

A lit candle, a magnifying glass over an open book, and a quill pen. The candle is lit, casting a warm glow. The magnifying glass is positioned over the open book, which is lying flat. The quill pen is resting on the right page of the book. The background is dark, making the candle and the book stand out.

Annual Volume

1945

STUDIES IN THE  
SCRIPTURES

ARTHUR W. PINK

# Studies in the Scriptures

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# January

## THE CHANGING YEARS BUT GOD UNCHANGING

When we were young, the transition from December to January meant little more to us than the need for another calendar and registering the new date on our letters. There was no solemn realisation that another milestone had been passed in the short journey of life, and that we were 365 days nearer a never-ending Eternity—to spend the same, either as a regenerated soul in the Courts of holiness and everlasting bliss, or to be cast as a righteously abhorred sinner into the Region of unutterable woe, there to suffer the due reward of our iniquities for ever and ever. But since Divine mercy apprehended us and gave us the spirit of a sound mind, and as we grow older, the passing of each year impresses us more deeply with the mutability of all things mundane and of our own mortality. As each fleeting year witnesses the call hence of one and another, we are reminded that the same call may likely come to us ere 1945 expires; and therefore, it behoves us to see to it that our own house is set in order.

With the changing years, come also the vicissitudes of life. True, that has been the case all through human history, but it seems to have been more pronounced of late. What alterations have been witnessed in every sphere during the last few decades! Probably most of our readers would have discredited anyone who, a generation ago, was able to forecast the principal conditions now prevailing. Even the few who had sufficient discernment to see the coming events, which were casting their dark shadows before them, were unable to foresee more than the general outline of what is now before them in detail. Whether we view the situation in the military, the political, the social, or the religious sphere, things have deteriorated and degenerated more than even the pessimistic conceived likely. Nor can the most experienced and sagacious prognosticate with any degree of certainty how much further the downward trend will go, how much lower moral and spiritual values will sink, nor how much which is still prized will be sucked into the maelstrom of destruction. Yes, the changing years are bringing with them great changes in living conditions—changes which are solemn to contemplate, and fearful to experience.

But if there was nothing more to be said, we would not have penned the above. Yet, what has been pointed out needs to be considered if we are to really appreciate what follows. That which most impresses the writer by the changing years is that we have *an unchanging God*. “Thy years,” said the Psalmist, “shall have no end” (Psa 102:27). He is unaffected by the flight of time, unin-

fluenced by all the mutations of things and creatures here below. “Semper Idem” (“always the same”) is inscribed upon his brow: “from everlasting to everlasting, thou art *God*” (Psa 90:2). This perfection of the Divine character does not occupy the place in our hearts and thoughts which it should. It is one of the choicest jewels in the diadem of God’s attributes. The immutability of God is the guarantor of His fidelity: “The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent [change His mind]” (1Sa 15:29). Likewise, the immutability of God guarantees the security of His people: “For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal 3:6)—closely as they may resemble Jacob.

God’s immutability is one of His communicable perfections. He imparts life to the lower creatures, wisdom to man, holiness to the angels—but immutability unto none. To speak of an immutable creature would be a contradiction in terms: If *immutable*, it would not be a “creature;” instead of being dependent, he would be independent, and therefore a God; instead of a subject, he would be Sovereign. God did not bestow immutability upon Adam at the beginning, when He pronounced him “very good” (Gen 1:31), for he had been incapable of falling had that been imparted. The arch-angel possesses it not; nor will the saints in Heaven. Immutability is entirely peculiar unto God Himself: There is no growth or development in Him. He is ever the same: The self-existent, all-sufficient, eternal, unchanging God. “I AM THAT I AM” (Exo 3:14) is His glorious name, and that which expresses His nature. What a truly marvelous and awe-inspiring Being! Nothing can be taken from, nothing added to Him. With Him, there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam 1:17).

“But he is in one mind, and who can turn him?” (Job 23:13). None can sway Him or induce Him to alter His eternal purpose. The clearest, yet most solemn, demonstration of that was made in Gethsemane—when the incarnate Son on His face, in an agony, cried, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Mat 26:39). God would not change His mind: The terms of the everlasting covenant must stand! It is this perfection of God’s which supplies the most conclusive proof of the error of Universalism, which predicates that after certain “ages,” the wicked will be released from Hell. Not so, and why? Because those whom the Lord abhors, He abhors forever! That “I am the LORD, I change not” (Mal 3:6) has a two-fold bearing: A blessed and a solemn one. Unto the saved, it is unspeakably blessed—“having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (Joh 13:1); but those whom He hates, He will hate for all eternity. Before the wicked could be released from Hell, the very nature and character of God must change—to be reversed.

“Thou art the same” (Psa 102:27). Not “Thou hast been” nor “Thou wilt be,” but “Thou *art* the same.” The same in nature and character, the same in will and purpose—without fluctuation within, or alteration without. Though His works of creation decay, though the operations of His providence vary, and though even the activities of His grace differ from time to time, yet the Lord God Himself is ever “the same.” How blessed that He is so! What strength, calmness, and comfort does this bring to the heart which has a believing apprehension of the same. What a sure foundation does this provide for faith to rest upon: That He who failed not the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, our own fathers who trusted in Him, is just the same now unto those who turn to Him in the present upheaval. “When heaven and earth shall flee away from the dreadful presence of the great Judge, He will be unaltered by the terrible confusion, and the world in conflagration will effect no change in Him” (C. H. Spurgeon). The Christian may lose his dearest earthly friends, but not his heavenly Friend. The years of those clothed with mortality are but few at most, but those of Him who “only hath immortality” (1Ti 6:16) are without beginning and without end.

Because the holy Scriptures are inspired by God, they too, are immutable. “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psa 119:89). That was Luther’s sheet-anchor amid the fierce gales that for so long burst upon him. Resting on that “impregnable Rock,” his heart was kept in perfect peace; and thereby, he was enabled to wax strong and very courageous. We, too, are living in stormy times, but thank God the same sure Anchor is available for us. While everything is crumbling around us, the monuments of the centuries being reduced to rubble, the thrones of kings being overturned, the plans and policies of men cast into the melting pot, the Divine Oracles are unaffected, unimpaired, unchanged—for the Word of God, like its Author, “liveth and abideth for ever” (1Pe 1:23). His own infallible promise is: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Mat 24:35; Mar 13:31; Luk 21:33).

Because the Redeemer is God the Son, He also is immutable: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb 13:8). He is the same merciful Saviour as pardoned the dying thief. He is the same long-suffering Master, as bore so patiently with the dulness of His disciples. He is the same sufficient One as multiplied the loaves and fishes, and thereby provided for a great multitude. He is the same Physician as healed the leper and gave sight to the blind. He is the same faithful Intercessor as prayed for poor Peter. He is the same compassionate One as wept by the graveside of Lazarus. When His forerunner was murdered, we are told that His disciples “went and told Jesus” (Mat 14:12). Why? Was it not because they would pour out their grief unto One whom they knew had a sympathetic ear, who could be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, and who would comfort and strengthen them? If then your heart be torn with anxiety or bowed down with sorrow, go and do likewise. Let our New Year’s resolution be to make more use of Christ in 1945 than we ever have before.

This blessed truth of the Divine immutability is many-sided in its application. Because God changes not, His *promises* are unfailing and may be relied upon at all times: “Thy testimonies are very sure” (Psa 93:5). For the same reason, we know that His *threatenings* must be fulfilled. “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). Because He changes not, the mediatorial throne is forever one of *grace*. It was there that He received us when first we came to Him as empty-handed beggars; it is there He still welcomes us when we pocket our pride and humbly, but boldly, seek fresh supplies “to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). Even in the eternal state, it will be “the throne of God *and* of the Lamb” (Rev 22:1). Then make use of this Divine attribute—plead it in your prayers. Amid all the fluctuations and vexations of 1945, remember that God changes not. Remind yourself of that blessed fact each day.

## THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

### 13. 2 Corinthians 13:14 – Part 2

In our last, instead of entering into a detailed exposition of this verse, we dwelt upon its central theme and sought to show it sets forth the Christian doctrine of God. In developing that grand



truth, we pointed out that we are indebted, supremely, to the Lord Jesus Christ for the full and final revelation of the character and perfections of Deity. Whatever be revealed of God in creation, in the governance of this world, or in the Old Testament, it is in and by the incarnate Son that the Father has been most clearly declared. Christ is “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15); and therefore, did He affirm, “he that seeth me seeth him that sent me” (Joh 12:45); and again, “If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father” (Joh 15:24). But as the query of His apostle intimated, “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” (Joh 14:22), it was a spiritual revelation to the hearts of His own, in which that manifestation mainly consisted.

The Christian Benediction, then, enunciates the foundational doctrine of Christianity, for no one is entitled to be regarded as a Christian who does not believe and acknowledge *the Triune God*, and that is why Scripture requires all who avow themselves Christians to be baptized into “the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Mat 28:19)—for that is the initiating confession of faith for all who would enter the kingdom of Christ, and the inspired formula with which believers are to be received into His fellowship: Three Persons, one God. The Divine Trinity lies at the basis of all New Testament teaching. The Redeemer claimed to be equal with God, one with the Father, and ever spoke of the Spirit as being both Personal and Divine. The apostles everywhere proclaimed His doctrine and recognised the threefold distinction in the Persons of the Godhead. The equal Deity and honour of the Son and Spirit with the Father is the mystery and glory of the Gospel they preached, and by which we are saved—the denial of it is conclusive proof of being unsaved. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (Joh 17:3), and the “only true God” is revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and is known in and through Jesus Christ the one Mediator.

That the revelation of the Triune God constitutes the doctrinal foundation of Christianity is easily capable of demonstration. First, as pointed out above, the true God subsists in three co-essential and co-eternal Persons; and therefore, he who worships any but the Triune God is merely rendering homage to a figment of his own imagination. He who denies the personality and absolute Deity of either the Father, the Son, or the Spirit is not a Christian, but a heretic, and the saints are bidden to have no fellowship with him (2Jo 1:10). Second, because there is no salvation possible for any sinner, save that of which the Triune God is the Author. It is a serious mistake to regard the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, to the exclusion of the saving operations of both the Father and the Spirit. Had not the Father eternally purposed the salvation of His elect in Christ (Eph 1:3, 4), had He not entered into an everlasting covenant with Him and commissioned the Son to become incarnate and redeem His people, He had never left Heaven in order that He might die the Just for the unjust.

The salvation of the Church is ascribed to the Father: “Who hath *saved* us, and called us with an holy calling...according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus *before* the world began” (2Ti 1:9). The Father then was our Saviour long before Christ died to become such—and thanksgiving is due Him for the same. Equally necessary are the operations of the Spirit to actually apply to the hearts of God’s elect the good of what Christ did for them. It is the Spirit who convicts them of sin and who imparts saving faith to them. Therefore is our salvation also ascribed to Him: “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2Th 2:13). A careful reading of Titus 3:4-6 shows the three Persons together in this connection, for “God our Saviour” in verse 4 is plainly

the Father, and “*he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour*” (Tit 3:5, 6).

Third, because it is by the distinctive operations of the Holy Three that our varied needs are supplied. Do we not *need* “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ”? Is not our most urgent experimental requirement to come to Him constantly and draw from the “fulness” of grace which is treasured up for us in Him (Joh 1:16)? If we would obtain “grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16), then we must betake ourselves to that Throne on which the Mediator sits. And do we not also need “the love of God”—that is, fresh manifestations of it, new apprehensions thereof? Are we not bidden to “keep yourselves in the love of God” (Jud 1:21)? And do we not equally need “the communion of the Holy Ghost” (2Co 13:14)? What would become of us if He renewed us not day by day in the inner man (2Co 4:16; Eph 3:16). What would be our prayer-life, if He no longer “helpeth our infirmities” and “maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom 8:26, 27).

Like the virgin birth of Christ and the resurrection of our bodies, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is one of the mysteries of the Faith. The first truth presented to faith is the Being of the true and living God, and this we knew not from any discovery of reason, but because He has revealed it in His Word. The next grand truth is that the one living and true God has made Himself known to us under the threefold relation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and this we know on the same authority as the first. They are equally above reason, and real Christians do not attempt to fathom them; yet their incomprehensibility, so far from being any objection, is a necessary condition of their confidence in revelation and faith in Him who is revealed. Had the Bible presented no heights beyond the powers of reason to scale, had it contained no depths unfathomable to the keenest mental acumen, this writer for one had discarded it as being nothing more than a human production and imposture. For our part, we would no more worship a “god” that we could measure by our intellect than we would honour an image that our hands fashioned.

Whenever we attempt to discuss the revelation God has made of His three Persons, we should do so with bowed heads and reverent hearts—for the ground we tread is ineffably holy. The subject is one of transcendent sacredness, for it concerns the infinitely majestic and glorious One. For the whole of our knowledge thereon, we are entirely shut up to what it has pleased God to reveal of Himself in His Oracles. Science, philosophy, experience, observation or speculation cannot—in this exalted sphere—increase our knowledge one iota. As one eminent theologian said, “The doctrine of three Persons in one God is wholly inconceivable by us, and Unitarians consider it as the greatest contradiction and absurdity imaginable. And those Trinitarians who have undertaken to *explain* it and make it more intelligible, have really made it ridiculous by darkening counsel by words without knowledge. The being of God, the mode of His subsisting, must be infinitely above our comprehension.”

The Divine Trinity is a Trinity in Unity: That is to say, there are not three Gods, but three Persons as co-existing by essential union in the Divine essence, as being the one true God. Those three Persons are co-equal and co-glorious so that one is not before or after the other, neither greater nor less than the other. It is in and by Their covenant offices that They are manifested unto us, and it is our privilege and duty to believe and know how these three Persons stand engaged to us and are interested in us by the everlasting covenant—but not so to understand the mystery of Their subsistence. Any teaching which does not equally honour all the Persons of the Godhead—distinctively and unitedly—is of no value to the soul. As one has said, “There is not a vestige of Christianity where the truth of the Trinity is not known and acknowledged. Not a vestige of godliness in the heart where the Father, Son and Spirit do not officially dwell. There is not a clear

view of any doctrine of God's grace to be obtained, unless (so to speak) the telescope of the truth of the Trinity be applied to the eye of faith, and that doctrine be viewed through it."

In view of what has just been pointed out, it constitutes one of the gravest signs of the times that in professedly "Christian" countries, the Triune God is no longer officially acknowledged. While some of our national leaders still give thanks unto "God" and own our dependence upon "the Almighty," yet that is no more than any orthodox Jew or Mohammedan would do. There is a studied avoidance of any reference to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the Holy Spirit. Yet sad though that be, it is not to be wondered at; it is simply the shadowing forth in the civil realm of what has long obtained in the religious. For several generations past, the absolute Deity of Christ and of the Spirit has been openly denied in most of the theological seminaries; and thereby, the Tri-unity of God was repudiated. Even in most of the "orthodox churches," the eternal Three have not been accorded Their rightful place—either in the doctrinal teaching of the pulpit, or the devotional life of the pew.

In the Benediction, the apostle invokes the Trinity as the Source of grace, love, and communion. Its unique features must not be overlooked: The order is unusual, and the Names used informal. The Son is placed before the Father. The Divine Persons are not here spoken of as the Son, the Father and the Spirit, but as the Lord Jesus Christ, God, and the Holy Spirit. The reason for this is because what we have in our text is not primarily a confession of faith (as is Mat 28:19), nor a Doxology (as is Jud 24, 25), but a Benediction. A doxology is an ascription of praise; a benediction is a word of blessing: The one ascend from the heart of the saint unto God, the other descends from God to the saint. "Consequently the Benediction does not approach the subject from the standpoint of theology, but of *experience*. It is not concerned with definition, nor does it contemplate the glory of God in the absoluteness of His Deity; but it sets Him forth as He is realised in the soul" (S. Chadwick, to whom we are also indebted for other thoughts and expressions in the previous article and this one).

The Christian Benediction, therefore, intimates that the doctrine of the Trinity is one of great importance to the existence and progress of vital godliness: That it is not a subject of mere speculation, but one on which depends all the communications of grace and peace to the saints. It is a striking and solemn fact that those who reject the truth of the Trinity are seldom known to even profess unto having spiritual communion with God; but instead, treat the same as a species of enthusiasm and fanaticism, as a perusal of the writings of "Unitarians" will show. The Benediction, then, sums up the blessings of Christian privilege in the three great words of the Gospel: Grace, love, communion. Those three Divine gifts are attributed to different Persons in the Trinity—for there is a distinction of functions, as well as of Persons, in the Godhead. Each takes precedence in His own peculiar work—though we cannot trace the limits of such, and must be careful, lest we conceive of God as three Gods rather than One. Each belongs to all. Grace is of God and of the Spirit, as well as of the Son. Love is of the Son and Spirit, as well as the Father. And our communion is with the Father and the Son, as well as with the Spirit.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." Why distinctively ascribe "grace" to *Him* if it be of God and the Spirit as well? Because in the economy of redemption, all grace comes to us through Him. The word "grace" is the special token of Paul in every epistle—eight close with "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you," sometimes varying the formula to "with your spirit." It is one of the outstanding words of the Gospel. "It is more than mercy and greater than love. Justice demands integrity, and mercy is the ministry of pity; love seeks correspondence, appreciation and response; but grace demands no merit. Grace flows unrestrained and unreserved upon those who have no goodness to plead and no claim to advance. Grace seeks the unfit and the unworthy. It is

love, mercy and compassion combined, stretching out towards the guilty, ungracious and rebellious. It is the only hope for sinful men. If salvation comes not by grace, it can never be ours. Without grace there can be no reconciliation, no pardon, no peace” (S. Chadwick).

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.” That is His designation as the God-man Mediator. It includes and indicates His Divine nature: He is “the Lord,” yea, “The Lord of lords;” His human nature: He is “Jesus;” His office: He is “Christ,” the anointed One, the long-promised Messiah, the Mediator. It is the favour of His Divine Person clothed with our nature and made the Head of His people—which the apostle invokes for all his believing brethren. *His* “grace” be with you all. That comes first in the Benediction, because it is our initial need. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2Co 8:9): There, it is His infinite condescension in submitting to such a mean condition for our sakes.

When He became incarnate, the Only-begotten of the Father was beheld by His own as “full of grace and truth” (Joh 1:14), and as the apostle added, “And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” (Joh 1:16). Here, the meaning of “grace” passes from an attribute of the Divine character to an active energy in the souls of the redeemed. At the Throne of Grace, we “find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). The heart is “established with grace” (Heb 13:9), and by that grace, we are enabled to “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb 12:28). It is in “the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2Ti 2:1) that we find our strength, and He assures us of its competency to support us under all afflictions and persecutions by the promise, “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2Co 12:9). Therefore, we are exhorted to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 3:18). Those passages all speak of the Divine power in the soul as the operation of “grace;” and in each one, it is connected with the Lord Jesus Christ as its Fountain.

“And the love of God.” There are two reasons why this comes second—because this is the order, both in the economy of redemption and in Christian experience. First, it was the mediatorial grace or work of Christ which procured the love of God unto His people—which turned away His wrath from them and reconciled Him to them. Hence, it is referred to not as “the love of the Father”—which never changed or diminished unto His people—but as the love or good will of God, considered as their Governor and Judge. Second, it is by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in saving us that we are brought to the knowledge and enjoyment of the love of God. The love of the Father is indeed the source and originating cause of redemption, but that is not the particular love of God which is here in view. The death of Christ as a satisfaction for our sins was necessary in order to bring us to God and the participation of His love. The manifestation of the love of God toward us in the pardon of our sins and the justification of our persons was conditioned on the atoning blood.

“And the communion of the Holy Ghost.” As the grand design of Christ’s work Godward was to appease His judicial wrath and procure for us His love and favour, so the grand effect saintwards was to procure for them the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Greek word may be rendered either “communion” or “communication.” It is by the communication of the Holy Spirit that we are regenerated, that faith is given, that holiness is wrought in us. Life, light, love and liberty are the special benefits He bestows upon us. Without the Spirit being communicated to us, we could never enter—personally and experimentally—into the benefits of Christ’s mediation. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us...that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit

through faith” (Gal 3:13, 14). Thus, the communicating of the Spirit to His people was one of the chief objects of Christ’s death.

But the Greek also signifies the *communion* of the Holy Spirit, a word which means partnership and companionship—He sharing with us the things of God. Grace tends to love, and love to communion. Hence, we see again that the order here is that of Christian experience. It is only as grace is consciously received, and the love of God is realised in the soul, that there can be any intelligent and real communion. Through Christ to God; and through Both, to the abiding presence of the Comforter. This expression, “the communion of the Holy Ghost,” shows He is a Person—for it is meaningless to talk of “communion” with an impersonal principle or influence. United as He is in this verse with “the Lord Jesus Christ and God,” it evidences Him to be a Divine Person. Further, it denotes He is an Object of intercourse and converse; and hence, we must be on our guard against grieving Him (Eph 4:30). The separate mention of each of the Eternal Three teaches us that They are to be accorded equal honour, glory, and praise from us.

What is signified by, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, *be with you all*” (2Co 13:14)? It cannot mean less than a consciousness of God’s Presence. The apostle was not praying for the gifts of grace, love and communion, apart from the Persons in whom alone they are to be found. It was a request that the presence of the Triune God might be realised in the souls of His people. The N.T. teaches that the Divine Three are equally present in the heart of the believer. Speaking of the Spirit, Christ said, “he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (Joh 14:17), and of Himself and Father, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (Joh 14:23). The Christian is indwelt by the Triune God: The Lord Jesus dwells in him as the source of all grace, God abides in him as the spring of all love, and the Holy Spirit communes with him and energises him for all spiritual service.

What is the *purpose* of that indwelling? God abides in the believer to conform him to His image, that he may become one with Him—one with Him in mind and heart, in character and purpose. The Christian reflects his God. The grace by which the Lord Jesus tasted death for His people is designed to produce a like spirit of sacrifice in them, “because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1Jo 3:16). They that know the love of God must live the life of love. If we say the love of God is “in us” and we walk contrary to love, we are liars (1Jo 4:20). The God of love dwells in His people that they may live the life of God-like love. So it is with the communion of the Holy Spirit: He does not share with us His riches that we may spend them upon ourselves. “The threefold Benediction is to abide with us that its threefold grace may be manifested by us, and the presence of the three-one God demonstrated through us” (S. Chadwick).

# THE MISSION AND MIRACLES OF ELISHA

## 25. Fifteenth Miracle – Part 3

For the benefit of new readers and also to refresh the memories of old ones, we will briefly review our last two articles upon this miracle. First, we emphasised its *reality*, seeking to show it was indeed a miracle which took place and that it might justly be regarded as connected with our prophet. Second, we dwelt upon its *occasion*, which was the fearful shortage of food in the city of Samaria, resulting from its being so closely invested by the Syrians that none of its inhabitants could go forth and obtain fresh supplies (2Ki 6:24, 25). So acute did conditions become that the vilest of offals were sold at exorbitant prices, and mothers had begun to consume their own babies. So far from humbling himself beneath the hand of Divine judgment and acknowledging that it was his own idolatry and impenitence which was the procuring cause of reducing his kingdom to such sore straits, Israel's king turned an evil eye upon Elisha and determined to make a scapegoat of him, taking a horrible oath that he should be slain forthwith (2Ki 6:31)—evidencing that he was a true son of Jezebel (1Ki 18:4).

“But Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him” (2Ki 6:32): Quiet from fear of evil, he calmly awaited events. Announcing that “this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head,” he gave orders that the door should be shut and the royal messenger be not admitted, with Jehoram himself hastening on just behind. The prophet and the king then came face to face; and third, the former *announced* the impending miracle. “Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD: Thus saith the LORD; To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold [as cheaply as] for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria” (2Ki 7:1). That was tantamount to saying, God in His high sovereignty is going to show mercy on your wretched kingdom, and within a day, will work a miracle that shall entirely reverse the present situation, so that not only will the Syrians depart, but there shall be provided an abundant supply of food, which will fully meet the needs of your people; and that, without a blow being struck, or your royal coffers being any the poorer.

“Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?” (2Ki 7:2). Such a message of good news as the prophet had just proclaimed of deliverance from the enemy and food for the starving, seemed utterly incredible to carnal reason; and therefore, instead of being received with fervent thanksgiving, it met with nought but a contemptuous sneer. Unbelief presumed to call into question the Divine promise. Arguing from what he could *see*, no possible relief being visible, this wicked lord scorned the likelihood of its fulfilment. That which Elisha had announced was indeed impossible to anyone but the living God, for only by a miracle could it be made good; yet, it was the express word of Him that cannot lie and Who is endowed with omnipotence. Despite the effort of his unbelieving courtier to prevent any weakening of his resolution, the king of Israel decided to wait another day ere carrying out his murderous design, and during that interval, the prediction was accomplished.

We turn now to consider, fourth, *its heralds*, or the ones made use of by the Lord to proclaim the wonder of mercy which He had wrought. Strange indeed do the Divine methods often appear to our dim vision—yet in the light of Scripture, their significance is not lost upon those favoured with anointed eyes. It was not “the elders of Israel” who had sat with Elisha in his house, nor was it “the sons of the prophets” whom the Lord honoured on this occasion. God is sovereign and employs whom He pleases. Often He acts as He does in order to stain the pride of man, for He is jealous of His own honour and will suffer no flesh to glory in His presence. It is true that He has called certain men to the special work of the ministry and set them apart thereto, and that He frequently works through them in the converting of His people; yet, He is by no means tied to that particular agency, and often manifests His independency by making use of the most unlikely ones to be His agents—as appears in the more extreme cases of Balaam and Judas. So it was here.

“And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?” (2Ki 7:3). More unlikely instruments could scarcely be imagined. They were pariahs, outcasts, debarred from mingling with their ordinary fellows. They were lepers, and as such, excluded by the Divine Law (Lev 13:44-46). Yet *these* were the ones whom God was pleased to employ. How different are His thoughts and ways from man’s! But let us observe the position which they occupied and the strange anomaly which that reveals. They were sitting “at the entering in of the gate”—that is, of “Samaria” (2Ki 7:1); namely, on the *outside* of the city’s walls—as the next verse shows. There, we have a striking sidelight on the inconsistency of perverse human nature, especially in connection with religious matters. Though an idolater and devoid of any respect for Jehovah—yet Jehoram and his officers were punctilious in carrying out the requirement of the ceremonial law as it respected the exclusion of lepers! They were diligent in tithing mint and anise, while omitting the weightier matters of the moral law (Mat 23:23).

That to which we have called attention is frequently exemplified on the pages of Holy Writ. Instead of utterly destroying Amalek and all his possessions, as commanded, when God delivered them into his hands, Saul permitted the people to spare the best of the sheep and oxen that they might offer them in “sacrifice unto the LORD” (1Sa 15:15, 21). To whom Samuel declared, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1Sa 15:22). Because it was the eve of the Passover, the Jews besought Pilate that the bodies of Christ and the two thieves who had been crucified with Him “might be taken away” (Joh 19:31), that their solemn feast might not be defiled. What a strange mixture human nature is! Those ceremonially unclean lepers must be shut out of Samaria, even though Jehovah Himself was treated with the utmost contempt! And do we not see the same principle illustrated in Christendom? Let the papist attend early morning mass, and he may spend the remainder of “Sunday” as he pleases. Being a stickler for a particular form of baptism, breaking bread each Lord’s Day morning, or spending five days at a “communion” is a mockery, if we love not our neighbour as ourselves.

“And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?” (2Ki 7:3). It will probably surprise many to hear that some of our readers have been taught that this is the proper attitude to assume when one has been convicted of his lost condition—appeal being made to such passages as, “Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors” (Pro 8:34). “In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water” (Joh 5:3). The awakened sinner is told that he is utterly helpless to do anything for himself, entirely dependent on God’s sovereign pleasure, and that since there is a “set time” to favour Zion (Psa 102:13), he must meekly wait for God’s appointed hour of deliverance—should He design *to* deliver him. But such counsel is an utter *misuse* of both the truth of God’s sovereignty and of man’s

spiritual inability, and proof that it *is* so is found in the fact that it both clashes with the call of the Gospel and is a repudiation of human responsibility.

The truth is that the spiritual inability of the natural man is both a voluntary and a criminal one: He does not love and serve God because he hates Him, he believes not the Gospel because he prefers to cherish a lie, he will not come to the Light because he loves darkness. So far from his, “I *cannot* repent, I *cannot* believe,” expressing an honest desire so to do, it is but an avowal of the heart’s enmity against God. If the doctrine of the Cross and the glorious message of the Gospel contain nothing to overcome such enmity and attract the soul to Christ, it is not for us to invent *another* Gospel and bend the Scriptures to the inclination of man’s depravity. It is we who must bend to the Scriptures, and if we do not, it will be to our eternal undoing. The one who wrings his hands over his inability to believe and asks, “What can I do?” is not to be soothed by something *other* than the Gospel of Christ, or encouraged to suppose that he is willing to be saved in God’s way. Yet *that* is the very delusion such souls cherish, imagining they are as willing to be saved from their sins, as the impotent man by the pool was desirous of being made whole.

Neither Christ, nor any of His apostles, ever told a convicted soul to passively wait for God’s appointed hour of deliverance. Instead, He bade the heavy laden, “come unto me” (Mat 11:28); and so far from informing those who followed Him across the sea, that it lies not in their power to do anything to secure the Bread of life, He exhorted them to “Labour...for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life” (Joh 6:27). Rather than tell men they must sit quietly before it, Christ commanded, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate” (Luk 13:24). When his hearers were pricked in their hearts and asked, “What shall we do?” instead of saying, “You can do nothing, except wait until God speaks peace unto you,” Peter bade them “Repent” (Act 2:37, 38). Those who think they have been given a sense of their helplessness are quite content if some physician of no value will inspire them with a hope in the way they are now in and encourage them to expect that if they remain passive, God will release them by a “moving of the waters.” We do but miserably deceive souls if we give them any comfort or hold out any hope for them, while they remain impenitent and away from Christ.

It is recorded that the passengers of a ship off South America went ashore on a brief expedition, ascending one of the mountains. But ere they were aware, night came on and a very cold fog. They felt a strong inclination to sleep, but a medical man in the party remonstrated against any such indulgence, warning them that there would be the utmost danger of their never waking. As the one who chronicled this incident asks, “What had been thought of his conduct if, instead of urging his companions to escape from the mount, he had indulged them in their wishes? The Scriptures declare, ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him’ (Joh 3:36)—and surely, we ought not to contradict that, either by directing to the use of means short of ‘believing’ or by encouraging those who use them to hope for a happy issue.” Paul did not offer the jailor comfort on the ground of his being in great distress, but bade him, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 16:31). The word to exercised souls is not “sit still”—but “seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you” (Mat 7:7; Luk 11:9).

But to return to the narrative. “They said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die” (2Ki 7:3, 4). How those poor lepers put to shame the “do-nothing” Fatalists! Those men rightly recognised the hopelessness of their case, perceiving that continued passivity would profit them nothing; and hence, they decided



to act. And if you, my reader, are already convicted of your perishing condition, do not rest content with that conviction and persuade yourself that in due time, God will save you—but embrace the Gospel offer and receive Christ as your Lord and Saviour, for He has declared, “him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (Joh 6:37).

We ask the indulgence of others who have not been infected with such paralysing teaching while we add a further word, yea, we would ask them to beg God to use these paragraphs to deliver some souls from this subtle snare of the Devil. If one who reads these lines has been made to feel his lost condition, then consider, we pray you, the far happier situation facing *you* from that in which those lepers were. They decided to come unto an enemy and cast themselves upon his mercy, while you are invited to betake yourself unto the Friend of publicans and sinners! They had no invitation from the Syrians, but you *have* from the Lord: “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (Joh 7:37). They had nothing better than an “if they save us alive” to venture upon—whereas you have “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou *shalt* be saved” (Act 16:31). They were confronted with the possible alternative of being killed; not so you: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” (Joh 3:36)—then why hesitate?

“And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there” (2Ki 7:5). What was before us in verses 3 and 4 did not end in idle talk. The situation for those lepers was a desperate one, and prompted by a sense of urgency, they acted. Their sitting still had got them nowhere, so they “rose up” and proceeded at once to their proposed objective. They did not puzzle their heads about God’s secret decree and whether or not His ordained hour had arrived—for that was none of their business. Instead, they responded to the instinct of self-preservation. Again we say, how far superior is the sinner’s case: He need not wait a moment for the prompting of any instinct, but is invited “*Come*, for all things are *now* ready” (Luk 14:17). Come just as you are with all your sinfulness and unworthiness, and if you cannot come to Christ *with* a melted heart and faith, then come to Him as a desperate patient *for* them.

The Divine narrative breaks in upon the account of the heralds of this miracle to show us, fifth, *its means*—for before we see those lepers going forth to publish their good news, we are first informed how it was that they came to find the camp empty. “For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us” (2Ki 7:6). This is to be regarded as the sequel to 2 Kings 6:24: Benhadad’s purpose was to starve out Samaria. But man proposes, and God opposes and disposes. “The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect” (Psa 33:10).

The Lord accomplishes His purpose by a great variety of measures and methods: Sometimes employing the supernatural, more often using the natural. What were the means He used here? In the light of what is *not* said in verse 6, it seems strange that T. Scott should write, “The infatuation which seized the minds of the whole Syrian army was equal to the illusion put upon their senses, and both were from the Lord, but how produced we know not.” Little better is M. Henry’s “these had their hearing imposed upon.” There was neither illusion, nor imposition. It does not say, “The Lord made them to hear a noise *like as of* chariots and horses,” but the actual thing itself—that is to say, He so attuned their auditory nerves that they registered the sound of what previously was inaudible to them. This is but another instance of how we create our own difficulties when reading the Word through failing to attend closely unto exactly what *is* said.

If we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, we should have no difficulty in ascertaining the precise means used on this occasion. On a previous one, God had employed “horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (2Ki 6:17), and as we showed, the reference there was to angelic beings. Then why not the same here! There, God “opened the eyes of the young man” in order to see them; here, He opened the ears of the Syrians to hear them. It may well be that in their original condition, our first parents were capacitated to both see and hear celestial beings, but the fall impaired those as well as all their faculties—the “clairvoyance” and “clairaudience” of Spiritist mediums being the devil’s imitation of man’s original powers. That the Syrians—unregenerate idolaters—misinterpreted what they heard, is only to be expected, as those who heard the Father speaking to His Son said, “it thundered” (Joh 12:29); and as those who accompanied Saul heard the Voice which spake to him (Act 9:7), but “heard not the voice” (Act 22:9)—distinguished not the words.

“Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life” (2Ki 7:7). How true it is that “the wicked flee when no man pursueth” (Pro 28:1)! Supposing that a more formidable force had come to the relief of the besieged Samaritans, the Syrians were filled with consternation; and at once, abandoned their well-provisioned camp. So thoroughly panic-stricken were they, that they left their “horses” which had accelerated their flight. How easily can the Lord make the heart of the stoutest to quake, and how vain and mad a thing it is for thee to defy Him! “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” (Eze 22:14). Then throw down the weapons of your warfare against Him and make your peace with Him now.

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

### 7. Its Stages

For the benefit of new readers, it should be pointed out that in our last article, we called attention to the fact that Christians may be graded into three classes according to their “stature” in Christ or their spiritual development and progress. In proof thereof, appeal was made to Mark 4:28 and 1 John 2:13. In addition to those passages, we may also take note of our Lord’s parable of the Wheat, wherein He represented the good-ground hearers as bringing forth fruit in varying degrees or quantities. That parable is recorded in each of the first three Gospels; and there is, among others, this noticeable difference between their several statements: That Mark says of those who received the Word, they “bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred” (Mar 4:20); whereas, in Matthew’s account, that order is reversed—“bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Mat 13:23). Evidently, the same parable was ut-

tered by our Lord on different occasions, and He did not employ precisely the same language—the Holy Spirit guiding each Evangelist according to His particular design in that Gospel.

Since Matthew is the opening book of the N.T., it is obviously the connecting link between it and the Old; and accordingly, the nature of its contents differ considerably from that of the three which follow. The prophetic element is far more prominent, and its dispensational character more marked. Many have regarded the parables of Matthew 13 as supplying prophetic outline of the history of Christendom. Personally, we still believe that view—that instead of its course being steadily upwards, it was to be definitely downwards; and that, so far from the Gospel converting the world to Christ, this age would witness the whole public testimony of God being corrupted. Thus, we regard the “hundredfold” of Matthew 13:23 as being descriptive of the primitive prosperity of Christianity in the days of the apostles, the “sixty” of the noticeable and lesser yield during the times of the Reformers and Puritans, and the “thirty” as that which resulted from the labours of men like Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and later, Spurgeon; while today, nothing is left but the mere  *gleanings*  of the harvest. Thus, the course of this Christian dispensation has been very similar to that of the Mosaical—with its reformatations in the days of David and then of Ezra—but ending like Malachi shows!

But in Mark 4:20, it is not the corporate testimony which is in view, but the spiritual experience of individual believers: “And bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred,” which corresponds with the three grades of verse 28—“first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear,” and the apostle’s more definite description—“I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children [babes], because ye have known the Father” (1Jo 2:13). As Thomas Goodwin (1600-1679) pointed out: John “had an advantage over all his fellow apostles in that he lived the longest of them, so that in the course of his life, he went through the several ages or seasons that Christians do, and having also had an experience of other Christians and what was eminently in and proper unto each age of men in Christ, writes unto all sorts accordingly and sets down what things spiritual belonged into those several stages.”

In our last, we dwelt upon some of the features which characterise the “babes” or “little children,” pointing out that those very designations intimate that which distinguishes them from the “young men” and “fathers”—for God has made the natural to shadow forth the spiritual. “Brethren, be not children in understanding” (1Co 14:20). As in a young child, reason is undeveloped, so in a spiritual babe, there is but a feeble apprehension of the deeper things of God; yet as that exhortation shows, the believer ought soon to pass out of a state of infancy. What is said of them in 1 John 2:13 describes another mark: “Ye have known the Father.” Little children acknowledge their parents, are dear to them, hang about them, cannot endure to be long absent from them. They expect to be much noticed and fondled; and accordingly, it is said of the good Shepherd, “He shall gather the  *lambs*  with his arm, and carry them in his bosom” (Isa 40:11). Little ones must be dandled on the knees, cannot endure the frowns of a father, and are not yet strong enough for conflicts—and hence, God tempers His providential dealings with them accordingly. The babe has “tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1Pe 2:3); but as yet, knows not of the “fulness” there is in Him.

Now the young convert is not to remain a spiritual babe, but is bidden to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 3:18); yea, to “grow up into him in  *all things* ” (Eph 4:15). God has made full provision for him to do so; and by his availing himself of that provision is He honoured and glorified. But the sad fact is that many Christians never do so; and many others who “run well” (Gal 5:7) for a while, lapse back again into spiritual infancy.

We are warned against this very danger by the solemn example of the Hebrews, to whom the apostle had to write, “Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe” (Heb 5:11-13).

Three things marked those believers who had failed to advance in the school of Christ. First, they were “dull of hearing” (Heb 5:11)—which connotes not slow wittedness, but failure of affection and will to respond to the teaching they had received. They were unconcerned about what they heard, unsearched by it, and consequently, it affected no change for the better in their characters and conduct. In Scripture, to “hear” God means to *heed* Him, to bring our ways and works into accord with His revealed will. God’s Word is given to us as a Rule to walk by (Psa 119:105), and walking signifies to go forward in the highway of holiness. Thus, to be “dull of hearing” is a species of self-will, it is a non-response to the call of God, it is to disregard His precepts. As intelligence begins to dawn, the first thing required of a little child should be subjection to the will of those who have its best interests at heart; and the first thing required by the Father of His children is loving obedience to Him.

Spiritual babes need to be taught “the first principles of the oracles of God” (Heb 5:12). What were the “first principles” which God taught Adam and Eve in Eden? Why, that He was their Maker and required obedience from them. What were the “first principles” inculcated by Jehovah at Sinai? Why, that Israel must be in dutiful subjection unto the One who had redeemed them from Egypt. What were the “first principles” enunciated by Christ in His initial public address? His sermon on the mount must answer. The “first principles” of spirituality or genuine piety are personal faith in God and loving obedience to Him. While *they* be in operation, the soul will prosper and make progress; as soon as they become inoperative, we deteriorate. Hence, the second thing complained of is, the Hebrews were “unskilful [margin “inexperienced”] in the word of righteousness” (Heb 5:13). Observe the particular title by which the Word is here called—that which emphasises the *practical* side of things: they were not walking in “the paths of righteousness” (Psa 23:3). They had degenerated into self-pleasers, following the by-ways of self-will.

Third, they were incapable of receiving “strong meat.” The force of which may be gathered from verses 10 and 11. The apostle desired to open unto the Hebrews the mystery of “Melchizedek” and bring before them deeper teaching concerning the official glories of Christ, but their state cramped him. He must suit his instruction according to the condition of their hearts, as it was evidenced by their walk. He was similarly restrained by the case of the Corinthians: “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto [because of their perversity and naughtiness] ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able” (1Co 3:1, 2 and see Mark 4:33). “Milk” is a figurative expression denoting precisely the same thing as “first principles of the oracles of God” (Heb 5:12)—faith, obedience. As it would be senseless to teach a child grammar before it learned the alphabet, or arithmetic before it knew the values of the numerals, so it is useless to teach Christians the higher mysteries of the Faith or to take an excursion into the realm of prophecy, when they have not learned to be regulated by the practical teaching of Scripture.

Here, then, are two of the chief reasons why so few Christians really advance beyond spiritual babyhood to become “young men” that are “strong” and who “overcome the wicked one” (1Jo 2:13, 14). Here are the worms which, it is to be feared, have been eating at the root of the spiritual

life of some of our readers. Because they were “dull [not of intellect, but of] hearing.” The Greek word for “dull” is rendered “slothful” in Hebrews 6:12. It denotes a state of slackness and inertia. It means they were too indolent to bestir themselves. They were spiritual sluggards. They were not willing to “buy the truth” (Pro 23:23) and make it their own by incorporating it in their daily lives. They failed to “gird up the loins” (1Pe 1:13) of their minds, and earnestly and resolutely set about the task God has appointed them—namely, to deny self and take up their Cross daily and follow Christ. They did not lay to heart the *precepts* of the Gospel and translate them into practice. They made no progress in practical godliness.

Second, lack of progress was due to their being “unskilful in the word of righteousness” (Heb 5:13). The word “righteousness” means right doing, up to the required standard. God’s Word is the alone Rule of righteousness, the Standard by which all our motives and actions are to be measured, the Rule by which they are to be regulated. That Word is to *govern us* both inwardly and outwardly. By that Word of Righteousness, each of us will be judged in the Day to come. Now, it is not said that those Hebrews were ignorant of this Word, but “unskilful in” it. The word “unskilful” here means inexperienced; that is, inexperienced in the practical *use* they made of it. I may be thoroughly familiar with its letter, understand much of its literal meaning, able to quote correctly scores of its verses; yet, so far from that serving any good purpose, it will only add to my condemnation if I am not *controlled* by it. To be “unskilful in the word of righteousness” means I have not yet learned how to mortify the flesh, overcome temptations, resist the Devil; and as long as that be the case, if I be saved at all, I am only a spiritual infant, undeveloped in the spiritual life.

Another thing which holds back many a young convert from spiritual progress is his making too much of his initial experience. Unless he be on his guard, there is great danger of making an idol of the peace and joy which comes from the knowledge of sins forgiven. God requires us to walk by faith and not by feelings, for though the latter may for a while please us, the former is that which honours *Him*, and the faith which most honours *Him* is that which rests on His bare Word when there are no feelings to buoy us up. Moreover, God is a jealous God and will not long suffer us to esteem His gifts more highly than Himself. If we are more occupied with lively frames and inward comforts than we are with God in Christ, then He will take from us a sense of His comforts, and the soul will sink and be cast down under a sense of the loss of them. In such a case, Revelation 2:5 prescribes the remedy: The sin of idolatry must be penitently confessed, and we must return to the Storehouse of grace as a beggar, and make Christ our all.

Many babes in Christ have their spiritual growth retarded by (negatively) the lack of suitable instruction, and (positively) by the cold water poured on their joy and ardour by their elders. It is neither necessary, nor kind, for some would-be wiseacres to tell them, “This joy of yours will not last long—your night sky will soon be overcast with dark clouds.” Many of them are likely to discover that soon enough for themselves, while others may live to disprove such doleful predictions. This writer was often told that he would quickly lose his assurance of God’s acceptance of him in Christ, but though more than thirty-five years have passed since sovereign grace “plucked [him] out of the fire” (Zec 3:2), his assurance has never wavered or weakened, for it has always rested on the unchanging Word of Him that cannot lie. Others are greatly stumbled by empty professors and the inconsistencies of some real Christians, and they allow that to keep them from striving after a closer walk with God.

Many are kept weak in faith through failure to attain unto a proper acquaintance with the person and work of Christ. They do not realise how sufficient and able He was for everything He undertook to do for them, and how perfectly He finished the same. They have no clear views of

either the fulness or the freeness of His so-great salvation. Consequently, a legal spirit working with their unbelief puts them upon reasoning against their being saved freely by grace through faith. Those unbelieving reasonings gain great power from their defeats in their warfare between the spirit and the flesh, or grace and nature. They hearken to and trust more in the reports of self than to the testimony of God's Word. Thereby, their faith is checked in its growth, and they remain but babes in Christ. Their weak faith receives but little from Christ, and it continues weak because they have so little dependence upon the fulness of grace there is in Him for sinners. They appropriate not His promises, nor trust in His faithfulness and power. Growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ are inseparable, and experimental knowledge of Christ is entirely dependent upon the exercise of *faith on Him*.

But we must pass on now to the second class. "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1Jo 2:14). Although the classification which this passage makes of the Lord's people does not regard them simply according to their natural ages, but rather to the several degrees of stature in Christ; yet the characters given them are more or less taken from and assimilated unto what prominently distinguishes each class in their natural life. Infants rejoice in the sight of their parents and in prattling to them—thus, the spiritual babes are said to "know the Father." Proverbs 20:29 tells us, "The glory of young men is their strength"—and accordingly, those who reach the second stage of Christian development are termed "young men," and it is said of them, "ye are strong." Young men are renowned for their athletic vigour and are the ones called upon to fight in the defence of their country; and here, they are pictured as victorious in conflict as having "overcome the wicked one" (1Jo 2:13, 14).

"I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1Jo 2:14). Though these words were most certainly not written by the apostle in order to flatter, but were beyond doubt, a sober statement of fact concerning those he addressed; yet, because of our dulness of understanding, they are by no means free of difficulty to us. Therefore, as the Lord is pleased to enable, we shall endeavour to supply answer to the following questions. Wherein do the "young men" differ from the "babes"? In what sense can they be said to be "strong"?—is there such a thing as out-growing spiritual weakness! Exactly what is signified by "the word of God abideth in you"—and are those words to be understood as explaining the preceding clause, or the one which follows? In view of the many defeats, which apparently all Christians experience, what is meant by "ye have overcome the wicked one"?

Wherein do "young men" differ from "babes"? First, because having been longer engaged in the practice of godliness, they have learned to more seriously consider their ways, in order that they may avoid sin and the occasions thereof. They have sufficiently acquainted themselves with God as to realise the need of watching, praying, striving both against inward corruptions and outward temptations. They frequently present before the Throne of Grace such petitions as these: "Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness" (Psa 119:33-36). Sins, which formerly they regarded as blotted out by the general pardon received at conversion, are now thought of with shame and bitterness.

Second, they are more diligent in the use of means. Not that they necessarily devote more time thereto, but that they are more conscientious and spiritually exercised therein. As they have be-

come increasingly acquainted with their corrupt inclinations, rebellious wills, the workings of unbelief and pride, they attend more closely to that basic duty, “Keep thy *heart* with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23); and accordingly, they can truthfully say, “I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end” (Psa 119:112)—though they will often have to confess lack of power to perform their desire. That makes them the more concerned to learn how to make use of their spiritual “armour”—for none so conscious of its need and so earnest to put it on as *this* grade of believers.

Third, they are better versed in the Word of God. Though not so experienced and proficient in the Word of Righteousness as the “fathers,” yet they are not as unskilful as the “babes.” They have learned much in how to personally appropriate the Scriptures, how to apply them to their several cases, circumstances and needs. They long to make further progress in piety; and therefore, they meditate in the Law of God day and night. Deeply exercised that their daily lives may be pleasing to God and adorning to the profession which they make, they are concerned to inquire, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” (Psa 119:9); and discover the answer to be, “by taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Psa 119:9). Thus, they are daily furnishing themselves with spiritual knowledge and fortifying themselves against their enemies.

Fourth, they have learned to look more outside of self. They neither make so much of inward comforts, nor do they lean so much unto their own understanding as once they did. They look more to Christ and live more upon Him. As formerly they trusted Him for cleansing and righteousness, now they turn to Him for wisdom and strength. They have discovered from experience that these can only be drawn from Him by the exercise of *faith*. They have realised themselves to be poor, helpless creatures, continually in need, and as having no means of their own to supply them. Thereby, the Lord teaches them to live more *out of* themselves and more upon His fulness. When the Enemy cometh in like a flood, they look to Christ for victory. When conscious of their impotency, they do not give way to despair, but trust Christ to renew their strength. Thus, by such means, they pass from the weakness of infancy and become “young men.”

# THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

## 6. Its Effectuation

For the benefit of new readers and to refresh the memories of last year’s ones, we will here epitomize what has been presented in previous articles. First, we pointed out the *distinctions* which require to be recognised if confusion is to be avoided. (1) That in connection with reconciliation, God acts both as a loving Father and as an inflexible Judge. (2) That His elect are viewed both in the purpose of His grace and under the condemnation of His Law. (3) That they are viewed by Him both in Christ as their covenant-Head and as the depraved descendants of fallen Adam: In the one case, as His “dear children” (Eph 5:1); and in the other, as being “by nature the children of wrath” (Eph 2:3). (4) That though there be no change in God, yet there is in His attitude unto and His dealings with them. (5) That God’s purpose concerning His elect in eternity and

the actual accomplishment of that purpose in a time-state must not be confused. Failure to observe these distinctions has caused many to err in their preaching and writing on this important subject.

Next, we demonstrated the *need for* reconciliation. Therein, we dwelt upon the fearful breach, which the entrance of sin made between God and man, the creature casting off all allegiance to his Maker, revolting from his rightful Lord, despising His authority, trampling under foot His commandments. We showed that while the original offence was committed by Adam, yet he was acting as the federal head of his race; and that, therefore, the guilt and consequences of his transgression are justly imputed to all his descendants. Moreover, they take sides with him by perpetuating his evil course. The life of the unregenerate is one unbroken course of rebellion against God. The consequences of that breach are that fallen man is separated from God, he is an object of abhorrence to God, he is under the wrath of God, he is in bondage to Satan, and so under the reigning power of sin that he hates God. Obviously, such an one is in urgent need of being restored to His favour and having his vile enmity removed.

Then we saw that *the Author* of reconciliation is God, and more particularly, God the Father. In the development of which we pointed out that the recovery of His fallen elect proceeds from the good pleasure of His will, or “the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph 3:11). That gracious design was suggested by none other, and no external motive influenced Him. No necessity was put upon Him to form such a resolution: It was simply His own sovereign design—“*I will shew mercy*” (Exo 33:19). Yet, it was His own nature which prompted that decision; it originated in the everlasting *love*, which God bore to His elect—a love so great that even their awful sins could not quench, nor produce any change in it. Nevertheless, since the Divine holiness was infinitely antagonised by sin, Divine justice required that full satisfaction should be made for the dishonour it had wrought. Nought but Divine *wisdom* could find a way in which Love and Law were perfectly harmonized, and solve the problem of how mercy and justice might alike maintain its ground without the slightest compromise, yea, issue from the conflict honourable and glorious.

Under the last division of our subject, we turned our attention to the Divine *arrangement* for the accomplishment of reconciliation—namely, “The Everlasting Covenant,” in which is displayed the Divine perfections in their blessed unity. In that covenant, God gave His elect to Christ as a trust or charge, holding Him responsible for their everlasting felicity. In that covenant, all the details of the wondrous plan of redemption were drawn up and settled. In that covenant, the Father made known unto the Son the terms which He must fulfil, and the task He must perform, in order to the saving of “that which was lost;” while the Son voluntarily concurred therein and gladly consented to carry out its stipulations. In that covenant, we have revealed the office which Christ was to assume and the nature of the work He was to do—namely, to serve as the Substitute and Surety of His people in the full discharge of all their obligations unto the Divine Law. In that covenant, the Father gave assurance of rendering adequate assistance to the Mediator in the performing of His engagement and the guarantee of the glorious reward upon the successful completion thereof.

We are now to see how the eternal purpose of God was effected, *how* the mutual engagements of the everlasting covenant were fulfilled. “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption [or “status”] of sons” (Gal 4:4, 5). The “fulness of the time” means more than that the ordained hour had arrived: It signifies when all the preliminary operations of Divine providence had been completed, when the stage was thoroughly prepared for this unparalleled event, when the world’s need had been fully demonstrated. The advent of God’s Son



to this earth was no isolated event, but the climax of a lengthy preparation. That He was now “made of a woman” was the fulfillment of the Divine announcement in Genesis 3:15 and Isaiah 7:14. That He was “made under the law” (Gal 4:4), which His people had broken is what supplies the key to that which is otherwise an inexplicable mystery; in fact, throws a flood of light upon the experiences through which He passed from Bethlehem to Calvary.

The very circumstances of Christ’s birth at once made unmistakeably manifest that God had sent forth none other than His own Son and clearly intimated the unique mission upon which the Beloved of the Father had then entered. Nothing less than a supernatural birth befitted so august a Person, and such was accomplished by the miraculous conception of His virgin mother, by means of which a “*holy*” humanity became His (Luk 1:35)—a real human spirit, and soul, and body—yet, without the slightest taint of our corruption. The amazing event of the Incarnation and the Divine dignity of the One who had become flesh was signalled by the appearing again of “the Shekinah” (which had left Israel in the days of Ezekiel—Ezekiel 10:4, 18; 11:23), for “the glory of the Lord (namely, the Shekinah) shone round about” the shepherds on Bethlehem’s plains, so that they were “sore afraid;” and an angel announced to them that the One just born was none other than “Christ the Lord;” while suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the “heavenly host” praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luk 2:9-14).

But, if what we have just alluded to were clear proofs that God had indeed “sent forth his Son, made of a woman” (Gal 4:4), there were other attendant circumstances, which no less plainly intimated (to an anointed eye) that His Son was also “made under the law” and that—as the Surety of His people, as the One who had entered their Law-place—*He* must receive what is due *them*. This has not been sufficiently recognised. In that same second of Luke, we read that Mary “brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luk 2:7). The force of that is better perceived if it be linked with, “So he drove out the man” (Gen 3:24) from Eden, for he had become an outcast from his Maker. Do we not behold, then, in His exclusion from the inn and birth in a cattle shed, a definite shadowing forth of the fact that Christ had vicariously entered the place of His outcast people! In the circumcising of Him on the eighth day (Luk 2:21), there was an evident prefigurement that He had been made “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom 8:3). That was unspeakably solemn, but amazingly wonderful.

A little later, it was made evident that the One cradled in the manger was more than human. The wise men saw “*his* star in the east” (Mat 2:2) and came to Jerusalem enquiring, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” That extraordinary star “went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was” (Mat 2:9). Entering the house where He abode, they “fell down, and worshipped him” (Mat 2:11), presenting gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh—thus were Divine honours paid Him. Yet, immediately after a determined effort was made by Herod to slay Him, as though to show us from the beginning that *His life was forfeit* and that a death by violence awaited Him! But His hour had not then arrived and Joseph was warned to flee with Him. His sojourn in Egypt was not without significance, for it intimated that as the Surety of His people, He had taken His place alongside of them in the typical house of bondage. With what awe and astonishment should we contemplate these things!

What we have sought to point out unmistakably opens up to us the deeper meaning of much that is recorded in the Gospels, supplying the key to the strange mingling of the lights and shadows in the earthly career of our Lord. That key lies in the distinction which must ever be drawn between the adorable Person and the awful place which He took, between the Son of God incar-

nate and the *office* He was discharging. Though His essential glory was veiled by flesh, yet that glory frequently broke forth in splendour. Or to put it in another way: God had suffered His Beloved to make “himself of no reputation” (Phi 2:7) in this world, yet He was so jealous of His honour that, again and again, He afforded proof that the despised One was Immanuel. Thus, if Christ—to the amazement of His forerunner—submitted to the ordinance of baptism, yet, at that very time, the heavens were “opened unto Him” (Mat 3:16), and the Spirit descended like as a dove upon Him, and the voice of the Father was heard saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat 3:17; Mat 17:5; 2Pe 1:17).

Yes, the key to the deeper meaning of much in the Gospels is found in keeping before us the distinction between the Person and the place He took. He was the Holy One, but He took the place of His sinful people. As the Holy One, ineffable joy, unclouded blessedness, the love and homage of all creatures was His legitimate due. Treading the path of obedience, the smile of God, and the ordering of His providences accordingly were what He was justly entitled to. Wisdom’s ways are “ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Pro 3:17), and Christ ever trod Wisdom’s ways without any deviation—why then did He encounter so much unpleasantness and opposition? “When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Pro 16:7), and Christ always pleased Him (Joh 8:29); yet, the Father was far from making *His* enemies at peace with Him. Why? Ignore the office which Christ had taken (and was discharging from Bethlehem onwards!), and we are left without any possible solution.

“The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Mat 8:20; Luk 9:58). The real force of that pathetic statement can best be perceived by grasping the meaning of the particular title which the Saviour here employed. It has its roots in the following O.T. passages: “The stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm?” (Job 25:5, 6); “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psa 8:4 and compare Psa 146:3), from which it will be seen that it is a term of abasement and ignominy, expressive of lowly condition. In its application to Christ, it connotes not only His true humanity, but also the humiliation and shame into which He descended. It is descriptive of His person, but more especially of His *office*; in other words, it points to Him as “the Second Man,” the “last Adam,” and as such, entering our lot, sharing our misery, serving as our Surety. Christ appropriated this title unto Himself as marking His condescending grace and as displaying the condition, which He had taken to Himself.

A certain scribe had offered to follow Jesus wherever He went, and “the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Mat 8:20; Luk 9:58) was His response. It was not only a word bidding him count the cost, but an announcement that *His* path led to the place where none could accompany Him. It was more than a declaration that He who was rich for our sakes became poor in order to reinstate us: It was an intimation that He had voluntarily subjected Himself to the consequences of sin, that He would therefore be treated as a sinner both by God and by men, that He had entered the place of His disinherited people (driven out: Genesis 3:24); and therefore, that He had no claim to ought in this world. “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mat 20:28). Thus, it is clear that this “Son of man” title contemplates Christ as the humbled One. Confirmatory of this, it is the fact that He is never referred to by it after His resurrection—though as “the Son of man,” He appropriately receives His reward (Dan 7:13, Mat 26:64; Joh 5:27).

Justice demands that each one shall receive his due. Now the Lord Jesus was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb 7:26)—then to what was He lawfully entitled at the hands

of a righteous God? Does not the Judge of all the earth do right! Then how shall He order His governmental dealings toward the One who eminently honoured and glorified Him? Must He not show Himself strong on His behalf? Must He not shower upon Him the ceaseless tokens of His favour? Must He not turn the hearts of all men unto Him in loving homage? Certainly—but for one thing! Though personally holy, yet officially the guilt of His people rested upon Him. In view of Psalm 37:25, how can we possibly account for the righteous One Himself being forsaken by God in the hour of His acutest extremity? Only one answer is possible—and that is furnished by what we have sought to set before the reader:

*“Bearing shame and scoffing rude.  
In my place condemned He stood.”*

Blessed be God if the reader can, by sovereign grace, respond with us:

*“Sealed my pardon with His blood,*

Hallelujah, what a Saviour!”

If we shut our eyes to the solemn fact that the Son of God entered this world charged with the guilt of His people, then are we confronted with the supreme anomaly, the most flagrant injustice of all history. For on the one hand, we have the Personification of all virtue and moral excellency; and on the other, God suffering Him to be traduced as One possessed of a “demon” (Joh 10:20). On the one hand, we have the supreme Benefactor of mankind ever going about and doing good; and yet, God so ordering His lot that He “had not where to lay His head” (Mat 8:20; Luk 9:58). On the one hand, we have Him preaching glad tidings to the poor and binding up the broken hearted; and on the other hand, God allowing Him to be so dealt with by those whom He befriended that He cried, “Reproach hath broken my heart” (Psa 69:20). On the one hand, we have Him manifested as Love incarnate; yet, on the other, God permitting His enemies to vent their bitterest hatred upon Him. In the case of all others, we discern the principle of sowing and reaping, of the connection between conduct and the consequences which it righteously entails; but in the case of our Lord, there was not, so far as He personally acted and was treated. Yet bring into account the *relation* which He sustained to His guilty people, and the anomaly and seeming injustice vanishes.

Perhaps some readers are inclined to say: I can see why it was necessary for Christ as our Substitute to endure the wrath of *God*, but I am rather at a loss to understand why He should have to suffer such cruel treatment at the hands of *men*. True, their vile conduct against the Lord of glory demonstrated as nothing else the fearful depravity of human nature, but why did the Father—under His righteous government of the world—permit His Son to be so unjustly dealt with by Jews and Gentiles alike? Though it was ordained that He should be crucified and slain by wicked hands (Act 2:23), yet wherein lay the necessity for Him to be so mistreated by His own creatures?—and that, not only during “the Passion week” but throughout the whole course of His ministry? In the light of what we have sought to point out, there should surely be no difficulty at this point: It is only a matter of giving a wider application to that basic and illuminating principle.

As the Surety of His people, Christ entered this world charged with *all* their guilt; and therefore, He had to suffer not only for their sins against God, but also against their fellows. We have broken *both* tables of the Law; and therefore, the Redeemer must endure the penalty of both. See then, in the treatment meted out to Him by men, what *we* deserve, because of our woeful failure to love our neighbour as ourselves. As our Substitute, a life of reproach among men was His due. Therefore, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (Joh 1:11); but instead, despised and rejected Him. Therefore was He, throughout His course, “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa 53:3), subjected to contempt, constantly persecuted by His enemies.

The very next verse in Isaiah 53 explains why He was the Man of sorrows: “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows” (Isa 53:4). Therefore, was the sin-Bearer deserted by all His apostles (Mat 26:56), as well as forsaken by God.

It is indeed in the closing scenes of “the days of his flesh” (Heb 5:7) that we may perceive most clearly Christ occupying the place of His people and receiving both from man and God that which was due unto us. As we view Him before Caiaphas and Herod, we must not be occupied only with the *human* side of things, but look higher and see Divine justice directing all. The Romans were renowned for their respect of law, their equity of dealings, and their mild treatment of those they conquered. Then how shall we account for the conduct of Pilate and his soldiers?—and especially, why did God require His Son to be mocked with a trial that appears worse than a farce? Because though personally innocent, He was officially guilty.



# February

## BURDEN BEARING

“Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee” (Psa 55:22). What a remarkable statement is that! Probably our very familiarity with it has prevented any sense of wonderment over it. Try and conceive what would be its first effect upon a converted heathen! He has been brought to a saving knowledge of the living God and granted a measure of light on His august Being and Majesty. He has learned that by His mere fiat, the universe was called into existence: That so infinitely is He exalted above all creatures, the nations of the earth are regarded by Him as but a drop in the bucket; that He sits enthroned on High, where myriads of creatures bow before Him in worship crying, “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts” (Isa 6:3). And now he learns that this King of kings and Lord of lords invites him to “Cast thy burden upon the LORD” (Psa 55:22)! Must not such a discovery be overwhelming to his mind and heart! And ought it not to have the same effect on us?—that He who “humbleth himself to [even] behold the things that are in heaven” (Psa 113:6) deigns to bid us lay upon HIM what *we* find too heavy to carry.

What a striking thing it is that when a Christian has perceived the amazingness of such an invitation, or at least is acquainted with it, that he is so slow in profiting from it. We know not which is the more wonderful that the Lord should be so condescending in granting us such a privilege, or that we should be so slow and reluctant to avail ourselves of it. We know not which is the more surprising: That we are vouchsafed the opportunity of easing ourselves and laying on the Lord what is too heavy for us to carry; or our failure to embrace such an opportunity—and in consequence, continuing to stagger beneath a load which cripples us. It makes us think of a famished man being so foolishly proud as to refuse food when it is offered to him; or one in daylight closing and bandaging his eyes, and then complaining that he cannot see. Like Martha of old, many of the saints are “careful and troubled about *many* things”—when “but one thing is needful” (Luk 10:41, 42).

The one thing needful for ease of mind and peace of heart is to “cast thy burden upon the LORD” (Psa 55:22), instead of attempting to carry it thyself. There is our blessed recourse: That is the grand remedy for anxiety. Why, that was the very thing we learned at the beginning, was it not? When convicted of our lost condition, when “heavy laden” with a sense of guilt and the wrath of God upon us, how did we obtain relief? Was it not by heeding that blessed Gospel invitation, “Come unto me...and I will give you rest” (Mat 11:28)? We found rest of conscience and soul by coming to Christ just as we were, by acknowledging our wretchedness, by casting our-

selves on His grace and mercy. And, my reader, we are to obtain relief of heart and mind from the carking cares of this life in precisely the same way that we obtained relief of conscience at the beginning: By unbosoming ourselves to the Lord, by asking Him to undertake for us, by trusting Him to do so.

While it be true that (as mentioned in the opening paragraph) an apprehension of the infinite greatness and absolute supremacy of God will fill us with wonderment at His amazing condescension in bidding us cast our burden upon Him, yet it needs to be pointed out that a sense of His dominion and all-mightiness will never move the soul to respond to this invitation. The contemplating of Jehovah upon His throne will awe; but unless we also view Him in other relations and consider other aspects of the Divine character, the heart will never be melted before Him and drawn out to have free dealings with Him. There is a balance which needs observing here too. God is not only transcendent, but imminent. He not only resides in the highest Heaven, but “he be not far from every one of us” (Act 17:27). He not only dwells “in the light which no man can approach unto” (1Ti 6:16), but He is also “a very *present* help in trouble” (Psa 46:1); and for the believer, “a *friend* that sticketh closer than a brother” (Pro 18:24).

The last quoted passages need to have a real place in our hearts if we are to respond to the invitation of our opening text. They need to be frequently meditated upon and require faith to be mixed with them. To view the Lord only as in Heaven produces a sense of remoteness in the soul. We should also cultivate a sense of His nearness to us. Is not that clearly presupposed by the language of Psalm 55:22?—how could one cast his burden on Another who was far away! God is near to His people not only by virtue of His omnipresence—for in *that* sense, He is equally near to the wicked—but He has come close to them in the Person of Christ, and *He* has brought them unto God (1Pe 3:18). That needs to be realised in the soul, as well as understood in the mind. The Lord is constantly near us: “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5)—which is not only a blessed fact, but one that needs to be *acted on*. Since He is by thy side, “Cast thy burden upon the LORD” (Psa 55:22). “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art *with me*” (Psa 23:4).

Others are, perhaps, deterred from availing themselves of this privilege—through regarding God as being of such greatness and majesty that it would be presumption to suppose He notices our petty trials and troubles. In the human realm, high office and pomposity usually go together, for those in authority rarely pay much attention to the personal affairs of those under them. But far different is it with the Lord. The One who created the universe also planted the blade of grass. The One who governs the planets also numbers the hairs of our heads. The One who is worshipped by the angels also observes the fall of a sparrow. The One who holdeth our souls in life bids us to cast our “burden upon” Him. It is true that He is Almighty, but He is also our Father. If I called upon the king of England, or the president of the U.S.A., he would not receive me; but he would his own child! Cultivate the thought of God’s *Fatherhood*: It implies nearness, access, sympathy, readiness to sustain.

Another thing which hinders many is the limitations which they place upon the Lord. They believe that Christ bore their sins in His own body on the tree, but that is as far as their faith goes. They trust Him with the eternal interests of their souls, but largely lose sight of Him for their temporal supplies. They betake themselves to Him as their spiritual Physician, but not as their bodily. We read, “Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” (Mat 8:17). He took them upon His spirit, entering sympathetically into the condition of the sufferers. And today, He is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb 4:15). Then contemplate Him as the compassionate One who has at heart your temporal interests, who is willing to supply *all* your need. He is

not only a Deliverer from the wrath to come, but a Sustainer in trouble, a Strengtheners in weakness, a Succourer in trials. Then make use of Him as such, and cast thy burden upon Him.

Note well, it is not “burdens” but “burden”—for we are not to allow them to accumulate. As soon as you are conscious of one, cast it on the Lord, by taking Him fully into your confidence, freely unbosoming yourself to Him, and familiarly acquainting Him with what weighs upon you. If it be the burden of sin, confess it frankly to Him and plead the promise of 1 John 1:9. If the burden of sustenance, anxiety over the morrow, troubled about meeting your obligations, acknowledge your fear, unbelief and distress, and remember it is “the Father of mercies” (2Co 1:3) you are talking to. If of sorrow, grief over wayward children, or the anguish of bereavement, pour out your lamentations into the ear of Him who wept by the graveside of Lazarus. Then plead His promise, “he shall sustain thee” (Psa 55:22)—expect Him to make it good in your case, and you shall prove the grand truth, “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2Co 12:9).

“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2). A very needful word is that in this exceptionally selfish age, when, beyond contributing to public appeals for charity, few have any regard for the needs and rights of others, and when so many of the present and the rising generation are devoid of even “natural affection.” True Christianity fulfils *both* tables of the Law. Genuine piety consists not only of giving God His proper place in my life, but in seeking the welfare of my neighbours. I may be diligent in keeping the Sabbath, singing Psalms, and attending church, but if I am *lacking in love* to those I profess are my brethren and sisters in Christ, then my religion is no better than that of the Pharisees. If the love of God has been shed abroad in my heart, then I shall sympathise with His children in their varied trials and troubles, be ready to counsel and comfort, and assist them so far as lies in my power. Only thus shall I fulfil the law of Christ’s precepts and the law of His example (Joh 13:14, 15), for He enjoins us to be compassionate to others and is Himself touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

“For every man shall bear his own burden” (Gal 6:5). Needless to say, there is no conflict between this verse and the others which have been before us. There is a “burden” of which we cannot rid ourselves—and that is, the discharge of our responsibility, the performance of duty. For the fulfilment of that, we may—we should—seek grace from the Lord; but to be relieved of it, we must not pray. Nor may we legitimately look to our brethren and sisters to shoulder it for us. We are not warranted in imposing on *their* benevolence, or so trading on their kindness that we become drones. If a man will not work, neither shall he eat (2Th 3:10). If he refuses to use the strength and talent God has given him, he has no right at all to expect others to come and feed him.

## THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

### 14. Ephesians 1:3

This epistle presents to our view the inestimable treasures of Divine wisdom, the knowledge-surpassing manifestations of God’s love unto His people. Therein are set forth “the riches of his

grace” (Eph 1:7); yea, “the exceeding riches of his grace” (Eph 2:7), “the riches of his glory” (Eph 3:16), and “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph 3:8). In it, there is the fullest opening up of “the mystery” or the contents of the everlasting covenant. Here, we are shown in greater detail than elsewhere, the intimate and ineffable relation of the Church to Christ. Here, as nowhere else, we are conducted unto and into “the heavenlies.” Here are revealed depths which no finite mind can fathom, and heights which no imagination can scale. Writing upon “its excellency,” Thomas Goodwin said, “It hath been esteemed among the choicest of Paul’s epistles, and is accordingly placed in the midst of them, as is the most sparkling gem in a casket of jewels, or as the heart in the midst of the body, for as it is the principal seat and fountain of our spirits, so this epistle contains more of the spirit, the quintessence of the mystery of Christ, than any other, and is made up of the most quickening cordials to the inner man.”

Before the apostle proceeded to the orderly development of his wonderful theme, he bows in worship. As his mind was absorbed with the transcendently-glorious subject—which was to engage his pen, as he contemplated the exceeding riches of God’s grace unto His people—his soul was overwhelmed, ‘lost in wonder, love and praise.’ The heart of Paul was too full to contain itself and overflowed in adoring gratitude—that is what the highest form of worship is; and it is only in such a spirit, we can truly enter into the contents of this epistle. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3). As a prayer, those words may be viewed thus: First, its *nature*—an ascription of praise; second, its *Object*—the God and Father of Christ; third, its *incitement*—because He has so enriched us in Him. Were we to sermonize the verse, our divisions would be: 1) The believer’s excellent portion: Blessed “with all spiritual blessings.” 2) The believer’s exalted position: In the heavenlies in Christ. 3) The believer’s exultant praise: “Blessed be the God and Father.”

“Blessed be the God and Father.” That those words signify an act of *prayer* is clear from many passages. “I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Psa 34:1). “Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name” (Psa 63:4 and compare 1Ti 2:8). “Sing unto the LORD, bless his name” (Psa 96:2). “Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD” (Psa 134:2). To “bless” God is to adore Him, to acknowledge His excellency, to express the highest veneration and gratitude. To “bless” God is to render unto Him the homage of our hearts as the Giver of every good and perfect gift. The three principal branches of prayer are humiliation, supplication and adoration: Including in the first, confession of sin; in the second, making known our requests and interceding on the behalf of others; in the third, thanksgiving and praise. This action of the apostle here is a summons to all believers to unite with him in magnifying the Source of all our spiritual blessings: “Blessed be the God and Father.”

By way of infinite eminency, God is “the Blessed” One (Mar 14:61)—a title which is solely proper and peculiar to Himself. Nevertheless, He is graciously pleased to hear the “Amen” of His saints thereto. This was intimated by our apostle when, after declaring Him to be “the Creator, who is blessed for ever” (Rom 1:25), he at once added his “Amen” to the same—which was not a “so be it” added to a blessing of invocation, but to a joyful acclamation, as expressing his own satisfaction and joy therein. “All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints [a word which also includes the holy angels] shall bless thee” (Psa 145:10)—they alone “bless” Him, for they alone bear Him good will. “It was His very end in choosing forth a select company of saints, that He Himself first blessing them, they then might bless Him again” (T. Goodwin). They bless



Him not only for what He is unto themselves and for what He has done unto them, but for what He is in Himself.

The nature of this prayer then is not a petitionary one—like those which come later in this epistle—but is an ascription of praise, evoked by an apprehension of the spiritual blessings wherewith God the Father hath blessed His people, the principal ones of which are described in the verses which immediately follow. It was an adoring of God for such an amazing portion, such inestimable treasure, such a glorious inheritance. The apostle was filled with overwhelming gratitude for such infinite love and grace, and like new wine bursting of the old bottle into which it was poured, fervent thanksgiving flowed forth from him. As one has beautifully said, “The first notes of the everlasting song of the heavenly world are sounded here below, and are produced and drawn forth by a sense of God’s goodness and mercy as revealed to the soul, and especially when the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit.” This it was, which made David exclaim, “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name” (Psa 103:1)—he blesses God for having so richly blest him.

We turn now to consider *the Object adored*. It is not God the Father absolutely considered, for as such, out of Christ, He is “a consuming fire” (Deu 4:24, 9:3; Heb 12:29) to sinners such as we are. Nor is it simply as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus, for we could have no approach unto Him as such. Rather, is it as “the God and Father of *our* Lord Jesus Christ” (2Co 11:31; Eph 1:3; 1Pe 1:3), as the One who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Him, that He is here worshipped. There is a wealth of theological instruction in the Divine titles, and we are greatly the losers if we fail to pay due attention unto them. This title is the peculiar and characteristic designation of the Father as the God of accomplished redemption—compare 2Co 1:3; 1Pe 1:3. It is *this* blessed relationship which is the ground of our confidence. We stand related not to the absolute Jehovah, but to the God of redemption as He is revealed in Jesus Christ: The One whom the Saviour declared, whose will He perfectly accomplished. It is because God spared not His own dear Son, but “delivered him up for us all” (Rom 8:32), that He is *our* “God and Father,” and that through Christ and by the Spirit, we have access to Him.

As we have so often pointed out in these pages, when the Deity is said to be “the God” of any person or persons, it signifies He is his or their *covenant God*. Thus, after the first “covenant” described in Genesis, we find Noah speaking of “the LORD God of Shem” (Gen 9:26)—for it was through *that* son God’s covenant with Noah was to be accomplished. Later, He became known as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exo 3:6). In the names of those patriarchs, the conveyance of the covenant blessings ran; and consequent thereto, their return of praise and blessing unto God again. Thus, Noah exclaimed, “*Blessed be* the LORD God of Shem” (Gen 9:26); and later, “Blessed be the LORD God of Israel.” Now, as in a parallel case, the prophet declared, “Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt” (Jer 16:14); and “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel” (Jer 31:31)—so we may say that, under the fuller revelation of the Gospel, God has said, I will no longer be known as “the God of Abraham” etc., but as “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and owned and adored as such.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 1:3; 1Pe 1:3). This unspeakably-precious title views God as He is related to us in Christ—that is, Christ as the covenant-Head and His elect in Him. He was, is, and ever will be “the God and Father” of the Lord Jesus. We question whether there is here any direct reference to the miraculous begetting of our Lord: Rather do we consider that He is contemplated in His mediatorial character—that is, as

the eternal Son invested with our nature. In view of our Lord's own utterances, it is abundantly clear that He owned the Father as *His* "God." "I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly" (Psa 22:10). "I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Psa 40:8). On the Cross, He owned Him as His "God" (Mat 27:46). After His resurrection, He spoke of Him as "my God" (Joh 20:17). Enthroned in Heaven, He is Him to be "my God" four times over in a single verse (Rev 3:12). God the Son, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, He assumed the form of a Servant.

The Father is the "God" of Christ in the following respects. 1) In regard of His human nature, which being a *creature* ("a body hast thou prepared me"—Heb 10:5) was subject to God. 2) In regard of His human nature being predestinated to the grace and union with His Divine person. "Christ as man was 'foreordained' [predestinated] (1Pe 1:20), as well as we; and so hath God to be His God by predestination, and so by free grace, as well as He is our God in that respect" (T. Goodwin). 3) In regard of His well being: "God is the Author and immediately the matter of Christ's blessedness (as He is man); and therefore, blessed be God as the God of Christ, who hath 'blessed thee for ever' as appears in what follows—'God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows'—Psalm 45:2, 7" (T. Goodwin, 1600-1680). 4) In regard of the covenant there was between Them: "Thus saith God the LORD...I the LORD have called thee...and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;" (Isa 42:5, 6). 5) In regard of His relation to the Church: As the Head and Representative of His people—"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb 2:11).

God must be "the God and Father" of the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be "the God and Father" of His people whom He chose in Him. The relation which the Church sustains to God is determined by Christ's own relation to Him, for she is "Christ's and Christ is God's" (1Co 3:23). The general principle of this is established by those words, "God sent forth His Son...that we might receive the adoption of *sons*" (Gal 4:4). Still more explicitly, it is found in His own words, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (Joh 20:17)—not "our," be it carefully quoted, but "my," first Mine, and then yours: Mine originally, and yours by participation. In view of all that follows in Ephesians 1, it is clear that the apostle's design here in verse 3 was to show us that *the ground* on which all those "spiritual blessings" are conveyed to us is that they issue from God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus in verse 5, God the Father "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself." It should also be pointed out that "*our* Lord Jesus Christ" pertains only to His people. In a special way, He is Lord of the saints, as He is called "King of the saints" (Rev 15:3) in distinction from His being King of the nations (Jer 10:7); and certainly, He is the Saviour of none others.

And *what was it* that occasioned this outburst of joyous praise unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? This: "Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." As God alone is styled "the Blessed" One (Mar 14:61), so (as T. Goodwin points out) He alone blesseth or is able to do so. When creatures bless, they can only do so "in the name of the LORD" (Psa 129:8). When man is made an instrument to convey good things unto us, yet he cannot make them "blessings"—for *that* we are to have recourse to *God*. It is under the relation of His being—through Christ, our covenant God and our Father—that He has blessed us. "God, even our own God, shall bless us" (Psa 67:6), for having taken upon Him to be such unto us, He cannot but bless us; for such is obviously the force of the duplication, which immediately follows—"God *shall* bless us" (Psa 67:7). He has blessed us by giving Himself to us. And whence comes it that

He became “our *own* God”? Why, by choosing us to be His; and therefore, we are termed, “His own elect” (Greek of Luke 18:7)—made His own by sovereign choice.

Likewise, God blesses us under the relation of “our Father.” This was designedly adumbrated of old—for the first human beings who pronounced (invoked) blessing upon others were those who bore the relation of *fathers*. Having love and good will to their children, it was natural to wish them well; and therefore, they had recourse unto God to perform their desires, as that which was not in their own power to do. Thus, we find the patriarchs blessing their children and posterity (Gen 27:27, 33, 36; 48:9). So, too, we recall that utterance of our Lord’s, “If ye then, being evil [filled with self-love, yet moved by natural affection], know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Mat 7:11)—for it was to this very end that He was pleased to become a Father to us. Being “the Blessed” One, He is in Himself an ocean of all blessings, which seeks an outlet for itself to communicate unto those whom He hath loved and chosen. He has become our Father for the very purpose of lavishing His love and grace upon His dear children.

But let us notice carefully the tense of the verb here. It is not “who will bless us,” nor “who is blessing us”—but “who hath blessed” us. The time when God bestowed all spiritual blessings upon His people in Christ was when He chose them in Him—even before Heaven and earth was called into existence. It is super-creation blessings which are here in view. In His eternal decree, God the Father gave unto His people both being and wellbeing in Christ, in the order of His counsels that was prior to His foreview of their fall in Adam. This is evident from what follows: “According as he hath chosen us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Eph 1:4)—and note the “having predestinated” in verse 5, and the “hath made us” in verse 6, and contrast the “in whom we have redemption” in verse 7. With which accords, “according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2Ti 1:9)—the “purpose” there being all one with the “blessing” of Ephesians 1:3.

“Who hath blessed us with all spiritual *blessings*.” Each word is selected with Divine precision and propriety. It is not “all spiritual gifts” or “enrichments”—but “blessings,” because it accords with God’s new-covenant title here and emphasises that these are *covenant* bestowments. As Goodwin so helpfully reminds us: This is “that original word under which the promise of the covenant of grace was at the first given to Abraham the father of the faithful, as that which contained all particular good things—as his loins did that ‘seed’ to whom that promise was made.” “I will bless thee... in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen 12:2, 3); and again, “in blessing I will bless thee” (Gen 22:17). Though the N.T. uses higher terms than the Old to express spiritual things, it altered not this one, for no better was to be found. In His first public sermon, Christ repeatedly declared, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” etc., etc. When He ascended, His last act was to bless (Luk 24:50); and at the last day, when Heaven’s doors are opened to all the righteous, their eternal felicity is expressed by “Come, ye blessed of my Father” (Mat 25:34).

“Who hath blessed us with all *spiritual* blessings.” 1. In contrast from the blessings promised to the nation of Israel under the old covenant, which were material and temporal—Deu 28:1-8. 2. In contrast from the common blessings of creation and providence, which the non-elect share with the people of God—for He “maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mat 5:45). 3. In explanation of His promise to Abraham: “That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal 3:14)—the second clause being an exposition of the first, showing what sort of blessing was meant. 4. Because spiritual are the ones for which we should

especially bless and praise God—seeing they are withheld from the reprobate and are earnest of our eternal heritage. 5. Because these are what actually dispose the heart unto thanksgiving—temporal mercies, but furnish motives thereto.

“Who hath blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings.” Note well, it is not simply, “who hath blessed me”—but “us”: The spiritual blessings which God bestows upon one of His people, He bestows upon them all. “Whom he did predestinate, *them* he also called: and whom he called, *them* he also justified: and whom he justified, *them* he also glorified” (Rom 8:1-30). The ‘perfectionists’ idea of some believers being justified—and yet not sanctified—is an utter delusion. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us *all* things?” (Rom 8:32). If Christ be mine, then “all spiritual blessings” (Eph 1:3) are mine. As our apostle declared in another epistle, “all things are yours” (1Co 3:21), and the proof he gave was, “ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (1Co 3:23). As Goodwin puts it, “If any one blessing, then with all, they hang together and go in a cluster.” Everything necessary to give each Christian title and meetness for Heaven is his.

“Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in *heavenly* places in Christ.” The Greek has the article before “heavenly” and nothing to warrant the “places” supplied by our translators. Bagster’s Interlinear is much to be preferred—“in the heavenlies.” Nor need the English reader have any difficulty: The selfsame expression occurs again in Ephesians 1:20, where its meaning is plain. Our spiritual blessings are said to be “in the heavenly places” to mark the distinction between them and what Israel enjoyed in *Canaan*. More remotely still, they point a contrast from those blessings God blessed us with in Adam in *Eden* (Gen 1:27, 28). Christians have their “citizenship” in Heaven (rendered “conversation” in Phi 3:20). They are “partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb 3:1). They have been begotten unto an inheritance which is “reserved in heaven” (1Pet 1:4) for them. Christ being “the Lord from heaven,” a “heavenly” man (1Co 15:47, 48); therefore, “being blessed in and together with Him, we are blessed with heavenly blessings and raised up to heavenly places in Him (Eph 2:6)”—T. Goodwin.

“Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Out of Christ, there is no spiritual blessing whatever for any soul, but in Him, there is abundantly sufficient for all eternity. The words “in Christ” signify in union with Him: First a mystical, then a legal, and then a vital. It is in Christ, we are loved by God (Rom 8:39). It was in Christ He chose us (Eph 1:4). In Him, we are made “new” creatures (2Co 5:17). In Him, we are “sanctified” (1Co 1:2). In Him, we are “made nigh” unto God (Eph 2:13). In Him, we are “complete” (Col 2:10). We are “all one in Christ” (Gal 3:28). The departed saints are still “in Christ” (1Th 4:16). And it is of the Father that we are “in Christ” (1Co 1:30). But though all our blessings be in Him, we can only live in the power and enjoyment of them, as faith looks away from self and all its concerns and is occupied entirely with Him. “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (2Co 9:15).

# THE MISSION AND MIRACLES OF ELISHA

## 26. Fifteenth Miracle – Part 4

In continuing our contemplation of this miracle, let us now pause and admire the *marvel of it*. Benhadad had become dissatisfied with the results achieved by his marauding bands and gathering together the whole of his armed forces determined to reduce Samaria to utter helplessness. Throwing a powerful force around their capital, he sought to bring its inhabitants to complete starvation by means of a protracted siege. In order to carry out his scheme, he had brought with his army large supplies of food and clothing, so that they might be in comfort while they waited for the stores of his victim to give out. How nearly his plan succeeded, we have seen: The Samaritans were reduced to the most desperate straits in an effort to keep life in their bodies. Yet as T. Scott pointed out, “In extreme distress, unexpected relief is often preparing; and whatever unbelievers may imagine, it is not in vain to wait for the Lord, how long soever He seems to delay His coming.”

But in the instance now before us, there is not a word to indicate that the Samaritans had been crying unto the Lord and looking to Him for relief. They had openly turned away from Him and were worshipping idols. This it is which renders the more noteworthy the act of Jehovah on this occasion: He was “found of them that sought” Him not (Isa 65:1). He showed Himself strong on the behalf of a people who had grievously despised and insulted Him. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. It was the Most High acting in His absolute sovereignty, having mercy on whom He pleased, to have mercy and to show favour unto those who not only had no claim thereto, but who deserved nought but unsparing judgment at His hands. The means which the Lord used on this occasion was as remarkable as the exercise of His distinguishing mercy. He was pleased to use the stores of the Syrians, their deadly enemies, to feed the famished Samaritans: “Out of the eater came forth meat” (Jud 14:14). Thus were the wise taken in their own craftiness.

Four lepers outside Samaria’s gates said, “Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die” (2Ki 7:3, 4). Observe how God wrought: It was not by an audible voice that He bade these lepers act—not such are the mysterious, but perfect, workings of Providence. It is by means of a secret and imperceptible impulse from Him, through the process of natural laws, that God usually works in men, “both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13). Those lepers acted quite freely of their own volition, in response to simple, but

obvious, thoughts on their situation; and followed the dictates of common sense and the impulse of self-preservation. Mark, we are not here attempting to philosophise or explain the conjunction between the natural and the supernatural, but merely calling attention to what lies on the surface of our narrative, and that which is recorded for our instruction.

When the four lepers arrived at the enemy's camp, they found it to be deserted: "For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life" (2Ki 7:6, 7). *That* was indeed the employment of the supernatural—something over and above the ordinary workings of Providence, for though the Syrians misinterpreted the sound, we believe (as stated in our last) that what they heard was the movement of angelic horses and chariots (compare 2Ki 6:17)—the Lord allowing their ears to register what normally would have been inaudible to them. Yet even here, there was a blending of the supernatural with the natural: Those celestial beings did not slay the Syrians, but only terrified them by the noise which they made.

"And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it" (2Ki 7:8). Sol-  
emn indeed is this, first, from the negative side. There was no recognition of the Divine hand, no awesome exclamation, "What hath God wrought!" (Num 23:23), no bowing before Him in thanksgiving for such a signal favour. They conducted themselves like infidels, accepting the mercies of Heaven as a mere matter of course. And remember, they were lepers: Even such an infliction had not turned their hearts unto the Lord. Be not surprised then that those whose homes are destroyed and whose bodies are injured by the bombs are not brought to repentance thereby. But positively, after satisfying their hunger, they plundered the Syrian tents. Verily, "there is no new thing under the sun" (Ecc 1:9). There was *looting* then as there is now—though theirs was not nearly so despicable and dastardly as what is now so common in this country.

And why is it that "there is no new thing under the sun" (Ecc 1:9)? Because "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Pro 27:19). Whether he be a man living in centuries B.C. or A.D., whether he be civilized or uncivilized, his heart is depraved. Civilisation effects no change *within* any person—for civilisation (not to be confused with morality and common decency) is but a veneer from without. But to return to our passage. The lepers enriching themselves from the spoil of the Syrians did not contribute unto the relief of the starving Samaritans, and *that* was what Jehovah had promised. Mark then the sequel: "Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household" (2Ki 7:9). The Divine design of mercy unto the starving city was not to be thwarted by the greed of these lepers, for His counsel must stand—yet note how it was now effected.

As God had wrought secretly in those lepers in verses 3 and 4, so again did He now. There, it was by an impulse upon their instinct of self-preservation; here, it was upon their *conscience*. Yet observe how conscience acts in the unregenerate, producing not horror and anguish at having offended a gracious God, but causing fear of the consequences. This is made clearer by the marginal rendering: "If we tarry till the morning light we shall find punishment." But unless God had wrought secretly upon them, they, too, had been like our own generation—from whom His restraining hand is removed, and who are given up to "the lusts of their own hearts" (Rom 1:24),

utterly reckless and regardless of consequences. In this instance, in order to the carrying out of His benevolent purpose, God put a measure of fear upon these lepers and caused them to realise that not only were they playing an ignoble part, but were likely to swiftly be smitten by His wrath if they failed to announce the good news to their famished fellows.

“Now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king’s household” (2Ki 7:9). Here, as everywhere, we need to be much on our guard against making a *misapplication* of Scripture. It is so easy to read our own thoughts into the Word; and thus, find what we are looking for. Those who are so enthusiastic in urging young believers to become evangelists by preaching the Gospel to all and sundry, would likely find in this verse what they considered was a striking passage on which to base an address on “the necessity of personal work,” yet it would be an altogether unwarranted use to make of it. This verse is very far from teaching, by typical implication, that it is the duty of every Christian to announce the “good tidings” to all they contact. Holy Writ does not contradict itself, and none other than the Lord Jesus has expressly bidden us, “*Give not* that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.” (Mat 7:6). That command is designed to bridle the restless energy of the flesh.

It was unto those who had been prepared for those “good tidings” who would *welcome* them, these lepers went forth; namely, to those who were fully conscious of their starving condition! There is a radical difference between those who are “lovers of pleasures” (2Ti 3:4) and satisfied with what they find therein, and the ones who have discovered the emptiness of such things and are deeply concerned about their eternal welfare; and there should be an equally radical difference in the way we deal with and speak to each of them. The Gospel would not be “good tidings” to the former, but would be trodden beneath their feet if offered to them; yet, it is likely to be welcomed by the latter, and if we unmistakably meet with the latter, it would be sinful for us to remain selfishly silent. “So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were” (2Ki 7:10).

Not being permitted to enter the city, the four lepers called out to those who were keeping watch at its gate. They announced the good news in plain and simple language, and then left the issue with them. The chief porter did not receive the strange tidings with incredulity, but “he called the [subordinate] porters;” and while he remained at his post of duty, “they told it to the king’s house within” (2Ki 7:11), middle of the night though it was. Here, too, we may perceive the continued—though secret—workings of the Lord. He it was who caused the porter to give heed to the message he had just heard. Altogether unexpected as it must have been, too good to be true as it would have sounded; yet, he was—unknown to himself—Divinely inclined to *credit* the glad tidings and promptly acquaint his royal master with the same. Yet the porter acted quite freely and discharged his personal responsibility. How wondrous are the ways of Him with whom we have to do!

“And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now shew you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we be hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city” (2Ki 7:12). The king’s reaction to the good news was thoroughly characteristic of him, being all of a piece with everything else recorded of him. Instead of expressing gratitude at the glad tidings, he voiced his scepticism; instead of perceiving the gracious hand of God, he suspected his enemies of laying a subtle snare. Perhaps some may be inclined to say, It was very natural for Jehoram to argue thus: The king was acting in prudence and wise caution.

Natural it certainly was, but not *spiritual*! There was no thought that the Lord had now made good His Word through the prophet, but simply the reasoning of a carnal mind at enmity against Him. One of the ways in which the carnal mind expresses itself is by a reasoned attempt to *explain away* the wondrous works and acts of God.

When God has spoken—plainly and expressly—it is not for us to reason, but to set to our seal that He is true and receive with unquestioning faith what He has said: If a promise, expecting Him to make it good. The scepticism of the king only serves to show how the tidings borne by the lepers had been lost on the porters, and the entire royal household had not God wrought secretly—but effectually—in the one and the other. Accordingly, we are next told, “And one of his servants answered and said, Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city, (behold, they are as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it: behold, I say, they are even as all the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed:) and let us send and see” (2Ki 7:13). That too was “of the Lord.” He it was who gave this servant both courage and wisdom to remonstrate with his master. He knew the man he had to deal with as his “send and see” showed—reminding us at once of 2 Kings 6:10 when the king “sent” to see if Elisha’s warning was a true one.

Nothing could be lost (unless it were the horses) by pursuing the policy proposed by the servant, and much might be gained thereby. As the Divine purpose could not be thwarted by the greed of the lepers, so it should not be by the scepticism of the king. It was God who gave the servant’s counsel favour in his master’s sight; and therefore, we are told, “They took therefore two chariot horses; and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see” (2Ki 7:14). God’s ways and works are as perfect in their execution as they are in their devising. But be it noted that though Jehoram yielded to the solicitation of his servant, it was with some unbelief he did so, as his sending them “after the host of the Syrians” rather than “unto the camp” (2Ki 7:5) indicates. Nor was their errand in vain: “And they went after them unto Jordan: and, lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste” (2Ki 7:15). It was no temporary spasm of fear that possessed them, but a thorough and lasting one. When God works, He works effectually.

“And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour *was* sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD” (2Ki 7:16). Of course it was, for no word of God’s can possibly fall to the ground, since it is the Word of Him “that cannot lie” (Tit 1:2). Men may scoff at it, kings may not believe it, even when its definite fulfilment is declared unto them; but that affects not its infallible verity. “Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to *all* that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise” (1Ki 8:56): Such will be the ringing testimony—individually and collectively—of the spiritual Israel when, for all eternity, they shall rest in the antitypical Canaan. It is to be noted that the prediction made through Elisha was fulfilled in no vague and mere general way, but specifically and to the letter. That, too, is recorded both for our instruction and our consolation.

Sixth, *its meaning*. After all we have sought to bring out upon this miracle, its typical significance should—in its broad outline at least—be plain to the simplest Christian reader. We say, “its broad outline,” for every detail in connection therewith is not to be regarded as a line in the picture. *First*, the starving Samaritans may surely be viewed as portraying of perishing sinners. They were not seeking unto God, nor looking to Him for relief. So far from it, they had turned their backs upon Him and given themselves up to idolatry. They were reduced to the most desperate straits, being quite unable to deliver themselves. As such, they accurately represented the condi-



tion and position of the fallen and depraved descendants of Adam. *Second*, in Benhadad and his hosts who sought the destruction of the Samaritans, we have a figure of Satan and his legions who are relentlessly attempting to destroy the souls of men—"seeking whom he may devour" (1Pe 5:8). *Third*, in the Divine deliverance of the famished Israelites, by a miracle of sovereign mercy, we have a striking foreshadowment of the saving of God's elect. The particular aspect of the Gospel here adumbrated appears in the *strange means* which God employed to bring about deliverance; namely, His causing the Syrians themselves to supply the food for those they had designed to be their victims: Compare Judges 14:14. Does not this remind us forcibly of that verse: "That *through death* he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14)! As the Saviour Himself declared, "but this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luk 22:53), yet by allowing the Serpent to bruise His heel, He set free his captives. Incredible as it seems to the proud philosopher, it is by Christ's humiliation, His people are exalted; by His poverty, they are made rich; by His death, they have life; by His being made a "curse," all blessing comes to them!

Seventh, *its sequel*. "And the king [God working secretly in him to do so] appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate: and the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God [not simply "Elisha"! ] had said, who spake when the king came down to him. And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king...And so it fell out unto him" (2Ki 7:17-20). Thus, in due course, the Divine threat was executed, fulfilled—be it noted, to the very letter. Solemn indeed was this, being the awful sequel to what was before us in verses 1, 2. In like manner, God will yet answer the scepticism and blasphemous scoffing of this degenerate age. The great of this world may laugh at the Lord's servants now; but in eternity, they shall gnash their teeth in anguish. This sequel completes the typical picture, showing as it does, the doom of the reprobate. The Gospel is a savour of death unto death, as well as of life unto life. Unbelievers will "see" the elect feasting with Christ, as "the rich man" saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, but shall not partake thereof (Luk 16:19-26).

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

### 7b. Its Stages

"I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1Jo 2:14). At the close of our last, we sought to describe some of the characteristic features of those whom we consider may justly be regarded as belonging to that class of Christians who are here designated "young men"—particularly as they are distinguished from the "babes" or "little children" (1Jo 2:13). Let it be understood that what we wrote thereon was in no spirit of dogmatism, but merely an expression of personal opinion.

We consider that the spiritual “young men” are believers who have acquired a considerable knowledge of the Truth and are well established in the whole plan of doctrine as set forth in the Scriptures—though as yet lacking the deeper understanding thereof, as pertains to the “fathers.” To which, we would add, they “*know* whom they have believed”<sup>1</sup> and “committed” their all—for we would certainly regard a Christian without assurance that Christ is *his* as still but a “babe”—though we do not expect all will agree to that.

“I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” How different are the ways of God from men’s—even those of good men! Many elderly Christians today would deem it most imprudent to write or say to their younger brethren, “Ye are strong...and ye have overcome the wicked one” (1Jo 2:14), fearing that such an assertion was “dangerous,” because having a strong tendency to “puff up” its recipients—which only goes to show how little some of our thoughts are formed by the Word of God and how prone we all are to fleshly reasoning. Such an attitude is but a “shew of wisdom” (Col 2:23)—and a poor show at that, for it betrays both ignorance and silliness. Those who are “strong” spiritually are not at all likely to be puffed up by telling them the *truth*. Contrariwise, any who *are* puffed up by such a statement would demonstrate they were *weak*! Let us not seek to be wise above what is written, but rather set aside our proud reasonings and receive what God says, “as a little child” (Mar 10:15; Luk 18:17).

In making the above assertion, the apostle was certainly not seeking to flatter them—for he did not say, “ye have made yourselves strong.” Rather, he was making a factual statement. In doing so, he, first, honoured the Holy Spirit, by owning *His* work within them: The explanation of that statement of fact was the gracious operations of the Spirit in their hearts. Second, he was expressing his own *joy*: It was a matter of delight to him that they *had*—by the grace of God—reached this stage of spiritual health and vigour. Third, it was said by way of encouragement to them. If, on the one hand, it be our duty to rebuke and reprove what is evil in fellow Christians, it equally becomes us to recognise and own whatever is good in them. A word of cheer and stimulus is often a real help. If there be “a time to break down,” there is also “a time to build up” (Ecc 3:3). Paul did not hesitate to tell the Thessalonians, “your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth” (2Th 1:3).

By nature, the Christian was entirely devoid of spiritual power. Writing to the saints at Rome, Paul said, “For when we were yet *without* strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom 5:6). Now that “yet” would be quite pointless if those to whom he was writing were *still* “without strength.” “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of *power*, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2Ti 1:7). We dishonour the work of the blessed Spirit, if we view the regenerate as being in the same helpless plight as the unregenerate. At regeneration, we received spiritual life, and as Goodwin pertinently asks, “What is strength but life in an active vigor?” Are we not told, “the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10), i.e. the more the believer delights himself in the Lord and rejoices in His perfections and his relation to Him, the more will his soul be invigorated, and his graces quickened. Does not the Psalmist acknowledge, Thou “strengthenedst me with strength *in my soul*” (Psa 138:3), so that he was no longer feeble in himself.

But let us not be misunderstood at this point. We are not arguing in favour of any kind of “strength” being imparted to the Christian which renders him in any wise self-sufficient. No indeed, perish the thought. Even the “fathers” are as completely dependent, moment by moment, upon Divine grace, as the youngest and feeblest babe in Christ. Paradoxical as it may sound to the

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<sup>1</sup> hymn: “I Know Whom I Believed;” words: Daniel Whittle, 1883; Music: James McGranahan.

carnal mind, the very “strength” which is communicated at the new birth makes its recipient conscious (for the first time) of his utter *weakness*. It is the purity of the new nature in the soul which makes manifest the corruptions of his flesh. It is his reception of the earnest of his inheritance which makes him poor in spirit. It is the gift of faith which causes him to be sensible of the workings of unbelief. It is the life of God in the renewed which causes them to thirst and pant after God. Nevertheless, there is a real sense in which the Christian *is strong*—both comparatively with his unregenerate impotency, and relatively in himself.

“A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength” (Pro 24:5). In proportion as spiritual knowledge increases, so also does spiritual strength. The spirit is nourished and enriched both for spiritual work and warfare by true wisdom. As we have so often reminded the reader, growth in grace and in spiritual knowledge are inseparably connected (2Pe 3:18). There is a strength of courage, of fortitude, of resolution, which enables its possessor to stand firm against opposition, to overcome difficulties, to endure trials and afflictions. But the reverse of that is expressed in, “If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small” (Pro 24:10). If, in the day of testing and trial, thy spirits sink so that thy hands hang down and thy knees become weak; if, when afflictions come, thou takest the line of least resistance, neglect the means of grace, and are unfitted for duties—then “thy strength is small,” and such an attitude will further weaken it. Unto such, that word is especially appropriate, “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD” (Psa 27:14).

The order there is to be carefully noted: First, an acknowledgement of our dependency upon the Lord. Second, a being of good courage. Third, the Divine promise unto those who are of good courage. Fourth, trusting God for the fulfilment of His promise of further strength. It is unto those who have, that more is given (Mat 25:29); it is those who make use of the grace bestowed, who receive larger supplies. “God more ordinarily vouchsafeth adjuvant (extra-assisting) efficacious grace to overcome temptations according to the measure of grace, habitual or inherent; and therefore, when men (we) are grown up to more radical inward strength, He gives more effectual assisting strength, and (accordingly), He meeteth forth temptations to the ability our inward man is furnished withal, as that we are able to bear them (1Co 10:13). He vouchsafes His actual supplies of aiding strength according to the proportion of that inherent stock of ability He sees in the inner man; and then, as the conflicts grow greater, our additional aids are together therewith increased” (T. Goodwin).

Without further quoting verbatim from this writer, we will summarise and paraphrase his next paragraph, with which we are in hearty accord. The grace of God indeed works freely, and He ties Himself absolutely to no rules and measures, but ever acts according to His own good pleasure. He takes liberty to withhold His supplies of assisting grace—even from those who have most inherent grace, to show us the weakness of all our grace as it is in us, withholding from the “strong” (Rom 15:1), His further influencing grace, which moves us both to will and to do—to evidence that His grace is tied to none. This we see, both in David and Hezekiah, when they had grown up to this middle age in grace. Yet, that alters not the fact that in His ordinary dispensations, God gives more grace to those who make good use of what they already have: “every branch that *beareth fruit*, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (Joh 15:2). The promise of being “made fat” is not to the sluggard, but to “the soul of the diligent” (Pro 13:4).

To sum up. By the apostle’s “young men, because ye are *strong*” (1Jo 2:14), we understand that through using the means of grace, by increased spiritual knowledge, by appropriating the strength which is in Christ Jesus (2Ti 2:1), through exercising the graces of the new man, by improving (profiting from) the varied experiences through which they had passed, and by the

assisting operations of the Holy Spirit—they had developed from “babes” into a higher spiritual stature and were the better qualified to use their spiritual muscles. It is written, “But they that wait upon the LORD [which refers not so much to an act as it is descriptive of an attitude found in all the regenerate who are in a healthy condition] shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa 40:31). There *is* such a thing as overcoming spiritual weakness or babyhood, but not of continual dependence on the Lord. There is such an experience as going on “from strength to strength” (Psa 84:7). Though without Christ, I can do nothing (Joh 15:5); yet through Him strengthening me, “I can do all things” (Phi 4:13).

“And the word of God abideth in you” (1Jo 2:14). We regard that clause as connected first with the preceding one, as casting light upon and furnishing a (partial) explanation of *why* these “young men” were “strong,” as revealing to us one of the principal sources and means of their spiritual strength. And at the same time, it also serves to define the nature of the strength mentioned—namely, as inherent grace, as some thing *within* themselves. It is by the pure milk of the Word that the babe in Christ grows (1Pe 2:2), and it is by that Word abiding in him that he becomes strong, that the faculties or graces of the new man are kept healthy and vigorous. But, second, we regard that clause as having an intimate bearing on the one that follows—seeing that it ends, as well as begins with the word, “and.” For it was by means of the Word of God abiding in them that these young men had been enabled to “overcome the wicked one” (1Jo 2:13, 14)—by the “word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer” (Psa 17:4).

“Ye have overcome the wicked one” (1Jo 2:13, 14). Note, first, this is not an exhortation or intimation of duty: It is not “ye ought to”—but “ye have.” Second, this is not predicated as a rare experience peculiarly to some exceptionally exalted saint, but is postulated of the whole of this company—“ye have.” Third, it is not described either as a present process or a future attainment, but as an accomplished thing: Not “ye are overcoming” or “will” do so—but “ye *have* overcome the wicked one.” Little wonder that Goodwin said on this point, “There is a second and greater difficulty [beyond defining the “ye are strong”]; namely, How and in what respect they are said more eminently [i.e. than the “babes”] to have overcome Satan? For are they not in their conflicts apt to be overcome and to yield to corrupt affections? and how far they may be overcome [by those] is not to be determined by man”—the words in brackets are, in each instance, our own additions.

“Ye have overcome the wicked one.” Whatever difficulty we may experience in understanding the meaning of those words, there is surely no occasion for us to needlessly add to the difficulty. We must be very careful with this verse—as with all others—not to read into it what is not there. It does not say, “ye have overcome the *flesh*”—that the young men had obtained victory over their inward corruptions. It is a most significant fact, and one which should exert great influence on our thinking at this point, that while this Epistle speaks of overcoming “the wicked one” and overcoming “the world” (1Jo 5:4), it does not speak of believers overcoming their lusts. It is true, we are bidden to mortify our members which are upon the earth (Col 3:5); and that in varying degrees, all the regenerate do so. It is also true that the grace of God effectually teaches its recipients to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts” and to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit 2:12); but Scripture nowhere affirms that any saint “overcame the flesh.”

As intimated above, we believe that the preceding clause, “and the word of God abideth in you” throws light upon those words which have presented such a difficulty unto so many—“and ye have overcome the wicked one” (1Jo 2:14). First, because they declare unto us the principal *means* by which the Enemy is overcome; namely, the Word of God, which is expressly designat-

ed, “the Sword of the Spirit”—the one offensive weapon which is to be used against the “wicked” (Eph 6:16, 17). Supreme demonstration of that was given by the Lord Jesus when He was attacked by the Devil. He then gave proof that the Word dwelt richly in Him, that the Word of God abode in His affections and thoughts, and was the Regulator of His ways. To each of Satan’s temptations, He replied, “It is written.” He did not parley with the Enemy, He did not reason or argue with him; He took His stand on the authoritative and all-sufficient Word of God and refused to turn aside therefrom; and *thereby*, He overcame him. In *that*, Christ has both left us an example that we should follow His steps and given us such encouragement as ensures success.

But second, it seems to us that the clause, “and the word of God abideth in you” not only signifies the means to be used; but also—and perhaps chiefly—intimates the very nature of *wherein* the young men had “overcome the wicked one.” In other words, the very fact that it could be said of them, “the word of God abideth in you” was itself the grand *proof* of their victory over the great Adversary. In His parable of the Sower, our Lord taught that the seed sown was the Word, and that which fell by the wayside, “the fowls of the air came and devoured it up” (Mar 4:4). In His interpretation, Christ explained that to signify: “Satan cometh immediately and *taketh away* the Word that was sown in their hearts” (Mar 4:15). That shows plainly that the primary and principal aim of the Devil is to prevent the Word of God finding a permanent abode in the human heart; and in the case of the vast majority of our fellows, he is permitted to succeed. To a very large percentage of professing Christians, the Lord says—as He did to the Jews who had much head knowledge of the Son—“And ye have *not* his word *abiding in you*” (Joh 5:38).

We are living in a day of such darkness that this generation is “ignorant of his devices” (2Co 2:11). Many of God’s own people seek to blame Satan for what originates with themselves. Note well the following statements: “From within, out of the heart of men [not ‘from the Devil’], thoughts, adulteries, fornicators, murders...all these evils come from *within*” (Mar 7:21, 23). “Now the works of the flesh [not ‘of the Devil’] are manifest, which are these; adultery...envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like” (Gal 5:19-21). “But every man is tempted, when he is [not ‘assailed by the Evil one,’ but] drawn away of his *own* lust” (Jam 1:14). But pride works, and we do not wish to think that we are so evil and vile, and so we attempt to escape the onus by attributing to Satan what we—ourselves—are responsible for. There is no need for Satan to tempt men to such things as those passages mention. He works far more subtly and insidiously than that.

If we go back to Genesis 3, where we have the earliest mention of Satan—and the first mention of any thing in Scripture invariably supplies the key to subsequent references—we are shown the realm in which he works and the central object of his attack. That realm is the *religious*, and that object is the Word of God. His opening words to Eve were, “Yea hath God said?” calling into question a “thus saith the Lord.” As he seeks night and day to *prevent* God’s Word entering the human heart, so he labours incessantly to *remove* it when it has entered. One of his favourite tactics is to inject of spiritual babes, to get them to question the inspiration of the Scriptures. Under the imposing terms of “modern thought,” “scholarship,” “the discoveries of science,” he seeks to sap the foundation of faith. Where that fails, appeal is made to the conflicting views to the sects and denominations to discredit the inerrancy of the Word. Where that fails, recourse is had to human “tradition” in order to set aside the Oracles of God.

It is far too little realised that every attack which is made upon the Word of God, every denial of its verbal inspiration and Divine authority, repudiation of its sufficiency as being our alone Rule of faith and practice, every corruption of its doctrine, and every perversion of the ordinances and worship of the Triune God, are *from the Devil*. Many of the “babes” in Christ are severely

shaken by those attacks and are tossed to and fro by various winds of erroneous doctrine. Nevertheless, Divine grace preserves them, and as they grow in grace and knowledge, as they become more cautious of whom they hear and what they read, as they become established in the Truth, they triumph over the Enemy. He *fails* to destroy their faith in the Scriptures, to lead them astray by “damnable heresies” (2Pe 2:1), to catch away the Seed sown in their hearts; and therefore, the Word of God abiding in them is sure *proof* that they *have* “overcome the wicked one.” As the same apostle goes on to say in his fourth chapter, “many false prophets are gone out into the world,” and then he added, “ye are of God little children [the term of endearment], and have *overcome*” (1Jo 4:1, 4)!

# THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

## 6b. Its Effectuation

That which is here to engage our attention is the work performed by the Mediator, in order to heal the breach between a righteous God and His sinful people—and thus, effect a mutual reconciliation. This will bring before us the most wonderful, awe-inspiring, and glorious events in all the ways and works of God. It will conduct us to ground, which is ineffably holy, and on which it becomes to tread with the utmost reverence and circumspection. The work of Christ is absolutely unique, being without precedent or parallel. Nothing whatever can be known about it—save that which is revealed thereon in Holy Writ—neither philosophy, science, nor metaphysics, can afford us the slightest assistance in the understanding thereof. Carnal reasoning concerning it is utterly worthless and highly presumptuous. The great mystery of godliness is made known unto *faith*: Yet, the utmost diligence and earnest prayer for the Holy Spirit’s aid, are called for in our searching of the Scriptures, and in carefully weighing all they make known on the Death Divine—that faith may lack no part of the foundation on which it is to rest, and none of the materials on which it is to feed.

In our last, we sought to present more or less a general survey of the ground we hope to cover under this particular aspect of our subject: Now we must proceed to more detail. This will require us to examine closely what the Incarnate Son did in order to “make peace” between an offended God and His lawbreaking people, what was the relation Christ bore to them, the character in which He acted in that stupendous undertaking, and what was the office He discharged therein. It is all important at the outset to recognise that *the Person* we are to be occupied with was none other than Jehovah’s “fellow” (Zec 13:7)—co-essential and co-equal with the Father and the Spirit. Though God the Son took upon Him human nature and became the Son of man; yet in so doing, He ceased not to be a Divine Person. It was the theanthropic (Divine human) constitution of His person which qualified Him for His mediation—for as the God-man, nothing could be too difficult for Him to effect, or too great for Him to accomplish: The dignity of His person gave infinite value to His work.

The wrong done by sin unto God was so incalculably enormous; and His hatred of the same is so great that only a perfect and infinitely meritorious satisfaction could appease Him—and obviously, such a satisfaction could be rendered by none, but a person of infinite dignity and worth. Our sins are committed against the infinite Majesty of Heaven; and therefore, are they infinitely culpable, and unless an atonement of infinite value is made for us, our sins must entail infinite suffering—hence, the punishment of the wicked is necessarily *eternal*. Sin—so far as it could do so—struck at the very throne of God: It was an act of high treason, a disowning of His authority, an attempt on the part of the creature to overthrow the Divine government. Sin has made such a breach in the order of things appointed by God, that no mere creature could possibly repair it—least of all, man, for *he* is the culprit, guilty and defiled. If, then, the breach is to be healed, God must lay “help upon one that is *mighty*” (Psa 89:19).

Writing on “The heinousness of human guilt,” James Hervey said,

“Ten thousand volumes, written on purpose to display the aggravations of my various acts of disobedience, could not so effectually convince me of their inconceivable enormity, as the consideration of that all-glorious Person, who, to make an atonement for them, spilt the last drop of His blood. I have sinned, may every child of Adam say; and what shall I do unto Thee, O Thou Observer of men? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Vain commutation! and such as would be rejected by the blessed God with the utmost abhorrence. Will all the potentates—that sway the sceptre in a thousand kingdoms—devote their royal and honoured lives to rescue an obnoxious creature, from the stroke of vengeance? Alas! it must cost more, incomparably more, to expiate the malignity of sin and save a guilty wretch from Hell. Will all the principalities of Heaven be content to assume my nature and resign themselves to death for my pardon? Even this would be too mean a satisfaction for inexorable Justice—too scanty a reparation of God’s injured honour.

“So flagrant is human guilt that nothing but a victim of infinite dignity could constitute an adequate propitiation. *He* who said, ‘Let there be light: and there was light’ (Gen 1:3), ‘Let there be a firmament’ (Gen 1:6), and immediately the blue curtains floated in the sky; *He* must take flesh, *He* must feel the fierce torments of crucifixion and pour out His soul in agonies, if ever such transgressors are pardoned.”

There could be no satisfaction for the sinner without atonement, for God has declared He “will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo 34:7). Equally evident is it that no atonement can be made by the violator of God’s Law, for he can neither provide reparation for past offences—being a moral bankrupt, devoid of any merit; nor render perfect obedience in the present—being a depraved creature. God’s Law requires righteousness of character before it will receive righteousness of conduct; and therefore, a fallen creature is utterly disqualified to render acceptable obedience. The Law will not compound with our sinfulness by modifying its holy requirements: “Pay that which thou owest” is its unchanging demand.

After what has been pointed out, it should be quite clear that, first, in order to save His people from their sins, the incarnate Son of God must serve as their *Substitute*—acting in their stead and rendering satisfaction to the Law for them. By substitution, it is meant, the transference of obligation from those who incurred it to One who willingly shouldered the same in their stead. The substitutionary death of Christ means far more than that He died for the *benefit* of all who savingly believe in Him: It signifies that He entered their Law-place and received what was due them; and that through His sacrificial death, He so expiated their sins that nothing can be laid to their charge—that they stand “unblameable and unproveable” in God’s sight (Col 1:22). “But he was wounded for *our* transgressions, he was bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of our peace

was upon him; and with *his* stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:5). “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1Pe 3:18).

Though there be no parallel to the greatest transaction in all history, though there be no analogy to the relations Christ sustained to God and to His people in any of the relations of mere creatures to one another, yet God has graciously adapted a series of *types*—historical and ceremonial—to the illustration of His grand plan of redemption, and to adumbrate various aspects of the office and work of Christ; and in them, the wisdom of God is signally displayed. Of the first person to whom the Holy Spirit ascribes faith, it is recorded that, “Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous” (Heb 11:4). Cain brought of the fruit of the ground (the product of his own toil) an offering unto the Lord; but unto it, He “had not respect” (Gen 4:5). But Abel brought “of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof” (Gen 4:4)—showing it had been slain. Realising that death was his due—but that God graciously accepted a substitute in his place—he put a bleeding lamb between his sinful self and the Holy God.

The same elementary, yet fundamental, truth was taught the Hebrews on that most memorable night in their history. Jehovah had declared, “About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: And *all* the firstborn *in* [not ‘of’] the land of Egypt shall die” (Exo 11:4, 5). Sufficient attention had not been paid to the words we have put in italics. There were to be no exceptions: The firstborn sons of Israel equally with the Egyptians were to be slain. But though no exception was made, a difference was drawn: A *substitute* was provided for the former; though not for the latter. The Israelites were bidden to take a male lamb, without blemish, to slay it, and sprinkle its blood on the posts of their doors, and the Lord promised, “when I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Exo 12:13). The angel of death entered not their houses, for judgment had already been executed there, the lamb being slain as the substitute. In the light of that, we are to understand, “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1Co 5:7).

But it was in the wilderness—after the Levitical priesthood was appointed and the tabernacle had been erected—that the Lord taught His people more fully the grand truth of pardon and cleansing, acceptance and blessing, through a substitute. A wide field of study is here opened to us, but we can only now briefly mention its outstanding lessons. First, in the unblemished animal required for sacrifice, God showed His people the perfections of the substitute in the room of their imperfections. Second, in their being required to bring such an offering, the claims of God were enforced. Third, in the words, “he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him” (Lev 1:4), there was an identifying of the offerer with his offering. Fourth, on the great day of atonement, Aaron was required to “lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat” (Lev 16:21); thereby, a transfer of guilt being signified.

Fifth, an Israelite was not only required to furnish the offering, but “he shall *kill* the bullock before the LORD” (Lev 1:5) was the order: Thereby, he acknowledged that death was his own due and proof was furnished of God’s displeasure against sin. Sixth, “And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces” (Lev 9:24, and compare 1Ki 18:38; 2Ch 7:1). In that *fire*, we see the holy wrath of the Judge consuming the victim in the sinner’s room. Seventh, “And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin” (Num 19:9). “In the *ashes*, we have the proof that



the wrath had spent itself, that the penalty was paid, that the work was done. ‘It is finished’ was the voice of the ashes” (H. Bonar). Thus was God’s mercy expressed in a righteous way.

The main thing to grasp in connection with the sacrifices—to which we have all too briefly alluded—is that they were not Eucharistic, but expiatory; not tokens of thanksgiving, but vicarious oblations. The animal or bird was put in the place of the one who brought it, and is termed, an “offering unto the LORD *for his sin*,” and it would “make an atonement for him concerning his sin” (Lev 5:6). It was, then, a substitutionary sacrifice—slain in the stead of the offerer, to signify what he deserved, and by which, he was personally saved from undergoing the penalty. It was literally and specifically a life for a life; a life devoted to God in sacrifice. “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement [a propitiation or appeasement] for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev 17:11). Therefore, did God enjoin upon His people, “No soul of you shall eat blood” (Lev 17:12), it was to be held sacred by them.

Should it be asked, Why did God appoint the slaying of animals, the bringing of so many costly offerings to His altar, which were so frequently repeated? The answer is simple and conclusive, though it may be stated in a variety of ways. It was to signify that, in the purpose of God, the anti-typical Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. It was to inform His people that they must look outside themselves for salvation. It was to keep before them a continual reminder of His righteousness and what sin called for at His hands. It was to educate men for “the good things to come” by shadowing forth the great sacrifice (Heb 9:11). It was to furnish the N. T. saints with an infallible dictionary, for if we would understand the language which Christ and His apostles used in connection with the Sacrifice of Calvary, we must needs define the terms employed of the grand Antitype by the meaning they obviously bear in the types—as 1Co 5:7 is to be interpreted in the light of Exodus 12.

It is in the light of the Levitical offerings that we should read “the Gospel of Isaiah 53” and regard the N.T. references to the atoning sacrifice of our Saviour. Who can fail to see that the words, “the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6) look back to: “And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall *bear upon him* all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited” (Lev 16:21, 22); and that “who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24) is an echo of the same language. When we read that “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures” (1Co 15:3), are we not to regard the reference as being both the types and the prophecies of the O. T.? When we are told that, “while we were yet sinners, Christ died *for us*” (Rom 5:8), can it signify anything else than that—as a sacrificial offering was slain in the stead of the offerer—so Christ endured the penalty which our sins call for!

It needs to be insisted upon that the death of Christ was something more than an unparalleled act of benevolence, enduring crucifixion for the good of others: It was a penal death, in which He vicariously endured the penalty of the Law in the stead of others. The suffering of martyrs for the good of their cause, of patriots for their country, of philanthropists for mankind, are *not* “vicarious”—for they are not *substitutionary*. Vicarious suffering is suffering endured in the place of others. Christ’s sufferings were vicarious in precisely the same way that the death of animals in the O.T. sacrifices was in lieu of the death of the transgressors offering them. While in many passages of the N.T., the Holy Spirit has used the Greek “*huper*” which is rendered “for”—yet in Mark 10:45, He has employed the decisive “*anti*”—“give his life a ransom for [“*anti*”—in the

stead of] many;” and in Matthew 2:22, “anti” is rightly rendered “in the room of”: Compare Matthew 5:38, Luke 11:11, Romans 12:17, where “anti” is rendered “for.”

But does not the substitutionary sufferings of Christ raise a difficulty even in the minds of the reverent? Let us face it squarely and state it frankly: Was it altogether *just* that an innocent person should suffer in the stead of the guilty? At the back of many minds, there lurks the suspicion that—though it was amazing grace and surpassing love which gave the Lord of glory to die for poor sinners—yet was it not, strictly speaking, a breach of equity? Was it right that One who perfectly honoured God and illustriously magnified His Law by a flawless and perpetual obedience, should have to suffer its penalty and endure its awful curse? To answer, It *had* to be: There was no other way of saving us, supplies no direct answer to the question; nay, it is merely arguing on the jesuitical basis that “the end justifies the means.” Far better to remain silent in token of our ignorance, than thus to sully the character of God. But such a suspicion is groundless; and such ignorance, causeless—as we hope to yet show.

To say that sin must be punished, that the penalty of the broken law could not be revoked, is but to repeat what Scripture clearly affirms; but to draw the conclusion that, therefore, an innocent Substitute had to be penalized in the stead of the guilty, is to impeach the Divine justice. Every regenerated person must feel that it had been infinitely better for the whole of Adam’s race to have suffered eternally in Hell, rather than that God should act *unrighteously* in delivering His people therefrom. Such a thing could not be, for God “cannot deny himself” (2Ti 2:13)—i.e. act contrary to His own perfections. “The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works” (Psa 145:17); and most certainly, the greatest and grandest of His works—that which supremely manifested and promoted His glory—is no exception to that rule. He has declared Himself to be “a *just God* and a Saviour” (Isa 45:21), and never was His justice more gloriously displayed than at the Cross.

Of old, the question was asked, “who ever perished, being *innocent*?” (Job 4:7); and surely, we may unhesitatingly reply, No one ever did under the righteous government of God. He who “will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo 34:7), will by no means afflict the innocent. Startling as it must sound, it was not the innocent whom the sword of Divine justice smote at Calvary. And this brings us to say, secondly, in order to be our Saviour, Christ had to act as the Substitute of His people; and in order to be their Substitute, He first assumed the office of *Surety*. As their Surety, as their legal Representative, Christ took upon Him their legal obligations—as the husband assumes the debts of the woman he marries. The guilt of His people’s sins were charged to Christ’s account; and therefore, justice legally and righteously exacted payment from Him. Though personally innocent, Christ was *officially guilty* when He suffered, “the just for the unjust” (1Pe 3:18). Much remains yet to be said, but here we must stop.



# March

## IDENTIFICATION OF THE GODLY

In a day like the present, when—because of the abounding of iniquity the love of many has waxed cold—it might be thought that it is no easy matter to distinguish the genuine from the spurious, the living Christian from the lifeless professor. But that is a mistaken notion. The very opposite is the case, as a little reflection should intimate to those favoured with spiritual understanding. It is in times of revival, when the Spirit of God is working mightily in a community, that many are temporarily awakened, convicted of their sins and have their emotions deeply stirred. Though not regenerated, impressions are made upon them, and fearing the wrath to come, they exercise a natural and temporary faith in Christ and find peace therein. Such are they who “receive the word with joy” (Luk 8:13)—yet have they “no root in themselves” (Mar 4:17; Mat 13:20). They float with the tide of revival and are carried into companies of God’s people; but as Matthew 13:21 goes on to say, they last “for a while” only, for their goodness is “as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away” (Hos 6:4).

What we have pointed out above—unpalatable as it may be to those who like to think that all which glitters is real gold—is illustrated and demonstrated all through religious history. We are plainly told that the Lord “called him [Abraham] *alone*” (Isa 51:2) when He bade him leave Chaldaea and go forth unto a better inheritance: Yet Genesis 11:31 tells us that Terah his, father, accompanied him “to go into the land of Canaan;” but he never arrived there, dying at Haran (verse 32) which means, “Half-way.” When the Lord put forth His mighty hand and delivered the Hebrews from the house of bondage, we are told that, “a mixed multitude went up also with them” (Exo 12:38)! That mixed multitude soon became a thorn in Israel’s side, for *they* were the ones who “fell a lusting” for the fleshpots of Egypt and evilly influenced God’s people to become dissatisfied with the manna (Num 11:4, 5). Just as surely as Israel’s exodus from Egypt was a Divinely-designed type of the redemption of God’s elect, so that “mixed multitude” who joined themselves unto them foreshadowed the crowd of empty professors who have ever associated with them.

At a later date, when God wrought so wondrously through Joshua, we read of the Gibeonites who determined to throw in their lot with Israel, and so cleverly did they pose as “strangers and pilgrims” that God’s servant was deceived by them. They came to him with the language of piety, saying, “And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt,” etc.

(Joh 9:9, 10)—which serves to illustrate the same principle and fact. We all know how it was with Christ during the days of His earthly ministry: Speaking as never men spake, going about doing good, working miracles, great multitudes flocked to Him, many “believed in his name,” yet with a non-saving faith (Joh 2:23, 24) and “walked with” Him as His “disciples” for a season, but later deserted Him (Joh 6:66). While they “walked with” Him, suppose you that it was easy to perceive their real character? No indeed, as our Lord’s next words to the apostles indicate: “Will ye also go away?” (Joh 6:67). It was only when the hour of testing came that their real character was revealed.

And thus it has been all through the centuries of this Christian era: When the Holy Spirit has wrought in power, regenerating and reviving the elect, a “mixed multitude” has always joined their ranks, and while the revival continued, it was rarely possible for human judgment to distinguish the tares from the wheat. Thus, it was in the blessed days of the Reformers and the early Puritans. Thus, it was under the preaching of George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and Charles H. Spurgeon. But such is very far from being the case now or for many years past. Our lot is cast in a day when the Spirit is “grieved,” and His power withheld, when in most places, He has been “quenched” and His presence *withdrawn*. Over the great majority of “churches” and “chapels,” the sentence is written, “your house is left unto you desolate,” and though the services be continued, they are lifeless and ununctionless; and though new members are still added, they are but barren branches as their fruitless lives evidence; and thus, they are easily distinguished from the genuine saint, and so are very different in calibre from the professors of earlier and better times.

It is the Spirit’s holy presence and gracious operations which make all the difference not only to the regenerate but also to the unregenerate. There are His general operations, as well as particular—the former being His work *upon* the many, while the latter is His quickening work *within* only a few. Even the ungodly who attend services where the power of an ungrieved Spirit is felt are at least sobered and awed, many moved unto a reformation of life, and not a few to make a profession and unite with God’s people; and if their profession is to be credited, their walk *must* be orderly. But in a day when the Spirit is “quenched,” His powerful operations more or less cease, and then the whole tone of things is rapidly lowered, and professors with a disorderly walk can still maintain their standing; nevertheless, they are much more *easily recognised*!

There is no good reason why any child of God should be mistaken about empty professors: He has but to measure them, as he should himself also, by the unerring standard of God’s Word. In it, the Lord has plainly described His people by many different marks, by which they may be identified. We will look at one now which is less known and about which far less is written and said than about many others. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2Ti 3:12). Observe how searching that assertion is: Not “some” but *all*; not “may” but *shall* “suffer persecution,” if they will (are determined) to “live godly.” *What is* godly living? It is giving God His due place in our hearts and lives. It is to spurn the customs of this world, to lean not unto our own understanding, but to have our character and conduct formed and regulated by the Word. It is sincerely and earnestly seeking to please God in all things. It is for the graces of faith, hope and love to be constantly exercised upon Him, so that they bring forth their appropriate fruits.

Now those that will “live godly”—*all* of them who do so—“shall suffer *persecution*.” They have always done so, and they always will in this world. Godly Abel was persecuted by Cain, Isaac by Ishmael, David by Saul, the prophets by the apostates, Christ by the Jews. And both Scripture and history show that persecution has always come most from nominal saints, from the professing Christian world. True, there are various degrees of persecution: From the sneer and cold shoulder, to being dis-fellowshipped by the church; from being dubbed “puritanical,” to be-

ing placed in the stocks. So also persecution takes different forms: As it exists in the heart, issues from the tongue, or by actions; but generally, it is done under the cloak of religion. Now, a professing Christian may *escape* “persecution”—by compromising. But he will not call it that; rather, does he say, “he is avoiding extremes,” “acting prudently,” etc. But real Christians refuse to trim their sails; and therefore, they will, do, and must, suffer persecution. Reader, if you are not being persecuted in some form or other, you are not entitled to regard yourself as living a godly life.

There are those who believe that “persecution” in a more pronounced form is soon to be the lot of Christendom. Personally, we emphatically dissent. Most certainly what is known as “organized Christianity” is not on the eve of being persecuted as in earlier ages. Why are we so dogmatic? Because Satan is the author of persecution, and *he* will not stir up opposition against the “churches” as they now are. He is only too well pleased to leave them alone in their heterodoxy or dead formality. There is far too little of godliness prevailing in them today to cause Satan any uneasiness! The strong man armed has full possession of the hearts of windy professors; and therefore, he lets them rest in a false peace. But if the Spirit should again work in an unmistakable manner—outside in “the wilderness”—then the Devil would rage and stir up his ecclesiastical agents to do everything in their power to put a stop to it. But he *is* still opposing *godly livers*, and by his opposition, we may identify them.

“When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace” (Luk 11:21). The “strong man” here is Satan, as the context shows. His “palace” has a double reference: Individually, it signifies the sinner’s heart, in which the Devil resides and rules; collectively, it is an apostate Christendom, where he presides as “god” of the religious world (2Co 4:4). His “goods” are the faculties of the individual soul and his deluded victims in the corporate company. But what we would specially observe is that Satan preserves his goods “in *peace*.” There is no ceaseless conflict within the one whom Satan “keepeth,” but rather, the sleep of *death*. So in his “synagogue” (Rev 2:9), he keeps its members at peace with each other. It is the saints—those who are determined by grace to “live godly”—that are the objects of his malice, and against whom he stirs up persecution, using when he can, professing Christians as his instruments.

## THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

### 15. Ephesians 1:15-23

In the first half of Ephesians 1, we have what is probably the profoundest and most comprehensive doctrinal summary to be found in Holy Writ; in the second half of the chapter, we are shown, by implication, what should be our response thereto. In view of the wondrous spiritual blessings with which God has blest His people in Christ, they should betake themselves unto Him in praise and prayer. Those duties are clearly suggested by the example which the apostle here sets before us. His prayer on this occasion is the longest one recorded in the N.T. It reaches depths and points to heights which faith alone can sound and scale. For the purpose of analysis, we may outline it thus. First, the occasion of it, which was the tidings the apostle had received of

the faith and love of the Ephesian saints (verse 15). Second, the nature of it; namely, praise and petition (verses 15, 16). Third, the Object of it: “The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory” (verse 17). Fourth, its requests (verses 17-19), which we take to be four in number, some though reduce them to three, while others extend to five. Fifth, its revelation concerning Christ and the Church (verse 20-23).

First, *its occasion*. “Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers” (Eph 1:15, 16). It is the opening “Wherefore” which intimates to us why the apostle here prayed as he did. Most writers restrict it to what immediately follows: Paul had received tidings of their spiritual prosperity, and that caused him to bless God for His goodness to them and to seek further favours for them. While that is undoubtedly to be included, yet we see no reason why the “wherefore” should be severed from what precedes. In the previous verses, a description is given of the inestimable benefits which had been conferred upon them, and as Paul considered how God had chosen, predestinated, redeemed them by the blood of His Son, given them faith, sealed them by His Spirit, he could not forbear to give thanks for them, and ceased not to do so. After a most precise doctrinal enumeration of the rich blessings, which God’s people have in and from Christ, the apostle rejoiced as he was assured these Ephesians had a personal interest and participation in those blessings.

More immediately still, in the verse preceding, the apostle had pointed out that the climax of those blessings lay in the Holy Spirit of promise, wherewith they had been “sealed” (identified and secured), being “the earnest of our [their] inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession,” which said he is all “unto the praise of his glory” (Eph 1:14). This is the grand end of God in all the blessings of His “so-great salvation”: That *He* should be glorified by and for them. It had been mentioned in verse 6: “To the praise of the glory of His grace.” And in verse 12, in its application to the Jews: “That we should be to the praise of his glory, who *first* trusted in Christ” (Eph 1:12). And it is mentioned again here, in its application to all the Gentiles: “In whom *ye also* trusted...unto the praise of his glory” (Eph 1:13, 14). *Wherefore* says the apostle, “I...cease not to give thanks for you”: God is not to lose the revenue of praise due Him: It is therefore my duty to glorify Him on your behalf. If God glorify us, the least we can do is to act and live unto His glory.

It is to be remembered that at the time Paul offered up this prayer, he was in detention by the Romans, but it is most blessed to mark how he viewed his incarceration: “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord” (Eph 4:1). Note that well my reader: Not “the prisoner of Caesar” but “of *the Lord*.” Paul knew full well that none could lay hands upon him except as it was ordered by the One who regulates every creature and every event, “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom 11:36). Equally blessed is it to behold how this “ambassador in bonds” (Eph 6:20) occupied himself: Not in repining at the unkindness of Providence, asking, “What have I done to deserve such treatment?” but rather in praising and petitioning God. And think you not there is an intimate connection between the two things. Most assuredly: There can be no peace for the mind, and still less any joy of heart, if we fail to recognise that our lot, our circumstances, our condition, is fully ordered by a sovereign and gracious God.

The “I *also*...give thanks” means: In addition to the Ephesian believers themselves and those who had communicated to Paul the latest tidings of their case. Doubtless those saints were full of gratitude unto God for His having brought them out of darkness into His marvellous light; and here, the apostle assures them that he joined with them in fervent thanksgiving for that glorious event. And not only so, but that he continued to bless God as he received word that their lives gave evidence of the genuineness of their conversion. Nothing affords the servant of Christ such

happiness as hearing of the salvation of sinners and the accompanying transformation in their lives: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3Jo 1:4). Paul was himself the founder of the Ephesian assembly (Act 19:1, 10; 20:17-38), but he had been away from them now for several years; and therefore the statement, “after I *heard* of your faith” (Eph 1:15), etc, is not to be understood as meaning for the first time, but that he continued to receive most favourable reports of their spiritual healing and prosperity.

By making known unto them *his* thanksgiving to God on their behalf, the apostle also intimated their own privilege and duty—especially his “cease not to”: He would by his example stir up their hearts unto the renewed praising of God for His sovereign and amazing goodness unto them. Nothing is more acceptable to Him—“whoso offereth praise glorifieth me” (Psa 50:23); nothing is more becoming in us—“Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright” (Psa 33:1). Nothing is more conducive unto stirring us up to this God-honouring and delightful exercise than to consider the greatness of His benefits unto us, such as are named in the verses preceding this prayer. If the Christian take a believing view of all his blessings in Christ, labours to see his own personal interest in the same, and then considers how God has ordered this not only for his salvation, but for “the praise of *His* glory,” then the heart cannot but be moved to pour out itself in adoration and gratitude. Nor is such thanksgiving to be confined to his own case, but rendered for all who give evidence that they are new creatures in Christ.

“After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints.” *Those* are the best evidences of a genuine conversion, for they are the fruits brought forth by the two principal graces communicated to us at the new birth. Faith is known by what it effects and produces. It was not their first believing in Christ that the apostle alludes to, for he had witnessed that for himself, but rather the working and constancy of their faith of which he had “heard”—the influence it had on their daily walk. The faith of God’s elect is one which is active in “purifying the heart” (Act 15:9)—and this it does by engaging it with holy objects. The faith of God’s elect is “the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness” (Tit 1:1). It is one which nourishes reverence for God and obedience to Him. The faith of God’s elect is one which brings forth good works (Jam 2:14-22), such works as those described in Hebrews 11. It is one “that overcometh the world” (1Jo 5:4), enabling its possessor to resist its seductions, scorn its principles, and policy, and be “not of it” in his affections and ways.

Another mark of the faith of God’s elect is that it “worketh by love” (Gal 5:6): Love unto the Truth, unto Christ, and unto His redeemed. Faith is but an empty name if it does not fructify in love. Faith in Christ is only a delusion if it issues not in love for those who are His. Scripture is too plain on this point to admit of any uncertainty: “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” (1Jo 4:20). Saving faith in Christ and spiritual love for *all* whom *He* loves are inseparably connected—see Colossians 1:4, Philemon 1:5, 1 John 3:23. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren”: If we love one saint *as* a “saint”—for what we see of Christ in him—we shall love *all* saints. Faith in Christ and love for His people are inseparable, and as one waxes or wanes, so does the other. If my love for Christians is cooling (if I pray less for them and am less active in seeking to promote their highest good), then my faith in Christ is declining.

Second, its *nature*. The character of this particular prayer was twofold: It consisted of thanksgiving and requests—praise for what God had done for them and wrought in and through them, petitions for further blessings unto them. The order of these two things is something we need to lay carefully to heart, for there is much failure at this very point. Scripture is very explicit there—

on: “In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phi 4:6); “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col 4:2). Here we see how the apostle sets us an example. It is praise which gives wings to our petitions. The more my heart is occupied with God’s goodness, the more thankful I am for the favours already bestowed on me, the more will my soul be stirred up in seeking further mercies, the more liberty shall I experience in making requests for them, and the more expectation shall I have to receive the same. Cultivate the habit of gratitude, my reader, if you would be more successful at the throne of grace. “I sought the LORD, and he heard me” is *preceded* by “I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Psa 34:1, 4)!

Not only should we return thanksgiving unto God for His mercies unto us personally, but also for His grace unto *fellow saints*, which is more especially in view in our present passage. Said Paul on another occasion, “But we are bound (as a matter of duty) to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation” (2Th 2:13), upon which Thomas Goodwin remarked: “Here lieth much of the communion of saints: this is one great and high part of it. This is the angel’s grace—to rejoice at the conversion of sinners; this will be one great exercise of our grace in Heaven—that we should be thankful to God for His having chosen and saved every soul there. This will make up one great part of happiness in Heaven, that each saint will rejoice in the salvation of all and everyone as in his own.” “For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God” (1Th 3:9). Alas, that there is so little of this disinterested affection in our day.

But Paul did more than give thanks for what God had done for them and wrought in them: He requested *further* blessings on their behalf. Carnal wisdom had drawn the very opposite conclusion from that opening, “Wherefore”: It would have inferred that since they were so highly favoured of the Lord, there was no need to seek additional mercies for them. But the spiritual mind sees in the smile of God upon a people an *encouragement* to ask for further benefits to be vouchsafed them. Similarly should we argue in our own case, regarding each fresh token of love from God as an earnest of more. It is to be duly noted that Paul did not pray that God would exempt them from persecution, or give them a smooth passage through this world. Nor did he beg God to make them eminent winners of souls. Nor did he ask that they might be given a deep insight into the mysteries of Prophecy or skill in “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2Ti 2:15), as might be expected if many of our moderns were right. What he *did* pray for, we hope to consider in due course.

Third, its Object: “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory” (verse 17). As we dwelt at some length upon God as “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ” in our last, when expounding Ephesians 1:3, we will confine ourselves now to “the Father of glory,” with which should be compared “the Lord of glory” (1Co 2:8) and “the spirit of glory” (1Pe 4:14), which bring out the co-equality of the three Persons in the Godhead. “The Father of glory”—Ah, who is competent to write thereon! To describe or even define the meaning of that ineffable title transcends the power of any mortal tongue or pen: At most, we can but offer a few notes thereon. We are told that He is “glorious in holiness” (Exo 15:11), that “His work is honourable and glorious” (Psa 111:3), that He is seated upon “a glorious high throne” (Jer 17:12). We read of “his glorious voice” (Isa 30:30), His “glorious...apparel” (Isa 63:1), His “glorious arm” (Isa 63:12), of “the glorious honour of thy majesty,” and of “the glorious majesty of his kingdom” (Psa 145:5, 12). Well, may we exclaim, “blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise” (Neh 9:5); for “his glory is above the earth and heaven” (Psa 148:13).



When we have affirmed that, “the glory of God is the excellency of His being or character, that it is the sum of His perfections, or the outshining of all His attributes in resplendent combination,” we are conscious of the paucity of human language and of the incapability of the finite to comprehend the Infinite. But if we have experimentally tasted of “the glory of his grace” (Eph 1:6), if we have felt in our souls “his glorious power” (Col 1:11), if our sin-blinded eyes have been opened to see Him “glorious in holiness” (Exo 15:11), then we *know* He is a glorious God, even though we can only lisp out what He has made known to our hearts. Such a knowledge (though only a “foretaste”) have all the regenerate. “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). By supernatural illumination and inward revelation (compare Mat 16:17; Gal 1:16), the saints are given a spiritual discernment and view of the Divine glory, such as no creature can communicate to another, and which no mere mental acumen can ever attain unto. They know without any uncertainty that He *is* “the Father of glory” (Eph 1:17).

“He is called ‘the Father of glory.’ First, by way of eminency *eminency of fatherhood*: There is no such father as He is. He is a glorious Father, and so by a Hebrewism, He is a Father of glory: That is, a glorious Father, such as no father else is. He is called ‘the King of glory’: There are other kings, but He only is the glorious king. There are other fathers: He only is the Father of glory; He is therefore called the ‘Heavenly Father’...Heaven and glory are the highest things we can conceive of; and therefore, when He would put forth how great a God, how glorious a Father He is, He calleth Himself the heavenly Father, the Father of glory, in distinction from all fatherhoods. The use of this is: Never be ashamed of your Father, you that are the Sons of God, for you are the highest born in the world—no nobility rises up to *glory*. Therefore, walk worthy of Him, and let our light so shine before men that you may glorify your Father, the Father of glory, which is in Heaven” (T. Goodwin). It was as “the God of glory” that He first appeared to the father of the faithful, when He called him to leave Chaldea and go forth unto Canaan (Act 7:2); and it is as a most glorious God He reveals Himself to the newly-born soul.

Second, He is designated, “the Father of glory” not only because He is infinitely glorious in Himself, but also because He is *the Bestower* of glory on His dear children: “the LORD will give grace and glory” (Psa 84:11). He is the Author of all the glory with which His saints are or ever will be invested. There is what we may call (for want of a better term) the *official* glory of God, which is incommunicable; and there is His *moral* glory, of which makes His people partakers. That distinction is observed in those words of Christ’s, “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them;” on the other hand, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory [Mediator and incommunicable], which thou hast given me” (Joh 17:22, 24). A measure of His moral glory is communicated to us in this life: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:18). Utterly unable we are to explain the mystery of that spiritual alchemy; yet, the fact is clearly stated, and the fact receives verification in the experience of the saints, for as faith is exercised that Divine glory has a transforming efficacy on their souls.

Third, there was a particular propriety in addressing God on this occasion as “the Father of glory.” As we have pointed out in former articles, the titles given to Deity when approaching Him in prayer were not selected at random, nor were different ones used merely for the sake of variety. Rather was the particular character in which God was viewed most in accord with the special exercises of the apostle’s heart, and the specific nature of the requests he was about to make. Such was, again, the case here, he was about to pray for spiritual knowledge of *glorious things*, an ap-

prehension of the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints, and of the exceeding greatness of His power; and therefore, suitably thereto, he called upon the Father of glory; just as he addressed Him as "the God of hope" when making request that the saints might "abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom 15:13).

We must not anticipate too much that which immediately follows in this prayer, but we may at least point out that each of its petitions are closely related to the particular title which is here ascribed to the Father. In asking that He would give unto His people, "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him," it is a knowledge of Him as the Glorious One. In requesting that they might know, "what is the hope of his calling," we learn from 1 Peter 5:10 that, among other things, it is a calling "unto his eternal glory;" yea, we are called to "glory" itself (2Pe 1:3). The "riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" signifies a glorious inheritance, an inheritance in the Glory. While in making request that we might know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward," something more than the bare exercise of Omnipotence is included; namely, the putting forth, in an especial manner, of "His glorious power" (Col 1:11). Thus, we may the better perceive why the apostle here addressed Deity as "the Father of glory"—being most consonant to the particular favours he was about to ask for.

## THE MIRACLES AND MISSION OF ELISHA

### 27. Sixteenth Miracle

First, *its reality*. The first six verses of 2 Kings 8 chronicle an incident which is rather difficult to classify in connection with the ministry of Elisha. By which we mean, it is perhaps an open question whether we are to regard it as properly belonging to the *miracles* which were wrought through his instrumentality. Undoubtedly, the majority of Christian writers would look upon this episode rather as an example of the gracious and wondrous operations of Divine *providence*, rather than a supernatural happening: With them, we shall have no quarrel, for it is mainly a matter of terms—some define a "miracle" in one way; and some, in another. No question of importance is involved, either doctrinal or practical: It is simply a matter of personal opinion whether this series of events are to be viewed as among the ordinary ways of the Divine government as God orders the lives of each of His creatures, and in a more particular manner undertakes and provides for each of His dear children, or whether we are to contemplate what is here narrated as something over and above the workings of providence.

The signal deliverances which the Lord's people experience under the workings of His special providence are just as truly manifestations of the wisdom and power of God as are what many theologians would technically term His "miracles," and are so to be regarded by us. While strongly deprecating the modern tendency to deny and decry the supernatural, we shall not now enter

into a discussion as to whether or not “the day of miracles be past;” but this we do emphatically insist upon, that the day of Divine intervention is certainly *not past*. God is as ready to hear the cry of the righteous now as He was in the time of Moses and the Prophets, and to so graciously and definitely answer the prayer of faith as cannot be explained by so called “natural laws”—as this writer, and no doubt many of our readers, can bear witness. Whether you term His interpositions “miracles” or no, this is sure, the Lord still shows Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect (upright, sincere) toward Him (2Ch 16:9).

Second, *its connection*. This is intimated by the opening word of our narrative. That “then,” which occurs so frequently in the Scriptures, should never be hurried over carelessly. There is nothing meaningless, nor superfluous in God’s Word, and every syllable in it should be given its due force and weight. “Then” is a time-mark, emphasizing the season or occasion when some particular event happened. To ascertain its significance, we should always pause and ask, “When?” and in order to find the answer, refer back to the immediate context—often obliging us to ignore a chapter division. By so doing, we are the better enabled to perceive the connection between two things or incidents; and often, the moral relation the one sustains to the other, not only of cause and effect, but of antecedent and consequent. In passing, we may point out that, “Then” is one of the key words of Matthew’s Gospel, with which should be linked, “when” and “from that time”—see Mat 4:1, 17; 15:1, 21; 25, 1; 26:14. The deeper significance of many an incident is discovered by observing this simple rule: Asking the “then”—when?

In our present instance, the miracle we are about to contemplate is immediately linked to the one preceding it by this introductory, “Then.” There is, therefore, a close connection between them; yea, the one is the sequel to the other. When considering 2 Kings 7, we saw how wondrously Jehovah wrought in coming to the relief of the famished Samaritans, furnishing them with an abundant supply of food at no trouble or cost to themselves, causing their enemies to supply their needs by leaving their own huge stores behind them. But, as we pointed out, there was no recognition of the Hand that had so kindly ministered unto them, no acknowledgement of His goodness, no praising Him for such mercies. He had no place in their thoughts, for they had grievously departed from Him and given themselves up to idolatry. Consequently, here as everywhere, we find inseparably linked together “unthankful, unholy” (2Ti 3:2). Where there is no true piety, there is no genuine gratitude; and where there is no thankfulness, it is a sure sign of the absence of holiness. This is a criterion by which we may test *our* hearts: Are we truly appreciative of the Divine favours, or do we accept them as a matter of course?

It may seem a small matter unto men, whether they are thankful or unthankful for the bounties of their Maker and Provider, but *He* takes note of their response, and sooner or later regulates His governmental dealings with them accordingly: He will not be slighted with impunity. Whether He acts in judgment or in mercy, God requires us to acknowledge His hand in the same: Bowing in penitence beneath His rod, or offering to Him the praise of our hearts. When Moses demanded of Pharaoh that he should let the Hebrews go a three days’ journey into the wilderness to hold a feast unto the Lord, he haughtily answered, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go” (Exo 5:2). But before God’s plagues were finished, the magicians owned, “This is the finger of God” (Exo 8:19), and the king confessed himself, “I have sinned against the LORD your God” (Exo 10:16). We are expressly bidden, “O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good” (Psa 136:1), but if men break that commandment, God will visit His displeasure upon them. One of the reasons why He gave up the heathen to uncleanness was because they were unthankful (Rom 1:21, 24).

Third, *its nature*. God employs various methods and means in chastening an ungrateful people. Chief among His scourges are His “four sore judgments” (Eze 14:21); namely, “the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast” (see verse 15) and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast” (Eze 14:21). In the present instance, it was the second of these judgments. “Then spake Elisha unto the woman, whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn: for the LORD hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years” (2Ki 8:1). This, we regard as a miracle, and as connected with Elisha. First, because this pronouncement was a prophecy, a supernatural revelation which he had received from God, and then communicated to the woman. Second, because his announcement here is expressly said to be, “the saying of the man of God” (verse 2)—indicating he was acting in his official character. Third, because both in verses 1 and 5, this incident was definitely linked with an earlier miracle—the restoring of her dead son to life.

But our present miracle is by no means confined to the famine which the Lord here sent upon Samaria, nor to the prophet’s knowledge and announcement of the same: We should also contemplate the gracious provision which the Lord made in exempting the woman from the horrors of it. A “famine” is usually the outcome of a prolonged drought with the resultant failure of the crops, and the drying up of all vegetation; though in some cases, it follows incessant rains, which prevent the farmers from harvesting their grain. Now had the Lord so pleased, He could have supplied this woman’s land with rain, though it was withheld from her adjoining neighbours (see Amo 4:7), or He could have prevented her fields from being flooded, so that her crops might be garnered; or in some mysterious way, He could have maintained her meal and oil that it failed not (1Ki 17:16). Yet, though the Lord did none of those extraordinary things; nevertheless, He undertook for her just as effectually by His providences.

Fourth, *its duration*. This particular “famine” lasted no less than “seven years,” which was double the length of time of the one God sent on Samaria in the days of Elijah (Jam 5:17). When men refuse to humble themselves beneath the mighty hand of God, He lays His rod more heavily upon them, as the successive plagues which He sent upon Egypt increased in their severity, and as the judgments mentioned in the Revelation are more and more distressing in nature. Of old God called upon Israel “consider your ways” and complained that His House was neglected, while they were occupied only with rebuilding and attending to their own. But they heeded Him not, and accordingly He told them, “Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands” (Hag 1:10, 11). Thus, it was now upon the rebellious and idolatrous Samaritans.

Fifth, *its beneficiary*. This was “the woman, whose son he [Elisha] had restored to life” (2Ki 8:1). She was before us in 2 Kings 4. There we saw that she was one who had a heart for the servant of God, not only inviting him into her house for a meal whenever he passed by her place, but built and furnished for him the “prophet’s chamber” (2Ki 4:8-10). Then we beheld her remarkable faith, for instead of wringing her hands in despair upon the sudden death of her child, she promptly rode to mount Carmel where Elisha then was, with the evident expectation that God would undertake for her in that extremity through His servant. Nor was her hope disappointed: A miracle was wrought, and her dead son quickened. But now that the seven years’ famine was imminent, Elisha did not keep to himself the knowledge he had received of the Lord, but put it to a good use, bethinking himself of the family, which had shown him kindness in his earlier days, warning her of the sore judgment that was about to fall upon the land of Samaria.

The prophet's action contains important instruction for us, especially for those who are the ministers of God. First, we are shown that we are not to selfishly keep to ourselves the spiritual light God vouchsafes to us, but pass it onto those capacitated to receive it. Second, the servant of God is not to lose interest in those unto whom God made him a blessing in the past, but seek opportunities to further help them in spiritual things, particularly endeavouring to express his gratitude to those who befriended him in earlier days—often, this can be most effectually accomplished by prayer for them, or by sending them a special word of greeting—see 2 Timothy 1:16; Romans 16:6. Elisha did not consider he had already discharged his indebtedness to this woman by restoring her son to life, but as a fresh emergency had arisen, he gave timely counsel. Third, here too, we see God honouring those who honoured Him: In the past, she had ministered to the temporal needs of His servant, and He had not forgotten this: Having received a prophet in the name of a prophet, she now received the prophet's reward—light on her path.

“Then spake Elisha unto the woman, whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn” (2Ki 8:1). As there is no mention of her husband throughout the whole of this narrative, it is likely he had died in the interval between chapters 4 and 8, and that she was now a widow: If so, it illustrates the special care the Lord has for widows and orphans. But let us observe the exercise of His sovereignty on this occasion, for He does not always act uniformly. In an earlier famine, He had miraculously sustained the widow of Zarephath by maintaining her meal and oil: He could have done the same in this instance, but was pleased to use other means; yet, just as real and effective in supplying her every need. Learn: We must never prescribe to the Lord, nor limit Him in our thoughts to any particular form or avenue of deliverance, but trustfully leave ourselves in His hands, and meekly submit to His imperial, but all-wise ordering of our lot.

“Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn.” How frequently are we reminded that here have we no continuing city, which should cause us to hold all earthly things with a very light hand. This incident also reminds us that the righteous are occasioned many inconveniences, because of the conduct of the wicked; nevertheless, the Lord evidences His particular care of His own when His judgments fall upon a nation. Observe to what a severe test this woman's faith was now submitted. It was no small matter to leave her home and property, and journey with her household into another land—the inhabitants of which had for so long time been hostile to the Israelites. It called for implicit confidence in the veracity of God's servant. Ah, my reader, nothing but a genuine faith in God and His Word is sufficient for the human heart in such an emergency; but the mind of one who trusts Him will be kept in perfect peace.

“And the woman arose, and did after the saying of the man of God (2Ki 8:2). Note well how that is phrased: She regarded Elisha's instruction as something more than the kindly advice of a personal friend, viewing him as the messenger of God unto her. In other words, she looked above the prophet to his Master, and accepted the counsel as from Him. Thus, she acted in *faith*, which was in entire accord with what was previously recorded of her. There is no hint that she murmured at her lot or complained at the severity of her trial. No, when faith is in exercise, the spirit of murmuring is quelled. Contrariwise, when we grumble at our lot, it is sure proof that unbelief is dominant within us. Nor did she yield to a fatalistic inertia and say, If God has called for a famine, I must bow to it; and if I perish, I perish. Instead, she acted as a rational creature, discharged her responsibility, forsook the place of danger, and took refuge in a temporary haven of shelter.

“And she went with her household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years” (2Ki 8:2). Not in the adjoining territory of Judah, be it noted, for probably even at that date, the

Jews had “no dealings with the Samaritans” (Joh 4:9)—it is sad, yet true, that a Christian will often receive kinder treatment at the hands of strangers than from those who profess to be the people of God. This Israelitish woman had not been warranted in taking refuge among the Philistines without Divine permission, for God had said unto Israel, “Ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine” (Lev 20:26); and therefore, did He declare, “The people shall dwell *alone*, and shall not be reckoned among the nations” (Num 23:9). But note well that it is not said that she and her household “settled down in the land of the Philistines,” but only that she “sojourned” therein—which means that she did not make herself one with them, but lived as a stranger in their midst (compare Gen 23:4, Lev 25:23).

“And sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years.” That is surely remarkable, and very blessed. The Philistines had long been the enemies of Israel, and had recently made war the one with the other: Yet, here was this Israelitish woman and her household permitted to live peacefully in their midst, and her temporal needs supplied by them! In that, we must see the secret power of God working on her behalf and giving her favour in their eyes. The Lord never confounds those who truly trust Him, and as this woman had honoured His word through His prophet, so now He honoured her faith. Her ways pleased the Lord; and therefore, He made her enemies to be at peace with her. “And it came to pass at the seven years’ end, that the woman returned out of the land of the Philistines” (2Ki 8:3). This, too, is equally blessed. She had not found the society of the Philistines so congenial that she wished to spend the remainder of her days with them. But observe how it is worded: *Not* “when the famine was over” she returned to Samaria, but “at the seven years’ end,” mentioned by the prophet—the word of God through His servant was what regulated her!

“And she went forth *to* cry unto the king for her house and for her land” (2Ki 8:3). It is not clear whether her property had reverted to the crown upon her emigration, or whether some one had unlawfully seized it and now refused to relinquish the same; but whichever it was, she did not shirk her duty, but actively discharged her responsibility. She was neither a believer in ‘passive resistance’ nor of looking to God to undertake for her while she shelved her duty—which had been highly presumptuous. T. Scott has pointed out how this verse illustrates “the benefit of magistracy,” and rightly added in connection therewith, “Believers may, on important occasions, avail themselves of their privileges as members of the community: Provided they are not actuated by covetousness or resentment, do not manifest a contentious spirit, and make no appeal in a doubtful or suspicious cause; and rulers should award justice without respect of persons, and compel the injurious to restitution.” Had not this woman now appealed to the king for the restoration of her own property, she had condoned a wrong and refused to uphold the principles of righteousness.

Sixth, *its sequel*. This is equally striking, for the anointed eye will clearly perceive the power of the Lord working on behalf of His handmaid. “And the king talked with Gehazi the servant of the man of God, saying, Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done. And it came to pass, *as* he was telling the king how he had restored a dead body to life, that, behold, the woman, whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life. And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that was hers, and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now” (2Ki 8:4-6). Who can fail to see the superintending hand of God in the king’s desire to hear of Elisha’s miracles, the presence of one well qualified to inform him, the

*timing* of such an occurrence, the interest in this woman which would be awakened in the king, and his willingness to grant her full restitution!

Seventh, *its lesson*. In the course of our remarks, we have called attention to many details of this incident which we may profitably take to heart, but there is one outstanding thing in it which specially claims our notice; namely, the wonder-working providences of God on behalf of the woman—through Elisha, the Philistines, Gehazi, and the king of Israel. And thus, it is that He still acts on behalf of His own, making gracious provision for them in an evil day. Whatever be the means or the instruments He makes use of in providing a refuge for us in a time of trouble, it is as truly “*the LORD’s* doing,” and it should be just as “marvellous in our eyes” (Psa 118:23)—especially when God constrains the wicked to deal kindly with us, as if He openly worked for us what are technically called “miracles.” At the close of the 107th Psalm, after recounting the various deliverances the Lord wrought for those who cried unto Him, this comment is made: “Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the LORD” (Psa 107:43). The greater pains we take to observe God’s hand undertaking for us by His providences, the better shall we understand His “lovingkindness,” and the more confidence shall we have in Him.

## THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

### 6c. Its Effectuation

In our last, we showed, first, that in order to satisfy the requirements of Divine justice, the incarnate Son was “made under the law” (Gal 4:4), and that the work He did and the sufferings He endured in order to heal the breach between an offended God and His offending people was performed and undergone by Him while acting as their *Substitute*. Then, second, in the concluding paragraphs, we briefly pointed out that in order to be the Substitute of His people, Christ had taken upon Him the office of *Suretyship*. It is of great importance that we should be quite clear upon the latter, for much harm has been done by novices who have grievously misrepresented the Atonement by their crude and carnal conceptions, and the cause of Truth has been much injured by their unwarrantable attempts to illustrate the central fact of the Gospel from supposed analogies in human relations. It cannot be insisted upon too emphatically that the plan of redemption, the office sustained by Christ, and the satisfaction which He rendered to the claims of Justice against us, have no parallel in the relations of men to one another.

But how often has a popular preacher pictured a criminal, in whose character was no relieving feature, condemned to death for his aggravated crimes. While lying in the condemned cell, or perhaps as he stands upon the scaffold itself, the reigning monarch is supposed to send his or her own son and heir to die in the villain’s stead, and then turn him loose on society. Such a monstrous supposition has frequently been offered as an illustration of the amazing fact that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Not only is that imaginary illustration a gross misrepresentation

of the Truth, but it is utterly revolting to serious minds and those who love righteousness. It is, too, a horrible degrading of the Gospel and a denial of the uniqueness of the Atonement. The Atonement carries us far above the sphere of the highest relations of created beings into the august counsels of the eternal and incomprehensible God, and it is nothing but a species of impiety for us to bring our petty line to measure counsels in which the “manifold wisdom” of Omniscience is contained.

Here, as everywhere, in connection with the things of God, spiritual things of God, spiritual things must be compared “with spiritual things” (1Co 2:13), and not with carnal: One part of the Truth must be interpreted by—not drawing upon our imagination, but—by another part of the Truth. It is only in the light of the Word itself—our hearts being opened to receive the same—that we can see light. It is only as “we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth” (1Co 2:13) that we can accurately express the grand mysteries of our Faith. Now the term “*Surety*” is one of the words the Holy Spirit has used of Christ Himself to enable us to understand the better the *relation* He sustained toward those on whose behalf He transacted, and the special *office* He discharged for their sakes. Now a “surety” is one who is legally obligated to answer for another. A “surety” is one who undertakes for another or for others, and who thereby makes himself responsible to render what is due from them, or to suffer what is due to them.

“I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors. Be *surety* for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me” (Psa 119:121, 122). In like manner, we find the godly Hezekiah praying, “O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me” (Isa 38:14)—the Hebrew rendered “undertake for me” is the same as translated “be surety for me” in Psalm 119:122. Thus, in each instance, believers made a request that the Lord would not barely bestow some favour or confer some privilege on them, but do so under the particular character of a “surety.” By addressing themselves unto their Deliverer under that character, it is clear they had knowledge that He had agreed to act in this office for His people. Since the O.T. saints, equally with the N.T. ones, were to benefit from the mediatorial work of the incarnate Son, they were not left in ignorance of the grand truth that He was appointed by the Father, and by His own consent, to serve as the Surety of His people.

On Psalm 119:122, John Gill pointed out: “What David prays to God *to be* for him, that Christ *is* for all His people. He drew near to God, struck hands with Him, gave His word and bond to pay the debts of His people; put Himself in their law-place and stead and became responsible to Law and Justice for them; engaged Himself to make satisfaction for their sins and bring in everlasting righteousness for their justification, and to preserve and keep them and bring them safe to eternal glory and happiness; and thus, was being a ‘Surety for good’ for them.” It is worthy of special notice that this particular verse wherein the Lord is besought to act as “Surety” is the only one in the 176 of this Psalm wherein the Word of God is *not* mentioned under the name of “Law,” “commandments,” “statutes,” “judgments,” etc.—thereby intimating that Christ as the Surety of His people met all their obligations; and thereby, fulfilled the Law in their stead.

In the O.T. is found a most striking and blessed type of N.T. teaching on this subject, and, as we might expect, it is found in connection with its initial occurrence. It is an almost, if not, an entirely unvarying rule that the *first* mention of anything in Scripture more or less defines its meaning and scope—from the way in which it is employed and the connections in which it is found—and forecasts its subsequent significance. Such is the case here. When seeking to persuade Jacob to allow his beloved Benjamin to accompany his brethren on their journey into Egypt, Judah said, “Send the lad with me...I will be *surety* for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever”



(Gen 43:8, 9). That was no idle boast on the part of Jacob's son, as the sequel shows—for he remained true to his promise, though God intervened and spared him from actually fulfilling his trust.

The reader will remember how that Joseph's cup was found in Benjamin's sack while they were returning home with the sorely-needed grain, and how the whole company went back to Egypt and were brought before its governor. Joseph said, "The man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father." Whereupon Judah interposed, and after explaining the situation in a most touching way, declared, "And he [Joseph] said, God forbid that I should do so: but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father. Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever. Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide *instead* of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren" (Gen 44:17, 18, 32, 33). Equally beautiful is the sequel, and equally striking in completing the type: "*Then* Joseph could not refrain himself...he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that, his brethren talked with him" (Gen 45:1, 15).

It seems strange that no writer—of the many we are acquainted with—has made any attempt to "develop" this blessed evangelical picture and bring out the wondrous details of the type. First, observe the *occasion* of this incident: It was a matter of life and death, when Jacob and his household were faced with the prospect of starvation, that this proposal was made (Gen 43:1-8). In like manner, unless Christ had interposed as the Surety of His people, they had received the wages of sin. Second, it was not Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, but *Judah* who offered to act as "bondman" for Benjamin; and surely, it is not without Divine design that in the only chapter in the N.T., where Christ is specifically designated "surety," we are therein reminded that "our Lord sprang out of Juda" (Heb 7:14, 22). Third, it is to be particularly noted that this office was not compulsorily thrust upon Judah, but that he *freely* and voluntarily assumed it, as did the antitypical Surety.

Fourth, let it also be duly observed that it was not for one unrelated to him, but for his own *brother* that Judah proposed to serve—with which should be linked, "He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it" (Pro 11:15). Fifth, it was in order to satisfy his *father* that Judah proposed to act. This at once refutes the error of the Socinians on Hebrews 7:22: Christ was not God's Surety unto us; rather, did He serve as the Surety of His people to satisfy the justice of His Father. This is made very clear in the type: "Thy servant became surety *for* the lad *unto my father*." Sixth, the *nature* of suretyship is here clearly defined; namely, serving as a bondman in the room of another, discharging his obligations: "Let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord" (Gen 44:33). Seventh, the result of this typical suretyship was that *reconciliation* was effected between Joseph and his estranged brethren: so the antitypical Surety secured reconciliation between an estranged God and His alienated people.

How very much better, then, is it to take our illustrations of any aspect of Divine Truth from the Word itself, rather than draw upon our imagination or stoop to human history for incidents which supply no analogy! They must indeed be devoid of spiritual vision who fail to see in what has been brought out above a truly remarkable foreshadowment of the Suretyship of Christ. If any regard as 'far fetched' the seven details to which we have called attention, they are to be pitied. It is true that at the last moment, God intervened on Judah's behalf, as He did on Isaac's when his father had bound him to the altar and took the knife to slay him—God accepting the will for the

deed; yet just as surely as Abraham “received him [Isaac] in a figure” from the dead (Heb 11:19), so did Judah in a “figure”—and literally so in intention—serve as surety for Benjamin. That God interposed both in Abraham’s and Judah’s case, exempting them from finalising their intentions, only serves to emphasise the contrast that He “*spared not his own Son*” (Rom 8:32).

That which is most revelant to our present subject is the result obtained by Judah’s suretyship; namely, healing the breach which had for so long obtained between Joseph and his brethren—the type turning from Judah’s relation to his father and the bringing in of Joseph and its effect upon him, being parallel to the type in Genesis 22 turning from Isaac, the willing victim on the altar, to the “ram” caught in the thicket and being slain in his stead. For many years, Joseph had been separated from his brethren, and they alienated in spirit from him. When they came into his presence the first time, he “made himself strange” to them and “and spake roughly unto them” (Gen 42:7)—as God did to us through His Law prior to our conversion; and though the heart of Joseph yearned toward them, he made not himself known to them. It was not until Judah stepped forward as the surety of Benjamin that everything was changed: “*Then Joseph could not refrain himself*” (Gen 45:1), and reconciliation was at once effected!

Now it is in the light of all that has been before us above that we are to interpret that blessed declaration, “By so much [as the Melchisedec priesthood excelled the Levitical] was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.” or “covenant” (Heb 7:22)—the contrast being not between an inferior “surety” and Christ, but the more excellent covenant. Christ is the Surety provided by the Everlasting Covenant, which was administered under the O. T. era (the “old covenant”) beneath shadows and figures, but now (in this N.T. era) under the “new covenant,” His Suretyship is fully revealed in its actual and historical fulfilment. The typical case of Judah exhibits every essential feature of the Suretyship of Christ, and the more clearly it is fixed in our minds, the better shall we be able to understand the Antitype. As the Surety of His people, Christ undertook to yield that obedience to the Law which they owed and to make reparation to Divine justice for their sins—to discharge their *whole* debt, both of obedience and suffering.

“God did not mince the matter and say, Son, if Thou wilt take flesh and die by the hands of wicked men, I will pardon all Thou diest for, for Thy sake, and Thou shalt have an easy task of it: It shall be only enduring the corporeal pains of death, which thousands have undergone in a more terrible manner. But God saith as this: ‘If Thou wilt be their Saviour, Thou must be their Surety. Thou must pay all the debt of doing the Law and suffering for the breach of the Law. Thou must bear all their sins: Thou must suffer all their direful pains of body and soul, all the terrors and horrors due to them for sin from the wrath of God. I will make their sins fall on Thee with all the weight which would press all the elect into the vengeance of Hell-fire forever. Those are the terms: Hard enough indeed; but if sinners be saved by My free grace in giving Thee for them, My righteousness and holiness must be satisfied and glorified. Hast Thou such a love to My glory and to their poor souls as to undergo all that for them?’ ‘Yes,’ said our blessed Lord: ‘I am content; Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God’” (S. Crisp, 1691).

Third, we have seen that in order to be our Saviour, Christ had to be our Substitute; we have shown that to legally act as our Substitute, He had to take upon Him the office of Surety; we now push our inquiry still further back, and ask, *What was it* that justified the Holy One serving as our Surety, and the government of a righteous God taking vengeance upon Him for our sins? Not until we obtain the Scriptural answer to this question do we arrive at bed-rock and find a sure foundation for faith to rest upon—such a foundation as none of the sophistical reasonings of the carnal mind can shake; and against which the objections of scepticism are shattered into nothing, like the spray of the sea as its proud waves spend themselves upon the granite cliff. Nor do we

have far to seek if we attend closely to Hebrews 7:22; federal relationship or *covenant oneness* is what makes manifest the righteousness of the Great Transaction. There is reciprocal identification between the covenant-Head and the covenantees: Christ transacted *for* His people because He was *one with* them.

That Christ acted as the covenant-Head or federal Representative of His people is clear from 1 Corinthians 15:45 and 47, where He is designated, “the last Adam” and “the second man”—the one expression explaining the other. Christ was not “the second man” in order of time and number, for such was Cain; but He was in the sense that He sustained the same relation to His people as the first man did to the whole of his posterity. As the margin of Hosea 6:7 shows, God made a “covenant” with the first Adam, in which he acted and transacted for all his natural seed as their legal head and representative; and therein, was “the figure of him that was to come” (Rom 5:14), for Christ acted and transacted for all His spiritual seed as their legal Head and Representative. Thus in that sense, there have been but two men who have sustained this special relation to others before the Divine Law: That each served as a public person; and that thereby, a foundation was laid for the judicial consequences of the acts of each to be righteously charged to the account of all for whom each stood—see our May 1944 article for the first Adam.

It has been well said that, “The Atonement is founded upon the *unity* of Christ and His people, with whom He took part in flesh and blood” (James Haldane). It is indeed true that all mankind are partakers of flesh and blood, but Christ “took part” only with the children whom God had given Him. This is brought out very clearly in the language of Hebrews 2: “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are *all of one*: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” (verse 11). And again, “Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same...He took on him the seed of Abraham”—not of Adam. “Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren (verses 13, 14, 16, 17). It was that unity between the Sanctifier and the sanctified which laid the foundation for Christ to “make reconciliation [or rather “propitiation”] for the sins of the people” (verse 17).

Under human governments, there may be expedients by which the innocent are penalized in order that the guilty may escape, but such a device and arrangement is impossible under the righteous government of God. “Such is the perfection of the Divine government, that, under it, no innocent person ever suffered and no guilty person ever escaped” (J. Haldane, 1847). It was not that a stranger, *unrelated* to the elect, had imposed upon Him their obligations but that the Head of the body of which they are members—and the unity of the head and the members of our physical body (when any member suffers, it is registered in the brain, and when the head is severed, all the members at once die) is no closer than that of Christ and His people (see Ephesians 5:32). Just as every member of the human race has been made responsible for the original offence of the first Adam, so Christ is made responsible for the offences of His people and suffered accordingly; furthermore, they themselves (legally considered) suffered in Him and with Him.

Were it not for the unity of Christ and His people, justice, instead of being magnified, would have been violated in His substitution. However, great the dignity of the sufferer—however deep his voluntary humiliation—it would have been no atonement for us. In order to purge our sins, in order to ransom His Church, Christ must so entirely unite Himself with His people, that their sins should become His sins, that His sufferings should be their sufferings, and His death, their death” (“The Atonement” by J. Haldane). And this is indeed what took place. Christ not only bore our sins in His own body on the tree, but each believer can say, “I am crucified *with* Christ” (Gal 2:20). Christ not only suffered for us, but we suffered *in* Him, for we were legally one with Him.

He was substituted for us, because He was and is one with us, and we are one with Him. And here, again, we must (reluctantly) stop.

# SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

## 7c. Its Stages

In Ephesians 4:13, there is a “stature of the fulness of Christ” spoken of; namely, that of “a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” It would lead us too far astray from the present aspect of our subject, which is the spiritual growth of individual Christians, to enter into a full analysis and discussion of the passage in which this verse occurs (Eph 4:11-16), suffice it now to point out that it treats of the *corporate growth* of the Church and its ultimate perfection. Verses eleven, twelve, state the appointment of the Christian ministry, verse 13 announces its goal, while verses 14-16 makes known the *process* by which that goal is reached. There is a “unity of the faith” among believers now, as to its “first principles,” as truly as there is a saving “knowledge of the Son of God” (Eph 4:13) possessed by them in this life; but that which this passage contemplates is the consummation of the same in the Body corporate, when there will be perfect unity of faith, as there will yet be perfect knowledge and perfect holiness (Heb 12:23)—for all the saints will then be fully conformed unto the image of Christ. When the “perfect man” is openly revealed, it will consist of a glorified Head with a glorified Body.

“The measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph 4:13) is that unto which the whole of the Church is predestinated, and the accomplishment thereof will be seen at the second advent of our Lord, “When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe” (2Th 1:10). But during this present life, there are different stages of spiritual development reached by Christians, different forms in the school of Christ to which they belong, different measures of progress made by them. Broadly speaking, there are three degrees of “the stature of Christ” reached by believers in this life—though the highest of them falls very far short of that which shall pertain to them in the life to come. Those three degrees are most clearly specified in 1 John 2:12-14, where the apostle grades the members of God’s family into the “babes,” the “young men,” and the “fathers.” In the preceding articles, we sought to describe the principal features of the first and second; and now we are to consider what is more characteristic of and pre-eminent in the third class, the “fathers.”

Note carefully how we worded the closing part of the last sentence: It is not that which is peculiar to; but rather, that which is distinctive of the third class. This needs to be emphasised, or at least plainly stated, in order to prevent readers from drawing a wrong conclusion. What is predicated of each separate class is also common to the whole, though not to the same degree. In their measure, the “babes” overcome the Wicked one and have a real and saving knowledge of “him

that is from the beginning” (1Jo 2:13, 14); yet, they do not “overcome” to the same extent as the “young men,” nor “know” Christ so well or extensively as do the “fathers.” In like manner, the “fathers” rejoice in the knowledge of sins forgiven, and “know” the Father even better than they did in the days of their spiritual infancy; so too, they are not only as “strong” as they were in the time of their spiritual youth, through the Word of God abiding in them, but they have progressed “from strength to strength” (Psa 84:7), for the Word now dwells in them “richly” (Col 3:16).

Let us remind the reader once more that in 1 John 2:12-14, believers are not graded according to their natural ages, nor even according to the length of time they have been Christians, but according to the spiritual growth and progress they have made in the Christian life. Some of God’s elect are converted very late in life and are left in this world for but a short season at most; and though they give clear evidence of a work of grace wrought in them, and bring forth fruit to the glory of God; yet, they attain not to the spiritual vigour of “young men,” and still less to the spiritual intelligence and maturity of the “fathers.” On the other hand, there are those who are regenerated in their youth and some of them make steady and constant progress, adorning the doctrine they profess and becoming useful to their fellow-Christians; while others, after a promising beginning, backslide, and are a grief to their brethren. It is with individual Christians as with corporate companies of them: Of the saints at Rome, Paul could say, “your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world” (Rom 1:8); while to the Galatians, he complained, “ye did run well; who did hinder you”? (Gal 5:7). To the Thessalonians, he could say, “your faith groweth exceedingly” (2Th 1:3); but of the Ephesians, it is recorded, “thou hast left thy first love” (Rev 2:4).

While it be true that the longer a person has been a Christian, the more mature his spiritual character should be, the more growth in grace ought to mark him, the more intelligence he should have in the things of God; yet, in many instances, this is far from being actualised in experience. In only too many growth is stunted and progress is retarded, and some Christians of twenty years’ standing advance no further in the school of Christ, than those who entered it a few months before. We have a type of this in the contrast presented between Elihu and the aged men who took it upon themselves to counsel and criticise Job. “I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom”—*they* were given the floor first, only to exhibit their incompetency. “But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment. Therefore, I said, Hearken to me” (Job 32:7-10). The “hoary head is a crown of glory, *if* it be found in the way of righteousness” (Pro 16:31).

Note well, my reader, that statement in the above passage: “The inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding” (Job 32:8). Gracious ability comes not from the passing of the years, but by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. That gives us the Divine side: But there is also a human side—that of our responsibility. Said David, “I understand more than the ancients, because I *keep* thy precepts” (Psa 119:100). Though study of and meditation upon the Word are indeed means of grace and of growth; yet spiritual understanding is obtained chiefly from personal submission to God—He will not grant light on the “mysteries” of Scripture if we forsake the path of obedience. The young Christian who walks according to the Divine precepts will have more spiritual discernment and better judgment, than a much older one who is lax in his “ways.” “If any man will *do* his will, he *shall know* of the doctrine” (Joh 7:17). The world says ‘Experience is the best teacher,’ but it errs: The child who subjects himself wholly to the Divine Rule has an all-sufficient Guide and is independent of experience. Understanding obtained through keeping God’s precepts is infinitely better than knowledge secured by painful experience.

“I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning” (1Jo 2:14). The one thing which is here predicated of mature Christians is their *knowledge of Christ*, for the reference is to the Son of God as incarnate. They have attained unto a fuller, higher, and more experimental knowledge of Christ. They are now more occupied with who He is than what He did for them. They delight in viewing Him as the One who magnified the Divine Law and made it honourable, who satisfied all the requirements of Divine holiness and justice, who glorified the Father. They have a deep insight into the mystery of His wondrous Person. They have a clearer understanding of His covenant engagements, and of His prophetic, priestly, and kingly functions. They have a more intimate acquaintance with Him through personal fellowship. They have a fuller experience of His love, His grace, His patience. They have obtained experimental verification of His teachings, the value of His commandments, and the certainty of His promises.

The “knowledge” which is here ascribed unto the “fathers” is far more than a speculative and historical one, with which the majority of professing Christians are content. There are several degrees of this merely theoretical knowledge. With some, it is nothing more than *memorative*, as the Jews are said to have had “the form of knowledge” (Rom 2:20), like a map of it in their brains—acquired by retaining in their minds what they have read or heard about Divine things. With others, it is an *opinionative* knowledge, so that they have not only a mental acquaintance with parts of the Truth, but a kind of conscience and judgment about those things, which causes them to regard themselves as “orthodox;” and yet wisdom enters not into their hearts (Pro 1:20). A few have a yet higher degree of this knowledge, which in measure, affects their hearts and leads to reformation of life, so that they “escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of *the* [not ‘their’!] Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”—yet its hold on their affections is too weak to withstand strong temptations; and hence, they apostatize from the Faith and return to their “wallowing in the mire” (2Pe 2:20, 22).

In contrast from nominal professors, every regenerated soul has a supernatural and spiritual knowledge of God, of Christ, and the Gospel; and as he grows in grace, it increases. The kind of knowledge possessed by each of us may be determined by the *effects* it produces: Whether it be only a bare, non-influential knowledge—or whether it be a spiritual and saving one—is discovered by the *fruits* it bears. A Divinely-imparted one leads its possessor to put his trust in the Lord (Psa 9:10), to esteem Christ superlatively (Phi 3:8, 9), to obey Him (1Jo 2:3, 4). It is such as causes us to receive the Truth—not only in the light of it—but in the love of it (2Th 2:10); and thus, it is an intimate, permanent, heart-affecting, and life-transforming knowledge. It is what the apostle terms “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ,” and that is one which causes its possessor to count all other things but dung, and moves him to pant after a yet fuller acquaintance with Christ, a more unbroken communion with Him, a more complete conformity unto His image.

The knowledge of Christ with which the “fathers” are blest is such as fills their souls with holy awe, astonishment and admiration. They know Him through the revelation of the Gospel as the One who was “set up from everlasting, from the beginning,” who was “daily his [the Father’s] delight” (Pro 8:23, 30). Thus, they know Him as the One who took into union with His divine person a holy humanity. They know Him as the Image of the invisible God (Col 1:15), as the One who has fully told out the Father. They are led into a knowledge of His Divine majesty, His Headship of the Church, as the Mediator of union and communion, which floods their hearts with delight. They know Him as their Lord, their Redeemer, their Hope, their All in all. He is the grand Subject and Object of their contemplations, so that they are more and more absorbed with Him. Such knowledge finds expression in speaking well of Him to fellow-saints, by endeavouring to please Him in all things, by diligently following the example He has left us.

It must not be concluded from 1 John 2:13, 14 that this deeper and fuller knowledge of the Person, offices and work of Christ is the only distinguishing mark which eminently characterises the “fathers.” Hebrews 5:11-14 shows otherwise: They “teach” others, both by example and precept, giving counsel and admonition, encouragements and comfort, to their younger brethren. In that same passage, they are termed, “them that are of full age,” and the marks of such are described as “those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” and being capacitated to masticate “strong meat,” which—according to the scope of that epistle—has reference to the official glories of Christ, particularly His priestly. While those who cannot digest such food—who find neither savour nor nourishment therein—are termed, “babes,” who can relish naught but milk that is the simpler and more elementary aspects of the Gospel.

Just as the natural infant possesses the very same faculties as the adult, but has not learned to employ them so the babe in Christ has all the “senses” or spiritual graces of the “fathers,” but has not learned to use them to the same advantage. As the natural infant is incapable of distinguishing between wholesome and injurious food so the spiritual infant has not the ability to form a correct judgment and distinguish between preachers who minister only the letter of the Word from those who are enabled to open it up spiritually. It is by “reason of use” that the spiritual senses are developed. As the muscles of the athlete, or the fingers of the craftsman, become fit or skillful through constant exercise, so the spiritual graces of the new man are developed by regularly calling them into play. It is by using the light we have, by practicing what we already know, which fits the soul for further disclosures of the Truth and for closer communion with Christ, and which the better enables us to “discern both good and evil.” Thus, a further mark of the “fathers” is wisdom, sound judgment, keen discernment.

The old Christian has more solid, judicious, and connected views of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the glories of His redeeming love: Hence, his hope is more established, his dependence more simple, his peace and strength more abiding and uniform than is the case of the young convert. Though his sensible feelings may not be so warm as when he was in the state of spiritual infancy, his judgment is more solid, his mind more fixed, his thoughts more habitually exercised upon the things within the veil. His great business is to behold the glory of God in Christ, and by beholding, he is changed into the same image, and brings forth in an eminent and uniform manner the fruits of righteousness. His contemplations are not bare speculations, but have a real influence, and enable him to exemplify the Christian character to more advantage and with more consistency than can, in the present state of things, be expected from the babes’ or ‘young men’” (John Newton, 1725-1807, “Grace in the Full Ear”).

The “fathers” are such as are more diligently employed in the exercises of godliness for having proved for themselves that obedience to God is true liberty, their practice of piety is not performed only from a sense of duty, but with joy. They more wisely manage the affairs of this life, for they have a greater measure of spiritual prudence and circumspection. They discharge their duties with increasing diligence and care, knowing that God esteems quality rather than quantity; the heart engaged therein, rather than the length or measure of the performance. They are more weaned from the delights of sense, for their assurance is now based upon knowledge, rather than feelings. They are more conscious than they formerly were of their frailty and ignorance; and therefore, lean harder on the everlasting arms and more frequently seek wisdom from above. They are more submissive under the varying dispensations of Providence, for the trying of their faith has wrought patience (Jam 1:3); and therefore, they are more content to meekly and trustfully leave themselves and their affairs in the hands of Him that doeth “all things well.”

The “fathers” are such as have been greatly favoured with light from the Spirit by His gracious opening of their understandings to perceive, and their hearts to receive the teachings of Holy Writ; and they have learned that they can no more enter into the spiritual meaning of any verse in the Word without the Spirit’s assistance than create a world; and therefore, their daily prayer is, “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law.” Through deep acquaintance with God, their characters are more mellowed, and their lives are more fruitful to His praise—not necessarily in outward activities, but by the exercise of their graces, thanksgiving, and adoration. Having had made to them many discoveries of the glories of Christ, received innumerable proofs of His forbearance, been partakers of countless love-tokens from Him, their testimony is, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psa 73:25). Their minds are largely taken up with and exercised upon the wondrous perfections of Christ, both personal and official.

“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the *aged men be* sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience” (Tit 2:1, 2). Here, we are informed what are the particular graces which should characterise the “fathers” in God’s family. First, “be sober”—or as the margin preferably has it—“be vigilant.” They must not suffer increasing years to induce spiritual lethargy; rather should they issue in increasing watchfulness and alertness to danger. “Grave”—not garrulous and excitable, but thoughtful and serious: Less allowance will be made for *them* than younger brethren if they indulge in levity and vanity. “Temperate” or moderate in all things: The Greek word signifies, “self-restrained,” having their tempers and affections under control. “Sound in faith”: Sincere and stedfast in their profession. “In love” to Christ and their brethren. “And patience,” not peevish and fretful: Persevering in good works, meekly enduring trials and persecutions. “Those who are full of years should be full of grace and goodness” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

Not only does the N.T. maintain the distinction between spiritual infants and mature Christians, but it reveals how God provides *servants* of His who are specially suited unto each: “For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many *fathers*” (1Co 4:15). The “fathers” among the ministers of Christ are not only characterised by their disinterested, affectionate, faithful and prudent instructions, so that they are entitled to the love and respect shown unto a parent; but are Divinely and experimentally fitted to open up “the deep things of God” (1Co 2:10), and edify the older, as well as the young saints: Though all the true servants of Christ are commissioned by Him; yet all are not equally qualified, gifted, or useful to the Church. Many are “instructors in Christ” (1Co 4:15), but can go no further—being neither designed, nor fitted, for any thing beyond that. But a few are greatly superior to them and have more lasting importance to the flock. All are useful in their several stations, but all are not useful in the same way.

In concluding this aspect of our subject, we cannot do better than call attention to the analogy between the spiritual growth of the children of God, and that in the incarnate Son. Beautiful indeed is it to behold how this line of truth was exemplified in Him. The humanity of Christ was perfectly natural in its ordinary development and everything was “beautiful in his time” (Ecc 3:11) in Him. First, we see Him as a “babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger” (Luk 2:12). Then we behold His progress from infancy to childhood, and as a Boy of twelve, His moral perfections shone forth in being “subject to His parents,” and we are told that “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luk 2:51,52). When He became Man, His glory found other expressions—working at the carpenter’s bench (Mar 6:3),



followed by His public ministry. Supremely was *He* the “tree planted by the rivers of water,” which brought forth “his fruit in his season” (Psa 1:3).





# April

## IDENTIFICATION OF THE GODLY

### Part 2

In our last, we virtually covered the ground intended; but after pondering the same, we feel there are one or two points rather in need of clarification and amplification. For example, the presence of so many nominal Christians among the regenerate, and the task of distinguishing the one from the other. It is true that in every age, there have been a large number of empty professors; yet for the most part, they were easily recognised—by those who measured their outward conduct by the rules of Scripture. It is equally true that some of God’s own children suffer spiritual declines; and while they be in a backslidden state, they differ, practically, very little from the unregenerate—as Paul said of the Galatians, “I stand in doubt of you” (Gal 4:20). Backsliders have no Scriptural warrant to regard themselves as children of God; still less to expect others to accredit them as such. But it is not of them we write; but rather of the ones who bear the marks of those who are in Christ Jesus.

“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall *suffer persecution*” (2Ti 3:12). It is to be duly noted that this verse occurs in a passage which describes a time of apostasy; and therefore, it is one which is most pertinent to our own day. “The last days” of verse 1 do not signify the closing days of this era, but mean this Christian age itself, which is the *final one* in the earth’s history. In this last dispensation, there would be “perilous times” (2Ti 3:1)—there would occur and *recur* seasons of declension and departure from God, for the passage is describing not the profane world, but the professing world; not the character and condition of men in general, but that of nominal Christians in particular. This is clear from “lovers of pleasures *more than* lovers of God” (2Ti 3:4), for those in the professing world do not pretend unto any love for Him. It is further borne out by what is said in verse 5. It is this feature of it which makes the passage of such deep importance to us at the present juncture.

Now, if one carefully notes the different characteristics enumerated in verses 2 to 4, there should be no difficulty in identifying those who possess the same. Not that *all* of those features are stamped on each one of them, yet sufficient to classify them. And it is not the slightest breach of charity—but rather, a sober statement of fact—when we say that many, in fact most, of those very features are now borne by the majority of “church members” professing to be Christians; yet

who are highly indignant if any one dared to challenge their claim. But God requires us *to* judge them and act accordingly: “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such *turn away*” (2Ti 3:5). That clearly implies two things: That God’s people are able to clearly recognise such characters; and that they must have no fellowship with them. Should they disregard that injunction, the consequences would be most serious—compare Revelation 18:4.

Those mentioned in verse 5—and there are a multitude of such today—are described as, first, “having a form of godliness,” which means that they have a religious veneer. They bear the name of Christ, belong to some so-called evangelical church, and seek to create the impression that they are regenerate people. But like the foolish virgins, they “took their lamps, and took no oil with them” (Mat 25:3, 4)—they are not indwelt by the Holy Spirit, nor made partakers of the transforming grace of God. For it is said of them, secondly, “but denying the power thereof” (2Ti 3:5)—the *reality* of vital godliness is lacking, the beauties of holiness are not found in them. By their lips, they claim to be godly, but by their lives, they give the lie to it. “They profess that they know God; but in *works* they *DENY* him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Tit 1:16). And with such, the children of God are to have nothing to do—to shun them as they would the plague.

In contrast from such characters, the apostle said to Timothy, “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, *manner of life*, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, *persecutions*, afflictions” (2Ti 3:10, 11). There is the genuine gold, set over against the tinsel. There is the power of godliness, set over against the mere “form” of it. It consists of soundness in doctrine, for where there is not *that*, there can be none of the others. It consists of a definitely-marked “manner of life,” treading the path of obedience, in subjection to God’s authority. It consists of the presence and exercise of spiritual graces. It consists of evoking and encountering the hatred and opposition of godless religionists. Then Paul adds—as though to say, *my* testimony and experience is common to the redeemed—“Yea, and *all* that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2Ti 3:12).

Once more, we would emphasise the fact that 2 Timothy 3:12 occurs in a passage which is describing a season of declension and departure from God—as the verse which immediately follows also goes on to show. Those seasons of declension are designated “perilous times” in the opening verse of the chapter; and therefore, we must supply answer to the question, What is it that particularly constitutes any “time” or season “perilous” to Christendom? Surely, the reply is obvious: It is the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit’s power, when His gracious operations and unction are withheld, because despite has been done to Him. Then it is that the restraining hand of God is also removed, and the flesh is given more or less free rein. The consequences are obvious: Instead of peace, there will be strife, prayer becomes formal, preaching is flat and profitless, hoary “tradition” supplants “the present truth” (2Pe 1:12); and a dead orthodoxy is the result. Soon, a dead orthodoxy is followed by heterodoxy, the Standard is lowered, worldliness comes in apace, and Christ is shut out (Rev 3:20).

“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2Ti 3:13). It is *religious* “seducers” who are in view, the unregenerate men who occupy most of our pulpits today; and who by their “form of godliness” (2Ti 3:5) delude the unwary—delude them, because they fail to perceive that their lives (moral and respectable though they be) deny the power or reality and efficacy of the same. “Perilous” indeed is a season when such preachers abound. And what the special word to *us* at such a time? The next verse answers: “But *continue thou* in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of” (2Ti 3:14). Be not swayed by what nearly every other professor is doing—look well to thine own bearings. “Continue thou,” depart

not from “acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness” (Tit 1:1). If others are determined to make shipwreck of the faith, see to it that you “work out *your own* salvation with fear and trembling.”

But remember that faithfulness will cost you something. In a “perilous” time, you may—probably will—have to walk *alone*, as Enoch did. If you resolve that by Divine grace you will “live godly in Christ Jesus,” then know you that “persecution” must be your portion. And that persecution will come upon you not from atheists and infidels, but from those bearing the name of Christians. It will issue from those who still keep up a “form (or semblance) of godliness,” but who are strangers to its living power. It will come to you from empty professors whose compromising ways are condemned by your refusal to conform thereto; whose worldliness and carnality is rebuked by your spirituality. It was the religious leaders of Israel who hounded the Saviour to His death! Thus, it is by their godly living the true are distinguished from the false, and by the *opposition* which they meet with from the latter, that they may be clearly identified. Their care to avoid what they call “singularity” and “puritanism”—and thus, to escape “persecution”—is what *exposes* the empty professor!

The true people of God, then, are clearly distinguished from empty professors. The characteristic marks of the former, being: Their determination to live, at all costs, a godly life; and, in consequence, their suffering persecution in various forms—not only from open infidels, but particularly, from unregenerate church-members. The latter have something of “the form of godliness,” but are strangers to its *power* or vital influence. Genuine “godliness” is consistent, all of a piece, evidencing itself in every situation and circumstance. Those with merely the “form” are “religious” only at certain times, and in certain relations. The one is a new nature within manifesting itself without; the other is naught, but an external cloak, seeking to hide the old man. The one issues from filial fear and spiritual love; the other, from servile fear and selfish love. The one is vitalized by the Holy Spirit; the other is regulated by selfish considerations, or is stimulated by emotion. The one is lasting; the other is only evanescent.

## THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

### 16. Ephesians 1:15-23 – Part 2

Our fathers were wont to say, “A word to the wise is sufficient,” and so it ought to be—to a receptive mind and responsive heart, a hint should be enough. Thus, if a godly and mature saint who is deeply interested in my spiritual welfare and more or less acquainted with me, wrote to say he was praying ceaselessly that God would grant me a larger measure of patience, or that He would make me more humble, then if I value his judgment, I shall at once regard that as a gracious word from God, informing me what *I* specially need to be petitioning Him for. It is thus we should look upon this prayer we are now considering. In making known to these saints what he sought from the Throne of grace on their behalf, the apostle intimated—indirectly, yet none the less really—what they needed to make the particular burden of *their* supplications; and hence, if

the Ephesian saints required to ask these blessings of Heaven, most certainly, God's people today need to do so. Let us then view this prayer as a Divine revelation to us, instructing us of the things which we most need to pray for.

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him” (Eph 1:17). In addition to the notes given in our last—upon the particular titles accorded the Object now supplicated—we believe that Deity is here viewed thus, for the strengthening of our faith and the firing of our hearts. Request is to be made for a fuller knowledge and a closer communion with God, and to encourage us to ask for this in confidence, we are assured that it is “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and to stimulate our aspirations, we are reminded that He is “the Father of glory” (Eph 1:17). Then with what trustful reliance should we present these petitions! With what ardour should we seek for their fulfilment! If God be believably viewed in these characters, it will have a most animating effect upon the soul. It is the God who so loved us as to give His only-begotten Son for us, the God who was the all-absorbing “Portion” of our Saviour during the days of His flesh; it is His and our *covenant God*. Further, it is the most glorious Father whom Christ revealed and of whom we have already obtained a glimpse in the face of the Redeemer.

We are living in a day of such appalling ignorance that nothing may be taken for granted; and therefore, it needs to be pointed out that in asking God for these particular things, the apostle did not signify the Ephesians were totally devoid of them, any more than his opening, “Grace be to you, and peace” (Eph 1:2) implied they possessed neither the one nor the other, but rather that he desired for them an increase of both. Thus, it is here. They already had a saving knowledge of God, or he would not have addressed them as “saints” and “faithful in Christ Jesus” (Eph 1:1). In asking God to grant them “spirit of wisdom and revelation” (Eph 1:17), he most certainly was not making request for the Spirit to be given them for the first time, for he had just affirmed in the context that they were “sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Eph 1:13). No, rather was he making request for further supplies and a richer outpouring of the Spirit upon them. Thus, too, must we understand the words, “in the knowledge of him”—it was for a fuller, deeper, closer acquaintance and fellowship with Him, an “*increasing* in the knowledge of God,” as Colossians 1:10 expresses it. So, too, must we regard each of the other things prayed for.

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the [S]pirit of wisdom and revelation” (Eph 1:17). The careful reader will note that the word “Spirit” is spelt with a small “s” in his Bible, and our capitalizing of it calls for an explanation. The original Greek manuscripts were written in capitals throughout, so that there is nothing to distinguish between “the Spirit” and “the spirit”; and thus, it is entirely a matter of interpretation on the part of the translators in using the small or capital letter. Where it is “the Holy Spirit” or “the Spirit of God,” all is quite clear; but when it is simply “the spirit,” it is not always easy to decide. To Nicodemus, Christ said that which “is born of the Spirit is *spirit*” (Joh 3:6)—the principle of grace or “new nature,” which is imparted to the regenerate, partakes of the character of its Begetter or Communicator, and is named after Him. Consequently, there are some passages when it is rather difficult to determine whether it be the Giver or His gift which is in view, whether the reference be to the Person of the Spirit, or to His gracious operations—the one being so inseparably connected with the other. In such cases, this writer includes *both*.

The word “spirit” is sometimes used as expressive of such mental states and acts as the new nature brings forth in the believer, yet under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Thus, we read of “the spirit of meekness” (1Co 4:21), “the same spirit of faith” (2Co 4:13), “the spirit of your mind” (Eph 4:23). On the other hand, when we read of “the Spirit of truth” (Joh 15:26), “the spirit

of holiness” (Rom 1:4), “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8:9)—that it is the person of the Spirit who is in view. But when we are told, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...” etc. (Gal 5:22), what are we to understand? In the context, the apostle has described some of “the works of the flesh” or old nature (Gal 5:19-21); therefore, we conclude that it is the products of the new nature or “spirit” which are set over in contrast from them; yet, since the new nature only bears fruit as it is energized by the indwelling Spirit, then He is the real Author of that fruit and is to be acknowledged as such. Thus, this writer would give the two-fold meaning to “the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22—namely, what the Spirit of God produces through the principle of grace in the regenerate. And it is *thus*, he regards the expression in the verse now before us.

It is true that the saint received “the spirit of wisdom” (Eph 1:17) at the time of his regeneration (adumbrated by the case of the one described in Mark 5:15, and compare 2 Timothy 1:7)—for that is one of the things which distinguishes him from the natural man who is possessed of a spirit of folly and ignorance; nevertheless, it was the Holy Spirit who imparted the same to him and who is also the Author of its development and activities. But something more than “the spirit of wisdom” is here included—namely, “revelation,” which cannot be understood of a gift inherent. Had it been only “the spirit of wisdom,” we should have regarded it as referring to a principle infused into Christians, but “revelation” necessarily implies a Revealer—for revealing is an act of one without us, of a person distinct from us; and who that person is, Scripture leaves us in no doubt. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath *revealed* them unto us *by his Spirit*...we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1Co 2:9, 10, 12).

Our understanding, then, of this opening petition is that the apostle first sought from God an increased measure of the Spirit for the Ephesians from whom all spiritual wisdom comes to us, and who reveals or discovers to our hearts the certainty, the reality, the surpassing blessedness of Divine things; and second, that there might be an enlargement of the gift of wisdom bestowed upon them, a fuller capacity to take in the things of God, that He would make unto them further “manifestations” of Himself (Joh 14:21), that they might perceive more clearly His ineffable and soul-satisfying glory, that He make good His promise, “all thy children shall be taught of the LORD” (Isa 54:13)—for it is in such ways that we obtain “the knowledge of him” (Eph 1:17; 2Pe 1:3). And that leads us to ask more distinctly: *Of whom?*—of the Father, or of Christ? Some answer of the former, but the majority of the latter, being unduly influenced by Philippians 3:8. The “Father of glory” (Eph 1:17) is the One spoken of in the immediate context, and it is to Him that the “*his* calling,” “*his* inheritance,” and “*his* mighty power” of verses 18 and 19 clearly refer. Yet it was as “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ” that He is specifically viewed; so putting the two together, it is the knowledge of *God in Christ* which is here referred to.

Coming to the substance of this petition, what is meant by “in the *knowledge* of him”? As there is more than one kind of faith spoken of in Scripture, so there are several species of “knowledge”—not only of different objects and subjects known, but ways of knowing the same. One may know or be fully assured from the testimony of reliable witnesses that fire produces most unpleasant effects if an unprotected hand be thrust into it. But if I have personally felt the consequences of being burned, then I have quite a different order of knowledge: The one may be termed notional; the other, experiential—usually, though wrongfully, termed “experimental.” The distinction which is frequently drawn between “real” and “assumed” knowledge does not define the difference. When the unclean spirit said to Christ, “*I know thee* who thou art” (Mar 1:24; Luk 4:34), his knowledge was both a real and accurate one, but it profited him nothing spiritually. On

the other hand, “they that *know* thy name *will* put their trust in thee” (Psa 9:10) speaks of a knowledge which inspires such confidence that its possessor cannot but believe.

As there are *degrees* of trusting God, so there are in our knowledge of Him, and the measure in which we know Him savingly will determine the extent of which we love Him, trust and obey Him. Since that be the case, we may at once perceive the vital importance of obtaining a fuller knowledge of God, and why this is the *first* petition of the four. The defectiveness of our faith, love, and obedience is to be traced to the inadequacy of our knowledge of God. If we were more intimately and influentially acquainted with Him, we should love Him more fervently, trust Him more implicitly, and obey Him more freely. The value of a better knowledge of God cannot be sufficiently realised by us. But let us again remark, it is not a mere notional knowledge of Him, but a visual and vital one. The former kind is one in which ideas or mental images are presented to the understanding to work upon; but the latter is what brings the reality of them down into the heart. It is such a knowledge in the soul, as whereby we behold the glory of the Lord and are “changed into the same image” (2Co 3:18).

There is also a knowledge by way of special “gifts,” which is quite distinct from this spiritual knowledge. One may have much of the former and very little of the latter, as with the Corinthians. They “come behind in no gift,” being “enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge” (1Co 1:7, 5). They were not only well informed, but able to so express themselves upon spiritual things, as to stamp upon the minds of their hearers an accurate image of them. Yet of those same highly-gifted and talented Christians, Paul said, “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ” (1Co 3:1)—thus, they were largely deficient in spiritual knowledge. But there are other saints with a much deeper and closer acquaintance of God, yet being less talented, are incapable of expressing themselves so freely and fluently as the former. It is a heart knowledge—and not a head knowledge of God—which makes a person more holy.

The opening petition was that the saints might be granted through the operations of the Spirit a fuller entry into that knowledge of God in which “eternal life” primarily consists. It was a request that they might perceive more clearly the glory of God, to give them an inward realisation of His ineffable perfections to make their hearts so in love with them that their wills would choose them for their chief delight. God first prepares the mind by an act of renewal to receive spiritual instruction, giving His people “an understanding, that we may know him that is true” (1Jo 5:20); and then He imparts to them a larger measure of “the spirit of wisdom and revelation” (Eph 1:17). At the new birth, we are called out of darkness into God’s marvellous light; yet, further light—fuller manifestations of Himself to us—are needed, if we are to know Him better.

God has promised “all *shall* know me” (Heb 8:11), that “all thy children shall be taught of the LORD” (Isa 54:13)—and those are for faith to lay hold of and plead before God. Neither the arts, nor the sciences, can impart one spiritual idea to the soul; still less, can they impart any vital knowledge of God Himself. It is only in His light that we can see light. It is only as He shines upon our understandings and reveals Himself to our hearts that we can become better acquainted with Him. It is by means of the Word that the Holy Spirit carries on the work of God in the soul; therefore, whenever we read or meditate upon it, we need to beg Him to take of the things of God and of Christ and “show them” unto us, to apply them to our hearts, that we may be more and more changed into their very image. But it is one thing to be convinced of that need, and another to put it into practice. Pride, self-sufficiency, is the chief deterrent. The things of God are only “revealed” to those who preserve this humble characteristic of the “babes” (Mat 11:25).



The Greek word rendered, “knowledge” in the verse we are pondering is “epignosis.” “Gnosis” signifies “knowledge” and “epi-” *upon*—so as our moderns would express it, it is “knowledge plus,” or as the lexicons define it, “full knowledge.” The word occurs in Romans 3:20, which will enable the average reader to better perceive its force: “by the Law is the knowledge”—or “full knowledge of sin.” A man knows something of what sin is by the light of nature, but only as sin is viewed and measured in the light of the authority, the spirituality, the strictness of the Divine Law, does he obtain a fully and adequate knowledge of the sinfulness of sin. Thus, it was for something more than a bare, fragmentary inchoate acquaintance with God which was here prayed for, even a full knowledge of Him—not a *perfect* knowledge, but a first hand, well-rounded, an intimate and thorough knowledge of His person, His character, His perfections, especially as He is revealed in and by Christ.

It is to be noted that the margin of our Bibles gives “for the acknowledgment of him,” for the Greek may also be thus rendered. To “acknowledge” is to *own* a knowledge of, to admit the same; and this, we do of God—first in our secret communion with Him; and then outwardly, by confessing Him before men with our lips and lives. Goodwin pointed this distinction thus: “One knoweth a stranger, but he doth ‘acknowledge’ he knew before his *friend*—so that the intimate knowledge of God as of a friend is the thing which the apostle meant. As He said of Moses, ‘I know thee by name’ and Moses knew God in turn; and John 10:14, ‘I...know my sheep, and am known of mine.’ It is to have this mutual knowledge, God knowing me, and I knowing God, so as to converse daily with Him and to have communion with Him as with a friend.” Thus, we see the *excellency* of this particular knowledge. It is not only a more enlarged knowledge about the things of God, such as Christ communicated to His disciples in Luke 24:27, but the end or issue of such knowledge—namely, such a knowledge as leads to real fellowship with Him, intimate communion with Him as with a Friend.

This is the ultimate intent of God in His grace and favour to us—that we may *so* “know” Him as to acquaint ourselves with Him, delight ourselves in Him, make free with Him, enjoy mutual converse with Him. “Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1Jo 1:3), so that He knows you and you know Him; He owns you, and you own Him; and that as the consequence, you cleave to Him as your supreme Good, give up yourself to Him as your absolute Lord, delight yourself in Him as your everlasting Portion. That “acknowledgment” will be evidenced in your daily walk, by submitting to His authority, seeking to please Him in all things; and thus, becoming more and more conformed to His holy image. If we dwell in the secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty, our affections will be warm and lively toward Him, and then obedience will be spontaneous and joyful. The more we increase in *this* knowledge of God, the easier shall we find it to “acknowledge him” in all our ways (Pro 3:6).

Now, this spiritual knowledge of God which leads to the practical acknowledgment of Him, comes to us in a way of wisdom—that is, faith exercising itself on the Word; and of revelation—that is, the Spirit operating by the Word. The word “revelation” in this connection signifies the *particularity* of it—something is made known by the Spirit unto the saints which is hidden from the wise and prudent of this world, as is clear from Matthew 11:25 and 27. It is a knowledge which is peculiar to the regenerate. It also connotes a knowledge which is *additional* to what “wisdom” or the workings of faith produces—not a different kind of knowledge, but in the *degree* thereof. Faith obtains clear apprehension of God, but when the Spirit shines through the Word upon the understanding, God’s glory is more awe-inspiring to the soul. It also emphasises the *excellency* of this knowledge—that of “wisdom” is discursive or acquired by information, but that of “revelation” is intuitive. That difference has to be experienced in order to be understood. But

has not the Christian reader, when at prayer, been favoured at times with a revelation of God to his soul, which, at other seasons (though conscious of access to Him) was not the case!

In conclusion, we will summarise the exposition of Goodwin, who pointed out the bearing of each word of the text on its central theme. An increased, more intimate knowledge of God may be obtained *in a way* of “wisdom”—that is, by faith making a sanctified use of reason, by meditating on the various parts of Truth wherein God’s excellencies are revealed. That is the ordinary way, for “wisdom” is a rational laying of things together, perceiving their harmony. But there is also *a way* of “revelation,” whereby the Holy Spirit comes down into the heart with a beam from Heaven, enabling us to discern the glory of God, such as no cognition can produce. It was thus with Job when he said, “But now mine eye seeth thee” (Job 42:5). It is thus when Christ makes good that word, “I will come in to him and sup with him” (Rev 3:20). It is not apart from the Word, but God causing a beam of light from that Word to suddenly and powerfully strike into the heart.

## THE MISSION AND MIRACLES OF ELISHA

### 28. Seventeenth Miracle

The opening verse of 2 Kings 8 informs us that the Lord had called for a seven years’ famine on Samaria, and in our last, we considered one of the things which transpired during that “sore judgment” from Heaven. That which is now to engage our attention is not to be regarded as something which occurred after the expiration of the famine, but rather, as what took place at its beginning. After tracing out the experiences of the woman from Shunem, the Holy Spirit picks up the thread of verse 1 and informs us of the movements of the prophet himself. “And Elisha came to Damascus” (2Ki 8:7). He, too, left Samaria, for it was no place for him, now that the indignation of the Lord was upon it. When God deals in judgment with a people, His temporal plagues are usually accompanied by spiritual deprivations often by “removing” His servants “into a corner” (Isa 30:20), and then the people of God are left “as sheep that have no shepherd” (2Ch 18:16)—one of the acutest afflictions they can experience. It was thus with Israel in the earlier famine in the days of Ahab. There is no intimation that Elijah did any preaching during these three and a half years, for the Lord sent him to Cherith, and then to Zaraphath.

Sad indeed is the plight of any people when they are not only scourged temporally, but have their *spiritual* blessings taken from them too. During the times of the Judges, when “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Jdg 17:6; 21:25), we are told, “in those days; there was no open vision” (1Sa 3:1)—which signifies there was no accredited servant of God to whom the people could go for a knowledge of the Divine mind and will. So again, in the days of Ezekiel, it was announced, “Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumour shall be upon rumour;” and as the climacteric calamity: “Then shall they seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish

from the priest” (Eze 7:26). Little as it is realised by the present generation, the most solemn, fearful, and portentous of all the marks of God’s anger is the *withholding* of a Spirit-filled, faithful and edifying ministry, for then, there is “a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD” (Amo 8:11). There is much more than appears on the surface in that short statement, “And Elisha came to *Damascus*” (2Ki 8:7).

Solemn indeed is that brief and simple sentence, denoting as it does, that the prophet had *left Samaria*—left it because his ministry there was unwelcome, wasted. How often we find a parallel to this in the Gospels. At the very beginning of His public ministry, we read that Christ “came down to Capernaum” (Luk 4:31). Why? Because at Nazareth, they were “filled with wrath” at His teaching (Luk 4:28, 29). “And he entered into a ship, and passed over” (Mat 9:1). Why? Because at Capernaum, the whole city “besought him that he would depart out of their coasts” (Mat 8:34). He “withdrew himself from thence”—because the Pharisees had “held a council against him” (Mat 12:14, 15). “And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief” (Mat 13:58). What follows? And He went round about their villages teaching (Mar 6:5, 6). “It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you...lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Act 13:46). When God calls a pastor to another charge, the church he has left has reason to search itself before the Lord as to the cause.

First, *its connection*. “And Elisha came to Damascus” (2Ki 8:7). The opening “And” links the incident which follows (8:7-15) with the first verse of our chapter (8:1)—but more, as was the case in several previous instances, it points a series of striking contrasts between this (8:7-15), and the events recorded in the context (8:1-6). There (8:1-6), the central character was a godly woman; here (8:7-15), it is a wicked man. In the former, the prophet took the initiative, communicating with the woman; now, a king sends to inquire of the man of God. There, his prophetic announcement was promptly credited; here, it is scornfully ridiculed (8:13). In that, the king’s servant told him the truth (8:5); in this, another king’s servant tells him a lie (8:13). There, God put forth His power and graciously provided for one of His own; here, He removes His restraining hand and suffers one of the reprobate to meet with a violent end. The previous miracle closed with the restoration of the woman’s property to her; this, with a callous murder and the usurper occupying the throne.

Though there be nothing in the narrative to intimate specifically when it was that Elisha “came to Damascus;” yet, the introductory “And” seems to make it clear that the prophet took this journey during the “seven years of famine,” and probably at an early stage of the same. As the Lord was not pleased on this occasion to work in a mysterious and extraordinary way for the temporal preservation of the woman of Shunem (as He had for the widow at Zarephath), but provided for her needs by the more regular, yet not less, wonderful orderings of Providence on her behalf—so it would seem that He did for His servant. And as she sojourned in the land of the Philistines, so he now sought refuge in the capital of Syria, even though that was the very country which had for so long been hostile to Samaria. Nor did he go into hiding there, but counted upon his Master protecting him, even in the midst of a people who had so often preyed upon Israel. That Elisha’s presence in Damascus was no secret is clear from what follows.

Second, *its occasion*. “And Elisha came to Damascus” (2Ki 8:7)—the most ancient city in the world, with the possible exception of Jerusalem. Josephus says that “it was founded by Uz, the son of Aram, and grandson of Shem.” It is mentioned as early as Genesis 14:15, in the days of Abraham, 2000 B.C. It was captured and occupied in turn by the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. Paul commenced his ministry there (Act 9:19-22). It remains to this day. In the time of Ahab, Benhadad—after his defeat by the Samaritans and the sparing of his life—said to the king

of Israel, “thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria.” Upon which Ahab said, “I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away” (1Ki 20:34). Whether Benhadad ever made good his promise, Scripture does not inform us, but his “covenant” with Ahab certainly gave Elisha the right of asylum in Damascus.

That Elisha had not fled to Damascus in the energy of the flesh in order to escape the hardships and horrors of the famine, but had gone there in the will of the Lord, is evident from the sequel. In what follows, we are shown how, while here, he received communications from God and was used by Him. That is one of the ways in which the child of God may ascertain whether or not he is in the place he should be, or whether in self-will, he has forsaken the path of duty. “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and I will love him, and will *manifest* myself to him” (Joh 14:21)—make Myself a living reality to his soul, make discoveries of My glory to him through the written Word. But when we take matters into our own hands, and our ways displease the Lord, communion is severed, and He hides His face from us. When we choose our own way and the Spirit is grieved, He no longer takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us, but disquiets our hearts because of our sins.

Yes, God made use of Elisha while he sojourned in Damascus. But how varied, how solemnly varied are the several ways in which He is pleased to employ His servants. Not now was he commissioned to heal a leper, nor to restore a dead child to life, but rather to announce the death of a king. Herein, we have shadowed forth the more painful and exacting side of the minister’s duty. He is required to set before men the way of life, and the way of death. He is under bonds to faithfully make known the doom awaiting the wicked, as well as the bliss reserved for the righteous. He is to preach the Law, as well as the Gospel; to describe the everlasting torments of Hell, as well as the unending glory of Heaven. He is bidden to preach the Gospel to every creature, and announce in no uncertain tones, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be *damned*” (Mar 16:16). Only by so doing will he be warranted in saying, “I am pure from the blood of all men. *For* I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” (Act 20:26, 27).

“And Elisha came to Damascus; and Benhadad the king of Syria was sick; and it was told him, saying, The man of God is come hither” (2Ki 8:7). The wearing of a crown does not exempt its possessor from the common troubles unto which man is born, rather does it afford additional opportunities for gratifying the lusts of the flesh, which will only increase his troubles. It is only by being temperate in all things that many sicknesses can be avoided, for walking according to the rules of Scripture promotes health of body, as well as health of soul. When sickness overtakes a saint, his first concern should not be its removal, but a definite seeking unto the Lord to ascertain *why* He has afflicted him (Job 10:2). His next concern should be to have his sickness *sanctified* to the good of his soul, that he may learn the lessons that chastisement is designed to teach him, that in the issue, he may be able to say, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes” (Psa 119:71). But it is the privilege of *faith* to become better acquainted with Jehovah-Rophi— “the LORD that *healeth* thee” (Exo 15:26).

In the case before us, it was not a child of God who had fallen sick, but a heathen monarch. “And the king said unto Hazael, Take a present in thine hand, and go, meet the man of God, and enquire of the LORD by him, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?” (2Ki 8:8). What a startling antithesis this presents from what was before us in 2 Kings 6:31! Only a short time previously, the king of Israel had sworn a horrible oath that Elisha should be slain; here, a foreign king owns him as “the man of God” and makes enquiry concerning his own life or death. Striking too is the contrast between Benhadad’s action here, and the last thing recorded of him when he sent his

forces to take Elisha captive (2Ki 6:14)! How fickle is human nature: One day, ready to pluck out their eyes and give them to a servant of God; and the next, regarding him as their enemy, because he told them the truth (Gal 4:15, 16). But now the Syrian king was concerned about his condition and anxious to know the outcome of his illness.

It appears to have been the practice in those days for a king who was seriously ill to make a formal inquiry from one whom he regarded as endowed with supernatural knowledge. Thus, we read that when Jeroboam's son fell sick, he sent his wife to ascertain of Ahijah the prophet, "What shall become of the child" (1Ki 14:3); and again, we are told that Ahaziah sent messengers to "enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease"! (2Ki 1:2). From what is recorded in 1 Kings 20:23 and the sequel, we may conclude that Benhadad had lost confidence in his own "gods" and placed more reliance upon the word of Elisha; yet it is to be noted that he neither asked for his prayers, nor expressed any desire of a visit from him. Seriously sick as he felt himself to be, he was not concerned about his soul, but only of his body. Throughout the whole of his career, there is nothing to indicate he had the slightest regard for the Lord, but much to the contrary.

"So Hazael went to meet him, and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' burden, and came and stood before him, and said, Thy son Benhadad king of Syria hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?" (2Ki 8:9). The "present" was to intimate that he came on a peaceful and friendly mission and with no design of doing the prophet an injury, or carrying him away as a prisoner. This, too, was in accord with the custom of those days, and the ways of Orientals. Thus, when Saul wished to consult Samuel about the lost asses of his father, he lamented the fact that he had "not a present to bring to the man of God" (1Sa 9:7), and when the wife of Jeroboam went to inquire of the prophet Ahijah, she took a present for him (1Ki 14:3). But looking higher, we may see in the lavish nature of Benhadad's present, the guiding hand of God and an "earnest" for His servant that He would spread a table for him in the presence of his enemies! We are not told that Elisha refused this present, nor was there any reason why he should—perhaps he sent a goodly portion thereof to relieve the distress of the schools of the prophets still in Samaria.

"And Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover: howbeit the LORD hath shewed me that he shall surely die" (2Ki 8:10). Observe first a significant omission. Elisha did not offer to go and visit Benhadad! That was not because he was callous, for the very next verse shows he was a man of compassion—rather, was he restrained by the Lord, who had no design of mercy unto the Syrian king. Very solemn was that. But what are we to make of the prophet's enigmatical language? Why this: The disease from which your master is suffering will not produce a fatal end; nevertheless, the Lord has showed me that his death is imminent: By violence—another proof that the Lord God "revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amo 3:7). It is on this same principle we discover the harmony between there being "an appointed time to man upon earth" (Job 7:1), and "why shouldest thou die before thy time?" (Ecc 7:17)—before the normal course of nature; and the fifteen years "added to" the course of Hezekiah's life—God intervening to stay the ordinary working of his disease.

Third, *its accompaniment*. "And he settled his countenance stedfastly, until he was ashamed: and the man of God wept" (2Ki 8:11). The first clause requires to be interpreted in the light of all that follows. Had it stood by itself, we should have understood it to signify that Hazael was deeply grieved by the prophet's announcement and sought to control his emotions—though that had not accounted for the prophet bursting into tears. But the sequel obliges us to conclude that—so far from being horrified at the news he had just received—Hazael was highly gratified, and the

settling of his countenance was an endeavour to conceal his elation. Accordingly, we regard the “until he was ashamed” (the Hebrew word is often rendered “confounded,” and once “put to confusion”) as denoting that—under the piercing gaze of Elisha—he realised he had not succeeded and was chagrined that his countenance revealed the wicked pleasure he found in the prophet’s reply. God has wisely, justly, and mercifully ordered it that, to a considerable extent, the countenance is made to betray the workings of our minds and the state of our hearts.

The servant of God was not deceived by Hazael’s play-acting, for he not only had the aid of his own eyes to perceive the attempted deception, but also had a direct revelation from Heaven concerning the sequel. The weeping of the man of God was not occasioned by his knowledge of the violent end awaiting Benhadad, but rather, from what the Lord had also shown him concerning the fearful horrors which should shortly be inflicted upon Israel. In his tears, we behold Elisha foreshadowing his incarnate Lord who wept over Jerusalem (Luk 19:41)—he was no heartless stoic. Even though he knew that his nation fully deserved the still sorer judgments—which God would shortly visit upon it through the agency of the man who now stood before him—yet Elisha could not be unmoved at his prophetic foreview of their terrible afflictions. The prophets were men of deep feeling, as the history of Jeremiah abundantly manifests. So, too, was Paul (Phi 3:18). So is every true servant of Christ.

“Fourth, *its nature*. “And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child” (2Ki 8:12). Like the two preceding ones, this miracle consists of a supernatural disclosure, the announcing of a prophetic revelation, which he had received direct from God—in this case, a double one: The death of Benhadad, and the judgments which should come upon Israel. So far was Hazael from being melted by Elisha’s tears, he was probably non-plussed by them; and in order to gain time for composure of mind, asked the question which he did. It is solemn to note that while Elisha announced what he foresaw would happen, he made no effort to dissuade or deter Hazael—as our Lord foretold the treachery of Judas, but sought not to turn him from his evil purpose.

Fifth, *its challenge*. “And Hazael said, But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” (2Ki 8:13). Hotly did he resent such a charge, nor did he at that moment deem himself capable of such atrocities, nor did he wish the prophet to regard him as such a wretch. How little do the unregenerate realize or suspect the desperate wickedness of their hearts! How anxious are they that others should not think the worse of them! When not immediately exposed to temptations, they do not believe they are capable of such enormities, and are highly insulted when the contrary is affirmed. “And Elisha answered, The LORD hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria” (2Ki 8:13). Again, we see the extraordinary powers with which the prophets were invested, though Elisha gives God the glory for his. When he ascended the throne, all human restraint would be removed from Hazael, and enlarged powers and opportunities would be his for working evil.

Sixth, *its fulfilment*. “So he departed from Elisha, and came to his master; who said to him, What said Elisha to thee? And he answered, He told me that thou shouldest surely recover” (2Ki 8:14). Thus, did Hazael seek to put off his guard from the one he intended to murder by deliberately lying to him. “And it came to pass on the morrow, that he took a thick cloth, and dipped it in water, and spread it on his face, so that he died: and Hazael reigned in his stead” (2Ki 8:15). And this was the man, who, a few hours before, indignantly denied he had the character of a savage dog! In the fearful doom of Benhadad, we see the righteous retribution of God: Having been a

man of violence, he met with a violent end—as he had lived, so he died (see 1 Kings 20: 1, 16, 21, 26, 29; 22:1; 2 Kings 6:8, 24). And for Hazael in the future: 2 Kings 10:32

Seventh, *its meaning*. This is so obvious that very few words are needed: It is the glaring contrast between the faithful and the unfaithful servant. Elisha had unflinchingly declared the counsel which he had received from the Lord, however unpalatable it was to his hearer. But Hazael gives us a picture of the hireling, the false prophet, the deceiver of souls. Ostensibly, he went forth in obedience to his master's commission (2Ki 8:9); in reality, he was playing the part of a hypocrite (2Ki 8:11). When he delivered his message, he falsified it by withholding the most pointed and solemn part of it (2Ki 8:14). How many there are like him, uttering “smooth things” and remaining guiltily silent on the doom awaiting the wicked. As surely as Hazael slew Benhadad, the unfaithful preachers of our day are murdering souls. As Hazael became “king,” so the most faithless now occupy the seats of power in Christendom.

## THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

### 6d. Its Effectuation

In seeking to show what Christ did in order to effect reconciliation between God and His people, two methods of presentation were open to us—each warranted by the analogy of Scripture: To begin with the work of Christ as it is usually apprehended by us, working back to its ordination by God; or to start with the Divine appointment and trace out the progressive accomplishment of the same on the plane of human history. In the last three articles, we followed the former plan; now, to aid the reader still further, we will reverse the process. Under our fifth main division, we saw how that a Covenant was entered into between the Father and the Son, in which everything necessary for the redemption of His elect was mutually agreed upon and settled; here, we are to contemplate what was actually done in fulfilment of that covenant engagement.

First, having agreed to become the Mediator or Daysman betwixt God and His people, the Beloved of the Father became *incarnate*. Oneness of nature was indispensable, for there must be a conjunction effected between the Redeemer and the redeemed, if He was to be identified with those on whose behalf He acted. Accordingly, “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham” (Heb 2:16), that He might have a right of property in us *as Man*, as well as God. In Galatians 4:4, 5, we are told that the Son became incarnate “to *redeem* them that were under the law.” By the law of Israel, the right of redemption belonged to him that was next of blood (Lev 25:25; Rut 2:20 [margin], 4:4-9). It was by being made like unto His brethren that Christ acquired the human and legal title to pay the ransom-price for His Church.

The obedience of *man* to the Divine Law is that to which “life” is promised (Mat 19:17, Rom 7:10). An angel's obeying in our stead would not have been the establishment of the original law, nor could life for men be claimed as the reward of angelic obedience. By man came death; and consequently, by man must come the resurrection from the dead (1Co 15:21, 22). It was essential that the Son of God should become incarnate and be in full possession of our humanity that He

might obey the Law and bring in everlasting righteousness for His people. It was His becoming flesh which laid the foundation for the imputation of our liabilities unto Christ and His merits, obedience, and sufferings unto us.

Second, in becoming incarnate, the Son of God “took upon him [voluntary action!] the form of a servant” (Phi 2:7)—God’s Servant, but on our behalf. That service consisted of His entering into the office of Surety. “Suretyship is a relation constituted by covenant engagement, by which parties become legally one so that they can be dealt with as such in law” (J. Armour). Or to state it in other words, a surety is one who gives security for another that he will perform something which the other is bound to do, so that in case of the failure of the first party, he will perform it for him. It was His natural union with His people that made possible and proper Christ’s federal oneness with them. Thus, Christ as “the surety of the covenant” came under obligation to perform the condition of the covenant in lieu of and behalf of His elect (Heb 7:22).

It must be carefully borne in mind that the Covenant was made with the covenantees (the saints) in the person of their Head. Thus, when Christ came forth as the Surety of the covenant, He appeared as the Representative of His people, assuming their liabilities and discharging their responsibilities, making satisfaction for their sins and bringing in an everlasting righteousness; and that, in such a way that the Law was magnified and made honourable (Isa 42:21), and that He (and His people in Him) became entitled to the award of the Law. We shall devote a disproportionate space to this essential point.

Third, in becoming our Surety, Christ *engaged to do* all that was necessary in order to restore His people unto the favour of God and to secure for them the right of everlasting felicity. The first of those engagements or terms was His meeting the original and righteous demands, which God made of them in Adam under the Covenant of Works—namely, to render in their place perfect and perpetual obedience to the Divine Law. The second of those terms was that He should endure the penalty of the Law which they had broken; and this, He did when He was “made a curse” (Gal 3:13) for them and suffered the wrath of God on their behalf. From the first Adam, the law demanded naught, but full conformity to its precept. But from the last Adam, it necessarily demanded not only holy obedience; but also penal suffering, that He might atone for our sins and blot out our iniquities.

It has been rightly pointed out that “In the original institute, the whole substance of moral obedience was summed up in the single precept, relative to the fruit forbidden. As the Law is a unity, and he who offends in one point is guilty of all; so when the spirit of obedience is tested in a single point only, and confined to that point, a failure here, brings upon man the guilt of the whole—he is liable to the whole penalty. Now, this was the sum total of the Law, as a covenant given to Adam that he should obey, and as the reward of obedience, should receive life. This glorious reward was held up as the motive prompting to choice on the side of law and right. The law was ordained unto life (Rom 7:10). This is its object, and to this, it was adapted. But it failed in the hands of the first Adam; and the last Adam comes in to make it good, to establish its principle and secure its object.” (G. Junkin on “Justification”).

When Christ appeared as the Surety of His People, it was with the affirmation, “Lo, I come to *do thy will*, O God” (Heb 10:9). Note well the word we have placed in italics: To “do” God’s will (ere He suffered His wrath for our sins)—to “do” what the first Adam failed to perform. The fundamental nature of God’s government must needs have been changed had He granted unto men “life” on any other terms than what He had presented under the Covenant of Works, and to which man agreed. The Gospel contains no substitute for the Law, but reveals that remedial scheme by which is confirmed and made good the principles of righteousness originally laid down by God to



Adam. “Do we then make void the law through faith [in the Gospel]? God forbid: Yea [is the triumphant answer], we *establish* the law” (Rom 3:31).

The unchanging terms of the Covenant of Works is “This do [obey the Law] and thou shalt live” (Luk 10:28). And since I have broken the Law and am incapable of keeping it, then “life”—the reward of the Law—could never be mine unless the Surety had “this” *done* on my behalf. Therefore was He “made under the law” (Gal 4:4)—for His appointed and agreed-upon task was not only to “make an end of sins,” but also to “bring in everlasting righteousness” (Dan 9:24); that is, a justifying righteousness for the whole election of grace. The Lord Jesus freely consented to pay His people’s debts, both in making satisfaction to the Law which they had broken, and in rendering perfect obedience in their stead. That “righteousness,” Christ was working out for us from the moment of His birth—until upon the Cross He cried, “It is finished” (Joh 19:30).

In executing the great work of our redemption and reconciliation, the incarnate Son paid homage to the Divine Law. He was not only “made under” it, but as He declared, “Thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:8)—enshrined in His affections, and His whole life was one of complete subjection to it. Christ as the Sin-bearer and Sin-expiator only gives one side of His work; the other is His holy *obedience*—the two together furnishing us a complete view of the satisfaction which He rendered to God. Christ’s obedience was equally the work of the One for the many, the Head for His body, and equally essential as His death. His first recorded utterance, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luk 2:49) shows clearly that He had entered this world on a special errand, that He was engaged in a specific work unto the Father, that He owed obedience to Him—as the “must” plainly intimates.

His first utterance on emerging from His private life struck the same note. When presenting Himself for baptism, John demurred, for to comply made Christ appear to be a *sinner*, for it was “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Luk 3:3). But it was not as a private person Christ presented Himself, but as “the Lamb of God, which taketh [or “beareth”] away the sin of the world” (Joh 1:29). To His forerunner’s objection, the Saviour replied, “Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness” (Mat 3:15). The “now” is emphatic in the Greek—now that I have made Myself “of no reputation” (Phi 2:7), now that I am discharging My suretyship. It “became” Him to fulfil His engagement. As the One obeying for the many (“us”!), it was requisite that He “fulfil all righteousness”—submit to God’s positive institutions or ordinances, as well as the moral Law.

In His first public address, Christ declared, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to *fulfil*” (Mat 5:17). Those words supply us with a clear-cut definition of His mission, and the character of the work in which He was engaged. In what way did He “fulfil” the Prophets? Why, *by doing* those things which they had foretold—such as preaching good tidings (Isa 61:1) and healing the sick (Isa 35:4-6)—and *by suffering* the indignities and pains which they had announced. In precisely the same way, He “fulfilled” the Law—namely, by rendering the obedience which its precepts required, and by enduring the punishment which its penalty demanded. The grand end of the incarnation was that Christ should provide for His people a righteousness, which excelled that of the scribes and Pharisees (Mat 5:20).

“To satisfy both the requirements of His justice and the abundance of His mercy, God determined that a full satisfaction should be made unto His Law, and such a satisfaction that it was thereby more honoured than if it had never been broken, or the whole race damned. In order thereto, He appointed that Christ should serve as the Substitute and Surety of His people. He must

stand as their Representative and fulfil all righteousness for them and endure the curse in their stead, so that they might be legally reckoned to have obeyed and suffered in Him” (T. Goodwin, 1600-1680, Puritan). Accordingly, we find Christ saying, “My meat is to *do* the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (Joh 4:34). The single principle that guided His holy life was *obedience to God*. Therein, He not only left us an example to follow, but was working out for us a righteousness to be imputed to our account, and by which we are justified and entitled to the reward of the Law. Calvary was not the beginning, but the end of His life of perfect obedience—as the “obedient *unto* death” of Philippians 2:8 testifies.

Fourth, God *transferred the sins* of His people and placed them upon their Surety the moment He assumed that office. “The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6)—not experimentally, but legally; not the corruption of them, but the guilt; not that He was defiled by them, but that He became subject to their penalty. The sins of His people were charged to the account of the Holy One. So truly was this the case that He acknowledged the actuality thereof, crying, “For innumerable evils have compassed me about: *mine* iniquities have taken hold upon me” (Psa 40:12); and again, “O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and *my sins* are not hid from thee” (Psa 69:5). That was the language of the Surety, as the context clearly shows.

Fifth, because Christ entered this world charged with the guilt of His people, Divine justice dealt with Him accordingly—as was shown under the first article on Christ effectuating reconciliation as our Substitute. Because Christ had shouldered the awful burden of His people’s sins, He must be paid sin’s wages. Because the Just had so united Himself to the unjust, He must suffer “the due reward of our deeds” (Luk 23:41). He must, accordingly, be “wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:4, 5). It was fore-announced, “He shall bear their iniquities” (Isa 53:11); and iniquities and guilt are inseparable, and since guilt signifies liability to punishment, Christ must be penalised in our stead. O that this article may be so blest to some reader that he may, for the first time, be able to truly say:

“Upon a life I did not live, upon a death I did not die—Another’s life, Another’s death, I rest my soul eternally.”

Sixth, because Christ was “made...to be sin” for His people (2Co 5:21), He was “*made a curse*” for them (Gal 3:13)—that curse consisted of the avenging wrath of God. The Sinbearer was “numbered with the transgressors” (Isa 53:12). The august dignity of Christ’s person did not avail to any abatement of the Divine curse. God “spared not his own son” (Rom 8:32). So far from sparing Him, the Judge of all the earth, the moral Governor of this world, the Administrator of the Law cried, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd” (Zec 13:7). Though “He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth, Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; *he* hath put him to grief” (Isa 53:9, 10). The wages of sin is death, and as physical death consists of the severance of the soul from the body, so spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God; and on the Cross, Christ was forsaken by God.

We must, therefore, look higher than the “band of men and officers” (Joh 18:3)—as the servants of the chief priests and Pharisees sent to apprehend Christ in the Garden—and see in them the agents of Divine justice, though they knew not what they did. We must needs direct our eyes above the Roman soldiers, as they “platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his [Christ’s] head” (Joh 19:2), and see in them the executives of the Divine Law, branding our Surety with the mark of the curse (see Gen 3:17, 18). We are required to exercise the vision of faith and behold in Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate doing “whatsoever *thy* [God’s] hand and thy counsel determined before

to be done” (Act 4:28) in order that the terms of the Everlasting Covenant should be carried out, the requirements of righteousness satisfied, the holy wrath of God appeased, and the sins of His people forever removed from before Him “as far as the east is from the west” (Psa 103:12).

Seventh, because Christ rendered full satisfaction to Divine justice, He redeemed His people unto Himself, and they are not only absolved from all guilt, but are *reconciled to God*. Not only are they no longer under the frown of the Divine Judge, but His smile rests upon them; not only are they freed from His displeasure, but they are restored to His favour; not only do they stand “unblameable and unreprouvable in his [God’s] sight” (Col 1:22), but they have an inalienable title to everlasting felicity. There cannot be a substitution without a *dual imputation*: If the debt of the debtor be charged to the surety, then upon his discharge of the same, the payment of the surety must be credited to the debtor. Accordingly, we are told, “For he hath made him [legally] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made [legally] the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21)—*there* is the counter-imputation: Christ’s righteousness is reckoned to the account of His people.

“As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners [legally constituted so; and then, as the consequence, experimentally became such] so by the obedience of one, shall many be *made* [legally constituted so, and then as the consequence, experimentally become such] *righteous* (Rom 5:19). Christ took our place that we might take His. Christ removed our sins that we might be clothed with His merits. Because Christ kept the Law for us, we are entitled to “reign in life” (Rom 5:17). “The forerunner is *for us* entered [into Heaven], even Jesus” (Heb 6:20). Observe well how Christ demanded this as His legal right: “Father, *I will* that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am” (Joh 17:24)—I have fully discharged their obligations, I have wrought out for them an everlasting righteousness; now give them that which, for My sake, they are justly entitled to.

“The moment the believing sinner accepts Christ as his Substitute, he finds himself not only cleared from his guilt, but rewarded—he gets all heaven because of the glory and merits of Christ. The Atonement we preach is one of absolute exchange. It is that Christ took our place literally, in order that we might take His place literally—that God regarded and treated Christ as the sinner, and that He regards and treats the believing sinner as Christ. From the moment we believe, God looks upon us as if we were Christ. He takes it as if Christ’s atonement had been our atonement, and as if Christ’s life had been our life; and He beholds, accepts, blesses, and rewards on the ground that all Christ was and did is ours” (G. S. Bishop, “Doctrines of Grace”). What a glorious Gospel! Then proclaim it freely and boldly, ye ministers of Christ.

From all that has been pointed out, it should, we think, be more or less clear to the simplest reader that the breach between God and His sinning people has been righteously healed—that is to say, reconciliation has been effected in a way both gracious and legal. To have brought this suit into the court of Divine Law had availed nothing, unless provision had been made for so ordering its process and judgment that the sinner might be honourably accepted, and that God might be both “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). The Law must be on the sinner’s side—his absolver, and not his condemner; his justifier, and not his accuser. That provision has been made by means of the Surety-Substitute, by the transference of total indebtedness from those who incurred it to One who incurred it not, and fully discharged the same.

It is by the principle and on the ground of Suretyship and Substitution that God’s justice is displayed in all His transactions with the believing sinner. It is this which is the climacteric in the Good News proclaimed by the heralds of Christ. The grand Evangel not only exhibits the knowledge-surpassing *love* of God, but as the apostle declares, “therein is the *righteousness* of

God revealed” (Rom 1:17). Grace indeed reigns, but it does so “through righteousness” (Rom 5:21). “Christ bears the sins of many because in His covenanted identification with those ‘many,’ their sins are sinlessly and truly His. And unto the many sons and daughters of the covenant, the Father imputes the righteousness of the Son, because, in their covenant oneness with the Son, His righteousness is undeservedly, but truly, their own righteousness. And all throughout, ‘the judgment of God is according to truth’ (Rom 2:2) and equity” (H. Martin, on “The Atonement”). Thus, we behold once more that, at the Cross, “mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psa 85:10). It is not a peace at any price, a peace wherein justice is sacrificed and the law is flouted, but a righteous peace, one that glorifies *all* the Divine perfections. Such is the wondrous and blessed message of the Gospel.

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

### 8. Its Promotion

We have now arrived at what is perhaps the most important aspect of our subject—not from the doctrinal side, but from the practical standpoint. It will avail us little to discover that there is a manifold needs-be why the Christian should grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, as it would advantage us nothing to be quite clear in our minds as to what Christian progress is not, and what it really consists of, if we continue to be stationary. While it may awaken interest to learn that in certain fundamental respects, the growth of saints is like unto trees in their upward, downward, inward, and outward development—yet such information will probe of no real value, unless the conscience be exercised thereby, and there be definite effort on our part. Trees do not grow mechanically, but only as they derive nourishment from the soil and receive water and sunshine from above. It is instruction to find out there are different grades in God’s family, and to ascertain the characteristics of each, but of what service will that be to me—unless I personally pass from spiritual infancy to youth, and eventually become a “father” in Christ?

While there is a close analogy between the manner of a Christian’s growth and that of a tree, it must not be lost sight of that there is a real and radical difference between them considered as entities, for *we* are moral agents, accountable creatures—while they are not so; and it is the exercise of our moral agency and the discharge of our responsibility which is now to engage our attention. Spiritual growth is very far from being a fortuitous thing, which occurs irrespective of the use of suitable means—nor does it take place spontaneously, or apart from the availing ourselves of our privileges and the performance of our duty. Rather is it the outcome of God’s blessing upon our employment of the aids which He has provided and appointed, and the orderly development of the different graces He has bestowed upon us. As it is in the natural, so it is in the spiritual: There are certain things which foster, and there are other things which hinder Christian progress—and it is

the lasting obligation of the saint to make full use of the former, and to resolutely avoid the latter. Spiritual growth will not be promoted while we remain indifferent and inactive, but only as we give the utmost diligence to attending unto the health of our souls.

In seeking to treat of the spiritual growth of a saint, it needs to be borne in mind that here—as everywhere in the Christian life—there are two different agents at work, two entirely different principles are concerned: There is both a Divine and a human side to the subject, and much wisdom and care are required if a proper and scriptural proportion is to be maintained. Those two agents are God and the saint; those two principles are the operations of Divine sovereignty, and the discharge of Christian responsibility. The difficulty involved—admittedly a real one—is to recognise the existence of each and to maintain a due balance between the one and the other. There is a real danger that we become so occupied with the believer’s duty and his diligence in using the proper means, that he takes too much credit to himself; and thereby, robs God of His glory—as in large measure do the Arminians. On the other hand, equally real is the danger that we dwell so exclusively on the Divine operations and our dependence on the Spirit’s quickening, that a spirit of inertia seizes us, and we become reduced to unaccountable non-entities—as is the case with Fatalists and Antinomians. From either extreme, we should earnestly seek deliverance.

It is of vital importance at the outset, that we clearly recognise that God alone can make His people grow and prosper, and that we should be deeply and lastingly sensible of our entire dependency upon Him. As we were unable to originate spiritual life in our souls, so we are equally unable to preserve or increase the same. Deeply humbling though that truth be unto our hearts, yet the declarations of Holy Writ are too implicit and too numerous to leave us in the slightest doubt upon it. “None can keep alive his own soul” (Psa 22:29)—true alike naturally and spiritually; positively, “O bless our God...which holdeth our soul in life” (Psa 66:8, 9). “Thou maintainest my lot” (Psa 16:5), said Christ Himself. “Thy God hath commanded thy strength” (Psa 68:28). “From me is thy fruit” (Hos 14:8). “Thou also hast wrought all our works in us” (Isa 26:12). “All my springs are in thee” (Psa 87:7). “Without me ye can do nothing” (Joh 15:5). Such flesh-withering statements as those cut away all ground for boasting, and place the crown of honour where it rightfully belongs.

But there is another class of passages, equally plain and necessary for us to receive at their face value and be duly influenced by them: Passages which emphasise the Christian’s accountability, which inculcate the discharge of his responsibility, and which blame him when he fails therein. Passages which show that God deals with His people as rational creatures, setting before them their duty and requiring them under pain of His displeasure and their great loss to diligently perform the same. He expressly exhorts them to “grow in grace” (2Pe 3:18). He bids them to be “laying aside” the things which hinder and *to* “desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby” (1Pe 2:1, 2). So far from holding the Hebrews as being without excuse for not having grown, He *blames* them (Heb 5:11-14). Though He has promised to do good unto His people, nevertheless, the Lord has declared, “I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, *to do it for them*” (Eze 36:37), and hesitates not to say, “Yet ye have not, because ye ask not” (Jam 4:2).

At first sight, it may appear impossible for us to show the meeting-point between the operations of God’s sovereignty, and the discharge of Christian responsibility; and to define the relation of the latter to the former, and the manner of their interworking. Had we been left to ourselves, it had indeed been a task beyond the compass of human reason; but Scripture solves the problem for us, and in terms so plain that the simplest believer has no difficulty in understanding them. “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was

not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1Co 15:10). It is true that the apostle was treating more immediately with his ministerial career; yet, in its wider application, it is obvious that the principles of the verse apply with equal propriety and force to the practical side of the Christian’s life—evidenced by the Lord’s people in all ages appropriating to themselves its first and last clauses—but equally important and pertinent is that which comes in between them.

In some passages, “the grace of God” signifies His eternal good will unto His people; in others, it connotes rather the *effect* of His favour, the “grace” which He bestows upon and infuses into them—as in, “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph 4:7). Christ is “full of grace and truth...and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” (Joh 1:14, 16). Just as sin is a powerful principle working within the natural man, inclining him to evil, so at regeneration, God’s elect have communicated to their souls Divine grace—which acts as a powerful principle working within them and inclining unto holiness. “Grace is nothing else but an introduction of the virtues of God into the soul” (T. Manton, 1620-1677). That principle of grace which is imparted to us at the new birth is what is often termed “the new nature” in the Christian, and is designated “the spirit,” because “born of the Spirit” (Joh 3:6, 8); and being spiritual and holy, it is opposed by indwelling sin—called “the flesh” (Gal 5: 17)—and that, in turn, opposes the workings of sin or the lusts of the flesh, the one being contrary to the other.

The principle of grace or new nature—which is bestowed on the saint—is but a *creature*, and though intrinsically holy, it is entirely dependent upon its Author for strength and growth. And thus, we must distinguish between the *principle* of grace and fresh *supplies* of grace for its invigoration and development. We may liken the newly-born babe and the young Christian subsequently to a fully-rigged yacht—though its sails be set, it is incapable of movement until a wind blows. The Christian is responsible to spread his sails and look to God for a breeze from Heaven; but until the wind stirs (Joh 3:8), he will make no progress. To drop the figure and come to the reality, what has just been said receives illustration in the apostolic benediction; wherein Paul so uniformly prayed for the saints, “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Col 1:2; 1Th 1:1); or as Peter expresses it, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you” (2Pe 1:2)—for nothing less than grace “multiplied” will enable any Christian to grow and thrive.

We must distinguish, then, not only between the eternal goodwill and favour of God unto His people (Eph 1:4, 5), and the effect or fruit of it in the actual infusion of His grace (Eph 4:7)—or bestowal of an active principle of holiness—but we must also recognise the difference between that principle and the *daily renewing* of it (2Co 4:16), or energizings of it, by the influences of the Holy Spirit—which we deserve not. Though that new nature be a spiritual and holy one which disposes its possessor unto the pleasing of God, yet, it has no sufficiency in itself to produce the fruits of holiness. Said the Psalmist, “O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes” (Psa 119:5): Such a desire proceeded from the principle of grace, but having not the power in itself it needed additional Divine enablement to carry it out. So again, “Quicken thou me according to thy word” (Psa 119:25): The sparks of grace under the ashes of the flesh needed fanning into a blaze. The life of grace can only be carried on by complete dependence upon God and receiving from Him a fresh “supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phi 1:19).

“Ye must depend upon Christ for strength, ability to repent: All evangelical duties are done in *His* strength. Christ must give us soft hearts, hearts that are repentant; and must teach them by His Spirit before they will repent. Except He smite these rocks, they will yield no water, no tears for

sin; except He break these hearts, they will not bleed. We may as well melt a flint, or turn a stone into flesh, as repent in our own strength. It is far above the power of nature; nay, most contrary to it. How can we hate sin, which naturally, we love above all? Mourn for that wherein we most delight? Forsake that which is as dear as ourselves? It is the almighty power of Christ which only can do this: We must rely on, seek to Him for it—Lamentations 5:21” (David Clarkson, 1670). The same applies just as truly to faith, hope, love, patience—the exercise of any and all of the Christian graces. Only as we are strengthened with might, by the Spirit in our inner man, are we enabled to be fruitful branches of the Vine.

In its final analysis, the spiritual growth of the Christian turns upon the grace, which he *continues to receive* from God; nor is the measure obtained, determined by anything in or of us. Since it be grace, its Author dispenses it according to His own sovereign determination: “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13). It is God “that giveth the increase” (1Co 3:7)—to some, an increase of faith and wisdom; to others, of love and meekness; to yet others, of comfort and peace; to yet others, strength and victory—“dividing to every man severally as He will” (1Co 12:11). Our concern and co-operation is equally due to enabling grace—for of ourselves, “not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God” (2Co 3:5). All that is good in us is but a stream from the fountain of Divine grace; and naught, but an abiding conviction of that fact will keep us both humble and thankful. God it is who inclines the mind and will unto any good, who illumines our understandings and draws out our affections unto things above. Even the means of grace are ineffectual, unless God blesses them to us; yet, we sin if we use them not.

But let us turn now to the human-accountability-side of this subject: We are required to “grow in grace” (2Pe 3:18), it is our responsibility to obtain “more grace” (Jam 4:6), and the fault is entirely ours if we do not—for “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10) is infinitely more willing to give than we are to receive. We are plainly exhorted, “Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you” (Mat 7:7; Luk 11:9)—where the reference is to our obtaining fresh supplies of grace. No fatalistic apathy is inculcated there; no sitting still with our hands folded until God be pleased to “revive us” (Psa 85:6). No, the very opposite: A definite “asking,” an earnest “seeking,” an importunate “knocking” until the needed supply is obtained. We are expressly bidden to “*be strong* in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2Ti 2:1). We are freely invited to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16)—pardoning grace, sanctifying grace, persevering grace, as well as grace to faithfully perform the common tasks of life.

It is then both our privilege and duty to obtain fresh supplies of grace each day. Says the apostle, “let us have grace” (Heb 12:28). But let us note the whole of that verse and observe the five things in it. “Wherefore [an inference drawn from the context] we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved [the privilege conferred upon us], let us have grace [the enablement], whereby we may serve God acceptably [the task assigned us] with reverence and godly fear”—the manner of its performance. Such a duty as serving God acceptably, we cannot possibly perform without special Divine assistance. That assistance or strength is to be definitely, diligently, constantly sought by us. To quote from John Owen on this verse—who is one of the very last to be accused of having a legalistic spirit: “To have an increase of this grace as unto its degrees and measures and to keep in exercise in all the duties of the service of God, is a duty *required of* believers by virtue of all the Gospel privileges, which they receive from God. For herein consists that revenue of glory which on their account He expecteth and requireth.” Alas, that so many hyper-Calvinists have got so far away from that holy balance.


In order to the obtaining fresh supplies of grace, we need first to cultivate a sense of our own weakness, sinfulness, and insufficiency, fighting against every uprising of pride and self-confidence. Second, we need to be more diligent in using the grace we already have, remembering that the one who traded with his talents was he to whom additional ones were entrusted. Third, we need to supplicate God for the same—since Christ has taught us to ask our Father for our daily bread, how much more do we need to ask Him for daily grace! There is a mediatorial fulness of grace in Christ for His people, and it is their privilege and duty to draw upon Him for the same. “Let us therefore come boldly [freely and confidently] unto the throne of grace” (Heb 4:16)—the verb is not in the aorist, but the present tense, signifying a *continuous* coming. Form the habit of so doing—it is both our privilege and duty to come, and to come “boldly.” The apostle did not say none may come, except they do so confidently—rather is he showing (from considerations in the context) how we *should* come. If we cannot come with boldness, then let us come asking for it.

We can advance nothing but the most idle and worthless excuses for our non-compliance with the blessed invitation of Hebrews 4:16, and our failure to “find grace to help in time of need;” yea, so pointless and vain are those excuses, it would be a waste of time to name and refute them. If we traced them back to their source, little as we may suspect it, it would be found that those excuses issue from a sense of self-sufficiency, as is clearly implied by those words, “God resisteth the *proud*, but giveth grace unto the humble” (Jam 4:6). God says to me, to you, “Let him take hold of my strength” (Isa 27:5); and again, “*seek* the LORD and his strength” (1Ch 16:11; Psa 105:4). Therefore, we should come before Him with the prayer, “Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands” (Neh 6:9), pleading His promise, “I *will* strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee” (Isa 41:10). In an earlier paragraph, we quoted the words, “thy God hath commanded thy strength;” yet, so far from the Psalmist feeling that relieved him of all responsibility in the matter, he cried “strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us” (Psa 68:28).

And now let us show how that 1 Corinthians 15:10 reveals the meeting point between the Divine operations of grace and our improvement of the same. First, “But by the grace of God I am what I am”—a brand plucked out of the fire, a new creature in Christ Jesus. Second, “and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain [contrast 2Co 6:1]; but *I laboured* more abundantly than they all”—so far from grace encouraging unto listlessness, it stirred up to earnest endeavour and the improving of the same, so that the apostle was conscious of and shrank not from affirming his *own* diligence and zeal. Third, “yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1Co 15:10)—he disowns any to himself, but gives all the glory to God. It is our bounden duty to use the grace God has bestowed upon us, stirring up and exercising that holy principle, yet this is not to puff us up. As the apostle said again, “Whereunto I also labour, *striving* according to his working, which worketh in me mightily” (Col 1:29)—he took no praise unto himself, but humbly ascribed what he had done entirely unto the Lord. Fourth, thus grace is given the Christian to make use of, to labour with—in striving against sin, resisting the Devil, running in the way of God’s commandments; yet in so labouring, he must be mindful of the Source of his spiritual energy. We can only work out what God has wrought in us, but remember, it is our duty *to* “work out” (Phi 2:12, 13).

Not only is it the Christian’s responsibility to seek and obtain more grace for himself, but it is also his duty to stimulate and increase the grace of his brethren. Re-read that sentence and let it startle you out of your lethargy and self-complacency. It is of no avail to reply, “I cannot increase my own stock of grace, let alone that of another.” Scripture is plain on this point: “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it



may *minister grace* unto the hearers” (Eph 4:29)—note well that verse is addressed not specially to the ministers of the Gospel, but the rank and file of God’s people! Yes, you may—you *ought* to—be a helper, a strengthener, a builder up of your fellow saints. Grumbling about your lot, groaning over your state, will not be any stimulus to them—rather, will it depress and foster unbelief. But if you speak of the faithfulness of God, bear testimony to the sufficiency of Christ, recount His goodness and mercy to you, quote His promises—then will your hearers experience the truth of that proverb, “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend” (Pro 27:17). 

May

## BRETHREN, BEWARE!

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12). In the context, the apostle had brought before his readers the solemn case of the most privileged of all the generations of Israel—namely, the one which had by Jehovah’s mighty hand been delivered from the cruel bondage of Egypt, and yet which *failed to enter* the land of Canaan. That generation perished in the wilderness, because of their unbelief. They were the fathers of those to whom he was here writing, their “type” (1Co 10:2), and they are held up as a warning example unto us—for “the best of saints need to be warned against the worst of evils” (John Owen). “Take heed” says the apostle—be on your guard, walk circumspectly with regard to danger. There is a great need for Christians to be constantly watchful, for they are menaced on the right hand and on the left, both from without and from within; and a careless profession is certain to end in making shipwreck of the faith.

The Christian life is not likened to lying down upon “flowery beds of ease,” but to a *warfare*; and if we gird not on our armour and be vigilant in guarding against our enemies, we shall assuredly fall a prey to them. Blind confidence and reckless presumption in a course of profession are a ruinous principle and inevitably leads to disaster. It is “with fear and trembling” (Phi 2:12) that God bids them work out their own salvation. While they be left here below, they are in the Adversary’s territory, for “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1Jo 5:19). Moreover, sin indwells them, and their corruptions are ever seeking to dominate them. God has faithfully warned us in His Word against our perils, and it is the part of wisdom to lay those warnings to heart. Only the presumptuous fool will disregard them, only the silly trifler will raise quibbles and make objections against them. If God has issued cautions, it is because we stand in real need of such.

The particular peril which our text warns against is “lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12). We take it that all of our readers will allow that unbelief still remains in the Christian, but it is probable that some of them will be ready to exclaim, Surely it is not possible for a real Christian to so yield thereto that he could justly be described as one having “an evil heart of unbelief”! Others are likely to at least raise the question and ask, Is it possible for one truly born again to so give way to his native unbelief in departing from the living God that he can only be characterised as a person with “an evil heart of unbelief”? Really, it seems to us almost like asking, Is it possible; or to go further, is it likely, that a rational and well-balanced person will commit suicide? Deliberately and by premeditation, No; but by

carelessness and recklessness, Yes. Many a person reputed to be sane and sensible has neglected a bad cold and died from pneumonia!

One does not have to totally abandon his profession in order to make shipwreck of the Faith—he will do so just as surely if he heedlessly disregards the warnings God has given and pursues a course of blind indifference to the consequences. Perhaps the reader replies, But one who acted thus would make it manifest he was only a dead professor. To which we answer: There are degrees of carelessness and recklessness, and who is competent to draw the line and say when fatal presumption has been reached? It may be said, *We* are not required to “draw that line,” or define what degree of recklessness would prove fatal; sufficient for us to know that God will preserve His own people from reaching that stage. Granting that, yet it must also be insisted upon that God preserves His people—not in a mechanical way, but in a moral way—by enforcing their responsibility, by giving to them, “the spirit...of a sound mind” (2Ti 1:7) and causing them to *use* the same.

The fact is that the eternal security of the saint has so often been presented in such a lopsided way that the accountability of the Christian has been implicitly—if not explicitly—repudiated. It is true, blessedly true, that God “will keep the feet of his saints” (1Sa 2:9). But how? Not by preserving them on prohibited territory, but by keeping them in the paths of righteousness; and when they wander therefrom, by restoring them thereto. It is true, blessedly true, that God delivers His people from following a course of recklessness. But *how*? Not by assuring them that all will be well in the end, no matter how negligently they conduct themselves, but by causing them to take heed to the warnings which He has given them, by moving them to avoid the perils that menace them. A small leak will not immediately sink a ship, but it *will* eventually—if it be not stopped! The presence of unbelief in the Christian will not at once destroy him, but it would *if* he offered no resistance thereto and continuously yielded to its inclinations.

“An evil heart *of* unbelief” (Heb 3:12) is a heart in which unbelief entirely predominates, a heart which is not only under the prevailing power of unbelief, but against which no contrary principle makes opposition. Such is the heart of every unregenerate person, such was the Christian’s heart before he was born again; and it is against such a deterioration of his heart that he is here warned. It is this evil heart of unbelief which makes the unregenerate close their eyes and ears against the Truth. “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (Joh 3:19). The love of sin is the immediate cause of their unbelief. When they discover that the design of the Gospel is to part them from their sins, they will have no more to do with it. But there is also a rejection of the Truth of the Gospel *after* it has been received and professed. In many cases, those who come under the general operations of the Spirit are temporarily impressed—in some cases, deeply so—of the truth of the Gospel, are convicted and brought to acknowledge the same; yet since no supernatural principle or new nature was communicated to them, there is no lasting fruit.

Like the promising blossoms and buds on the trees in the spring, which are blown off by unfriendly winds or nipped by the frost, the salutary effects produced by an illumined understanding and an aroused conscience, sooner or later, wear off. The temptations of the world and the corruptions of their hearts either stifle their convictions, or cause them to deliberately cast them out, and the sequel is that they either avowedly or practically repudiate the Faith they have owned. They may not go so far as to openly disclaim and renounce Christianity, but they cease to maintain practical godliness. Such are those described in Titus 1:16, “They profess that they know God; but in *works* they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.” The power of sin in their affections and over their wills is more influential than the light

of their understandings. They are regulated neither by the rewards promised in the Gospel to obedience, nor the evils which it threatens against disobedience; but are swept downward by their own lusts. And that is the condition of great multitudes in Christendom today—they are controlled by “an evil heart of unbelief” (Heb 3:12).

Not only is there the principle of unbelief in the saint, but he is also in more or less close contact with men and women, who, though they bear the name of Christians, are nevertheless completely dominated by this evil principle—the Divine gift of faith never having been communicated to them. It is those two solemn facts which make the exhortation of our text so pertinent to us. Unless the Christian earnestly seeks grace to steadfastly resist the workings of unbelief within him and to mortify the root from which they proceed, then that antagonistic element will become uppermost and gain full control over him. And unless he is much on his guard against the pernicious influence which unregenerate church members will have upon his spiritual life, and has as little to do with them as possible, then he will soon be corrupted by them and conform to their ways. Then “take heed brethren,” first, to the workings of your own hearts, and particularly to the initial oppositions made against the exercise of faith. Second, “take heed” to those you suffer yourself to become familiar with—if they do not help you toward a closer walking with God, they will inevitably draw you back unto a “departing” from Him.

## THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

### 17. Ephesians 1:15-23

#### *Part 3*

“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling” (Eph 1:18). In taking up this second petition in the apostle’s prayer, we shall endeavour to supply answers to the following questions: What relation does the opening clause of our verse bear to that which precedes and that which follows? Exactly what is signified by “the hope of His calling”? What is meant by a knowledge of the same? It is one thing to be familiar with the *sound* of a verse, but it is quite another to ascertain its *sense*, as there is much difference between answering these questions and *proving* them to be correct. It is just because they assume they understand the meaning of various passages that so many people never obtain a clear insight of their purport. Because the wording of a verse is simple, it does not follow that we understand its connections, or even what its terms connote. The mere fact that “hope” or “calling” signifies a certain thing in some verses gives no guarantee that it means precisely the same thing when it is used in others. We are only on safe ground when we plead ignorance and prayerfully study each verse for ourselves.

“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.” Four different views have been taken of the *relation* of this clause. First, that it is to be taken absolutely and regarded as a separate peti-

tion, which appears to have been the idea entertained by our translators, as their punctuation suggests. Second, that it is in apposition to and explanatory of the verse preceding—the view adopted by Charles Hodge. Third, that it states *an effect* of the gift of “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him” (Eph 1:17)—the concept of J. C. Philpot. Fourth, that it is separate from the preceding petition and introductory to this second one, which is the way in which Thomas Goodwin expounds it, and as we personally understand it. No difference in doctrine is involved, whichever view be taken. According to the Analogy of Faith, it is equally permissible to link this clause with what precedes or with what follows, or even with both. It is because we are addressing ourselves to critical students, as well as the more ordinary reader that we have penned this paragraph—for a word of explanation was required as to why we have deviated from the common course.

Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) points out that the Greek for “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened” is not in the dative case, but in the accusative, and should therefore be rendered, “eyes of your understanding enlightened”—the American R.V. approximating closely to that: “Having the eyes of your understanding enlightened.” Thus, instead of these words stating one of the fruits from our receiving the Spirit, it is rather a separate request for a further favour. In other words, as the apostle had first requested that the Spirit of wisdom and revelation be given the saints in order to their knowledge and communion with God, so now he asks for enlightenment of their understanding that they might know the hope of His calling—that is, for more peace and joy through a clearer and firmer assurance. If we join the opening clause of verse 18 to what precedes, then it amounts to this: That a knowledge of God and an enlightened understanding—resulting from the gift of the Spirit—is but a *means* by which we may know what is the hope of His calling and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; in other words, that a knowledge of God Himself is *subordinate* to a knowledge of what the glory of Heaven consists of—and surely, that is incongruous.

As Goodwin has well pointed out, there are two things to be considered in connection with our blessedness in Heaven: “The happiness that the saints themselves shall enjoy” there, and their “communion with God, which is the cause of their happiness.” As to which is the greater of them, there can be no room for doubt: The Fountain of all blessedness infinitely surpasses our draught therefrom, no matter how abundantly we may drink. Hence, it is that the apostle began his prayer with a request for a fuller measure of the Spirit that we may be brought into a closer communion with God, and then asks for illumination of understanding that we might obtain a better apprehension and enter into a fuller enjoyment of those things which belong unto our peace. The same two things are kept distinct in Romans 5: First, he says that by faith, we “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2); that is, of the glory we expect to receive from God, which expectation makes us to “glory in tribulations also” (Rom 5:3), despite the unpleasantness thereof. But blessed as that is, when he reaches the climax, he says, “not only so, but we also joy *in God*” (Rom 5:11)—in God Himself.

Two things are indispensable to vision, whether it be physical or spiritual—sight and light. A blind man is incapable of perceiving objects even when the sun is shining in midday splendour; the strongest eyes are useless when a person is in total darkness. Now the natural man is without either spiritual sight or spiritual light. He has eyes, but they see not, perceiving no beauty in Christ that he should desire Him. He is alienated from Him who is Light, and therefore, dwells and walks in darkness. Hence, “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him” (1Co 2:14)—for he is devoid of spiritual discernment. But at regeneration, the objects of sovereign grace are brought out of darkness into God’s marvellous light

and are “given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true” (1Jo 5:20), so that they are now capacitated to discern, understand, and enjoy spiritual things. Nevertheless, because ignorance, prejudice, pride, and carnality ever tend to the beclouding of his vision, so long as he remains in this world, the Christian is in constant need of having the eyes of his understanding enlightened afresh and of praying with David, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Psa 119:18).

As the eye is the organ of the body by which we see physical objects, so the understanding is the faculty by which the Truth is perceived. Yet, far more than a mental perception is involved in the apprehension of Truth. God’s Word is very much more than a species of intellectual propositions—it is a Divine revelation, an unveiling of spiritual things, requiring a spiritual faculty to take them in, producing spiritual effects where it is received. Therefore, “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened” must not be narrowed down to your minds being furnished with new ideas. In the Scriptures, “light”—when used with reference to spiritual things—includes both holiness and happiness. When the Lord Jesus said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Joh 8:12), He signified much more than “shall be intellectually illuminated.” Saints are “the children of light” (1Th 5:5; Joh 12:36), because they have been renewed in the image of Him that is Light; and therefore, are they bidden to conduct themselves as such (Eph 5:8). Thus, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened signifies their being Divinely anointed, spiritualized, made “single” (Mat 6:22) and more holy.

Among the high and honourable titles of God, this is used to describe His goodness to the children of men: “He that teacheth man knowledge” (Psa 94:10); therefore David added, “Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law” (Psa 94:12). It is this Divine teaching of the saints that is signified by “eyes of your understanding being enlightened” (Eph 1:18)—namely, the bestowing upon them a teachable disposition, a humble desire to be instructed of God. That teaching consists of God’s enabling the mind to perceive spiritual and Divine objects, and to *so* see their importance and value as inclines the affections to love and the will to choose them. God first prepares the heart to receive His Truth (Pro 16:1) and then fills it with, “the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9). His established method is by the Word and by the Spirit, for these two always go together: The Word explaining, and the Spirit applying the Word. When the Spirit works by the Word, He makes it effectual, through His operations, to build up and perfect the saint.

But we must now inquire, What is meant by “the hope of his calling” (Eph 1:18)? which is really a double question: What is meant by the word “hope” in this passage, and what by “his calling.” Before supplying answers thereto, may we remind our friends that we are seeking to furnish something more than mere generalisations or even topical articles—namely, *studies* in the Scriptures. We are not just jotting down the first thoughts which come to mind upon this verse, but desire to open its meaning, to *expound* it. Since we have spent many hours in preparing this exposition, is it too much to ask the reader to give it a patient and careful reading? The writer is conscious of his limitations and realises his efforts will come far short of what he aims at, but surely he is not to be blamed if he sets before him a higher standard than the superficial productions, which characterise the religious literature of our day. O that his own eyes may be anointed with heavenly eye-salve.

In Scripture “hope” always respects something *future*, and signifies far more than a mere wish that it *may* be realised—namely, a confident expectation that it *will* be so (Psa 16:9). In many passages, “hope” has reference to its object—that is, to the thing expected (Rom 8:25), the One looked to: “O LORD, the hope of Israel” (Jer 17:13 and compare 50:7). In other passages, it refers

to the *grace* of hope—that is, the faculty by which we expect: “And now abideth faith, hope, charity” (1Co 13:13). Sometimes “hope” is put for the *assurance* we have of our personal interest in the thing hoped for. Thus, “tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed” (Rom 5:2-5)—that is, it worketh assurance or deepening of our personal confidence in God. In still other cases, it has reference to the *ground* of our expectation—“there is hope in Israel concerning this thing” (Ezr 10:2) means there are good grounds to hope for it. “Who against hope believed in hope” (Rom 4:18)—though contrary to nature, Abraham was persuaded he had good and sufficient ground to expect God to make good His promise. The unregenerate are those “having no hope” (Eph 2:12)—they have one, but it is based on no solid foundation.

Now, it is in the last-mentioned sense we regard the word “hope” as being used in our present passage: That ye may know the *ground* on which rests your “hope of his calling,” that ye may be assured of your own personal interest therein; that ye may stand in no doubt regarding the same; that ye may be so enlightened from above as to be able to clearly perceive that ye have both part and lot therein—or in other words, that your evidence of the same may be clear and unmistakable. First, the apostle had prayed for an increased knowledge of God—that is, such spiritual sights and apprehensions of Him as led to more real and intimate fellowship with Him, which is the basic longing of every renewed soul. And what is it that he desires next to that? Is it not that which makes most for his peace and comfort—namely, to be *assured* of his own filial relation to Him? What does it avail my soul to perceive the excellency of the Divine character, unless I have Scriptural warrant to view Him as *my* God? *That* is what I need to have continually kept fresh in my heart. This, then, is the second thing which the apostle sought for these saints.

“His calling”—what is meant by that? Here is another term which is used by no means uniformly in the Scriptures. Broadly speaking, there is a twofold calling of God, or call from God: An external one, and an internal. The former is made to all who hear the Gospel: “Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man” (Pro 8:4); “many be called, but few chosen” (Mat 20:16). That external call through the Scriptures is addressed to human responsibility and meets with universal rejection. “I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and *no man* regarded” (Pro 1:24); “Come; for all things are now ready. And they *all* with one consent began to make excuse” (Luk 14:17, 18). But unto His elect, God gives another call: A quickening one, an inward one, an invincible one, what the theologians term, “effectual call”—“Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom 8:30). *This* is calling from death unto, out of darkness into God’s marvellous light” (1Pe 2:9). As the closing verses of 1 Corinthians 1 tell us, “not many” receive *this* call: It is one of distinguishing mercy and discriminating grace.

Our text then speaks of the effectual call, and it is termed, “*his* calling” (Eph 1:18), because God is the Author of it, and “*your* calling” (1Co 1:26), because saints are the recipients of it. The regenerate are “the called according to his [eternal] purpose” (Rom 8:28), because God is the Caller. Yet having said that much, we have but generalized, and the expositor must needs particularise if he is to bring out the various shades of meaning, which the same word bears in different verses. In some passages, the effectual call, which God gives His people, refers to that work of grace *itself*, as in 1 Peter 2:9; in others, it concerns more especially that *unto which* God has called them—“unto his kingdom and glory” (1Th 2:12); “unto holiness” (1Th 4:7; Rom 6:19, 22). As there seems to be nothing in our present verse which requires us to restrict the scope of the word, we shall interpret it in its double sense—that ye may be assured ye have been made partakers of

God's effectual or regenerative call; that ye may perceive the sure grounds of hope which God has called you *unto*.

Take it first for the calling itself. Paul prayed that they might have yet a better knowledge or assurance that they had been supernaturally quickened, personally called out of darkness into God's marvellous light. If the Christian measures himself impartially by the Word, he should have no difficulty on that score, but ought to be able to say humbly, yet confidently, "One thing I *know*, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (Joh 9:25). I'll see, with a feeling sense thereof in my heart, what a heinous and filthy thing all sin is, what a depraved and loathsome creature I am by nature, what a sink of iniquity still remains within me, what a suitable and sufficient Saviour Christ is for such a wretch as me, what a lovely and desirable thing holiness is, then I must have been called into God's marvellous light. If that regenerating call be a passing from death unto life, and I am now conscious of holy desires and endeavours to which I was previously a stranger, then I must be alive in Christ.

Or take it for that *unto which* the Christian is called—in this verse, an assured expectation: "That ye may know what is the hope of his calling." As God has called His people unto holiness, so also He has called them to be full of hope and good cheer. As the apostle prayed in another place, "Now the God of hope *fill* you with *all* joy and peace in believing, that ye may *abound in hope*, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom 15:13). Thus, by "his calling" we may understand, that ye may know that hope which God hath commanded you as Christians to have. When it is said in 1 Thessalonians 4:7, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness," it means that He *bids* us to be holy, for the third verse of that same chapter declares, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1Th 4:3). Thus, in that passage, the "will" and "calling" of God is one and the same thing. Thus, it may also be understood here—that ye may know the hope of His (revealed) will, which He requires us *to have*.

"That ye may know" (Eph 1:18)—not that ye should be ignorant of or doubtful about. This, at once and categorically, gives the lie to one of the cardinal dogmas of Romanism. One of the decrees of the Council of Trent—the declared and indisputable "standard" of Popery—is: "If any one affirm that a regenerate and justified man is bound to believe that he is *certainly* in the number of the elect, let such an one be accursed." From which it is crystal clear that any who seeks to undermine the legitimate assurance of Christians and who regards a state of doubt and uncertainty as one of the best evidences of an inward work of grace, is aiding and abetting the evil work of Papists. The very fact that the apostle was inspired to place on record this petition shows clearly that it is God's will His people may have this assurance, that it is both their privilege and duty to earnestly seek it, and that an increased experience thereof should be theirs. A doubting Thomas does not honour God.

Now let us put the whole together—and from the above, the reader should be able to check how we arrive at our conclusion. It is only as, when, and in proportion as, the "eyes of your understanding" (Eph 1:18) are Divinely enlightened that we *are able* to "know what is the hope of his calling" (Eph 1:18)—know it, not by carnal presumption, nor by mental acumen, but perceive it with anointed vision. Nevertheless, if our eyes be not enlightened, the fault is entirely our own—for it is the revealed will of God that each regenerate person should have assurance that he is a new creature in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit has given us one whole epistle to that very end: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may *know* that ye *have* eternal life" (1Jo 5:13); hence, those who would have the Christian believe that a firm and abiding assurance is not desirable (for he would be "puffed up") are but Job's comforters, if not false prophets, for they are contrary to the Word of Truth.



Note how emphatic it is: “The eyes of *your* understanding being enlightened; that *ye* may know.” That cannot signify less than that your *own* eyes should see what grounds of assurance the Christian really has to know that eternal life is his, that his own heart may realise the hope which God has bidden him to exercise. Not to see with some one else’s eyes, not to read through creedal spectacles, not to take any man’s say so for it, but to live by your own God-given faith and read in the light of Holy Writ your own clear evidences. As T. Goodwin well expresses it: “The apostle prays here that they may know what great, what infallible, what multitudes of ground of hope God had called them to, what grounds of assurance and evidence their souls might have that Heaven is theirs...that they might have assurance of their own interest in Heaven and see good grounds for it.” Every time I truly mourn over my sins, feel my poverty of spirit, hunger and thirst after righteousness, I have an indubitable evidence that I am among the “blessed.”

Precepts and petitions are complementary the one to the other. The precepts tell me what God requires, and therefore, what I need to most supplicate him for, that enabling grace may be given me to performing the same. The prayers intimate what it is my privilege and duty to make request for, and indirectly refill my *duty*. “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (2Pe 1:10)—unto yourself, is the Divine precept making known my duty; that “the Father of glory, may give unto you...eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling” (Eph 1:17, 18) is a request that I may be enabled to successfully carry out that task. This petition tells us, “We ought to labour after and pray earnestly for a clearer insight into and a fuller acquaintance with the great objects of a Christian’s hopes and expectations” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

## THE MISSION AND MIRACLES OF ELISHA

### 29. His Young Deputy

We regard the incident recorded in 2 Kings 9:1-10 as relating to the *missions* of Elisha, and in order to a better understanding of the same would refer the reader back to the first two articles of this series. There, we pointed out that the missions of Elijah and Elisha formed two parts of one whole, much the same as did those entrusted to Moses and Joshua. While there was indeed a striking difference between what was accomplished through and by Moses and the one who succeeded him, and while their respective missions may be considered separately, yet in the wider view, the latter should be regarded primarily as the *complement* of the former. Such was also the case with Elijah and Elisha. The analogy between Moses and Joshua and Elijah and Elisha is not perfect in every detail, yet there is sufficient agreement in the broad outline as to enable us perceive more clearly the relation which the second sustained to the first in each of those two pairs:

By such perception, not a little light is cast upon the ministries of those we are now more especially concerned with.

The very similarity of their names intimates a more than ordinary connection between them. According to that important rule of interpretation, the very first mention of Elisha in the Scriptures clearly defines his *relation* unto his predecessor. Unto Elijah the Lord said, “Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet *in thy room*” (1Ki 19:16). Those words signify something more than he was to be his successor in the prophetic office: Elisha was to take Elijah’s place as his accredited representative. This is confirmed by the fact that when he found Elisha, Elijah “cast his mantle upon him” (1Ki 19:19), which denotes the closest possible identification between them. In perfect accord with that is the reply Elisha made when, later, he was asked by the one whose place he was to take, “Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken [not “from Israel,” but] away from thee”—namely, “I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me” (2Ki 2:9), which request was granted. Elisha, then, was far more than the historical successor of Elijah: He was appointed and anointed to be his representative—we might almost say, his “ambassador.”

Elisha was the man called by God to take Elijah’s place before Israel. Though Elijah had left this scene and gone on high, yet his ministry was not to cease. True, he was no longer here in person, yet, he was so in spirit. The starting-point of Elisha’s ministry was the supernatural rapture of his master, and that the one was to carry on the work of the other was symbolically intimated by his initial act, for his first miracle was an exact duplication of the last one wrought by his predecessor, namely, the smiting and opening up of the waters of Jordan, so that he crossed over dry shod—the instrument used being Elijah’s own mantle (2Ki 2:14)! The immediate sequel supplies further evidence in proof of what we have just pointed out: “And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, “The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him (2Ki 2:14, 15).

In 2 Kings 2:2, we read of “the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel” and in verse 5, we are also told of “the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho”—the latter numbering more than fifty (2Ki 2:17). By that expression (a Hebrew-ism), we understand that these young men had been converted under the ministries of Elijah and Elisha—for the latter had accompanied the former for some years previous to his rapture—and who were organized into schools. As we saw in an earlier meditation, there was yet another school of them at Gilgal (2Ki 4:38), and from their “sitting before him” (compare Deuteronomy 33:3, Luke 2:46 and 10:39), it is evident that Elisha devoted much of his time to their instruction and edification. Their owning him as “thou man of God” (2Ki 4:40) and “master” (2Ki 6:5) reveals plainly enough the relation which he sustained unto them, as does also their appeal to him for the enlarging of their living quarters (2Ki 6:1). He acted then as their rector or superintendent, and gained both their respect and their affection.

In the course of our studies, we have seen how Elisha wrought more than one miracle for the benefit of these students. Thus, through his intervention on her behalf, he enabled the widow of one of the children of the prophets—who had appealed to him in her dire extremity—to pay off her debt and save her two sons from being made bondmen to her debtor (2Ki 4:1-7). Next, he delivered a whole company of them from being poisoned when there was “death in the pot,” which they were about to partake of (4:35-41). Then he rescued the head of the axe borrowed by another of them (6:3-7). Not only were the schools of the “sons of the prophets” which were established by the Tishbite continued throughout the life of his successor, but in the above instances, we see how that Elisha acted toward them as Elijah would have done had he remained among them—using his extraordinary powers on their behalf as need arose and occasion required.

Let us now point out the *relevancy* of this somewhat lengthy preface to the incident we are now to contemplate. Our narrative opens by saying: “And Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up thy loins, and take this box of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramothgilead: And when thou comest thither, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in, and make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber; Then take the box of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel. Then open the door, and flee, and tarry not” (2Ki 9:1-3). That can only be rightly apprehended in the light of what has just been pointed out.

If we turn back to 1 Kings 19:15, 16, it will be found that Elijah received the following commission: “And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.” Concerning the anointing of Hazael, Scripture is silent; that of Elisha was accomplished when Elijah “cast his mantle upon him” (1Ki 19:19). At first sight, the long delay in the anointing of Jehu seems to present a difficulty, but if we take note of the particular work appointed for him to perform and compare an earlier passage, the difficulty is at once removed. Jehu was to be the Lord’s instrument of executing His vengeance on the wicked house of Ahab—a solemn announcement of which was made to that apostate monarch by Elijah in 1 Kings 21:21-24, and Jehu’s agency in connection therewith was intimated in 1 Kings 19:17.

Upon hearing that dreadful announcement from the lips of the Lord’s messenger, we are told that Ahab “rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly” (1Ki 21:27). Because of that external humbling of himself before Jehovah, He declared unto the prophet, “I will not bring the evil in his days but in his son’s days will I bring the evil upon his house” (1Ki 21:29). Since that Divine decision was communicated to Elijah personally, we infer that it was tantamount to bidding him defer the anointing of Jehu. A respite having been granted unto Ahab—the commissioning of the one who was to execute the judgment—was also postponed. For the same reason, we conclude that since the time for the anointing of Jehu had not arrived before Elijah left this earth, that he transferred this particular duty to his successor, to the one who became “prophet in thy room” (1Ki 19:16)—as the Lord Jesus is said to have baptized those who were immersed by His disciples acting under His authority (Joh 4:1, 2).

But now the question arises: Why did not Elisha personally perform the task assigned him by the one whose representative he was? Why entrust it to a deputy? The principal reason given by M. Henry (and adopted by T. Scott) is that, it was too dangerous a task for Elisha to undertake; and therefore, it was not fit that he should expose himself—that being so well known, he had been promptly recognised, and therefore, he selected one who was more likely to escape observation. But such an explanation by no means commends itself to us, for it is entirely out of accord with everything else recorded of Elisha. The one who had spoken so boldly to King Jehoram (2Ki 3:13, 14), who was not afraid to give offence unto the mighty Naaman (2Ki 5:9-11), who had calmly sat in the house when the king had sworn he should be slain that day (2Ki 6:31, 32), and who possessed such power from God as to be able to smite with blindness those who sought to take him captive (2Ki 6:18), was hardly the one to shrink from an unpleasant task and invite another to face peril in his stead.

Since the Scriptures do not implicitly reveal to us the grounds on which Elisha here acted, none may attempt to dogmatically define the same. The most any writer can do is to form his own judgment from what is revealed, state his opinion, and submit it to the readers. Personally, we

prefer to interpret Elisha's action on this occasion in the light of the particular stage which had now been reached in his career. Nothing more is recorded about him after this incident save what immediately preceded his death. It appears then, that for some reason unknown to us (for he lived many years afterward), that he was about to retire from the stage of public action, and therefore that he would prepare the "sons of the prophets" and perhaps this one more particularly to take a more prominent part in the public life of Israel, and consequently was placing more responsibility upon them. It is not to be lost sight of—that it was also an important and distinguished mission this young man was now entrusted with, and that a high honour was conferred upon him.

"And Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up thy loins, and take this box of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramothgilead" (2Ki 9:1). Elisha is not here designated "the man of God," because no miracle was involved in what follows. Only here is he termed, "Elisha the prophet," and only in 1 Kings 18:36 was his predecessor called "Elijah the prophet"—it intimated the *identification* of the one with the other. Elisha's calling one of the children of the prophets to him manifests the *relation* which he sustained unto them—namely, as one having authority over them (compare our article on 2Ki 6:1-7). In the light of what was pointed out in the preceding paragraph, we may see in Elisha's action an *example* which elderly ministers of the Gospel may well emulate—endeavouring to promote the training of their younger brethren, seeking to equip them for more important duties after they will have left this scene—on the principle which Paul acted upon: "And the things that thou hast heard of me...the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2Ti 2:2).

"And when thou comest thither, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in, and make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber" (2Ki 9:2). Here we behold another example of the extraordinary powers possessed by Elisha—he knows where Jehu was to be found, that he would not be alone, the precise company he would be in, that he would be seated, and yet not in the inner chamber! But it was a trying ordeal to which he now subjected his deputy and a solemn errand on which he sent him. The wicked Jehoram (also called "Joram") was still on the throne, and at that time, sojourning in Ramoth-gilead, where he was recovering from the wounds which the Syrians had given him in the recent battle at Ramah (2Ki 8:29). With him was the son of the king of Judah, who was visiting him in his sickness, and with him too were other members of the reigning house. The mission entrusted to the young prophet involved his entry into the royal quarters, his peremptory ordering one of the princes to accompany him to a private chamber, and then discharging the purpose for which he had come.

That purpose was not only to anoint and make him king, but to deliver an announcement which would to most temperaments be very unpleasant. But the minister of God—be he young or old—is not free to pick and choose either his sphere of labour, or the message he is to deliver. No, being but a "servant," he is subject only to the will of his Master, and therefore, any self-seeking or self-pleasing is nothing else than a species of insubordination. Implicit obedience to the Lord—no matter what it may involve or cost him in this life—is what is required of him; and only by rendering such obedience, will he be rewarded in the next life by hearing from the lips of Christ Himself that commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Mat 25:21, 23). O that each young minister of Christ who reads these lines may be constrained to earnestly seek enabling grace that he may live and act now with the Day to come before him.

"Then take the box of oil, and pour *it* on his head, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel. Then open the door, and flee, and tarry not" (2Ki 9:3). The young

prophet was to make it unmistakably clear that he was acting in no private capacity, nor even as an agent of Elisha, but under the immediate authority of Jehovah Himself. It is most important that the minister of Christ should similarly conduct himself. He is to make it evident that he is commissioned by Heaven, not delivering a message of his own devising, nor acting as the agent of his denomination—only thus, is *God* honoured and only thus, will His servant preserve his true dignity and speak with Divine authority. When he has fulfilled his charge, then let him “tarry not”—that is, hang around in order to listen to the compliments of his hearers. Mark that kingship is of Divine appointment and institution (compare Pro 8:15), and therefore, are God’s people bidden to “honour the king” (1Pe 2:17). It is one of the marks of an apostate and degenerate age when “dominion” is despised and “dignities” are evil spoken of (Jud 8).

“So the young man, even the young man the prophet, went to Ramothgilead” (2Ki 9:4). Observe how the Holy Spirit has emphasised his youth! Often the babe in Christ is more pliable and responsive than an older Christian. Note that there is nothing to show he asked for an easier task, objected to this one on the score of his youth, nor that he felt “unworthy” for such a mission—which is more often the language of pride than of humility, for *none* is “worthy” to be commissioned of the Almighty. It is entirely a matter of sovereign grace, and in nowise one of personal merit, that any one is called to the ministry. Said the apostle Paul, “I was made a minister, according to the gift of the *grace* of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power” (Eph 3:7). Though he at once added, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph 3:8). He referred to a two-fold “grace”—in calling and equipping him. When God calls one to His service, He also *furnishes* him—illustrated in this incident by “the box of oil” put into the young prophet’s hand.

“And when he came, behold, the captains of the host *were* sitting; and he said, I have an errand to thee, O captain. And Jehu said, Unto which of all us? And he said, To thee, O captain. And he arose, and went into the house” (2Ki 9:5, 6). We regard the “behold” as having a three-fold force: First, as calling attention to the accuracy of Elisha’s indirect—but obvious—prediction in verse two. Second, as emphasising the severity of the ordeal which then confronted the young prophet—Jehu being surrounded by companions of note, and the likelihood that he would resent such an intrusion. Third, in view of what follows, as intimating the gracious hand of God so ordering things that Jehu promptly and uncomplainingly complied with the prophet’s order; thus, making it much easier for him. In that, we may see how God ever delights to honour those who honour Him and show Himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him.

That which is recorded in 2 Kings 9:7-10, was evidently included in the commission which the young man had received from the Lord through Elisha, and which he now faithfully discharged. The fact that the prophet here made such an announcement, appears to supply strong confirmation of what was pointed out in our opening paragraphs—namely, that this deputy of Elisha was acting in the stead of Elijah, or as his representative, for if it be compared with 1 Kings 21:21-24, it will be found that it is practically an echo of the Tishbite’s own words to Ahab. In the charge here given to Jehu, we are shown how he was to be God’s battle axe (Jer 51:20) or sword of justice. Man might see in Jehu’s conduct (see remainder of 2 Kings 9) nothing more than the ferocity of a human fiend, but in these verses, we are taken behind the scenes, as it were, and shown how he was appointed to be the executioner of God’s judgments. “For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come” (Hab 2:3)—true alike, whether the “vision” of prophecy foretells Divine mercy, or wrath, as the wicked house of Ahab was to discover.

“And he opened the door, and fled” (2Ki 9:10). This was most praiseworthy and should be duly taken to heart by us. The servant of God is not free to please himself at any point, but must carry out the orders he has received to the last letter of them. Most probably, had this young man lingered, Jehu—after receiving such a high favour at his hands—had evidenced his appreciation by bestowing some reward upon him, or at least feasted him at his royal table. But Elisha had bidden him, “open the door”—as soon as he had performed his errand—“flee, and tarry not” (2Ki 9:3); and here, we see his implicit obedience to his master. O that we may in all things render unqualified compliance with *our* Master’s will. It is not without significance that in the very next verse, the young prophet is scornfully referred to as “this mad fellow” (2Ki 9:11) by one of the servants of the king—for the unregenerate are quite incapable of assessing at their true value the motives which prompt the faithful minister of Christ, and judging him by their own standards, regard him as crazy. But what is the contempt and ridicule of the world, if we have the approbation of the Lord? Nothing, and less than nothing—especially if we *expect* it, as we should do.

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

### 8. Its Promotion – Part 2

It has often been said that, “Everything depends upon a right beginning.” There is considerable force in that adage: If the foundation be faulty, the superstructure is certain to be insecure; if we take the wrong turn when starting out on a journey, the desired destination will not be reached—unless the error be corrected. It is indeed of vital importance for the professing Christian to measure himself by the unerring standard of God’s Word, and make sure that his conversion was a sound one, and that his house is being built upon the rock and not upon the sand. Multitudes are deceived—fatally deceived—at this vital point: “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness” (Pro 30:12). Therefore, are God’s children expressly bidden, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2Co 13:5). Nor is that to be done in any half-hearted way: “Give *diligence* to make your calling and election sure” (2Pe 1:10) is our bounden duty.

“Prove all things” (1Th 5:21): Take nothing for granted, give not yourself the benefit of any doubt, but verify your profession and certify your conversion, rest not satisfied until you have clear and reliable evidence that you are indeed a new creature in Christ Jesus. Then heed the exhortation that follows: “Prove all things; *hold fast* that which is good” (1Th 5:21). That is no needless caution, but one which it is incumbent upon us to take to heart. There is that still within you which is opposed to the Truth; yea, which loves a lie. Moreover, you will encounter fierce opposition from without, and be tempted to forsake the stand you have taken. More subtle still will be the evil example of lax professors, who will laugh at your strictness and seek to drag you

down to their level. For these and other reasons, “We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” (Heb 2:1)—the “at any time” intimates we must constantly be on our guard against such a calamity.

“Let us *hold fast* the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised” (Heb 10:23); and therefore, we should be faithful in performing. See to it that you hide not your light under a bushel. Be not ashamed of your Christian uniform, but wear it on all occasions. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works. Be not a compromiser and temporizer, but out and out for Christ. “Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and *hold fast*” (Rev 3:3). If your conversion was a saving one, you received that which was infinitely more precious than silver and gold—then prize it as such, and cling tenaciously to it. Hold fast the things of God in your memory by frequent meditation thereon, keep them warm in your affections and inviolate in your conscience. “Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Rev 3:11). If you have, by grace, bought the Truth, see to it that you “sell it not” (Pro 23:23)—be unflinching in your maintenance of it, and unswerving in your devotedness to Christ and what He has entrusted to you.

Thus, it is not only necessary that we begin aright, but it is equally essential that we continue right: “If ye *continue* in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed” (Joh 8:31). A persevering attendance on Christ’s instructions is the best proof of the reality of our profession. Only by a steady faith in the person and work of Christ, a firm reliance on His promises, and regular obedience to His precepts—notwithstanding all opposition from the flesh, the world, and the Devil—do we approve ourselves to be His genuine disciples. “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: *continue ye* in my love” (Joh 15:9)—continue in the believing enjoyment of it. And how is that to be accomplished? Why, by refraining from those things which would grieve that love, by doing those things which conduce to a fuller manifestation thereof. Nor is such counsel in the least degree “legalistic,” as our Lord’s very next words show: “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love” (Joh 15:10).

It is perfectly true that if a soul has been regenerated by the Spirit of God that he *will* “hold on his way,” yet it is equally true that holding on our way is the evidence or proof of our regeneration, and that if we do not so, then we only deceive ourselves if we suppose we are regenerated. The fact that God has promised to “perform” or “complete” the good work which He has begun in any of His people, does not render it needless for them to perform and complete the work which He has assigned them. Not so, did the apostles think or act. Paul and Barnabas spake to their followers and “persuaded them to *continue* in the grace of God” (Act 13:43), which we understand to signify that they exhorted them not to be discouraged by the opposition they met with from the ungodly, nor allow the ragings of indwelling sin to becloud their apprehension of the Divine favour, but rather, to go on counting upon the superabounding of God’s grace, and for them to more and more prove its sufficiency.

So, too, we find those same apostles going on to other places, “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and *exhorting them to continue* in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22). Very far were they from believing in the mechanical idea of “once saved, always saved,” which is now so rife. They insisted on the needs-be for the discharge of the Christian’s responsibility, and were faithful in warning him of both the difficulties and perils of the path he must steadfastly pursue if he was to enter Heaven. Yea, they hesitated not to say unto the saints that they would be presented unblameable and unreprougeable in God’s sight, “*If ye continue* in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the

hope of the gospel” (Col 1:23). So, too, they exhorted them, “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col 4:2)—watch against disinclination to prayer, be not discouraged if the answer be delayed, be persistent and importunate, be thankful for past and present mercies and expectant of future ones.

The Christian, then, is to continue along the same lines as he began. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus *the Lord*, so walk ye in him” (Col 2:6). Observe well where the emphasis is placed—it is not “Christ Jesus the Saviour” or “Redeemer,” but “Christ Jesus *the Lord*.” In order to receive Christ Jesus as “the Lord,” it was necessary for you to forsake all that was opposed to Him (Isa 55:7); continue thus, and “not turn again to folly” (Psa 85:8). It was required that you throw down the weapons of your warfare against Him and be reconciled to Him; then take them not up again, and “keep yourselves from idols” (1Jo 5:21). It was by surrendering yourself to His righteous claims and giving to Him the throne of your heart—then suffer not “*other* lords” to have “dominion over” you (Isa 26:13), but “yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead” (Rom 6:13). As William Romaine (1714-1795) pointed out, “He must be received always as He was received once.” There is no change of Object, and there must be no change in us. Be willing, yea, glad for Him to rule over you.

But let us take note now of another word in that important verse: “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so *walk* ye in him” (Col 2:6). Here, as in so many passages in the Epistles, the Christian life is likened unto a “walk,” which denotes action, movement in a forward direction. We are not only required to “hold fast” what we have and to “continue” as we began, but we must *advance* and make steady progress. The “narrow...way” (Mat 7:14) has to be traversed if Life is to be entered into. There has to be a forgetting of those things which are behind (no complacent contentment with any previous attainment), and a “reaching forth unto those things which are before” (Phi 3:13), pressing “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phi 3:14). There, the figure passes from walking to running—which is more strenuous and exacting. In Hebrews 12:1, 2, the Christian life is likened unto a *race*; and in 1 Corinthians 9:24, we are reminded, “they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?”—to which is added, “So run, that ye may *obtain*.”

In these two articles on the promotion of spiritual growth, we have dwelt only on general principles; in those which immediately follow (D.V.) on the *means* of growth, we shall enter more into detail; but before turning to them, let us connect what has been pointed out in the above paragraphs with what we emphasised in the preceding article. Our main theme there was that, “in the final analysis, the spiritual growth of a Christian depends upon the *grace* which he continues to receive from God.” Now, it should at once be apparent to any renewed soul that while it is obviously his duty to hold fast what he has received from God, to continue in the path of holiness, yea, to go forward therein, yet he will only be enabled to discharge those duties as he receives further supplies of strength and wisdom from above. Therefore, it is recorded for his encouragement, God “giveth more grace...giveth grace unto the humble” (Jam 4:6), and the “humble” are those who feel their need, who are emptied of self-confidence and self-complacency, who come as beggars to receive favours.

“Grace and peace be *multiplied* unto you” (2Pe 1:2). In connection with the apostolic salutations, it needs to be borne in mind, first, they were very much more than pious forms of greeting—namely, definite prayers on behalf of those to whom their epistles were addressed. Second, since such prayers were immediately and verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit, they most certainly contained requests for those things which were “according to” the Divine will. Third, in supplicating God for what they did, the apostles set before their readers an example, teaching



them what they most needed and what they should especially ask for. Fourth, thus, Christians today have a sure index for their guidance and should be at no loss to decide whether they are warranted in praying for such and such a spiritual blessing. Believers today may be fully assured that it is both their privilege and duty to seek from God not only an increase, but also a multiplication of the grace which he has already bestowed upon them.

The need for increased grace is real and imperative. An active nature, such as man's is, must either grow worse or better—and therefore, we should be as deeply concerned about the increase of grace, as we should be cautious against the loss of grace. The Christian life is a pulling against the current of the flesh within, and the world without, and they who row against the stream must needs ply their oars vigorously and continuously, or the force of the waters will carry them backward. If a man be toiling up a sandy hill, he will sink down if he does not go forward—and unless the Christian's affections be increasingly set upon objects above, then they will soon be immersed in the things of time and sense. Very solemn and searching is that warning of our Lord's—the man who did not improve his talent lost it (Mat 25:28)!—many a Christian who once had zeal in the Lord's service and much joy in his soul have them no more. Yet, still more solemn is it to note that the call of "Let us go unto perfection" is at once followed by a description of the state and doom of apostates (Heb 6:1, 4).

As Thomas Manton (1620-1677) pointed out, "It is an ill sign to be contented with a little grace. He was never good that doth not desire to grow better. Spiritual things do not cloy in the enjoyment. He that hath once tasted the sweetness of grace hath arguments enough to make him seek further grace: Every degree of holiness is as desirable as the first; therefore, there can be no true holiness without a desire of perfect holiness. God giveth us a taste to this end and purpose that we may long for a fuller draught." Yet He does not force the further draught upon us, but often *tests* us to see if such is really wanted by us—as Christ after communing with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus and making their hearts "burn within" them while He talked with them in the way, then "made as though he would have gone further" when they arrived at their destination; but they "constrained him, saying, Abide with us" (Luk 24:28-32). The grapes of Eshcol were a sample of what Canaan produced, and fired the zeal of Joshua and Caleb to go up and possess that land; but their unbelieving brethren were content with the sample—and never obtained anything more! (Num 13:17-33).

In the outward part of the Christian life, there may be too much—but not so in the inward. There is a zeal which is not according to knowledge, a restless energy of the flesh which spurs to activities which Scripture nowhere enjoins, but such works as those are termed "will worship" (Col 2:23), and are often dictated by mere tradition or superstition, or are simply the imitation of what other "church members" engage in. But there cannot be too much faith in God, too much of His holy fear upon us, too much knowledge of spiritual things, too much denying of self and devotion to Christ, nor too much love for our fellow saints. For all such virtues, we need "abundant grace" (2Co 4:15). There are some who are far from the kingdom of God, having no deep concern for their souls (Eph 2:13). There are others who come near to the kingdom of God (Mar 12:34), yet never enter into it (Mat 7:21-23). There are some who enter, but who make little progress and are poor testimonials to Christ (1Co 3:1). But there are a few of whom it is said, "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you *abundantly* into the everlasting kingdom" (2Pe 1:11); and as the context shows, they are the ones who "give diligence"—putting their soul's interests before everything else.

Those who improve the grace given thereby make room for more (Luk 8:18), and ensure for themselves a more ample reward in the day to come. We fully concur with Thomas Manton that,

“According to our measures of grace, so will our measures of glory be, for they that have most grace are vessels of a larger capacity—others are filled according to their size.” We know there was not full agreement among the Puritans on this point, though we could quote from others of them who held there will be degrees of glory among the saints in Heaven, as there will be differences of punishment among the lost in Hell. And why not? There are considerable diversities among the angels on high (Eph 1:21, etc.). It cannot be gainsaid that God dispenses the gifts and graces of His Spirit *unequally* among His people on earth. Scripture makes it abundantly clear that God will suit our rewards according to our services, and our crowns according to the improvement we have made of His grace and of our opportunities and privileges. The reaping will be in proportion to the sowing (2Co 9:6; Gal 6:8). True, every crown will be cast at the feet of Christ, but the crowns will not be in all respects alike. Labour, then, to get more grace and improve the same.

Thus, there is abundant reason *why* the child of God should not only seek for more grace, but that grace may be “multiplied” unto him (2Pe 1:2). If an earthly monarch should invite one of his subjects to ask a favour of him, he would not feel himself flattered if only some trifling thing were requested. Nor do we honour the Sovereign of Heaven by making petty requests—“We are coming to a King; large petitions let us bring.” Does He not bid us, “open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it” (Psa 81:10)—think you that He means not what He says? Does He not invite us, “drink, yea, drink *abundantly* [from the fountain of grace], O beloved” (Son 5:1)—then why not take Him at His word? He is “the God of *all* grace” (1Pe 5:10), and has revealed to us, “the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7); yea, “the exceeding riches of His grace” (Eph 2:7)—and for whom are they available, if not for those who feel their deep need of and trustfully seek them? “And God is *able* to make all grace abound toward you” (2Co 9:8), and He would not have told us this, if He was not also *willing* to do so.

And now let us anticipate an objection, which might be expressed thus: I realise that spiritual growth is entirely dependent on receiving fresh supplies of grace from God, and that it is my responsibility and duty to diligently and confidently seek the same. I *have* done so, yet, instead of grace having been “multiplied” to me, my stock has diminished: So far from having progressed, I have gone backward; instead of my iniquities being subdued (Mic 7:19), my lusts rage more fiercely than ever. Several replies may be made. First, you may not have sought as earnestly as you should. Asking and seeking are not sufficient—there has to be an insistent knocking (Mat 7:7), a holy *striving* with God (Rom 15:30), a saying with Jacob, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me” (Gen 32:26). Second, God’s time to grant your request may not have arrived: “And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you” (Isa 30:18)—He waits to test your faith, and because He requires persistence and importunity from us. What is hard to obtain is valued more highly than that which comes easily.

Third, it is to be borne in mind that the infusion of grace into a soul promptly evokes the enmity of the flesh, and the more grace be given us, the more will sin resist it. Very soon after Christ came into the world, Herod stirred up all the country against Him, seeking to slay Him; and when Christ enters a soul, the whole of indwelling sin is stirred against Him—for He has come there as its Enemy. The more grace we have, the more conscious are we of our corruptions, and the more we are occupied with them, the less conscious are we of our grace. As grace is increased, so, too, is our sense of need. Fourth, God does not always answer in kind. You have asked for increased holiness, and been answered with more light; for the removal of a burden, and been given more strength to carry it. You have sought for victory over your lusts, and have been given *humbling* grace, so that you loath yourself more deeply. You have besought the Lord to take away some

“thorn in the flesh” (2Co 12:7), and He has answered by giving you grace to bear it.

# THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

## 7. Its Meaning

It may seem strange to some that we have deferred until now a consideration of the *meaning* of “reconciliation,” and to the critical reader, it must appear as a real defect. Ordinarily, a writer should define the terms which he uses at the beginning of his treatise; but in this case, we wish to do very much more than furnish a mere definition of the word itself—which was done in the opening paragraphs of our third article, in the May/1944 issue. Under the present division of our subject, we desire to consider more closely and definitely the thing itself. We have dwelt upon the need of reconciliation, its Author, its arrangement, and its effectuation. Now, we must describe more particularly what reconciliation actually *is*, as it concerns both God and His people. The previous articles have been paving the way for this, and in measure, furnishing materials for the same. And after what has already been presented, the reader should be able to follow more easily our present discussion than if we had introduced it at an earlier stage—as it also relieves the writer from taking anything for granted. It is on the foundations already laid we now propose to build.

It is also because that what we are to be engaged with concerns the more controversial aspect of our theme, that we sought to first make clear and establish from Scripture what must be regarded as the essential elements which enter into the equation. In seeking to ascertain more precisely the nature and character of reconciliation, we must carefully distinguish between cause and effect, between the means and end. Many are confused at this point, supposing that “atonement” and “reconciliation” are one and the same—the *sound* of the English word, “at-one-ment” leading them to miss its true *sense*. Unfortunately, this confusion is fostered by the only verse in the Authorised Version (which, in our judgment, has no equal) in the N.T. where it occurs: “By whom [namely, Jesus Christ] we have now received the atonement” (Rom 5:11)—unhappily, few avail themselves of the marginal alternative (generally, the better rendition) where it is rightly given as “reconciliation.” To speak of *our* “receiving” the Atonement does not make sense—for it was *God* and not ourselves who required an atonement or satisfaction; but it *is* correct to say that believers “receive” the reconciliation which Christ effected for them.

To “atone” is to placate or appease, to make reparation for injury or amends for wrongs done another. “Atonement” simply signifies that a satisfaction has been made, that the demands of the Divine Law have been met, that justice has been honoured, that God has been propitiated. The literal force of the Hebrew “kaphar” (generally rendered, “atonement” in the O.T.) is a “covering”; and thus, its appropriateness for this usage is clear—the sacrificial blood covered what was an affront to the offended eye of God by means of an adequate compensation. The term is applied to the “mercy-seat,” which was the lid or cover of the ark of the covenant—and therefore, a Divinely-appointed symbol closely connected with the presentation of sacrifices on the day of expiation. Thus, there can be no objection to rendering, “Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth

to be a propitiation through faith in his blood” (Rom 3:24, 25), so long as its purport be explained and the “blood” be duly emphasised.

The principal idea, then, expressed by the word “kaphar”—“atonement”—is that of averting vengeance by means of a placating offering. It is rendered, “appease” in Genesis 32:20. When Jacob was about to make the dreaded meeting with Esau, he sent his servants with droves of animals before him, saying, “I will appease [“kaphar”] him with the present that goeth before me”! In Numbers 35:31, it is written, “Moreover ye shall take no *satisfaction* [no “kaphar”] for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death,” which, again, helps us to ascertain the force of this most important Hebrew word; the word, “satisfaction,” meaning, of course, a legal compensation—none such being allowed in case of murder—vengeance must take its course. “Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer and put fire therein from off the altar and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation and make an *atone-ment* for them, *for* there is *wrath* gone out from the Lord, the plague is begun” (Num 16:46)—here, we see that “atonement” was plainly the means for propitiating Jehovah, for turning away His vengeance.

Now such was the Atonement made unto God by the Lord Jesus Christ: His sacrifice was offered for the satisfying of Divine justice, for the averting of Divine wrath from His people. God sent His Son to be “the propitiation for our sins” (1Jo 4:10). The judicial displeasure of God was turned away from His Church by means of the substitutionary interposition of the Lamb, who was slain in their stead. The righteous vengeance of God was appeased by the Surety, pouring out His soul unto death. Certain effects or results followed from that—the sins of God’s elect were blotted out, they were redeemed from the curse of the Law, and God was reconciled to them. The Atonement was the cause, the means, the root; reconciliation was the effect, the end, the fruit. Thus, the two things are clearly distinguished and should never be confounded. The very fact that the N.T. employs two entirely different words—“hilasmos” (1Jo 2:2, 4:10) and “katallage” (Rom 5:11)—shows plainly they are not the same, the latter resulting from the former.

It is a pity that the honourable translators of the A.V. did not always preserve that important distinction. Another verse which has served to cloud the judgment of English readers is Hebrews 2:17, where we are told the Son became incarnate that “he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people”—which is correctly rendered (as J. Owen and others of the Puritans long ago insisted that it should be) in the R.V., namely, “make *propitiation* for the sins of the people.” Because Christ made propitiation for their sins, the wrath of God was turned away from them and reconciliation was the outcome: “Having made peace through the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20) sums it up, and shows both the end and the means by which it was accomplished. That our English word, “at-one” signifies to *reconcile* and *not* to “propitiate” is evident from Act 7:26—Moses “would have set them at one again” (i.e., restore them to amity)—the Greek word being rendered “peace” elsewhere.

But at this point, we need to be careful in guarding against a misconception and the drawing of a wrong conclusion. While the atonement of Christ was an *appeasement*, it must *not* be regarded as an *inducement*—that is, as a price which the Redeemer had to pay in order to incline God to love His people. Yet, it is right here that the enemies of the Gospel have made their main attack upon that aspect of it, which we are now considering. They have accused those who maintain the Scriptural doctrine of propitiation in order to reconciliation, as denying the Divine benevolence, as arguing that Christ shed His precious blood in order to induce God to love sinners, that those who insist God required an appeasing sacrifice—before He would be gracious unto transgressors—are guilty of grievously misrepresenting the Divine character. But Socinians are the ones

who wretchedly pervert the teachings of sound theologians when they charge them with portraying the cross of Christ as the means of changing God from a merciless Tyrant, into a benevolent Being.<sup>2</sup>

Socinians grievously wrest the Truth when they argue that those who proclaim the propitiatory character of Christ's death teach that His death wrought a change in God, that He produced a different feeling within Him with regard to sinners. So far from *that*, the very men who have most faithfully and fearlessly magnified the ineffable holiness of God in its antagonism against sin and His inexorable justice in punishing it, have been the ones who also made it crystal clear that love to sinners, a determination to save His people from the curse of the Law, existed eternally in the Divine mind, that it was the love of God for His Church, His compassion for its members, which moves Him to devise and execute the plan of salvation, and to send His beloved to save them by making an atonement for their sins. Christ the Atoner was provided and given by *the Father* for His people! It was at His own tremendous cost—by not sparing His Son, but delivering Him up for them all—that the Father supplied that very compensation, which His holiness and justice demanded.

We must not for a moment suppose that the atonement was in order to change the good-will of the Father toward those on whose behalf it was offered. No, He gave His elect—the objects of His everlasting and unchanging love—to the Son, and He gave the Son of His love to and for them. All that we owe unto Christ we owe unto God who gave Him: “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (2Co 9:15). Nevertheless, the atonement was essentially necessary in order that God's love might flow to them in an *honourable channel*; that, so far from the glory of God being tarnished by their salvation, so far from His evidencing the slightest complicity in their sin, every Divine attribute might be placed in a more conspicuous view, so that—in clothing His Church with the everlasting righteousness of His Son and adorning them with all the beauties of holiness, unto the enjoyment of an exceeding, even eternal weight of glory—God might appear “glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders” (Exo 15:11)—let it be noted that verse is taken from Israel's song of *redemption* (Exo 15:13) after the destruction of their enemies at the Red Sea.

Nowhere does the love of God shine so illustriously as at the Cross. To die for a friend is the highest instance of love among mankind—an instance but rarely found. But God commendeth His love to men, in that, while they were *sinners*, Christ died for them (Rom 5:8)—died for those who were “alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works” (Col 1:21). This is the most amazing feature of it. It may then be reasonably inferred that God loves whatever is lovely; but it may with equal certainty be inferred that whatever is unamiable displeases Him. Human reason, then, could never have discovered a way in which sinners should be the proper objects of Divine love. But the Scriptures reveal how God's wisdom found a way whereby He has made the most loathsome objects *worthy* of His love! In the atoning death of Christ, all their pollutions are washed away, and in His perfect righteousness, they stand graced before God with all the merits of their Surety—more worthy than the light of the holy angels.

So far from teaching that the atonement of Christ was the procuring-cause of God's love unto His people, we emphatically insist that God's love for them was the moving cause of giving Christ to suffer and die for them, that their sins might be atoned for. It is not that there was insufficient love in God to save sinners without the death of His Son, but that He determined to save

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<sup>2</sup> **Socinianism** – a form of anti-Trinitarianism theology prominent in 16th & 17th century Europe, based on the works of Faustus Socinus, who maintained that there was only God the Father, a single divine being. He said the Holy Ghost was not a person but a divine force, not God, and not coequal to the Father—an exceptional man without sin, but not divine.

them in such a way as gloriously exhibited His righteousness too. The love of God wrought in a way of holiness and justice. He did not choose to receive sinners into His favour without giving public expression to His detestation of their iniquities, but, as the entire universe will yet learn, cried, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd” (Zec 13:7), so that “he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). God’s love triumphed at the cross, yet, not at the expense of Law! Let the reader judge, then, whether the Socinian or the Calvinist furnishes the most Scriptural and blessed exhibition of the Divine character and government.

The main objection made by those who formally reject the Atonement is that it is inconsistent with the love of God. God needed nothing, they say, but His own goodness to incline Him to show mercy unto sinners—or if He did, it could not be of grace, since a price was paid to obtain it. But in the light of what has been pointed out above, it should be quite evident that such an objection is utterly pointless, confusing the moving *cause* of mercy unto sinners with the *manner* of showing it. The sacrifice of Christ was not the cause, but the effect of God’s love. The love of God was amply sufficient to have pardoned the vilest sinner without any atonement—had God deemed it consistent with the holiness of His character and the righteousness of His government. David was not wanting in love for his son Absalom, for he “longed to go forth unto Absalom” (2Sa 13:39), but he felt for his own honour as the head of the family and the nation, which, had he admitted him immediately to his presence, would have been compromised and the crime of murder connived at. Hence, for a time, David kept Absalom at a distance, and when introduced, it must be by a mediator.

As Octavius Winslow (1808-1878) so sublimely expressed it: “It is a self-evident truth that, as God only *knows*, so He only can *reveal* His love. It is a hidden love, veiled deep within the recesses of His infinitude, yea, it seems to comprise His very essential, for ‘God is love’ (1Jo 4:8, 16)—not merely lovely and loving, but love itself, essential love. Who, then, can reveal it but Himself? ‘In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins’ (1Jo 4:9, 10). But behold God’s love! See how He has inscribed this glorious perfection of His nature in letters of blood drawn from the heart of Jesus. His love was so great that nothing short of the death of His beloved Son could give an adequate expression of its immensity.

“‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life’ (Joh 3:16). Here was the great miracle of love. Here was its most stupendous acknowledgment: Here, its most brilliant victory—and here its most costly and precious offering, ‘Herein is love’ (1Jo 4:10) —as though the apostle would say, ‘and nowhere but *here*.’ That God should punish the (intrinsically) Innocent for the guilty—that He should exact His co-equal Son to cancel the guilt of rebels—that He should lay an infinite weight of wrath on His soul in order to Lay an infinite value of love on ours—that He should sacrifice His life of priceless value for ours, worthless, forfeited and doomed—that the Lord of glory should become the Man of sorrows—the Lord of life should die and the Heir of all things be as ‘He that serveth’ (Luk 22:27). O the depths of love unfathomable! O the height of love unsearchable! O the length and breadth of love unmeasureable! O the love of God which paseth knowledge! (Eph 3:19)” [end Winslow quotation].

“Great is the mystery of godliness” (1Ti 3:16) is the Spirit’s own declaration. Therefore, the finite mind—especially in its present condition (impaired by sin and clouded by prejudice)—must expect to encounter features beyond its comprehension. Nevertheless, it is our privilege both to

receive all that Holy Writ reveals thereon and beg God for a spiritual understanding of the same, and to refuse to reject any aspect of the Truth, because we, forsooth, are unable to perceive its harmony with some other aspect. The Scriptures plainly teach that the Atonement of Christ was an appeasement of the wrath of God against His people, yet they are equally clear in making known that the Atonement was *not* made as an inducement of the love of God unto His people. The Saviour did not shed His blood in order to procure God's love for His Church; rather, it was God's gift of the Redeemer as the supreme expression of His love for it. The Atonement appeased the wrath of God in His official character as the Judge of all; the love of God is His good-will unto the elect as the covenant God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## PASTORAL COUNSELS

The following was written by Samuel Bury, a seventeenth century Presbyterian minister (1663-1730)

“Most loving and dearly beloved: Knowing that shortly, I must put off this my tabernacle, I am constrained to leave you this last testimony of my love. How much soever I have failed in my duty to you, yet God is my witness, how sincerely I love you all, and that I never appeared in the mount before Him in secret, but I had you all in my heart there. I am now to serve you no more, in my former station. I blush to think I have served you no better, but I am glad I have done it at all—for, blessed be God, I have a comfortable list of many sincere converts among you, as well as in other places, who are effectually called and brought home to Christ, and boldly call me their spiritual father, and who shall be my joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord.

“I have made it my business to preach unto and press upon you the substantial doctrines and duties of religion—which I was fully assured—were well grounded upon Holy Scripture. I was always afraid of apocryphal sins and duties—I mean, charging any thing upon you as sin or duty for which I had not Scripture, but only imaginary proof. I bless God I have made it the business of a considerable part of my life to get ready for death, and have now finished the work which God gave me to do. I can comfortably look into another world, in hope of a reward, not of debt, but of grace. Nor is it any terror to me to appear before the awful bar of God, whilst I can keep a steadfast eye upon my Advocate, pleading for me there.

“I have been solemnly ordained to the work of the ministry, and I bless God I have taken much pleasure in it, especially where I have found I have been useful and acceptable to the people. I was never proselyted to a party as such, but have endeavoured to serve God as a catholic Christian. I could not conform as a minister to the present establishment of the Church of England, because of such difficulties—which, after the most impartial study, have appeared to me insuperable—nor could I ever be reconciled to the temper or interest of unpeaceable Dissenters, who would censure and unchurch all men that were out of their way. I have loved a conformist, as well, and as cordially as a non-conformist—when both have been so, for conscience sake, and when the power of godliness has appeared in both.



“I am now within sight of the world of light, love and peace, where there is neither Jew nor Greek, but before I leave the world I am now in, I must take my solemn farewell of my people. I am now never to speak to you from the pulpit more, nor will you ever see my face again till the last appearance at the great day. Suffer me, therefore, I beseech you most solemnly, to charge upon you all, as your dying pastor, and as one that must meet you ere long at the Lord’s bar, that you do not compliment God and your own precious souls; but make religion the work of your lives, in defiance of all avocations and encumbrances of this world. Whatever becomes of your shop and counters, be sure to mind your closets. Seek an interest in Christ without delay. Embrace Him as He is freely offered in the Gospel. Never trust your own hearts, in matters of salvation, without an impartial scrutiny. Every day, examine yourselves in order to know your state for a better world, and suffer not any strangeness betwixt God and you; take heed of the least blot on any of your evidences for eternal life. Maintain an inviolable respect to both tables of God’s Law; and in all your religious and secular concerns, see that you keep a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards man; and let every day’s practice be, to amend the past day’s errors. Make conscience of relative duties to each other. Set up family instruction, and make the world stoop to your daily acts of Divine worship. Diligently observe yourselves and your families, and endeavour to keep your children and servants from the infection of bad company. Observe also that you be not ashamed of Christ and godliness, though others may reproach you for it—it being much easier to bear man’s censure than God’s anger. Have an especial regard to the sanctification of the Sabbath, both in the public assembly, and in your families and closets, and give diligent attention and constant and early attendance on all ordinances. Keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace and love, and be examples to others, both by your Christian temper and conduct.

“I now leave and commit you all to the care of the great and good Shepherd, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to keep you, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified. I am, your affectionate and dying pastor—*Samuel Bury*, Bristol.” ❧

# June

## BRETHREN, BEWARE!

### Part 2

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12). In view of what was pointed out in last month’s cover-pages article, it is of great importance that the reader should have a right and clear conception of what unbelief really consists. It is a far greater evil than many are aware. Unbelief is not a mere negation and passive thing as the prefix of the word might suggest. Unbelief is much more than a *lack of* believing or failure to assent unto the Truth; more than an error of the judgment. It is not simply an infirmity of human nature, but a vicious and culpable thing. Unbelief is a virulent and vicious principle of opposition to God. So far from being passive, it is an operative and active principle. It has a rooted aversion of God: “They did not like to retain God in their knowledge” (Rom 1: 28). It is that which causes the wicked to say unto God, “Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways” (Job 21:14). It has an inveterate hatred against a life of holiness (Pro 1:29; 5:12, etc.).

Take the case of Adam. His unbelief was more than a negative failure to believe the Divine threatening: It was a species of self-will and self-pleasing: “By one man’s *disobedience* many were made sinners” (Rom 5:12). Consider Israel in the wilderness who never entered Canaan “because of unbelief” (Heb 3:19). In their case, it was not only that they failed to accredit the good report of Caleb and Joshua, but as Moses told them, “ye would not go up, but *rebelled* against the commandment of the LORD your God” (Deu 1:26)—their unbelief was a positive thing of self-will and defiance. Examine the condition of the Jewish nation in the days of our Lord. They “received him not” (Joh 1:11). But that was only the negative side of their unbelief—they “will not come to” Him (Joh 5:40), because they “hated” Him (Joh 15:25). His holy demands suited not their carnal desires, and therefore, they declared, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luk 19:14). Unbelief with them, too, consisted of a determination to please their own selves at all costs.

Now, this unbelief operates in various ways and takes different forms in people, according to their several temperaments, training or temptations. But in one and all unbelief consists of and acts itself by a *dislike against* the things of God. We have but to read through the first four books of the N.T. to discover what a common thing this was in those who attended on the ministry of

Christ. Some found fault with this or that in His doctrinal preaching, others found His practical teaching distasteful. When He read to them from the opening verses of Isaiah 61 and declared, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luk 4:21), they “bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth” (Luk 4:22), but as soon as He pressed on them the sovereign and discriminating grace of God, they sought to kill Him (Luk 4:28, 29)! The young ruler had such respect for Christ that he came to be instructed by Him, but when faced by His searching requirements, “he went away sorrowful” (Mat 19:22).

This unbelief expresses itself in a dislike against the purity and *simplicity of Gospel worship*. Noticeably was that evidenced by the Jews of the apostles’ time. They greatly admired the pompous worship of the temple, and would not be drawn off from the same to the plainness of evangelical institutions. It was the principal objection of Pagans that the early Christians worshipped God without temples or altars, a ritualistic priesthood or elaborate ceremonies, and therefore, they regarded them as atheists. It was this dislike of the purity and simplicity of Gospel worship which gave rise to and fostered the progress of the Papish apostacy—for fallen human nature preferred the glitter and tinsel of what appeals to their senses. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12) through a dislike of that worship which must be “in spirit and in truth” (Joh 4:23, 24), rather than in outward forms and fleshly display.

This unbelief expresses itself in dislike against *the doctrines* and mysteries of the Gospel. When Paul preached Christ crucified, it was “unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness” (1Co 1:23). Some ridicule the imputed righteousness of Christ, and other mock at the imperative necessity of following the example which He has left us. Others rave against the doctrine of God’s absolute sovereignty and His predestinating grace, whereby He chose certain ones in Christ unto salvation and passed by all others. Others refuse subjection to God’s moral Law as the believer’s Rule of life, and thereby, display their enmity against Him (Rom 8:7). Some scoff at there being three distinct Persons in the unity of the Godhead, while others reject the truth of eternal punishment because it squares not with their idea of the Divine character. We know of a denomination, which long boasted of being “sounder” than any other, now rent asunder by some of its preachers rejecting the future resurrection of our bodies. Brethren, beware of refusing anything in Scripture because you find it contrary to your reason or humbling to your pride.

This unbelief expresses itself in a dislike against *the precepts* of the Gospel. The flesh likes not to be placed under restraint and rebels against the strictness of Christ’s demands. The great work and duty of faith is to influence the soul unto universal obedience and an abstinence from all sin, out of a regard for the precepts, promises, and threatenings of the Gospel. But where faith languishes and its efficacy begins to decay, the power of unbelief sets the soul on self-pleasing. The Gospel requires us to mortify our corruptions and lusts, and while the soul be in communion with God, it desires and resolves to do so; but when communion is severed, indwelling sin endeavours to drag the soul down again into the mire. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12) by failing to deny self, take up your cross daily, and follow Christ. Refuse to gratify your lusts by opposing their first risings.

Not only is the principle of unbelief still in the Christian, but it is operative, and ever seeking to bring him under its complete dominance. All of God’s children are to some degree influenced by “unbelief,” and are in danger of yielding more and more unto its potency. It is for that reason God here calls upon them to “take heed” of this menace. To be forewarned is to be forearmed—if

we duly attend to the warning. The warning, as we have said, is pointed by the solemn example of that generation of Israel who were delivered from Egypt and yet never entered Canaan. We, too, are still in the Wilderness—and the wilderness is the place of temptation, of testing, of danger! This warning is also pointed by the case of those described in 2 Peter 2:20-22, who “escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” but who afterwards turned from “the holy commandment delivered unto them,” and like the dog, “turned to his own vomit again.” Brethren, beware! Take heed to thyself! “Keep thy heart with all diligence” (Pro 4:23). Cry mightily unto the Lord, “I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24).

A final word on the *execution* of this duty: “Take heed” is a word of caution, calling for circumspection, being alert and watching against the danger warned against. It is a call to be especially on our guard against temptations, opposition, and the difficulties of the way. We are so to “heed” as to avoid being ensnared by this peril. Our distinctive avocation, our personal circumstances, certain times or seasons each has a tendency to occasion unbelief in some particular direction; and since it is there and then, we are most likely to fail, it is at *that* point, we need to exercise the greatest caution and care. We are not only to consider those special occasions and causes when they are about to assault us, but to watch against all the means and ways by which they are likely to do so. And we are to consider these dangers so as to definitely *oppose* them—by being wide awake, by seeking delivering grace, by exercising our graces. The more faith be in exercise, the less power has unbelief over us; the closer we cleave to the path of obedience, the further removed are we from the gins of the Destroyer.

## THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

### 18. Ephesians 1:15-23

#### *Part 4*

“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (Eph 1:18). In our last, we endeavoured to show that the opening clause of this verse is not a separate petition for a distinct blessing, but rather the stating of an essential spiritual *qualification*—we cannot obtain a true and influential knowledge of the grounds, which regeneration gives its subject to hope that he has passed from death unto life, nor realise what confidence God has bidden him to have (for both things are included), unless his eyes be Divinely anointed. It is now to be pointed out that this essential qualification applies with equal force to what follows. The grammatical construction of our passage makes it quite clear that an enlightened understanding is also indispensable for a spiritual knowledge of both “the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” and of “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward” (Eph 1:18, 19). Thus, that opening clause governs all of the three petitions that follow it.

Having pondered the opening request of this prayer in verse 17 and the first one in verse 18, we turn now to consider its third petition. We propose to concentrate on these three things. First, what is the relation of this petition to what precedes? Second, what is the precise meaning of its terms? Third, what is the use which the Christian is to make of knowing what are “the riches of the glory of God’s inheritance in the saints”?—devoting most of our space to the second. First, the apostle had prayed that the saints might experience and enjoy closer and fuller communion with God. Then he had asked that the grace of hope might be more operative within them, that they should realise it is God’s revealed will for them to “abound in hope” (Rom 15:13) and not live in a state of uncertainty, and that they might perceive how many sure grounds they had for believing they *were* recipients of an effectual call—as when we ask a doctor concerning a loved one who is seriously ill, “What hope is there?” we mean, “What ground is there to expect his recovery?”

No matter how clearly and vividly the landscape appears when the sun be shining, a blind man beholds it not. Christ is manifestly set forth in the Gospel, but the hearer must be given spiritual discernment before he will perceive the absolute suitability of such a Saviour to his own desperate case. Even after regeneration, the Christian is still completely dependent upon Divine illumination in order for him to continue apprehending spiritual things. That was exemplified in the case of Peter. Some time after he had become a disciple of Christ and made his memorable confession of His Deity, the Lord Jesus informed him, “for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Mat 16:17). The same thing is repeatedly illustrated in the experience of every saint: At one time, he will read a portion of Scripture and perceive little in it which impresses his heart or stirs his soul to wonderment; at another time, the same passage appears scintillating with Divine beauty and glory—the difference is to be accounted for by the absence or the presence of his eyes being Divinely anointed.

No reading of commentaries can secure an answer to this petition, and even the searching and study of the Scriptures will not of itself convey to the believer a spiritual and influential knowledge of what is “the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (Eph 1:18). Only as and when the eyes of his understanding are *enlightened* will that delightful and wondrous experience be his. Thus, the apostle asked for such illumination to be granted them as not only that they might know the hope of God’s calling, but also the excellency of His inheritance, that they might apprehend more clearly and comprehensively the greatness of that glory which they were persuaded they had a personal interest in—for when the God of all grace quickens His elect, they are “called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus” (1Pe 5:10). The Father hath “begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1Pe 1:3, 4). The one is preparatory unto and ensures the other—begetting and an inheritance, calling and eternal glory.

But some who have been spiritually begotten of the Father are doubtful thereof—yet they should not be. Instead, it is their duty and privilege to *know* what is “the hope of his calling” (Eph 1:18). But now the apostle goes further—that they might enjoy a better apprehension of the hope itself—that is, the *object* of it. This is what we understand the *relation* to be between the second and third petitions. That the two things are not to be separated is intimated by their connecting “and,” but that they relate to distinct blessings is clear from the “what is.” It is this consideration which determines the meaning of the word “hope” in the second petition—namely, that it is not the thing hoped for (which is named in the third); but rather the confidence which God commands His called people to have, and to perceive the clear grounds of assurance, which are theirs to warrant such confidence. The third petition announces what a great and glorious inheritance it is,

which they have a personal interest in, and the fourth tells of the exceeding greatness of God's power, which works in those who believe and preserves them unto that glorious inheritance.

As Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) expresses it: "First the apostle prayed in the former verse for communion with God. Now, what is the next thing a good soul would desire after communion with God? To have grounds of his assurance kept continually fresh in his heart, that he may 'know the hope of his calling;' that is the next thing any good soul would pitch upon, to keep himself in perfect peace and comfort; and then know the greatness of that glory which he had an interest in. Link those three things together, and this makes a perfect Christian: Full of comfort, full of peace and joy in believing." And for the Christian to enter into an experimental enjoyment of each and all of those ineffable favours he is dependent upon the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and of having the eyes of his understanding Divinely enlightened. It utterly transcends the powers of the human mind to so much as conceive of "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him," yet in response to earnest and expectant prayer, real and satisfying views thereof may be obtained even in this life, for "God *hath* revealed them unto us by his Spirit" (1Co 2:10, 11).

When Paul was commissioned to preach unto the Gentiles, it was "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and *inheritance* among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Act 26:18), and to the Hebrews, he declared that Christ is the Mediator of the New Testament that "they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb 9:15). Thus, we see again how closely connected, and yet distinct are the effectual call of God and the inheritance unto which the called are begotten. That "inheritance" is described, in part, in 1 Peter 1:4. But in the verse now before us, it is designated, "*God's inheritance in the saints*"—which at once brings to mind that remarkable statement, "For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance" (Deu 32:9 and compare Psa 78:71 and "my jewels" in Mal 3:17). The one is complementary to the other: God has an inheritance in the saints; and they have an inheritance in and from God—for if His children, then they are also "heirs: heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17).

Now, this inheritance is a *glorious* one. There is nothing in Heaven but what is glorious. The central and all-absorbing Object there is "the God of glory," particularly as He shines forth in the Person of our glorious Redeemer. Our souls and bodies will be glorious (Rom 8:30, Phi 3:20). Our employments will be glorious—praising and glorifying God forever and ever. We shall be surrounded by the glorious angels, and nothing shall ever enter there which can defile. For a brief season, the apostle himself had been caught up into Paradise itself, where he had received "revelations of the Lord" and "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful [nor 'possible'] for a man [returned to earth] to utter" (2Co 12:1-4). Little wonder, then, that he longed so vehemently that the saints in general might be admitted into a clearer and enlarged apprehension of the things which God has prepared for them that love Him, or that he should here be found labouring for words to express the same unto us: An "inheritance," "his inheritance," "the glory of his inheritance," "the riches of the glory of his inheritance" (Eph 1:18)!

If the apostle found it so difficult to find expressions in human language suited to the transcendent subject before him, what must be the task of the humble expositor, with his far less spiritual ability and attainments, when he seeks to explain those expressions! Our ideas of Heaven, of Glory, of perfection—even after the partial revelation of them in the Scriptures—is at very best defective: Yet sufficient *is* revealed as ought to fill us with admiration, astonishment and adoration; and in proportion, as the eyes of our understanding are enlightened and as faith is

exercised on what God has made known unto us thereon in His Word, will our hearts be affected and our lives influenced thereby. It is termed “God’s inheritance in the saints,” to show the greatness and grandeur of it. It is “his inheritance,” because He is the Deviser and Author of it. And let it not be overlooked that it is “his inheritance” as “the Father of glory” (Eph 1:17), which emphasises the surpassing excellency of it.

It is God’s inheritance, yet the saints are the “heirs” of it. That it is designated an “inheritance” announces that it is a *free gift* which we can do nothing to earn or merit. It is an inheritance of God’s own planning, preparing and bestowing. Such an inheritance must be inexpressibly grand, inconceivably wonderful, unspeakably glorious. It is “the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col 1:12). But let us observe now the qualities by which it is described in our text: “The *riches* of the glory of his inheritance.” In human speech, that word is applied to things which men value most highly, and to attain which the majority are prepared to sell their souls. In Scripture, when it is employed in connection with spiritual and Divine things, it is for the purpose of emphasising the excellency and copiousness of them. Thus, we read of God being “rich in mercy” (Eph 2:4), of “the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7), of “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph 3:8), and of “the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God” (Rom 11:33).

As T. Goodwin expressed it, “God layeth forth all His riches in making the saints happy...Wouldest thou know what Heaven is? Thou shalt have all God’s riches: Not in bullion or in species, for they are incommunicable; but thou shalt have them in use and in comfort.” It should enable us to form a better concept of this rich inheritance by linking up that word, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2Co 8:9). Christ was the Beloved of the Father, the Lord of glory, the Heir of all things, and therefore, “thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Phi 2:6). Yet He laid aside His glory, became incarnate, was born in a manger, and entered into such poverty that He had not where to lay His head. He voluntarily endured such unspeakable humiliation for the express purpose that His people “might be rich” (2Co 8:9). *How* rich then are they—how rich will they become? Those riches will bear a proportion to the unparalleled shame and beggary into which the Son of God descended for our sakes.

But it is not only “riches” and “*the* riches” but “the riches of his *glory*”—let how little are we capable of entering into the meaning and blessedness of that! As T. Goodwin has pointed out, if “riches” connote excellency, the “glory” of them importeth super-excellency. Thus, we read of “the excellent glory” (2Pe 1:17) or height of excellency, and of “the glory that excelleth” (2Co 3:10). The Hebrew word for glory is “weight,” to which the apostle made allusion when he spoke of “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2Co 4:17). It is put for beauty (2Co 3:7), for dazzling light (Act 22:11), for pomp (Mat 6:29), for power and strength (2Th 1:9), for joy and pleasure (1Pe 1:8), for that which evokes wonderment and admiration (2Th 1:10). That gives perhaps as full a definition as can be furnished. It signifieth all excellencies, and all excellencies in the height, and such a weight as they do oppress, that the ordinary understanding of a man cannot bear. Joy when it excelleth is called “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8). Now put the two together: “the riches of his glory”—i.e. of “the Father of glory”! (Eph 3:16, 17).

The two things are combined again in that familiar verse, “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phi 4:19)—not “out of” but “according to,” for it is the standard of measurement, rather than the source of supply. As T. Goodwin said, “God is a rich and glorious God; nor will He have those riches of glory lie by Him. When Abraham had no son, he said, Lord, Thou hast given me these riches, but to me Thou hast given no seed—no son to *inherit*. Therefore, God gave him Isaac, upon whom he might bestow his riches and inher-

itance (Gen 15:1-4). And so (speaking after the manner of men), God had these riches of glory lying by; and therefore, He chooses His sons to inherit them, and when He bestoweth an inheritance upon them, it is according to that glory of His, in proportion to His riches that lie by Him. It is therefore called *His* inheritance to show the greatness of it from His gift.” When Alexander the Great gave a city to a mean man, he said, “I do not give a city away according to the proportion of the man, but as it is fit for *me* to give” (abbreviated).

In showing how glorious must be the inheritance which the saints shall have, T. Goodwin called attention to Psalm 115:15, 16, where we read, “Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth. The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD’S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.” The earth, and all the good things in it, God has made over to the human family, but heaven and the heaven of heavens, He hath reserved for Himself, as *His* possession. The earth He has given away to the children of men, but the celestial courts are His own inheritance. Now, this be it noted is mentioned in order to show how favoured are *the saints*: “Ye are blessed of the LORD” (Psa 115:15). The earth God prizes not, but gives it away; but the heavens He has set apart for Himself. Then how happy must the saints be that they are taken up to Heaven to share God’s own inheritance! The earth is not good enough for Him, nor does He deem it to be so for them. The Lord is the Possessor of heaven, and blessed indeed must those be who are predestinated to be partakers of God’s own inheritance.

“The riches of the glory of *his inheritance in the saints*” (Eph 1:18). In an allusion to this verse, John Calvin (1509-1564) remarked, “the eyes of our understanding are not truly ‘enlightened’ unless we discover what is the hope of the eternal inheritance to which we are called.” Thomas Manton (1620-1677) understood it of the inheritance “appointed for those who are renewed by the Spirit of God;” and in another place, “that is, that they might more clearly see and fully believe those good things which they shall enjoy hereafter.” Charles Hodge defined it as “what is the abundance and greatness of that inheritance of which God is the Author.” Whether we regard it as God’s inheritance or the Christian’s, it comes to the same thing in effect—for it is displayed *in* the saints. According as God has glory in the saints, they must be glorious—just as the riches of the master are seen in the costly liveries of his servants, and as the glory of a king is exhibited in the glory of his attendants. The glory which the saints shall have, God regards as “his inheritance.” Moreover, there is a revenue of glory which He receives from them in their worship and thanksgiving.

It remains to be pointed out that the Greek may also be fairly rendered, “what is the riches of the glory of the inheritance *of Him* by the saints,” and then the meaning is that God Himself is the inheritance of the saints. This it is which will constitute the ineffable bliss and blessedness of heaven—that God Himself will be our all-absorbing and eternally satisfying portion and heritage. When the mind soars that high, it finds an all-sufficient resting place: “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be *his God*” (Rev 21:7). O what a marvellous and inconceivable prospect that the saints will possess God Himself; that the Redeemer will yet say unto His people, “enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Mat 25:21, 23)—the joy which is His; and that word, “enter” is couched in the language of this very figure, for a man enters into his inheritance when he actually takes possession of the same. Then will each saint exclaim, “The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance...in thy presence is fulness of joy (Psa 16:5, 11).”

Yet so full are the words of Scripture that no single definition can exhaust their scope. Our text not only includes the inheritance which God has provided *for* His saints, and which they have *in* Him, but it also respects what God Himself has *in them*. To paraphrase again from T. Goodwin: In 2 Thessalonians 1:10, it is said that Christ “shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to



be admired in all them that believe” (2Th 1:10). How will they be glorified?—why, so that *He* will be admired *in them*. “What if God, willing to...make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory” (Rom 9:22, 23)—bringing vessels of mercy unto glory is but to make known the riches of *His glory*. His glory shall arise out of theirs; and therefore, it is said to be “his inheritance in the saints” (Eph 1:18). When the saints are glorified and with Him in Heaven, then “he will rejoice over [them] with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over [them] with singing” (Zep 3:17). What glory must that consist of to be an inheritance for God to rest in forever!

Now, it was for a better knowledge of that glorious inheritance, which the apostle prayed the saints might have, and in order thereto that the eyes of their understanding should be enlightened. As a well-trained mind is required in order to grapple with an intricate problem in philosophy, as a musical temperament and ear is needed to fully appreciate a master-production of melody, so spiritual vision and the eyes of faith are indispensable in order to take in spiritual views of heavenly objects. Certainly, Paul had not prayed for this blessing, unless it was of great value and importance. We are bidden to set our affection upon things above—and the more real and glorious they appear to us, the easier will it be to comply with such a precept. And, obviously, the more our hearts be set upon heavenly objects, the less power will the perishing things of time and sense have to enthrall or even influence us.

If we perceived more clearly the riches of the glory of the inheritance to which we are called, we should be well content with “food and raiment” (1Ti 6:8) and a covering over our heads while here. We should be more of the spirit of those who “took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a *better* and an enduring substance” (Heb 10:34). It was “for the joy that was set before him” that the Lord Jesus “endured the cross” and despised (treated with contempt) “the shame” (Heb 12:2), and if we were more occupied with those “pleasures for evermore,” which are at God’s right hand (Psa 16:11), we should “run with patience the race that is set before us (Heb 12:1) and be less cast down by the petty sufferings and sorrows of the way. If Heaven were more real to us, we should be more earnest in seeking to walk as those journeying unto it, and long more ardently for Christ to come and take us there.

## THE MISSION AND MIRACLES OF ELISHA

### 30. His Death

We have no means of ascertaining the exact age of Elisha when he was overtaken by his fatal sickness, for we know not how old he was when called to the prophetic office (though from the analogy of Scripture, he would probably be at least thirty at that time), nor does there appear any way of discovering how long a period he accompanied and ministered to Elijah before his rapture

(some writers think it was upwards of ten years); but if we total up the years which the various kings reigned over Israel, who were all outlived by our prophet (beginning with Ahab), it will be seen that he was a very old man. One commentator supposes him to have been “at this time fully one hundred and twenty years of age.” Good it is to be assured that, whether our appointed span be long or short, our “times” are in the hands of the One who gave us being (Psa 31:15). God recovers His people from many sicknesses, but sooner or later comes one from which there is no deliverance—well for us if, when that time arrives, we conduct ourselves as Elisha did and use our remaining strength to the glory of the Lord.

The final incidents in connection with Elisha are in striking keeping with the whole record of his remarkable mission. No commonplace career was his, and most extraordinary are the things which mark its closing scenes. First, we learn that the reigning monarch called upon him during his fatal illness! Kings are not accustomed to visit dying people, least of all the servants of God at such times—it might be good for them if they did. Still more unusual and remarkable was it for the king to weep over the prophet because he was on the eve of leaving the scene. Even more noteworthy was the language used by the king on this occasion. Second, so far was Elisha from considering himself flattered by the presence of such a visitor that he took complete charge of the situation, giving orders to the king, and honoured him by giving a message from Jehovah, which was as striking as any he had delivered on earlier occasions. Third, after his death, God honoured the remains of the prophet by raising to life one who had been cast into his sepulchre.

That which is recorded, in the second half of 2 Kings 13, treats of what was really another miracle in Elisha’s memorable life. This is intimated by the Spirit referring to him there as “the man of God” (2Ki 13:19), which, as we have so frequently pointed out, was used only when he was acting in his official character and discharging his extraordinary office—a fact which seems to have escaped the notice of other writers. Like several others which have been before us, this miracle consisted of a Divine revelation being communicated through him, his uttering a supernatural prophecy. Previous to this incident, nothing is recorded about his activities or how he was employed, yet it must not be concluded therefrom that he was under a cloud, and rusting out. No, that lengthy silence is broken in such a way as to preclude any thought that he had been set aside by his Master, for the Lord here makes signal use of him as He had done formerly. Elisha, like other (though not all) of God’s servants brought forth “fruit” in his old age (Psa 92:14).

“Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died” (2Ki 13:14). “The Spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha, and yet he is not sent for to heaven in a fiery chariot, as Elijah was, but goes the common road out of the world. If God honours some above others, who yet are not inferior in gifts and graces, who should find fault? May He not do what He wills with His own?” (Matthew Henry). God does as He pleases and gives no account of His matters. He asks counsel of none and explains His actions to none. Every page of Holy Writ registers some illustration and exemplification of the exercise of His high sovereignty. “And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (Deu 34:7). Whereas of Joshua, who lived ten years less (Jos 24:29), we read that he “waxed old” and was “stricken in age” (Jos 23:1), yet certainly he was not inferior in spirituality, nor did he occupy a less eminent position in the Lord’s service than did his predecessor. So it is still—God preserves the faculties of some unto old age, yet not so with others.

“And Joash the king of Israel [also called ‘Jehoash’—2Ki 13:1, 25; 14:1—the grandson of Jehu, and to be distinguished from ‘Joash king of Judah’ in 2Ki 13:10-13], came down unto him” (2Ki 13:14). This indicates that the prophet had not spent his closing years in isolated seclusion, for the king of Israel—not long come to the throne—knew the place of his abode. But this men-

tion of the king's visit also informs us that the man of God was held in high esteem, and though the royal house had sadly failed to respond to his teachings, yet they recognised his value to the nation. Israel's fortunes had fallen to a very low point, for a little earlier than this, we are told, "In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel; From Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the river Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan" (2Ki 10:32, 33). What would the end be if Elisha were now removed!

"And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof" (2Ki 13:14). While this visit of the king's probably indicated his respect for Elisha, yet his tears are not to be regarded as proof of his affection for him—the second half of the verse really interprets the first. The king was worried over the assaults of Hazael, and greatly feared that upon the death of this man whose counsels and miracles had more than once been of service to the royal house and saved the nation from disaster (2Ki 3:16-25; 6:9; 7:1), would henceforth be left completely at the mercy of their enemies. Joash regarded the prophet as the chief bulwark of the nation, and the prospect of his speedy removal filled him with consternation and sorrow. Thus, there was a strange mingling of esteem and *selfishness* behind those tears—is not that generally the case even in connection with the departure of a loved one?

The practical lesson for us here is plain. In the words of another, "Let us seek so to live that even ungodly men may miss us when we are gone. It is possible for us in a quiet, unobtrusive manner, so to adorn the doctrine of God, our Saviour in all things, that when we die, many shall say, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his,' and men shall drop a tear, and close the shutter, and be silent and solemn for an hour or two when they hear that the servant of God is dead. They laughed at him while he lived, but they weep for him when he dies. They could despise him while he was here, but now that he is gone, they say, 'We could have better missed a less-known man, for he, and such as he, are the pillars of the commonweal—they bring down showers of blessing upon us all.' I would covet this earnestly, not for the honour and esteem of men, but for the honour and glory of God, that even the despisers of Christ may be compelled to see there is a dignity, a respect, about the walk of an upright man."

"And said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof" (2Ki 13:14). This was an acknowledgment that Joash regarded Elisha as the chief security of his kingdom, his best defence against aggressors—as the piety and prayers of God's people are today the nation's best protection in a time of evil, being far more potent than any material weapons. But we must note the striking language used by the king on this occasion, as he gave expression to that truth. In the opening paragraphs of our last article, we dwelt at some length upon the connection which the ministry of Elisha has to that of his predecessor—how that he was raised up to act in his stead and carry forward the work which he began. The final confirmation of the identity of the latter with the former is found in these words of the king, for they make unmistakably clear the unusually intimate relation he sustained to the Tishbite. As he had gazed on the departing form of his master, Elisha had cried, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof" (2Ki 2:12), and now that he was on the eve of taking his departure from this world, another utters the same words over him!

We turn now to consider Elisha's response to the king's visit, his tears, and his acknowledgment. The prophet was very far from acting as a sycophant before Joash on this occasion, but maintained and manifested his official dignity unto the end of his course. He was an ambassador of the King of kings, and conducted himself accordingly. Instead of any indication that he felt

himself to be honoured by this visit, or flattered by the monarch's tears, the man of God at once took charge of the situation and gave orders to his earthly sovereign. Let not young ministers today conclude from this incident that they are thereby justified in acting haughtily and high-handedly in the presence of their seniors and superiors. Not so—such an inference would be entirely un-warranted, for they do not occupy the extraordinary office which Elisha did, nor are they endowed with his exceptional gifts and powers. Nevertheless, they *are* to maintain their dignity as the ministers of Christ: “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1Ti 4:12).

“And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows” (2Ki 13:15). What follows is virtually a parable in action. It should be remembered that in Eastern lands, instruction by means of *symbolic actions* is much more common than it is with us, and thus, we find the prophets frequently having recourse to this method. When Samuel would intimate unto the self-willed Saul that “The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day” (1Sa 15:28), he “laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent” (1Sa 15:27). When the prophet Ahijah announced that the Lord would “rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee” (1Ki 11:31), he caught hold of the new garment upon Jeroboam and “rent it in twelve pieces” and bade him “take thee ten pieces” (1Ki 11:29-31). Even the false prophets employed such means—see 1 Kings 22:10, 11. Significant emblems were presented unto the eye to stir up the minds of those who beheld them and evoke a spirit of inquiry—see Jeremiah 27:2 and compare 28:10, 11 and *see* Ezekiel 24:17-19. To this custom, God referred when He said, “I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used *similitudes*, by the ministry of the prophets” (Hos 12:10). For a N.T. example, see Acts 21:10, 11.

When Elisha bade Joash, “Take bow and arrows” (2Ki 13:15), he was making use of a visual “similitude.” The articles selected at once explain it. In response to the king's lamentation, the prophet said, in effect, Weeping over my departure will avail the nation nothing—“stand fast in the faith, quit you like a man, be strong” (1Co 16:13). Take not the line of least resistance, but assemble your forces, lead your army in person against the enemy. Though I be taken away from the earth, Jehovah still lives and will not fail those who put their confidence in Him. Nevertheless, you must discharge *your* responsibility by making good use of the means to hand. Thus, Joash was informed that he was to be the instrument of Israel's deliverance by means of his own military efforts, and that if he trusted in the Lord and followed out His servant's instructions, He would grant him full success. There was no need then for the king to be so distressed: if he acted like a man, God would undertake for him!

“And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands” (2Ki 13:16). Here again, we see the commanding authority and influence which the prophet had, under God, for Joash made no demur, but meekly did as he was ordered. By placing his hands upon the king's, Elisha signified his identification with what he should yet do, thereby intimating that he owed it to the prophet's mission and ministry that Israel was to be spared and that God would again intervene on their behalf. By symbolic action, Elisha was saying to him, “The battle is not yours, but God's (2Ch 20:15). How little is that recognised today! Yet, thank God we have at least one General who is not ashamed to publicly own that fact, and also that we have a King who realises the value of prayer and urges His people to engage therein. “He teacheth my hands to war” (Psa 18:34) was what Elisha now sought to impress upon his royal master.

“And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the LORD'S deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syr-

ia: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them” (2Ki 13:17). In those words, the prophet explained to the king the meaning of his symbolic actions, and what should be the outcome of them. It evidenced that Elisha’s mind was still occupied with the welfare of Israel. It demonstrated that he still acted as the servant of Jehovah: It was the final use of his prophetic gift and proof of his prophetic office. “Eastward” was the portion of the land which Hazael had already conquered (2Ki 10:33), and in bidding the king shoot in that direction, Elisha indicated where the fighting would have to be done. Notice the striking conjunction of the Divine and human elements here, and the order in which they were made: It should be “The arrow of the LORD’s deliverance” (2Ki 13:17), yet “*thou* [Joash] shalt smite the Syrians”—God would work, yet by and through him!

“And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed” (2Ki 13:18). In the light of what follows, it is clear that the king’s faith was here being put to the test: The prophet would have him signalize his reaction to the reassuring message he had just heard. “Smite upon the ground” and intimate thereby how far you believe the words which I have spoken and really expect a fulfilment of the same. Did the Lord’s promise sound too good to be true, or would Joash rest upon it with full confidence? Would he lift up his heart and eyes to God and say with David, “Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me” (Psa 18:40), or would he follow the temporizing course, which Ahab had pursued, when, instead of following up his victory by slaying Benhadad whom the Lord had delivered into his hand, spared his life, made a covenant with him, and then sent him away (1Ki 20:29-34).

“And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times” (2Ki 13:19). There are some who teach that a saint should never lose his temper, that all anger is sinful—which shows how little their thoughts are formed by Scripture. In Ephesians 4:26, Christians are thus exhorted: “Be ye angry, and sin not,” though it is at once added, “let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil” (Eph 4:26, 27). There is a holy and spiritual anger—a righteous indignation—as well as a carnal and sinful one. Anger is one of the Divine perfections, and when the Son became incarnate, we read that on one occasion, He “looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts” (Mar 3:5). Elisha was disgusted at the half-hearted response made by the king to his message, and from love for Israel, he was indignant that Joash should stand in their way and deprive them of full deliverance from their foes. And if we had more zeal for God and love for souls, *we* would be angry at those who deprive them of their privileges.

“Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice” (2Ki 13:19). That should present a nice little problem to the hyper-Calvinist. Let us state it in question form. What possible difference to the issue could be made by the number of times the king smote upon the ground? If God had foreordained that the Syrians should be “consumed” (2Ki 13:17), then could any failure on the part of Joash prevent or even modify it? But do not Elisha’s words plainly signify that the extent to which the Syrians would be vanquished turned upon the response made by him to the Divine promise? If so, does that oblige us to adopt the Arminian idea and say that such events as these fall not within the compass of the Divine decrees, that such are, rather, contingent upon human conduct? We shall not here give a solution to this problem, and will only add that if Calvinists or Arminians are unable to fit this incident into their scheme, then that is proof there is something wrong with their scheme.

Instead of wasting time on metaphysical subtleties, let us take to ourselves the practical lesson which is here pointed, namely, “According to your *faith* be it unto you” (Mat 9:29), for it was at *that* point Joash failed—he did not thoroughly believe the prophet’s words. The majority of God’s people today need to realise that the exercise of faith does make a real difference in what they obtain or fail to obtain from God—as real and as great a difference as between Joash “consuming” the Syrians (the Hebrew word is rendered, “to destroy them utterly” in Leviticus 26:44, and “make an utter end of” in Nahum 1:8, 9) and the “three times” he “beat” Hazael” (2Ki 13:25). Most Christians expect little from God, ask little, and therefore receive little, and are content with little. They are content with little faith, little knowledge of the deep things of God, little growth and fruitfulness in the spiritual life, little joy, peace, and assurance. And the zealous servant of God is justified in being wroth at their pusillanimity and lack of spiritual ambition.

“And Elisha died, and they buried him” (2Ki 13:20). It is to be noted that nothing is said here of any “burial service.” Nor is there anywhere in the Scriptures either in the O.T. or the N.T. Funeral obsequies or ceremonies are of Pagan origin, capitalized by Rome and her daughters, and are neither authorised nor warranted by the Word of God. If the body of Christ was tenderly and reverently interred without the mummery of any “service” over His corpse, shall the disciple be above his Master! What slaves many are to “the way of the heathen” (Jer 10:2), and in what bondage do they suffer themselves to be held through fear of public opinion—afraid of what their friends and neighbours would think and say if they should be regulated only by Holy Writ in this matter!

“And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet” (2Ki 13:20, 21). Behold, here once more the sovereignty of God, He honoured Elijah at his departure from this world, but Elisha, in a different way afterwards. It was the Lord’s *seal* upon His servant’s mission. It indicated that the Lord was his God *after death*, as well as before; and thus, furnished evidence both of the immortality of the soul and the final resurrection of the body. It was an intimation that other miracles would yet be wrought for Israel in response to his prayers, and as the result of his labours. Thus, to the end of the piece, *miracles* are connected with the mission of Elisha.

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

### 9. Its Means

After what was set before the reader in our last two articles, it may seem almost superfluous to follow them with others devoted to a presentation of the principal means of spiritual growth. If

success in the Christian life really narrows down to our obtaining fresh supplies of grace from God, then why enumerate and describe in detail the various aids which are to be employed for the promotion of personal godliness? Because the expression, “seeking fresh supplies of grace” is a far more extensive one than is commonly supposed: The “means” are really the *channels* through which that grace comes to us. When expounding Matthew 7:7 in our “Sermon on the Mount” series, it was pointed out that, in seeking grace to enable the believer to live a spiritual and supernatural life in this world, though such enablement is to be sought at the Throne of Grace, yet that does not render useless, nor exempt the Christian from diligently employing the additional means and agencies which God has appointed for the blessing of His people. Prayer must not be allowed to induce lethargy in those directions or become a substitute for the putting forth of our energies in other ways. We are called upon to watch, as well as pray, to deny self, strive against sin, take unto us the whole armour of God, and fight the good fight of faith.

In the preceding portions of His sermon, Christ had presented a standard of moral excellency, which is utterly unattainable by mere flesh and blood. He had inculcated one requirement after another that lies not within the power of fallen human nature to meet. He had forbidden an opprobrious word, a malignant wish, an impure desire, a revengeful thought. He had enjoined the most unsparing mortification of our dearest lusts. He had commanded the loving of our enemies, the blessing of those who curse us, the doing good unto those who hate us, and the praying for those who despitefully use and persecute us. In view of which the Christian may well exclaim, “Who is sufficient for these things? Such demands of holiness are far beyond my feeble strength—yet the Lord *has* made them, what then am I to do?” Here is His own answer: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Mat 7:7). The Lord Jesus knew that in our own wisdom and strength, we are incapable of keeping His commandments, but He at once informed us that the things which are ordinarily impossible to men can be made possible by God. Divine assistance is imperative if we are to meet the Divine requirements. We need Divine mercy to pardon and cleanse, power to subdue our raging lusts quickening to animate our feeble graces, light on our path that we may avoid the snares of Satan, wisdom from above for the solving of our varied problems. Only God Himself can relieve our distresses and supply all our need. His assistance, then, is to be sought—sought prayerfully, believing, diligently, and expectantly; and if it be *thus* sought, it will not be sought in vain, for the same passage goes on to assure us, “What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Mat 7:9-11). What inducement is *that*! Yet, other means besides prayer are to be used by us, if we are to obtain that help and succour which we so sorely need.

There are three principal dangers against which the Christian needs to guard in connection with the various means which God has appointed for his spiritual growth. First, to lay too much stress upon and dependence in them—they are *but* “means” and will avail nothing, unless God bless them to him. Second, going to the opposite extreme, by undervaluing them or imagining he can get above them. There are some who give way to fanaticism or persuade themselves they have been so “baptized by the Spirit” as to be independent of helps. Third, to look for that in them, which can come only from God in Christ. No doubt, there is room for differences of opinion as to what are the particular means which are most conducive unto Christian prosperity, and certainly, there is a considerable variety of method among those who have written on this subject, some throwing their main emphasis on one aspect of it, and some on another. Nor is there any

agreement in the *order* in which they set forth the several aids to growth. We shall therefore present them to the reader according as they appear to us in the light of Scripture.

1. *Mortifying of the flesh.* In order to obtain fresh supplies of grace, constant watchfulness needs to be exercised that we do not cut ourselves off from the Source of those supplies. If such a statement jars upon some of our readers, having to them a “legalistic” or Arminian sound in it, we fear it is because their sensibilities are not fully regulated by the teachings of Holy Writ. Would it not be foolish for me to blame the bulb for emitting no light if I had switched off the electrical current? Equally vain is it to attribute any lack of grace in me to the unwillingness of God to bestow it if I have severed communion with Him. Should it be objected that to draw such an analogy is carnal, we reply, our object is simply to illustrate. But does not the Lord Himself distinctly affirm, “But your iniquities have *separated* between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa 59:2)—then how can I draw from the Fountain of grace if I have cut myself off from it!

None but a fanatical enthusiast will argue that a Christian may obtain a fuller knowledge of God’s will and increased light on his path while he *neglects* his Bible and books and preaching thereon. Nor will the Holy Spirit open the Word to me while I am indulging in the lusts of the flesh and “allowing” sin in my heart and life. Equally clear is it that no Christian has any Scriptural warrant to expect he will receive wisdom and strength from above while he neglects the Throne of Grace, and should he keep up the *form* of “praying” while following a course of self-will and self-pleasing, answers of peace will be withheld from him. “If I regard [cherish] iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psa 66:18). “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (Jam 4:3). The Holy One will be no lackey unto our carnality. “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law [i.e., refuses to tread the path of obedience, in subjection to God’s authority], even his prayer shall be abomination” (Pro 28:9)—for under such circumstances, praying would be downright hypocrisy, a mocking of God.

It is therefore apparent that there is something which must take precedence of either prayer or feeding on the Word, if the Christian is to make progress in the spiritual life. Whether or not we have succeeded in making that evident to the reader, Scripture is quite plain on the point. In James 1:21, we are bidden to “receive with meekness the engrafted word,” but before we can do so, we must first comply with what immediately precedes—namely, “*lay apart* all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness.” Room has to be made in our hearts for the Word—the old lumber has to be cleaned out before the new furnishings can be moved into it. We are exhorted, “As newborn babes, *desire* the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1Pe 2:2). Ah, but there is something else *before* that, and which must needs first be attended to: “Wherefore *laying aside* all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings” (1Pe 2:1). There has to be a purging of our corruptions ere there will be a spiritual appetite for Divine things. The natural man may “study the Bible” to become intellectually informed of its contents, but there has to be a “laying aside” of the things God hates before the soul will really hunger for the Bread of Life.

That to which we have just called attention has not been sufficiently recognised. It is one thing to read the Scriptures and become acquainted with their teaching, it is quite another to really feed upon them and for the life to be transformed thereby. God’s Word is a *holy* Word, and it requires holiness of heart from the one who would be profited by it—the soul must be attuned to its message and transmission before there will be any real “reception.” And in order to holiness of soul, sin has to be resisted, self denied, corrupt lusts mortified. What we are here insisting upon is illustrated and demonstrated by the *uniform order* of Scripture. We have to “hate the evil” before we “love the good” (Amo 5:15), and “cease to do evil” ere we can “learn to do well” (Isa 1:16, 17).



Self has to be denied and the cross taken up, before we can “follow” Christ (Mat 16:24). We have to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,” if we would be “perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1). We cannot “put on the new man” (Eph 4:24) until we have “put off concerning the former conversation [or “manner of life”] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Eph 4:22)!

Sin indwells all Christians and is actively opposed to the principle of grace or “new nature.” When they would do good, evil is present with them. Indwelling sin or “the flesh”—corrupt nature—has “no good thing” dwelling in it (Rom 7:18). Its nature is entirely evil. It is beyond reclamation, being incapable of any improvement. It may put on a religious garb, as in the case of the Pharisees, but beneath is nothing but rottenness. As one has truly said, “No good can be educed out of it: fire may as soon be struck out of ice, as good dispositions and motions be produced in the corrupt heart of the regenerate. It will never be prevailed upon to concur with the new principle in any of those acts which it puts forth. Hence, the mind of the believer is at no time wholly spiritual and holy in its acts—there is more or less of a resistance in his soul for what is holy at all seasons.” As the “flesh” continually opposes what is good, so it ever disposes the will to what is evil—its desires and motions are constantly towards objects which are vain and carnal. So far as it is permitted to control the Christian, it beclouds his judgment, captivates his affections, and enslaves his will.

Now the principle of grace, “the spirit” has been communicated to the saint for the express purpose of opposing the solicitations of the flesh and for the inclining of him unto holiness. Thus, the whole of his duty may be summed up in these two things: To die unto sin, and to live unto God. And he can only live unto God in exact proportion as he dies unto sin. That should be self-evident, for since sin is hostile to God—entirely and inveterately so—only so far as we rise above its evil influences are we free to act Godwards. Therefore, our progress in the Christian life is to be measured by the degree of our deliverance from the power of indwelling sin; and that, in turn, will be determined by how resolutely, earnestly, and untiringly we set ourselves to this great task of fighting against our corruptions. The weeds must be plucked up before the flowers can grow in the garden, and our lusts must be mortified if our graces are to flourish. Sin and grace each demand the governance of the soul, and it is the Christian’s responsibility to see to it that the former is denied and the latter given the right to reign over him.

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom 8:13). That at once shows us the fundamental and vital importance of this duty—our attendance or non-attendance thereto is a matter of life or death. Mortification is not optional, but imperative. The solemn alternative is plainly stated. Those words are addressed to the saints, and they are faithfully warned, “If ye live after the flesh ye shall *die*”—that is, die spiritually and eternally. To “live after the flesh” is to live as do the unregenerate, who are motivated, actuated, and dominated by nothing but their own fallen nature. To “live after the flesh” refers not to a single action, nor even a whole series of actions in one particular direction, but for the whole man to be regulated by the evil principle. Education and culture may produce a refined exterior; family training or other influences may lead to a “profession of religion”—but the love of God prompts neither, nor is His glory the end. To “live after the flesh” is to allow our fallen nature to govern our character and guide our conduct, and such is the case with all the unregenerate.

“But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom 8:13). Note well the “if ye *do*”—it is a duty assigned the Christian, it is a task which calls for self-effort. Yet, it is not a work for which he is sufficient of himself—it can only be accomplished “through the

Spirit.” But care has to be taken at this point, lest we lapse into error. It is *not* “If the Spirit through you,” but “if ye through the Spirit.” The believer is not a cipher in this undertaking. The Spirit is not given to relieve us of the discharge of our responsibility in this all-important matter, but rather to equip us for *our* discharge of the same. The Spirit operates by making us more sensible of indwelling sin, by deepening our aspirations after holiness, by causing the love of Christ to constrain, by strengthening us with His might in the inner man. But *we* are the ones who are required to “*mortify* the deeds of the body”—that is, resist the workings of sin, deny self, put to death our lusts, refuse to “live after the flesh” (Rom 8:12, 13).

We must not, under the guise of “honouring the Spirit,” repudiate our accountability—or under the pretext of “waiting for the Spirit to move us” or “empower us,” lapse into a state of passivity. God has called us to “*cleanse ourselves* from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit” (2Co 7:1), to “put off concerning the former conversation the old man” (Eph 4:22), to “keep yourselves from idols” (1Jo 5:21); and He will not accept the excuse of our inability as a valid plea. If we be His children, He has infused His grace into our hearts, and that grace is to be employed in this very task of mortifying our lusts; and the way to get more grace is to make a more diligent use of what we already have. We do not “honour the Spirit” by inertia—we honour Him and “magnify grace” when we can say with David, “I kept myself from mine iniquity” (Psa 18:23), and with Paul, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection” (1Co 9:27). True, it was by Divine enablement, yet it was not something which God did for them. There was *self-effort*—rendered successful by Divine grace.

Observe it is not, “For if ye *have* through the Spirit mortified the deeds of the body,” but “For if ye through the Spirit do mortify...” (Rom 8:13). It is not something which may be done once for all, but a continuous thing, a lifelong task which is set before the Christian. The term “mortify” is here used figuratively, inasmuch as it is a physical term applied to that which is immaterial; yet its force is easily perceived. Literally, the word signifies “put to death,” which implies it is both a painful and difficult task. The weakest creature may put up some resistance when its life be threatened, and since sin is a most powerful principle, it will make a mighty struggle to preserve its existence. The Christian, then, is called upon to exert a constant and all-out endeavour to subdue his lusts, resist their inclinations, and deny their solicitations, “*striving* against sin” (Heb 12:4)—not only against one particular form of its outbreakings, but against *all* of them, and especially against the root from which they proceed—“the flesh.”

How is the Christian to set about this all-important work? First, by starving his evil nature: “Make not provision for the flesh” (Rom 13:14). There are two ways of causing a fire to go out: To cease feeding it with fuel, and to pour water upon it. God does not require us to macerate our bodies, nor to adopt severe external austerities, but we *are* to abstain from pampering and pleasing them. “To ask meat for our bodies is necessary, a duty; but to ask meat for our lusts is provoking to God—Psalm 78:18” (Matthew Henry). “Provision for” the flesh is anything which has the least tendency to minister unto its appetites—whatever would stir our carnal lusts must be abstained from. There are mental lusts, as well as physical—such as pride, covetousness, envy, malice, and presumption—these too must be starved and denied, for they are “filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (2Co 7:1). Avoid all excesses—be temperate in all things. Second, refuse any familiarity with worldings: “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph 5:11). Shun evil companions, for “a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Pro 13:20). “Enter not into the path of the wicked...Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away” (Pro 4:13, 14). Even those “having a form of godliness,” but who in practice are “denying the power thereof,” God says, “from such *turn away*” (2Ti 3:5).

Third, “Keep thy *heart* with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23). Take yourself firmly in hand and maintain a strict discipline over your inner man, especially your desires and thoughts. Unlawful desires and evil imaginations need to be nipped in the bud, by sternly resisting them at our first consciousness of the same. As it is much easier to pluck up weeds while they are young, or to quench a fire before it takes a firm hold, so it is much simpler to deal with the initial stirrings of our lusts than after they have “conceived” (see Jam 1:15)—refuse to parley with the first temptation, suffer not your mind to cogitate upon anything Scripture disallows. Fourth, keep short accounts with God. As soon as you are conscious of failure, excuse it not, but penitently confess it to Him. Let not sins accumulate on your conscience, but frankly and promptly acknowledge them to the Lord. Bathe daily in the Fountain, which has been “opened...for sin and for uncleanness” (Zec 13:1).

It is strange that so many other writers on this subject have failed to place *first* among the means of spiritual growth this work of *mortifying* the flesh, for it should be quite obvious that it must take precedence over everything else. Of what avail can it be to read and study the Word, to spend more time in prayer, to seek to develop my graces, while I ignore and neglect that within me, which will neutralise and mar all other efforts. What would be the use of sprinkling fertilizer on my ground if I allowed the weeds to grow and multiply there? Of what avail would it be my watering and pruning of a rose-bush if I knew there was a pest gnawing at its roots? Settle it then in your mind, dear reader, that no progress can be made by you in the Christian life, until you realise the paramount importance and imperative necessity of waging a ceaseless warfare against indwelling sin—and not only realise the need for the same, but resolutely gird yourself for and engage in the task, and ever seeking the Spirit’s help to give you success therein. The Canaanites must be ruthlessly exterminated if Israel was to occupy the land of milk and honey, and enjoy peace and prosperity therein.

N.B.<sup>3</sup> Personally, we deem this article the most important one of the series to date, and though it may not be so palatable as some of the others, we think the spiritual reader will not be the loser if he gives it a prayerful and careful re-perusal. It is not always those portions of the Truth which are the most pleasing to us which we stand most in need of, as it is not always the tastiest dishes that afford our bodies the most nourishment.

# THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

## 7b. Its Meaning

In our last, we pointed out the needs-be for and the importance of making a clear distinction between the Atonement and reconciliation, that the sacrifice of Christ was the cause and means of which reconciliation was the effect and end. Some theologians, and good ones too, have demurred against terming the offering of Christ a “means”—insisting that it was the procuring cause of our

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<sup>3</sup> N.B. – nota bene, lit. “note well,” used to direct attention to something particularly important.

salvation. The fact is, it was both a means and a cause, according as we view it in different relations. It was the meritorious cause of re-instating us in the favour of God and of procuring for us the Holy Spirit; it was the means by which God's mercy is exercised in a way of justice. "Being justified freely by his grace *through* the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24). It may rightly be regarded as a mean or medium in respect of the originating cause—hence, grace is presented as the source from which it sprang, the redemptive work of Christ the channel through which it flows. In Hebrews 9:15, Christ's death is expressly termed the "means."

Some may be inclined to chafe at the "distinctions" we frequently call attention to, considering we are too prone to confuse the minds of the simple by introducing "theological niceties." But did not the apostle pray that the Philippian saints might be moved by God to "try things that differ" (margin of Phi 1:10)? We rather fear that such disrelish of these distinctions is a sign of mental slovenliness and spiritual slothfulness. Is it of no significance, or of no importance to us, to take notice of the fact that while the Scriptures speak of "the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev 6:16) and of the "wrath of God" being upon both the non-elect and elect in a state of nature, they never once make reference to "the wrath of the *Father*"! If any of our readers sneer or shrug their shoulders at *that* as a mere "splitting of hairs," we are very sorry for them. God's Word is made up of *words*, and it behooves us to weigh every one of them attentively. If we do not, we shall obtain little more than a blurred impression rather than a clear-cut view of the Truth.

The work of Christ was indeed one and indivisible; nevertheless, it is capable of and requires to be viewed from various angles. For that reason, among others, the typical altar was not round but "foursquare" (Exo 27:1). The *nature* of Christ's work was fourfold in its character: Being a federal work—as the Representative of His people; a vicarious work—as their Surety and Substitute; a penal work—as He took their Law-place; and a sacrificial work—offering Himself unto God on their behalf. The work of Christ *accomplished* four chief things: It propitiated God Himself, it expiated the sins, it reinstated them in the Divine favour, and it estated them an everlasting inheritance of glory. There is also a fourfold *consequence* of Christ's work so far as His people are concerned: The guilt of their transgressions is cancelled so that they receive remission of sins; they are delivered from all bondage—redeemed, they are made legally and experimentally righteous; and all enmity between God and them is removed—they are reconciled.

In our last, we also exposed the sophistry of the Socinian contention that if the propitiatory character of Christ's sacrifice be insisted upon, then we repudiate the uncaused love and free grace of God. We sought to show that while the shedding of Christ's blood was an appeasement of the Divine wrath against God's people, it was not an inducement of His love unto them. Thus, in the latter half of our foregoing article, we dealt more with the negative side in showing what the oblation of Christ was *not* designed to accomplish—namely, to procure God's good will unto sinners. Now we must turn to the positive side and point out what the Atonement was designed to effect. We need to be constantly on our guard against exalting the wondrous love of God to the deprecation of His ineffable holiness. If on the one hand, it is blessed to continually bear in mind that never has there been such love as the love of God—so pure, so intense, so satisfying; it is equally necessary not to forget there has never been a law like unto the Law of God—so spiritual, so holy, so inexorable.

Divine love unto sinners originated reconciliation, but the Divine Law required that love to flow in a righteous channel. The method which it has pleased God to employ is one wherein there is no compromise between love and law, but rather one where each has found full expression. At the cross, we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the spotless purity of the Law, the unbending character of God's government, and the righteous outflow of His mercy unto Hell-deserving

transgressors. The same conjunction of Divine light and love appears in connection with our receiving blessings in response to Christ's intercession, as is clear from His words, "I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you" (Joh 16:26, 27)—which was to assure us that we not only have the benefit of Christ's prayers, but the Father Himself so loves us that, that alone, is sufficient to obtain anything at His hands. Think not that the Father is hard to be exhorted, and that blessings have to be wrung from Him by My supplications—no, they issue from *His love*, but in an honourable way, and that we may appreciate them the more.

But in our day, it is necessary to consider reconciliation more from the standpoint of God's holiness and justice, for during the last two or three generations, there has been an entirely disproportionate emphasis on His love. While it be true that, at the cross, we behold the highest expression of God's love to sinners; yet, it is equally true that, there, we also witness the supreme manifestation of God's hatred of sin—and the one should never be allowed to crowd out, or obscure, the other. The apostle hesitated not to affirm that God "set forth [His Son] to be a *propitiation* through faith in his blood, to declare [or demonstrate] his righteousness" (Rom 3:25)—observe well how those words, "to declare...his righteousness" are *repeated* in the very next verse! If the question be asked, Why did God give His Son to die for sinners, rather than have them to perish in their sins?—the answer is, Because He loved them. But if the question be, Why did He give His Son to be a propitiation for sinners, rather than save them without one?—the answer is, Because He loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

To any who have followed us closely through these articles up to the present point, it should be quite clear, we think, that they err gravely who contend that reconciliation is entirely one-sided, that it is sinners who need to be reconciled to God, that in nowise did God require reconciling to His people, seeing that He changes not, that He loves them with an everlasting love, and that it was entirely His good-will and benevolence which provided the Atonement for them. Yet, since it is at this very point that so many have departed from the Truth, we must labour it and enter into more detail. It is sin which has caused the breach between the Holy One and His fallen creatures, and since He was the One wronged and injured by sin, surely, it is self-evident that reparation must be made unto Him for that offence and outrage. Why, every passage in which "propitiation" occurs is proof that God needed to be reconciled to sinners, that His wrath must be averted before peace could be made.

It is of first importance to recognise that "reconciliation" necessarily implies alienation, and that both reconciliation and alienation connote a *relationship* between God and us. Alienation signifies that a state of enmity and hostility exists between two parties; reconciliation that the cause and ground of the alienation has been removed, so that amity now obtains between them. It is therefore essential that we define carefully and accurately the *changed relationship* between God and His people, which was brought about by the entrance of sin. Though the everlasting objects of God's eternal favour—having been chosen in Christ from all eternity and blest with all spiritual blessings in Him—nevertheless, the elect (in Adam) *apostatized* from God, and in consequence of the Fall, fell under the curse of His Law. Considered as the Judge of all, God became *antagonistic* to them; considered as fallen creatures (what they were in themselves), they were by nature enmity against Him. The entrance of sin into this world brought the Church into a condition of guilt before the Holy One; yet, because of the Lamb being slain in the purpose of God, the Father's love never ceased unto His people—without any injury unto His justice.

There could be no thought of reconciliation between a holy God and a polluted rebel until full satisfaction had been made to His broken Law. Sin raised a barrier between God and us, which we could in no wise surmount: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God,

and your sins have hid his face from you” (Isa 59:2). Sin resulted in alienation between God and man. This as made unmistakably plain right after the Fall, in Eden itself, for we are told, “So he [God] drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen 3:24). Let it be carefully remembered that God was not there dealing with Adam simply as a private person, but as the *federal head* of the race, as the legal representative of *all* his posterity—both of the elect and the non-elect. The “flaming sword” was emblematic of the vindictive justice of God. The natural man as such was excluded from Paradise, and effectually barred from the tree of life. That it turned “every way” precluded *any* avenue of approach.

The reconciliation must be mutual, because the alienation was mutual—Christ had to remove God’s wrath from us, as well as our sins from before God. If God were not reconciled to us, it would avail us nothing to lay aside our enmity against Him. The fact that the flaming sword “turned every way” to bar man’s access to the tree of life signified that by no effort of his could the sinner repair the damage which his capital offence had wrought, and declared in the language of the N.T. that “they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God” (Rom 8:8). By nature, we are “the children of wrath” (Eph 2:3), and by practice, “alienated and enemies” in our “mind by wicked works” (Col 1:21), and unless peace be made and reconciliation effected, we should neither have any encouragement to go to Him for mercy, nor any hope for acceptance with Him. The throwing down of the weapons of our rebellion would avail nothing while we were obnoxious to the curse of the Divine Law. How then shall we be delivered from the wrath to come is thus the all-important question, for His wrath is “revealed from heaven against *all* ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom 1:18).

The fallen sons of men have not only removed themselves to a guilty distance from God, but He has judicially and morally removed Himself from them: “The LORD is far from the wicked” (Pro 15:29). And as men have wickedly departed from Him, God has righteously withdrawn from them; and thus, the distance is *mutual*, and ever increasing. While Adam remained obedient, his Creator admitted him to near communion with Him, as is intimated by His “walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Gen 3:8); but when he transgressed the commandment, He withdrew His favour and thrust him out of Paradise. Had no Atonement been provided, there had never again been any communion with God—any more than there is between Him and the fallen angels. This awful state of distance from God is *still* the condition of all the unregenerate—elect or non-elect, the interposition of Christ availing them not, while they continue rejecting Him, as is made unmistakably plain by “he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (Joh 3:36).

While they remain in a state of nature, the elect—equally with the non-elect—lie under the guilt of sin and the condemnation of the Law; and are therefore, obnoxious to God—considered as the moral Governor and Judge of all. “God hateth sinners as they hate Him, for we are children of wrath from the womb, and that wrath abideth on us till we enter into God’s peace; and the more wicked we are, the more we increase His wrath. ‘He is angry with the wicked every day’ (Psa 7:11); they are under His curse. Whatever be the secret purposes of His grace, yet so they are by the sentence of His Law, and according to *that* we must judge of our condition” (T. Manton, volume 13, p. 257). So too, John Owen (1616-1683): “Reconciliation is the renewing of friendship between parties before at variance—both parties being properly said to be reconciled, even both he that offended, and he that was offended. God and man were set at distance, at enmity, and variance by sin, man was the party offending, God offended, and the alienation was mutual on every side” (*The Death of Death*, chapter 6, 2nd paragraph).

But how may God be said to love or hate believers before their reconciliation since He is the Author of it? Let us give a condensation of Stephen Charnock's reply (1628-1680): "First, God loves them with a love of *purpose* or election, but till grace be wrought in them, not with a love of *acceptation*. We are within the love of His purpose as we are designed to be the servants of Christ, but not within the love of His acceptance till we are actually His servants—'he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God' (Rom 14:18). They are alienated from God while in a state of nature and not accepted by God till in a state of grace. There is in God a love of good-will and a love of delight. The love of good-will is the root, the love of delight is love in the flower. The love of good-will looks upon us as afar off, the love of delight is itself in us, draws near to us. By peace with God, we have access to Him; by His love of delight, He has access to us. God wills well to them before grace, but is not well pleased with them till grace.

"Second, God doth hate His elect in some sense before their actual reconciliation: (a) Not their persons, though He takes no pleasure in them, neither their persons nor services. (b) But He hates their *sins*. Sin is always odious to God, let the person be what it will. God never hated, nor ever could, the person of Christ, yet He hated and testified in the highest measure His hatred of those iniquities He stood charged with as our Surety. He hates the sins of believers, though pardoned and mortified. (c) God hates their *state*. The elect before conversion are in a state of enmity, of darkness, of slavery, and that state is odious to God, and makes them incapable while in that state to 'inherit the kingdom of God' (1Co 6:9-11). The state of the elect before actual reconciliation is odious, because it is a state of alienation from God—whatever grows up from the root of the old Adam cannot be delightful to Him. (d) God hates them as to withholding the *effects* of His love—His frown rather than His smile is upon them."

In Ephesians 2, the apostle informs us how this mutual alienation is removed—namely, by Christ "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph 2:15, 16). As J. Owen pointed out, "It is evident the reconciliation here mentioned consists in slaying the enmity, so making peace. Now, what is the 'enmity' intended? Not that in our hearts to God, but the legal enmity that lay against us on the part of God." This passage will come before us again (D.V.), when we consider the *scope* of reconciliation, suffice it now to point out that while verses 14, 15 refer to that which was effected between believing Jews and Gentiles, verse 16 has in view that which relates to God Himself, and as J. Owen well pointed out, this "enmity" of God against Jews and Gentiles alike was a legal one—that which the Divine Law entailed.

"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself;...And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight" (Col 1:20-22). Since "peace" was made, there must have been enmity or hostility; and since the peace was made "through the blood of his cross," then the shedding thereof was in order to the *placating of God*, by offering a satisfaction to His outraged Law. Thus, when theologians use the expression, "a reconciled God," they signify that a change in His relationship and attitude toward us has been effected, from one of wrath to favour—it is the removal of that estrangement which was produced by our offence. In consequence of His atonement, Christ has pacified God toward all who believe and brought them to God. Our reconciliation unto God is the same thing as our *conversion*, when we surrendered to His just claims upon us, and in heart, desired and purposed to forsake all that is opposed to Him. ❧

### *A REQUEST*

The March and April 1941 issues of this magazine to American readers were “lost by enemy action.” If my British friends have these two particular copies and can spare them *without* breaking a whole year’s set, kindly post them to us, and (D.V.), we will forward to those who will value them.



July

## FAITH AS A MASTICATOR

In the last two issues, we sounded an alarm unto our brethren against the danger of so yielding to the active and hostile principle of unbelief—which is still within us, that it should obtain complete dominion over us; and then, we should only be described as those marked by “an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12)—that is, as *apostates*. It is therefore fitting that we should now consider the grand remedy and preventative. “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Heb 4:1-2).

The exhortation begun at Hebrews 3:12 is not completed unto Hebrews 4:11. The connecting link between the two chapters is found in the words, “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Heb 3:19)—*that* was what gave point to the exhortation of 3:12, and *that* is also made the basis of the warning of Hebrews 4:1 and the injunction of 4:11. Israel had a promise of entering into Canaan, but it profited them not, because they did not mix faith with it (Heb 4:2). We, too, have a promise of entering the antitypical Canaan, but it will advantage us nothing if it be received with unbelief. The promise made to Israel is recorded in Exodus 6:6-8, yet the fact remains that—excepting only Caleb and Joshua—none of the adult Hebrews who were delivered from Egypt ever entered Canaan! Did then the promise of God fail of its accomplishment?

No. Why not? First, because that promise of Exodus 6 was made to Israel generally and collectively, *as a people*—it did not specify that all, or even any, of that particular generation were to enter in. Second, though no condition was expressly named, yet, as the event proved, it was necessarily implied: The promise must be “mixed with faith” (Heb 4:2)—as the threat of Jonah 3:4 could only be averted by repentance. Had an absolute and unconditional promise been made to that particular generation, it must have been performed. Instead, the fulfilment of that promise was suspended on their believing and acting accordingly. Thus, it was a promise addressed to human responsibility. God made no promise to Israel that He would bring them into Canaan—whether they believed and obeyed, or no. Nor did their unbelief make the promise of God of none effect. It was accomplished to the next generation, who believed God and obeyed the instructions of His servant—see Joshua 21:43.

God’s dealings with the Hebrews furnish an analogy of the principles which operate in connection with the promise of the Gospel, which is addressed to sinners as moral agents. The

promise is indeed “sure to all the [chosen] seed” (Rom 4:16), for every one redeemed by Christ will verily enter the purchased possession. Yet, the Gospel itself does not testify directly to any individual that Christ so died for him in particular, that it is certain *he* shall be saved by His death. Instead, it proclaims, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mar 16:16). It is only by my *believing* the Gospel that I am secured of eternal life, and it is only as I hold fast the Truth and am regulated by it, that I can legitimately enjoy the comfort of the Gospel. In other words, I can only spell out my election, as I put my trust in the atoning blood of Christ, and then serve Him.

The Gospel is addressed to human responsibility. It demands a believing acceptance from those who hear it. The proclamation that Christ is a Saviour for Hell-deserving sinners avails me nothing, until I make personal appropriation of it. It avails me nothing, until I regard the Gospel as being addressed to me individually. It avails me nothing until I mix faith (Heb 4:2) with it—that is, until I accept God’s verdict that I am a Law-condemned, lost, and bankrupt sinner, and come to Christ owning myself to be such, and put my trust in the sufficiency of His atoning sacrifice. Then, it is that—on the authority of Him who says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Act 16:31)—I have Divine warrant to be assured that He is my *own* Saviour, and to say with Job, “I know that my redeemer liveth” (Job 19:25)—not because I deem myself of God’s elect, but because I have received the sinner’s Saviour.

God’s Word, whether it be the hearing or the reading of it, only *profits* the soul as it is “mixed with faith” (Heb 4:2). Faith is so many-sided, and its operations so diverse, that (in condescension to our weakness) it has pleased the Holy Spirit to use quite a number of varied figures to set forth its operations and acts. It is likened unto looking (Isa 45:22), unto setting to our “seal” (Joh 3:33), fleeing “for refuge” and laying “hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb 6:18), eating (Jer 15:16), drinking (Joh 7:37), and committing “unto him” (2Ti 1:12). In our text, the similitude of mixing faith (Heb 4:2) is taken from the mingling of the saliva with our food, which—through chewing it thoroughly and rolling it about in our mouth—is an aid unto digestion; and to the mixing of the juices of the stomach, so that the food is duly assimilated and becomes part of our bodies.

If our food be not properly chewed and mixed with our saliva, it will cause indigestion, and so far from being assimilated and nourishing the body, it will upset us. So it is with our hearing of the Gospel: If we mix not faith therewith, not only will the soul receive no profit, but it will add to our condemnation in the Day to come. We may listen to God’s servant and be duly impressed with his solemnity, or stirred by his earnestness, we may admire the logic of his arguments and the eloquence of his diction, we may be moved by the forcefulness of his illustrations and brought to tears by his descriptions of Christ’s sufferings—and yet, obtain no spiritual benefit therefrom. Why? Because we were occupied only with the preacher and his preaching, admiring a *sermon*. Because we failed to mix “with faith” the Word—and faith has to do solely with *God*.

Faith, my reader, brings in God. He is its sole Object. Faith has to do not with reasonings, feelings, or inward impressions and impulses—but with God and His Word. When a convicted sinner hears the Gospel and mixes faith with it, he realises that *God* is speaking through the minister, that God is speaking directly to *him*, that God is addressing his own immortal soul. It is now that he begins to realise the force of that Word, “he that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Luk 8:8). “Let him hear” means “let him *heed*”: Let him take home to himself *what* he hears and be suitably affected thereby. It is the same if I am *reading* the Word. If we would “mix [it] with faith,” then I must regard that Word as God speaking through it, speaking directly and personally to *me*, speaking that which is true and for my good, and I must respond thereto and act accordingly.

The Feast is spread and the broad call is made, “Come; for all things are now ready” (Luk 14:17). That invitation is freely made to all who hear it, and there is a place assured at that Feast to every one who responds. In order to respond, I must mix faith with it—that is, I must thankfully recognise that invitation is made to *me*, utterly unworthy and unfit though I feel myself to be. I must believe that God means what He says, and promptly avail myself of His gracious overture. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1Ti 1:15). It is not as one who has reason to believe his name is written in the Book of life, nor as one who feels a qualifying work of grace has begun in him, but simply as a *sinner*, I am to come to Christ for salvation. Receive that Truth into your heart as a little child, as addressed to you, and you *have* mixed faith with it, and masticated the Gospel.

## THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

### 19. Ephesians 1:15-23

#### *Part 5*

We have now arrived at the fourth petition in this prayer. In pondering the same, it is both important and necessary to realise that, equally with the two preceding requests, this final one is based upon and governed by the initial blessing. We can no more know (spiritually and experimentally) what is “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward” (Eph 1:19) without there first being given unto us “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him” (1:17)—with the resultant, “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened”—then we can know “what is the hope of his calling” or “what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (1:18). We are as entirely dependent upon the gracious operations of the Spirit for the one, as we are for the other. Grammatically, logically, doctrinally, and experimentally, the one is governed by and follows from the other. Something far more than a mere speculative or intellectual knowledge of God’s mighty power is here supplicated—namely, a personal acquaintance, a heart apprehension thereof, and for *that* anointed eyes—as the consequence of an increased measure of “the spirit of wisdom and revelation” (1:17)—is indispensable.

“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward” (Eph 1:19). It may not be so apparent to some of us why the apostle felt the needs be of making this particular petition. To a greater or lesser degree, all the saints are conscious of their need for a fuller supply of “the spirit of wisdom and revelation” (1:17) in the knowledge of God, and of their being granted a clearer and enlarged apprehension of “what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (1:18); but probably, many of them are less aware that it is equally desirous and essential for them to know more about the mighty operations of God unto them. If they have good grounds for believing, *they* have received an effectual call, then they *do* realise that a miracle of grace must have been wrought in them that nothing short of omnipotence could

have brought them from death unto life; yet, much more than that is included in this petition. We shall, therefore, begin our study of it by suggesting several reasons why the apostle should have made this particular request.

First, because he would *stain human pride*, for the natural man is so self-confident and self-sufficient that he deems himself quite competent to determine his own destiny. But over all his fancied efficiency, egotism and independency, God has written “without strength” (Rom 5:6)—not without physical, mental, or moral strength, but *spiritual*. Fallen man is spiritually dead; and therefore, not only is he utterly unable to perform a spiritual act in a spiritual way and from a spiritual principle, but he is devoid of any spiritual desires or aspirations, though he may be very devout as the world conceives of “religion.” “Without strength” *Godwards*—but who believes this today? Few indeed and fewer still have confirmed it by actual experience. The boast of Christendom is, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (Rev 3:17)—ignorant of her true condition, for the Divine Judge says to her, “and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev 3:17). Nothing but that exceedingly great power of God can subdue the workings of such pride and bring the sinner as an humble suppliant, and empty-handed beggar to the throne of grace.

To believe on Jesus Christ with all our hearts appears to be one of the simplest acts imaginable, and to receive Him as our personal Lord and Saviour seems to present no great difficulty in it. Yet in reality, before any soul actually does so, there has to be the working of God’s mighty power; or, in other words, a miracle of grace must be wrought in him. Before a fallen and depraved creature will voluntarily and unreservedly surrender to the just claims of Christ, before he will forsake his cherished sins and abandon his beloved idols, before his proud heart is brought to repudiate all his righteousness as filthy rags, before he is willing to be saved by grace alone as a bankrupt pauper and a vile wretch, before he is ready to whole-heartedly receive Christ as his Prophet, Priest and King—God must put forth the same mighty power unto him as He wrought in the Mediator when He raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to His own right hand in the heavenlies. Nothing short of the exercise of Omnipotence is sufficient for the one or the other.

If any readers consider our language in the above paragraph to be too strong and sweeping, then it is because they so feebly apprehend the total depravity of the natural man. Did they but truly realise the fearful havoc which the Fall has wrought in the whole of man’s nature and constitution, and were they better acquainted with both the might and deceitfulness of indwelling sin, were they but aware of the fact that every descendant of Adam is “shapen in iniquity” (Psa 51:5), and born into the world the slave of sin; and that no efforts of his own, nor any attempts by his fellow-men can, to the slightest degree, deliver him from his fearful bondage—then it would be apparent that a supernatural power must intervene, if ever he is to be emancipated from his captivity, that none but the hand of God can smite off his fetters and bring him out of prison. If the spiritual darkness of man’s understanding, the perversity of his will, the disorderliness of his affections and passions were better understood, then it would be more evident that no mere reformation could suffice, that nothing short of personal regeneration—the communication to him of a new nature and life—could be of any avail.

Second, because we are so *ignorant of the terrible powers arrayed against us*. When engaged in a serious conflict, nothing is so fatal to success as to underestimate the strength of our opponents. Only as our judgment of the might and malignity of our spiritual foes are formed by the teaching of Holy Writ, can we really assess the same. Unless our thoughts concerning the enemies of our souls be regulated by what God’s Word reveals thereon, we are certain to err. Above, we have referred to the potency of indwelling sin, but how little is its awful dominion and prevalency

realised! “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil” (Jer 13:23). The natural man is no more able to improve his sinful nature and make himself love God, than the Negro can alter the colour of his skin. As neither external applications, nor internal potions could whiten his dark complexion—so neither education, culture, nor reformation can change the sinner’s nature, and bring him to hate what he now loves, or love that to which he is inveterately averse.

Not only is the natural man the slave of sin, but he is also *the captive of the Devil*. Immediately after the prayer, we are now pondering as the apostle reminded the saints: “In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2). So complete is Satan’s dominion over the unregenerate, that he not only tempts them from without, but works *within* them, so that they are moved and made both to will and to do of his evil pleasure; and therefore, is he termed their “father,” and as Christ declared unto the Pharisees “and the lusts [desires, behests] of your father ye will do” (Joh 8:44). They fondly imagine they are ‘free agents,’ pleasing themselves, but in so concluding, they are deceived by their arch-enemy, their master and king—for they are held fast in “the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (2Ti 2:26), and no more able to escape from his toils, than they are to create a world; nay, they have no desire so to do.

“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2Co 4:3-4). What then can his infatuated victims do? As the “prince of this world” (Joh 14:30), he directs its politics and policies, as “the god of this world” (2Co 4:4), he controls its superstitions and religions; thereby maintaining his “kingdom” (Mat 12:26), and governing his subjects. In His parable of the Wheat, our Lord intimated something of the fearful dominion of our great foe: “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart” (Mat 13:19). How helpless then are his victims! One has but to read the case of the poor demoniac in Mark 5, whom “no man could bind...no, not with chains,” to ascertain how thoroughly unavailing are all human attempts to escape from his thralldom. Yet how little is this realised!

When the Lord saves a person, He casts the Devil out of him, and *that* is a work of exceeding great power, such as He alone is capable of putting forth. This was clearly made known by His statement, “When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace [i.e. secure]: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils” (Luk 11:21-22). Only Divine omnipotence can turn souls “from the power of Satan unto God” (Act 26:18). Nor does he admit defeat, even when any of his captives *are* taken from him by force. No, he makes the most relentless and persevering efforts to recapture them, employing his powerful and numerous emissaries to encompass that end. Therefore are the saints warned, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood [merely human beings], but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12); and hence, they are bidden to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God” (Eph 6:10-11a).

Third, because of *the unbelief and timidity of the saints*. We are creatures of extremes. When our self-confidence and self-sufficiency is subdued, we are prone to become occupied with our weakness and insufficiency; instead of keeping our eyes fixed steadily on the One who began a good work in us—as we learn something of the might of our foes, both within and without, and

our feebleness, and incompetency to resist them—we are apt to become thoroughly discouraged and give way to despair. This, it seems to us, explains why the apostle reserved this petition for the last. He had just asked that the saints might know what are “the riches of the glory of his [God’s] inheritance in the saints” (Eph 1:18), and then it was as though he anticipated their inevitable objection: How shall such vile creatures, as we, ever come to be made glorious? Even though we have been delivered from a worse than Egyptian bondage, are we not likely, as the Israelites of old, to perish in the wilderness, ere we reach the promise land! It was to quieten such fears that Paul reminded them of the exceeding greatness of God’s power.

In the early part of Ephesians 1, much had been said about the good-will of God toward His people; and now, to warm their hearts and strengthen their faith, Paul would have them contemplate the Divine omnipotence. It is the power of God which executes His counsels. That power has ever been the confidence and glory of His saints—that He has a “mighty arm” (Psa 89:13) is the security of their salvation. It is inexpressibly blessed to see that the power of God is exactly proportioned to His promises: Has He given us “exceeding great and precious promises” (2Pe 1:4)?—then there is “the exceeding greatness of his power” (Eph 1:19) to make them good! That was the ground of Abram’s assurance when God declared he should have a son in his old age: “And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead...neither yet the deadness of Sara’s womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform” (Rom 4:19-21). It is in remembering the power of God that weakness and readiness to faint is changed into confidence and joy—see Psalm 77:7-15!

“That ye may know...what is the exceeding greatness of his power *to us-ward*” (Eph 1:18-19). That petition only meets with a suitable response from us, when we remember that the Divine omnipotence is engaged to uphold, strengthen, and defend His people, to complete the good work which it has begun in them, to fully redeem them from sin, Satan, and death, to perfectly conform them unto the image of His dear Son. Just in proportion, as believers realise that the infinite power of God is available for them to lay hold of and draw from, do they answer to the apostle’s design in placing upon record this request for them. When most conscious of our weakness and the might of our enemies, it is our privilege to come boldly to the throne of grace, and there, “find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). It is one thing to believe intellectually in the exceeding greatness of God’s power; but it is quite another for us to personally and experimentally “take hold” of His strength (Isa 27:5)—then, it is that we prove for ourselves the meaning of these words, “out of weakness were made strong” (Heb 11:34), and what it is to be “strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2Ti 2:1).

Fourth, because *only thus is God honoured*. To give place to such a fear as David did, when he said, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul” (1Sa 27:1) is most dishonouring to God, and is the consequence of being absorbed with our enemies—rather than the Lord. Let self-diffidence be accompanied with confidence in God, and all will be well. Since the glory of God is concerned in the salvation and preservation of His people—and the apostle was about to make requests concerning the furtherance of the same—he, here, addressed Deity as “the Father of glory” (Eph 1:17). It is blessed to realise the import of that—since the Father of glory be the Author of our salvation, He will certainly be the *Guardian* of it. The same motive which disposed Him to contrive and effect our salvation will also move Him to ripen all the fruits of it. It is for this reason, chiefly, we may be sure that, “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phi 1:6). His glory requires it, and His power will secure it; and therefore is it termed, “his glorious power” (Col 1:11).

“That ye may know...what is the exceeding greatness of his power *to us-ward*” (Eph 1:18-19) in removing our enmity against Him, in dispelling the native darkness of our understandings, in subduing our rebellious wills, in drawing our hearts unto Himself, in giving us a love for His Law and a longing for holiness, in delivering us from the power of Satan. It is most necessary for us to know *that*, if all the praise and glory are to be ascribed unto Him, to whom alone it be due. As we compare ourselves with the unregenerate—who naturally may shame us in many respects, but who spiritually are in the broad road that leadeth to destruction, unconcerned about their eternal interests—we do well to ponder that question, “*Who* maketh thee to differ?” (1Co 4:7). The answer is, and can only be, a sovereign God, by the putting forth of His omnipotence and making us willing to receive Christ as our *Lord* in the day of His power. And if we can now perceive any good thing—the root of the matter in us, the fruits of a new nature—then we must exclaim, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory” (Psa 115:1).

This fourth petition then was a request that the saints might have a clearer understanding and a better apprehension of *how* that miraculous change within them had been brought about, and of what that initial change was the sure earnest. It was not produced by rational considerations, moral suasion—nor by the power of the preacher, for he can no more quicken dead souls, than he can dead bodies. It originated not in any act of our wills; it was not effected by any human agency. There was something *prior* to the consent of our wills; namely, a radical and permanent inward transformation, wrought by the hand of the Most High. And observe how energetic and impressive is the language used—not only ‘the power of God’ or ‘the greatness of that power,’ but “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward” (Eph 1:19). So weighty and emphatic is the language of the Greek that it is difficult to reproduce in English: “The super-excellent sublime, and overcoming or triumphant greatness of His power” is how one rendered it.

We believe that Charles Hodge erred when he said that this exercise of the Divine power “evidently refers to the past and not to the future”—for surely, the tense of the verb here precludes any such limitation. We much prefer the excellent definition of J.C. Philpot: “The power put forth in first communicating; second, in subsequent maintaining; third, in completing and consummating the work of grace in the heart”—except that we would include God’s working on our behalf, and in the resurrection of our bodies, as well. But what we most desire to press upon the attention, and leave with the Christian reader, is that the exceeding greatness of God’s power is *to usward*. It is not merely latent in Himself—still less is it against us, as was the case with Pharaoh—but is engaged on our behalf, making all things work together for our good (Rom 8:28). Then what is there to fear! Join the apostle in praying for an enlarged heart-apprehension of it.

# SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

## 9b. Its Means

2. *Devotedness to God.* The lifelong work of mortification is but the negative side of the Christian life, being a means to an end: The positive aspect is that the redeemed and regenerated sinner is henceforth to live unto God, to wholly give up himself unto Him, to employ his faculties and powers in seeking to please Him and promote His glory. In his unregenerate days, he went “his *own way*” (Isa 53:6), and did that which was pleasing unto himself; but at conversion, he renounced the flesh, the world, and the Devil, and turned unto God as his absolute Lord, supreme End, and everlasting Portion. Mortification is the daily renewing of that renunciation, a continuing to turn away from all that God hates and condemns. Devotedness to God is a living out of the decision and promise, which the believer made at his conversion when he gave himself unto the Lord (2Co 8:5), chose Him for his highest Good, and entered into covenant with Him to love Him with all his heart, and serve Him with all his strength.

In exact proportion to his strict adherence to his surrender unto God, at his conversion will be the believer’s spiritual growth and progress in the Christian life. That mortification and devotedness unto God is the true order of the principal *means* for promoting spiritual prosperity, appears, first, from the grand type furnished in the O.T. When God began His dealings with Israel, He called them out of Egypt, separating them from the heathen—as He had their great progenitor, when He called him to leave Ur of Chaldea, a figure of mortification. But that was merely negative. Having delivered them from their old manner of life and brought them over the Red Sea, He brought them unto Himself (Exo 19:4), made known His will unto them, and entered into a solemn covenant—to which they were consenting parties, declaring, “All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient” (Exo 24:7). Just so long as they adhered to their vow and kept the covenant, all was well with them. Devotedness unto the Lord was the grand secret of spiritual success.

This order appears again in that oft-repeated word of Christ’s, which contains a brief, but comprehensive summary of His requirements: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mat 16:24). *There* are the fundamental terms of Christian discipleship, and the basic principles by which the Christian life is to be regulated. Anyone who “will come after me”—who chooses, decides, determines to enlist under My banner, throw in his lot with Me, become one of My disciples, “let him deny himself, and take up his cross,” and that “daily” (Luk 9:23)—which presents to us the work of mortification. But that is only preliminary, a means to an end; the principal thing is “and *follow me*,” My example. What



was the grand principle which regulated *Him*? What was the unchanging end of Christ's life? This: "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me"! (Joh 6:38) "I do always those things that please him" (Joh 8:29). And we are not following Christ, unless that be *our* aim and endeavour.

That devotedness to God is the outstanding mark, the essential duty, the pre-eminent thing in the Christian life, which is also clear from the teaching of the Epistles. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom 12:1). That appeal is made unto Christians, and *begins* the hortatory section of that Epistle! Up to that point, the apostle had set forth the great facts and doctrinal contents of the Gospel, and only once, did he break the thread of his discourse by interjecting an exhortation—namely, in 6:11-22, the force of which is here gathered up into a concise, but extensive summary. The "yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead" (Rom 6:13), and the "yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness" (Rom 6:19) is here paraphrased as, "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Rom 12:1). In substance, it is parallel with that word, "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" (Pro 23:26).

The place which is given to this precept in the N.T. intimates its paramount importance: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service" (Rom 12:1). That is the *first* exhortation of the Epistles addressed to the saints, taking precedence of all others! First, there is the duty which God requires from us. Second, the ground on which it is enforced, or the motive from which it is to be performed, is made known. Third, the reasonableness of it is affirmed. The duty to which we are here exhorted is a call to the unreserved dedication and consecration of the Christian unto God. But since those are terms which have suffered not a little at the hands of various fanatics, we prefer to substitute for them the *devoting* of ourselves entirely unto God. That word "devote" is employed in Leviticus 27:23, 28, where it is defined as "a holy thing unto the LORD" (Lev 27:23); yea, "every devoted thing is most holy unto the LORD" (Lev 27:28)—that is, something which is set apart exclusively for His use.

Joshua 6 contains a solemn illustration of the force and implications of that term. Israel's commander informed the people that "the city [of Jericho] shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD" (Jos 6:17). Since it was His power that delivered this city of the Canaanites into their hands, He claimed it as *His*, to do with as He pleased; thereby precluding the Israelites from seizing any of its spoils for themselves. So that there might be no uncertainty in their minds, it was expressly added, "But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD" (Jos 6:19). Therein lay the enormity of Achan's sin—not only in yielding to a spirit of covetousness, not only in deliberately disobeying a Divine commandment—but in taking unto himself that which was definitely devoted, or set apart, unto the Lord. Hence, the severity of the punishment meted out to him, and all his household. A monumental warning was that for all future generations—of how jealously God regards that which is set apart unto Himself; and the awful seriousness of putting to a profane, or common use, what has been consecrated to Him!

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice" (Rom 12:1) signifies, then, that ye devote them unto God, that you solemnly set them apart unto Him—for His use, for His service, for His pleasure, for His glory. The Hebrew word for "devote" (*charam*) is rendered "consecrate" in Micah 4:13 and "dedicated" (*cherem*) in Ezekiel 44:29. The Greek word for "present" (*paristemi*) occurs first in Luke 2:22, where we are told

that the parents of Jesus “brought Him to Jerusalem to *present Him* to the Lord”—which, in the next verse, is defined as, “holy to the Lord.” How deeply significant and suggestive that its initial reference should be to our Great Exemplar! It is found again in 2 Corinthians 11:2, “that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” It is the term used in Ephesians 5:27, “That he might present it to himself a glorious church.” It is the same word that is translated, “*yield yourselves unto God*” in Romans 6:13. It therefore means a definite, voluntary, personal act of full surrender to God.

This duty which is enjoined upon the Christian is here set forth, more or less, in the language of the O.T. types, as the term, “a living sacrifice” clearly intimates, while the word “present” is a temple term for the bringing thither of anything to God. This duty was announced in O.T. prophecy: “They shall bring all your brethren *for an offering* unto the LORD out of all nations” (Isa 66:20)—not to be slain and burnt in the fire, but to be presented for God’s use and pleasure. So, too, it was revealed that when “our God shall come” (Psa 50:3), He will say, “Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me *by sacrifice*” (Psa 50:5). There were three principal things taught by the Levitical offerings. First, our sinfulness, guilt and pollution, which could only be expiated by “a life for life”; and that was for our humiliation. Second, the wondrous provision of God’s grace: Christ, a substitute and surety, dying in our stead, which was for our consolation. Third, the love and gratitude due unto God, and the new obedience which He requires from us; and that is for our sanctification.

The Christian is required to surrender the whole of his being unto God. The language in which that injunction is couched in Romans 12:1 is taken from the usages of the Mosaic economy. “Present your bodies a living sacrifice” (Rom 12:1) connotes, present yourselves as embodied intelligences. Our “bodies” are singled out for specific mention to show there is to be no reservation—that the entire man is to be devoted unto the Lord: “The very God of peace sanctify you *wholly*; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless” (1Th 5:23). When God called Israel out of Egypt, He said, “there shall not an hoof be left behind” (Exo 10:26). Our “bodies are the members of Christ” (1Co 6:15); and therefore, does He bid us, “yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Rom 6:19). It is through the body that our new nature expresses itself. As 1 Corinthians 6 tells us, the body is “for the Lord; and the Lord for the body” (1Co 6:13). And again, “know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost...therefore glorify God in your body” (1Co 6:19-20).

This duty is expressed in O.T. terms, because the apostle was comparing Christians to sacrificial animals whose bodies were devoted as offerings unto the Lord; and because he would thereby particularly emphasise that obligation, which devolved upon them to be and do and suffer whatever God required. The ‘living sacrifice’ points to a parallel, and not a contrast—for no animal *carcase* could be brought by an Israelite. A living victim was brought by the offerer, and he laid his hand upon his head to signify he transferred to God all his right and interest in it; then he killed it before God, after which the priests, Aaron’s sons, brought the blood and sprinkled it upon the altar (Lev 1:2-5). In the application of this term to the Christian, it may also include the idea of *permanency*: Present your bodies a perpetual sacrifice, as in Christ “the *living bread*” (Joh 6:51) and “a living hope” (1Pe 1:3); it is not to be a transient “sacrifice,” but one never to be recalled. “Holy” means unblemished, and set apart solely for God’s use—as the vessels of the tabernacle and temple were devoted exclusively to His service.

The Christian is called upon to give up himself unto God—and that cannot be done without cost, without proving that a “sacrifice” is indeed a *sacrifice*, even though a willing one; yet, it is only by so doing, we can be conformed to the death of Christ (Phi 3:10). It is to be done intelli-

gently, *voluntarily*, as a free will offering to God—with full and hearty consent, as one gives himself or herself to another in marriage, so that the believer can now say, “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine” (Song 6:3). Yet, it is to be done *humbly*, with grief and shame for having so long delayed, for having wasted so much of my time, and strength in the service of sin. It is to be done *gratefully*, from a deep sense of Divine grace and mercy, so that the love of Christ constrains me. It is to be done *unreservedly*, with no reservation, an unqualified devoting of myself unto God. It is to be done *purposefully*, with the sincere desire, intention, and endeavour to be ruled by Him in all things, ever preferring and putting His interests and pleasure before my own.

But let us notice now the ground on which this duty is enforced, or the motive by which it is to be performed. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, *by the mercies of God*” (Rom 12:1). It is not, “I command you”—for it is not the Divine authority to which appeal is made. “Beseech” is the tender language of loving entreaty, asking for a gracious response to the amazing grace of God. The “therefore” is a deduction made from what precedes. In the foregoing chapters the apostle had, from Romans 3:21 onwards, set forth the Gospel “mercies” or riches of Divine grace. They consist of election, redemption, regeneration justification, sanctification, with the promise of preservation and glorification—blessings that passeth knowledge. What, then, shall be our response to such inestimable favours? It was as though the apostle anticipated his Christian brethren being so overwhelmed by such lavish displays of God’s goodness unto them, they would exclaim, “What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits” (Psa 116:12)? What possible return can I make unto Him for His surpassing love? Here, says Paul, is the answer to such a query, to such a heart longing.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Rom 12:1). It is *thus*, you will manifest your gratitude and evince your appreciation of all God has done for, unto, and in you. It is *thus*, you will exhibit the sincerity of your love for Him. It is *thus*, you will prove yourselves to be “followers” of Christ and adorn His Gospel. It is *thus*, you will please Him who has done everything for you—not merely by vocal thanksgiving, but by personal thanks-*living*. Thus did the apostle begin to present and press those obligations, which are involved by the blessed favours and privileges set forth in the preceding chapters. Those doctrinal disclosures are not so many speculative things to engage our brains, but are precious discoveries for the inflaming of our hearts. The contents of Romans 3 to 8 are given not only for the informing of our understandings, but also for the *reforming* of our lives. We should never abstract privilege from duty—nor duty from privilege—but take them together. The “therefore” of Romans 12:1 points the practical application to all that goes before.

“Acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Poor and paltry as is such a return unto the Divine munificence; yet God is pleased to receive the offering up of ourselves, and to announce that such an offering is agreeable to Him. That is in striking and blessed contrast from “the sacrifice of the wicked is an *abomination* to the LORD” (Pro 15:8). The word, “reasonable service” are susceptible of various renditions, though we doubt if any are better than that of the A.V. Logical or rational are warrantable alternatives—for God certainly requires to be served intelligently, and not blindly, or superstitiously. Literally, it may be translated, “your service according to the Word.” “Service” may be rendered “worship”—for it is an act of homage and a temple service which is here in view; and thus, accord with the idea of “sacrifice.” God requires the worship of our body, as well as of the mind. But in the light of the preceding “therefore,” we prefer “reasonable service.”

“Which is your reasonable service.” And is it not so? Those that “have rejected the word of the LORD” are ‘fools’ (Jer 8:9) and ‘unreasonable men’ (2Th 3:2), because lacking in wisdom to

discern the excellency and equity of God's ways. What can be more reasonable than, that, He who made all things for Himself should be served by the creatures that He made? That we should live unto Him who gave us being? That the Supreme should be obeyed, the infallible Truth believed, that He who can destroy should be feared, that He who doth reward should be loved and trusted in?" (E. Reynolds, 1670). It is reasonable, because it is what Omniscience requires of us: This is the fundamental part of our covenant when we choose Him as our God: "One shall say, I am the LORD's...and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD" (Isa 44:5). By our own solemn consent, we acknowledge God's right in us, and yield to His claims. He requires that His right be confirmed by our consent: "*Take* my yoke upon you" (Mat 11:29)—He forces it on none.

"Which is your reasonable service." And again, we ask, Is it not so? Does not a change of masters involve a changed order of life? Should not those who have been recovered from sin to God show the reality of that change, in being as earnest in holiness, as before they were in sin? Talk is cheap, but actions speak louder than words. If God gave Christ to us as a sin-offering, is it too much to ask that we devote ourselves to Him as a thank-offering? Christ was content to be nothing, that God might be all; and is it not "reasonable" that our judicial oneness with Christ should have—for its complement—practical conformity to Him. If we have, by regeneration, passed from death unto life, is it not reasonable and meet that we devote ourselves as a "living sacrifice" unto God, and walk in newness of life? Are not the "mercies of God"—appropriated by faith and realised in the heart—sufficient inducement to move His people to give up themselves entirely to His will—to be ordered, employed, and disposed of, according to His good pleasure (Phi 2:13)?

Are any inclined to ask, "What has all the above to do with spiritual growth or Christian progress?" We answer, "Much every way." Genuine conversion is a giving up of ourselves unto God, an entering into covenant with Him that He should be *our God*, and His promises are made to "such as *keep* his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to *do* them" (Psa 103:18). But if we turn from devoting ourselves to God unto sin and the world—and thereby, break the covenant—what possible spiritual prosperity can we enjoy, or progress make? Christ died for all His people, "that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but *unto him* which died for them, and rose again" (2Co 5:15). If, then, I relapse into a course of self-pleasing, so far from advancing in the Christian life, I have backslidden, repudiated the initial dedication of myself to God, and have cast Christ's yoke from off me. Spiritual growth consists of *increasing* devotedness to God, and being more and more conformed unto Christ's death.

It is one of the most effectual means for spiritual growth to live in the daily realisation that Christ has "redeemed us *to God*" (Rev 5:9): To restore His rights over us, to admit us to His favour and friendship, to enjoy fellowship and communion with Him, that we may be for His pleasure and glory; and then, to conduct ourselves accordingly. Only as we are wholly devoted to His service and praise, only as all our springs and joy are in Him, do we actualise the design of our redemption. No progress in the Christian life can be made any further, than as we are regulated by the fact that "ye are not your own...For ye are bought with a price" (1Co 6:19-20). When that is really apprehended in the heart, the soul will become the consecrated priest, and his body will be the living sacrifice offered unto God, daily through Jesus Christ. Then will it be the devotedness—not of constraint, but of *love*. The more fully we are conformed to Christ's death, the more closely we be following the example He has left us, the more (and the *only*) true Christian progress are we making.

# THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

## 7c. Its Meaning

In our last, we pointed out that reconciliation is an attitude or relation, and dwelt upon the fact that it is a *mutual* affair. This is so obvious, that it should need no arguing; yet, since so many have denied that God required to be reconciled unto sinners, we must perforce dwell upon it. Where one has wronged another, and a break ensues between them, then just as surely as ‘it takes two to make a quarrel,’ so it takes two for a friendship to be restored again. If the one who committed the injury confesses his fault, and the other refuses to accept his apology and forgive him, there is no reconciliation effected between them; equally so, if the injured party be willing to overlook the fault, desiring peace at any price; yet, if the wrongdoer continues to bear enmity against the other, the breach still remains. There must be a mutual good-will before a state of amity prevails. That holds good in connection with God and His sinning creatures.

We dwelt upon the fact that the entrance of sin brought about a changed relationship between God and man. Since Adam stood as the federal head of the race, and transacted as the legal representative of all his posterity, when he fell, the whole of mankind apostatised from God. In consequence of the fall, all mankind came under the curse of the Law; and therefore, the elect—equally with the non-elect—are “by nature the children of wrath, *even as others*” (Eph 2:3): Loved by God with regard to His eternal good-will, but born under His wrath in regard of His Law and its administration—let those words be carefully pondered. “Accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:6) from all eternity, yet entering this time-state under Divine condemnation. Holy and without blame in Christ by election, yet guilty and depraved in ourselves by sin. We must distinguish—as Scripture does—between how God viewed His people in Christ in the glass of His decrees, and how He regards them as in Adam, participating in the consequences of his transgression; and continuing in sin, by their own course of constant rebellion against Him, until they are regenerated.

“There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1) clearly implies that *before* they came to be “in Christ Jesus,” the elect *were* under condemnation—as Romans 5:18 declares, “by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation.” If it be asked, “But were not the elect ‘in Christ’ from all eternity?” The answer is, “In one sense, yes; in another sense, no.” “In Christ” always has reference to *union* with Him. The elect were *mystically* united to Christ, being “chosen...in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4); yet until that decree is actualised, they are “without Christ” (Eph 2:12). At regeneration, the elect are *vital*ly united to Christ: He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit (1Co 6:19 and compare 2Co 5:17). Hence, Paul speaks of those who “were in Christ *before me*” (Rom 16:7). Having been brought from death unto life, the elect embrace the Gospel offer and become *fiducially* united to Christ—“*fiducial*” is from the Latin “fido” (to trust)—for they, then, savingly “believeth in [or

“into”] Him” (Joh 3:15). “But he that believeth not is condemned already (Joh 3:18). The members of Christ’s body, the Church, are in a state of guilt and condemnation until they personally exercise faith in the atoning blood of Christ. We have laboured this point, because some of our readers have been taught the contrary.

It was the entrance of sin which caused the breach between God and us, but in this connection, particularly, it is important to remember what sin essentially consists of. While in some passages, sin is regarded as a “debt,” and God, in connection therewith, as the Creditor; in other places, as an “offense,” and God, in connection therewith, as the injured Party; and in still other verses, as a “disease,” and God, in connection therewith, as the great Physician—yet none of those terms bring before us the primary element in, and basic character of, sin. The fundamental idea of sin is that it is “a transgression of the law” (1Jo 3:4) of God, the Rule which He has commanded us to observe; and this should, therefore, be the leading aspect in which it is contemplated when we consider how God deals with it. Proof of that is found in connection with the origin of human sin, in Genesis 2 and 3: God gave man a commandment which he transgressed: “By one man’s *disobedience* many were made sinners” (Rom 5:19).

Now, as the essential idea of sin is not that it is merely a debt or injury, but a violation of our Rule of conduct, then it follows that the particular character in which God ought to be contemplated when we consider Him dealing with sin is not that of a Creditor or injured Party—who may remit debt or forgive the injury as He pleases—but in His office as the supreme Lord, sin as transgression of the Divine Law has, for its necessary corollary, God as *the Judge*. Since He has promulgated a Divine Law which prohibits sin under pain of death, He is bound by His veracity to maintain the honour of His Law and establish His government by strict justice; and therefore, He cannot pardon sin, unless an adequate provision be made for accomplishing those objects. As the Judge of all the earth, and the Rector of the universe, His own perfection requires Him to insist that if the penalty of the Law be remitted, it must be by another suffering it vicariously, thereby meeting the claims of His Law.

There could be no reconciliation between an offended God and His apostate people, until the breach between them had been healed, until His righteous wrath as the Governor of this world had been appeased, and until they also throw down the weapons of their warfare against Him. As the Judge of all, His honour required that His Law should receive full satisfaction; and since His fallen people were unable to make reparation, He graciously provided a Surety for them, who magnified His Law by rendering to it a perfect obedience, and by dying in their stead; and thus, enduring for them its unmitigated curse. Thereby, *God’s* legal “enmity” or wrath was appeased, and the sins of His people were blotted out; thereby, God was propitiated, and their guilt expiated. Through His atoning sacrifice, Christ removed every legal obstacle, which stood in the way of God’s being merciful unto transgressors and receiving them into His favour; and by His merits, Christ procured the Holy Spirit (Act 2:33), who, by His effectual operations in the elect, slays their enmity against God, and brings them into loving and loyal subjection to Him; and thus (at their conversion), *they* are reconciled to God.

Socinians have objected that it was neither necessary—nor just—that Christ should both obey the Law in His people’s stead *and* yet suffer punishment on the account of their transgressions, seeing that obedience is all that the Law requires. Such a demur would be valid, had Christ been acting as the Surety of an innocent people who were under probation; but since He entered the Lawplace of transgressors, the objection is entirely without point. Obedience is not all that the Law requires of *guilty* creatures—for they are not only obliged to be obedient for the future, but to make satisfaction for the past. The covenant which the Lord God made with Adam had two

branches: Obey, and live (“the commandment, which was ordained to life,” Rom 7:10); or sin, and die (Gen 2:17). And therefore, since Christ was “made under the law” (Gal 4:4)—which, in the final analysis, signified “under the Covenant of Works”—and since He was acting and transacting as “the last Adam” and “the second man” (1Co 15: 45, 47), it devolved upon Him to meet the requirements of *both* branches of the Covenant. As we discussed that at length in the last four articles of the 1944 issues, there is no need to further enlarge upon it.

Since the will of God changes not, and the requirements of His government remain the same forever, then, if a Surety engaged Himself to discharge all the obligations of God’s elect, He must necessarily meet all those requirements on their behalf. The Son, therefore, became incarnate and subjected Himself unto the full demands of the Law and was dealt with according to its high spirituality and rigorous justice. First, He honoured the preceptive part of the Covenant by rendering a perfect obedience to every detail. But that of itself would make no satisfaction for His people’s transgressions, nor afford any expression of the Divine displeasure against sin; and therefore, after a life spent in unremittingly doing the will of God, must also needs lay down His life. “For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb 7:26). His compliance with the precepts was preparatory to His enduring the penalty of the Law, when He stood at the bar of God in the room of the guilty—and before God as the offended Law-giver and angry Judge—executing upon Him what was due them.

Some are likely to still have a difficulty at this point: How could Christ be the gift of God’s *love*, if that Gift had for its first end the removing of His judicial “enmity” and the placating of His *wrath*? But such a difficulty arises from failure to distinguish between things that differ: Between God, in His essential and in His official character; and between the elect, as He views them in Christ, and as He sees them as the fallen descendants of Adam. To affirm that God both loved and hated them at the same time, and in the same respect, would indeed be a palpable contradiction; but this, we do not. God loved His people in respect of His eternal purpose, but He was angry against them with respect to His violated Law and provoked justice by sin. There is no inconsistency whatever between God’s loving the saints with a love of good-will, and the hindrances to the outflow and the effects thereof—which their sins and His holiness interposed in the way of peace and friendship. Though the holiness of God’s nature, the righteousness of His government, and the veracity of His Word placed barriers in the way of His taking sinners into communion with Himself, without full satisfaction being made to His Law; yet, they did not hinder His love from providing the means whereby those barriers were removed, and they were recovered from their apostasy.

“I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer 31:3); “I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was *not beloved*” (Rom 9:25). It should be quite evident to every candid reader that, if we are to avoid a contradiction in those two passages, we must make a distinction in the *interpretation* of them; that in them, the love of God is viewed in entirely different aspects. In other words, we must ascertain the precise *meaning* of the terms used. The former speaks of His paternal love, or good-will, towards them; the latter, of His judicial favour, or love-of-acceptance. The one concerns His eternal counsels; the other relates to His dealings with us in a time-state. The former is His love of philanthropy, or benevolence; the latter, of His love of approbation. The one has to do with His loving us in Christ; the other, with His loving us for our *own* sakes—because of what the Holy Spirit wrought in us at regeneration and conversion. The one concerns our predestination; the other, our reconciliation. That distinction reveals the confusion in the piece from Mr. Philpot, quoted in “The Introduction” of this series.

The same distinction has to be observed again, when we contemplate God's dual attitude toward Christ, the Son of His love, whom He both loved and poured out His wrath upon—yes, and at the *same time*, though in entirely different relations. When the Father declared, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat 3:17), He was expressing Himself paternally, as well as testifying to His approbation of both Christ's Person and Work. But when we are told that, “It pleased the LORD to bruise him” (Isa 53:10); and when He cried, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zec 13:7), it was as the Law-administrator, or Judge, that He was acting. Never was God more “well pleased” with His beloved Son than when He hung upon the Cross in obedience to Him (Phi 2:10); yet He withdrew from Him every effect or manifestation of His love during those three hours of awful darkness; yea, poured out His wrath upon Him as our sin-bearer, so that He exclaimed, “Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves” (Psa 88:7).

The very men who object to God's loving and yet being antagonistic to the same person at one and the same time, perceive no antagonism between those things, when they are adumbrated [suggested] before their eyes, and illustrated in their own experience on this lower plane. Love and anger are perfectly consistent at the same moment, and may—in different respects—be terminated on the same subject. A father should feel a double affection or emotion toward a rebellious son: he loves him as his offspring, but is angry with him as disobedient. Have we not read of a judge who was called upon to pass sentence on his own child? Or of a military officer who was required to court-martial his son for insubordination in the ranks? Why, then, should we have difficulty in perceiving that while in their lapsed state, God loved His people with a love of good-will, yet loathed and was angry with them as rebels against His government. As the injured Father, He laid aside His anger; but as the Preserver of Justice, He demanded full satisfaction from them, or their Surety.

Equally pointless is another objection made by Socinians and Arminians; namely, that such a doctrine, as we are propounding, represents God as changeable, as a fickle Being—first angry, and then pacified. But precisely the same objection might as well be brought against *repentance*! If it be granted that sin is displeasing to God, then obviously, He is no longer displeased when the sinner repents, and He forgives him! “The atonement did not make God hate sin less than He did before, or excite feelings of compassion towards us, which did not formerly exist. He loved us before He gave His Son; and sin still is, and ever will be, the object of His utmost aversion. The effect of the atonement was a change of *dispensation*, which is consistent with immutability of nature” (J. Dick). The fact is that God demanded an atonement, because He does *not* change, and would not rescind or modify His Law, revoke His threatening, nor lay aside His abhorrence of sin. They—who represent God as being mutable—are the very ones who assert that He pardons sin without satisfaction to His justice.

The precise nature of “reconciliation” can be ascertained clearly from the Levitical offerings. Unless those O.T. types were misleading, then they definitely exhibited the fact that the sacrifice of Christ pacified God, made peace, and procured His favour. Personally, we unhesitatingly adopt the words of Principal Cunningham when he said, “The whole institution of Levitical sacrifices and the place which they occupied in the Mosaic economy, were regulated and determined by a regard to the one sacrifice of Christ.” Those sacrifices set forth the principles on which the effects of the Redeemer's work depended, and provide the surest and best materials for interpreting and illustrating the character and bearing of the Atonement. Those typical sacrifices demonstrated beyond any doubt that the sacrifice of Christ was vicarious and expiatory, that it was presented and accepted in the room and stead of others, that it propitiated God and averted His wrath; and there-



fore, that it procured the exemption of His people from the penal consequences of their sins and effected their reconciliation unto God.

In our May article, we quoted Numbers 16:46 in proof that “an atonement” is made in order to turn away the “wrath...[of] the LORD;” let us now allude to further examples. “And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. *So* the LORD was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel” (2Sa 24:25)—the occasion being when “the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel” because David had numbered the people (2Sa 24:1). The same incident is mentioned again in 1 Chronicles 21, where we are told that “God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it” (1Ch 21:15), which was in addition to the “pestilence” or “plague” which slew seventy thousand Israelites mentioned in 2 Samuel 24. Then, after David had built an altar there unto the LORD and had offered appropriate sacrifices and “called upon the LORD,” and He had “answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar” (1Ch 21:26) (in token of His acceptance of the same), we read that “the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof” (1Ch 21:27). What anointed eye can fail to see in that incident, a vivid anticipation and adumbration of what occurred at Calvary!

There is a striking case of alienated friends being reconciled by means of sacrifice recorded in Job 42. “The LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly” (Job 42:7-8). Upon which Owen pointed out: “The offenders are Eliphaz and his two friends, the offence is their folly in not speaking aright of God. The issue of the breach is that the wrath or anger of God was towards them; reconciliation is the turning away of that wrath; the means whereby this was done, appointed by God, is the sacrifice of Job for atonement. This, then, is that which we ascribe to the death of Christ when we say that, as a sacrifice, we were reconciled to God. Having made God our Enemy by sin, Christ by His sacrifice appeased His wrath and brought us into favour again with God.”

The more closely that example in Job 42:7-8 be examined, the more clearly should we perceive the meaning and significance of the antitype. There was a declaration of God’s anger against those three men; yet also a revelation of His love to them, by directing them to the means whereby His anger might be put away; and they, restored to His favour. Clearly, He had goodwill unto them *before* He directed them what to do; yet He was not *then* reconciled to them—otherwise, there was no need of an atonement for appeasing Him. There was a cloud upon God’s face; yet the sun of mercy peeped out through that cloud—as He acquaints them with His anger, so He also shows them the way to pacify it. Though His wrath was truly kindled; yet He was ready for it to be quenched by the means of His prescribing. God could not find complacency in them, till He was reconciled to them. In acting on their behalf, Job was a type of Christ, whose propitiatory sacrifice, God both appointed and accepted.

# CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM

We have long felt the need for something helpful on this subject, and probably not a few of our readers have also desired a simple presentation of what God's Word teaches thereon. If we find it to be one which is by no means free of difficulties, that must be, because we have ourselves created them—by our prejudices and preconceptions—for God has given us His Word to legislate for us and direct our minds and actions, and not to perplex and bewilder us. In that Word are instructions pertinent to every relation, and suited to every situation we may be in. Sometimes those instructions are in the form of express precepts; sometimes, by broad general principles, which are applicable to many different circumstances; and sometimes, by the recorded example or prayers of Christ and His servants. God has not left us in darkness or ignorance of His will, but has provided His Word to be “a lamp unto...[our] feet” (Psa 119:105).

It is then to God's Word we must turn, if we would ascertain His revealed mind on the relation which His people sustain to the State, their duties to the government, and obligations to their fellow-citizens. Nor must we confine ourselves to any one section of the Word, nor so interpret any one statement in it as to contradict or cancel another—but must compare passage with passage, and seek to ascertain God's will by giving due place to every intimation thereof.

This has not always been done; and in certain circles, there appears to be not a little confusion in the minds of godly people. On the one hand, there are those who fail to clearly recognise the line of demarcation, which God has drawn between the world and the Church, who regard spirituality more as an abstraction, as something which concerns and is suited only to one side of our composite life—like a garment to don only on special occasions, leaving them free to wear their ordinary apparel the remainder of their time. Others, in their reaction from that concept, have swung to the opposite extreme and have concluded that, because the Christian is a “stranger and pilgrim” in this scene, he has no concern with the temporal well-being of his country.

Recently, we read a sermon which was preached during the time of the Napoleonic wars, when England was seriously threatened with invasion; and as it is the best thing we have ever seen on the subject, we propose to give our readers the benefit of it. It sets forth, in general at least, what we personally believe to be fully in accord with the revealed mind of God on the subject. As we desire it to be pondered impartially, we shall (for the present) withhold the name of its author, and the denomination to which he belonged. A sharp spear needs no polish, and a helpful exposition of any aspect of the Truth should require no eminent human name to commend it to the members of the household of faith. This sermon on “Christian Patriotism”—or the duty of God's people towards their country—was preached from the text of Jeremiah 29:7.—A.W.P.

## *Sermon on Christian Patriotism from the early 1800s*

*“And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace”—Jeremiah 29:7*

In the course of human events, cases may be expected to occur in which a serious mind may be at a loss with respect to the path of duty. Presuming, my brethren, that such may be the situation of some of you at this momentous crisis—a crisis in which your country, menaced by an unprincipled, powerful, and malignant foe, calls upon you to arm in its defence—I take the liberty of freely imparting to you my sentiments on the subject.

When a part of the Jewish people were carried captives to Babylon—ten years, or thereabouts, before the entire ruin of the city and temple—they must have felt at a loss in determining upon what was duty. Though Jeconiah, their king, was carried captive with them, yet the government was still continued under Zedekiah; and there were not wanting prophets, such as they were, who encouraged in them the hopes of a speedy return. To settle their minds on this subject, Jeremiah addressed the following letter to them: “Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon, Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace” (Jer 29:4-7).

I do not suppose that the case of these people applies exactly to ours; but the difference is of such a nature as to heighten our obligations. *They* were in a foreign land—a land where there was nothing to excite their attachment, but everything to provoke their dislike. They had enjoyed all the advantages of freedom and independence, but were *now* reduced to a state of slavery. Nor were they enslaved only—to injury was added insult. They that led them captives required of them mirth, saying, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion” (Psa 137:3). Revenge, in such circumstances, must have seemed natural; and if a foreign invader, like Cyrus, had placed an army before their walls, it had been excusable; one would have thought, not only to have wished him success, but opportunity offered, to have joined an insurrection in aid of him—nothing like this is allowed. When Cyrus actually took this great city, it does not appear that the Jews did anything to assist him. Their duty was to seek the welfare of the city, and to pray to the Lord for it—leaving it to the great Disposer of all events to deliver them in His own time; and this not merely as being right, but wise: In *their* peace, “shall ye have peace” (Jer 29:7).

Now, if such was the duty of men in their circumstances, can there be any doubt with respect to *ours*? Ought we not to seek the good of our native land, the land of our father’s sepulchers; a land where we are protected by mild and wholesome laws administered under a paternal prince; a land where civil and religious freedom are enjoyed in a higher degree than in any other country in Europe; a land where God has been known for many centuries as refuge; a land, in fine, where there are greater opportunities for propagating the Gospel—both at home and abroad—than in any nation under heaven. Need I add to this that the invader was to them a deliverer; but to us, beyond all doubt, would be a destroyer. Our object this evening will be partly to inquire into the

duty of religious people towards their country; and partly to consider the motive by which it is enforced.

I inquire into the duty of God's people towards their country. Though, as Christians, we are not of the world and ought not to be conformed to it; yet being in it, we are under various obligations to those about us. As husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants, etc., we cannot be insensible that others have *a claim upon us*, as well as we upon them; and it is the same as members of a community united under one civil government. If we were rulers, our country would have a serious claim upon us *as rulers*; and as we are subjects, it has a serious claim upon us *as subjects*. The manner in which we discharge these relative duties contributes not a little to the formation of our character, both in the sight of God and man.

I. The *directions* given to the Jewish captives were comprised in two things: Seeking the peace of the city; and praying to the Lord for it.

These directions are very comprehensive, and apply to us much more forcibly than they did to the people to whom they were immediately addressed. Let us inquire, more particularly, what is included in them.

1. "***Seek the peace of the city***" (*Jer 29:7*). The term here rendered "peace" signifies not merely an exemption from wars and insurrections, but prosperity in general. It amounts, therefore, to saying, "Seek the good or *welfare* of the city." Such, brethren, is the conduct required of us—as men and as Christians. We ought to be patriots, or lovers, of our country. To prevent mistakes, however, it is proper to observe that the patriotism required of us is not that love of our country which clashes with universal benevolence, or which seeks its prosperity at the expense of the general happiness of mankind. Such was the patriotism of Greece and Rome; and such is that of all others where Christian principle is not allowed to direct it. Such, I am ashamed to say, is that with which some have advocated the curse of negro slavery—it is necessary forsooth to the wealth of this country! No; if my country cannot prosper but at the expense of justice, humanity, and the happiness of mankind, let it be unprosperous! But this is not the case. Righteousness will be found to exalt a nation, and so to be a true wisdom. The prosperity which we are directed to seek in behalf of our country involves no ill to any one, except to those who shall attempt its overthrow. Let those who fear not God, nor regard man, engage in schemes of aggrandizement, and let sordid parasites pray for their success. *Our* concern is to cultivate that patriotism which harmonises with good will to men. O my country, I will lament thy faults! Yet with all thy faults, I will seek thy good; not only as a Briton, but as a Christian: For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will say, "Peace be within thee; because of the house of the Lord my God, I will seek thy good!"

If we seek the good of our country, we shall certainly *do nothing* and join nothing that tends to disturb its peace or *hinder its welfare*. Whoever engages in plots and conspiracies to overturn its constitution—we shall not. Whoever deals in inflammatory speeches, or in any manner, sows the seeds of discontent and disaffection—we shall not. Whoever labours to depreciate its governors, supreme or subordinate, in a manner tending to bring government itself into contempt—we shall not. Even in cases wherein we may be compelled to disapprove of measures, we shall either be silent, or express our disapprobation with respect and with regret. A dutiful son may see a fault in a father; but he will not take pleasure in exposing him. He that can employ his wit in degrading magistrates is not their friend, but their enemy; and he that is an enemy to magistrates is not far from being an enemy to magistracy; and of course, to this country. A good man may be aggrieved; and being so, may complain. Paul did so at Philippi. But the character of a *complainer* belongs only to those who walk after their own lusts.

If we seek the good of our country, we shall do everything in our power *to promote its welfare*. We shall not think it sufficient that we do it no harm, or that we stand still as neutrals in its difficulties. If, indeed, our spirits be tainted with disaffection, we shall be apt to think we do great things by standing aloof from conspiracies and refraining from inflammatory speeches; but this is no more than may be accomplished by the greatest traitor in the land, merely as a matter of prudence. It becomes Christians to bear positive good-will to their country, and to its government—considered *as government*, irrespective of the political party which may have the ascendancy. We may have our preferences, and that without blame; but they ought never to prevent a cheerful obedience to the laws, a respectful demeanour towards those who frame, and those who execute them; or a ready co-operation in every measure, which the being or well-being of the nation may require. The civil power, whatever political party is uppermost—while it maintains the great ends of government—ought at all times to be able to reckon upon religious people as its cordial friends. And if such we be, we shall be willing in times of difficulty to sacrifice private interests to public good, shall contribute of our substance without murmuring, and in cases of imminent danger, shall be willing to expose *even our lives* in its defence.

As the last of these particulars is a subject which deeply interests us at the present juncture; and I shall be excused if I endeavour to establish the grounds on which I conceive its obligation to rest. We know that the father of the faithful—who was only a sojourner in the land of Canaan when his kinsman Lot, with his family, were taken captives by a body of plunderers—armed his trained servants, pursued the victors, and bravely recovered the spoil. It was on this occasion that Melchizedek blessed him, saying, “Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand”! (Gen 14:19-20). Perhaps it will be said, “This was antecedent to the times of the New Testament.” Jesus taught His disciples not to resist evil; and when Peter drew his sword, He ordered him to put it up again, saying, “for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Mat 26:52). *[To be completed in the August issue.]*

## WELCOME TIDINGS

“Praise ye the LORD” (Psa 106:1 and in *many* other places!). The fact that this exhortation occurs so often in the Scriptures denotes that for the saints to be thus engaged is pleasing to the Lord, and such is indeed the case—for He has plainly declared, “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me” (Psa 50:23). It also imports that it becomes the saint to be so occupied; and this, too, borne out by “praise is comely for the upright” (Psa 33:1). Further, we may surely infer from this Divine call being made so often that praising the Lord is not to be an occasional exercise, but a frequent one. If we are to “Rejoice in the Lord alway” (Php 4:4) and “In every thing give thanks” (1Th 5:18), then obviously, we should be constantly praising Him. Have we not abundant cause so to do? Can we make any better employ of our faculties? Is there not something seriously wrong with us if we are not daily, hourly, “singing and making melody” in our hearts “to the Lord” (Eph 5:19)?

“Praise ye the LORD.” Does not the frequent repetition of this injunction also suggest that we are *tardy* in performing this delightful task—that we need to be reminded of it again and again? God knows that His people are now in a howling wilderness; that often, they are sorely tried by circumstances, that they carry about with them a sinful nature, which occasions many a groan; nevertheless, they are not to hang their harps upon the willows and rob Him of His due. They are journeying unto the Father’s house; He is making all their tribulations work together for their good; He has provided a Fountain “for sin and for uncleanness” (Zec 13:1). They must not suffer the trials of the way to overwhelm them, but set over against those the privileges and portion, which is theirs in Christ; and praise Him for the same.

“Praise ye the LORD.” In these days, when there is so much to distress them in the world, and when the speed and pressure of modern life is so exacting and enervating, there is real danger of the saints failing to rend unto the Lord daily that praise and thanksgiving to which He is so just entitled. It will help them to discharge this pleasant duty, if they sit down and try to count their many spiritual and temporal blessings. As the Psalmist said in another place, “while I was musing [meditating upon God’s goodness] the fire burned” (Psa 39:3). Let the Christian reader join with the editor and his wife in praising the Lord, because He deigns to continue blessing these pages unto one and another of His scattered sheep—a few of whose testimonies we now append.

“The Misses introduced me to your ‘Studies’ and I have derived much help and pleasure from them. My work in the army is such that I am very much on my own; and consequently, your magazines have been what of might call a little sanctuary” (One in the Australian Forces).

“I am deeply grateful to Almighty God for having made your acquaintance, even though it be through the medium of the penned word, for He has used you in wonderful way to further unfold the Scriptures to me—first and chiefly concerning the perversion of the Gospel, which is widely prevalent in the more Fundamental (?) of professedly Christian circles today. They would have faith without works, grace without holiness, love and no wrath...Again I say that I am grateful to Him for awakening me to this great delusion, which has swept the professing church; and through Him and in His name, I extend to you my thanks and appreciation for your ministry to me” (One in the U.S. Army).

“I wish to express my thanks to you and your wife for the help I have received in reading the ‘Studies.’ They have been a great source of encouragement and profit to me in my present circumstances; and I pray that in the goodness of God, your labours in study and meditation will bear much fruit in increased exercises in the hearts of those who profess to know and serve Christ. With Christian love (One in the Royal Air Force).

“I am in receipt of all the Studies for 1944, for which I sincerely thank you. Again and again have I enjoyed them, especially when one is away from all Christian fellowship and means of grace. The Lord richly bless your work through another year” (One in the Royal Navy).

“I receive much spiritual help from your writings” (Canadian soldier).

“At the moment, I am so busy on war work, fourteen and a half hours per day (Sundays excluded), that I find my brain and mind very tired at the end of the day. So a helpful spiritual ministry like yours is a tonic to my soul” (Munition Worker). —*How that puts to shame so many who work much shorter hours, and yet complain they have “no time” for solid and serious reading!*

“In thinking on the ‘Studies,’ I cannot but express how much your work has meant to my wife and me. I feel as though we were one in fellowship. We have grown to know and respect you

highly, not only as an able expositor of His Word, but as a friend. By that word, ‘friend,’ we mean all it connotes. When the mail arrives bringing your Studies, we feel as though you too had stepped through our door to pay us a visit.” —*Many of our readers feel the same way.*

“Thank you for the ‘Studies’ and their God-given messages. They are a great blessing to me and your opening up of God’s precious Word is most edifying. Your choice of articles for God’s beloved people in these days calls for their thanksgiving” (Welsh Reader).

“With grateful thanks, I forward herewith a contribution to the work of the ‘Studies,’ which I continue to receive; and which are just as profitable as ever, and probably more searching than ever” (New Zealand Reader).

“Nearly all modern religious literature lacks the solemn warning so often found in your articles.” “We are grateful for the heart-searching truths ministered to us.” “Your repeated warnings against the exceeding sinfulness of sin, I find very suited to my case” (Three Australian Readers).

“Those of us who are isolated look forward to ‘Studies,’ as they contain food for our souls: We get not only doctrine, but reproof—something we are sorely in need of, but I know of no other religious magazine which gives it” (Canadian Reader).

“I do not believe I have missed one issue of these Studies, which seems very wonderful to me. I am still enjoying them very much: So many articles seem written just for me” (Alaskan Reader).

“Thank you so much for the ‘Studies’—not one issue is missing. I do enjoy re-reading the many articles that are nourishing to my soul. I praise the Lord for them, for it is He alone who gives you the light” (U.S.A.).

“My much esteemed and faithful brother, may the blessings and mercies of a three-one-God continue to rest upon thee. As the days go by, it appears that the depth and richness of your work increases. I cannot tell whether the difference is in me or you—I hope both. Often when reading the ‘Studies,’ the thankfulness of my heart overflows” (U.S.A. Preacher).

“There are many things being written these days on the Scriptures, but I can say that I find your writings more helpful and stimulating than any others. I trust you may long be spared to continue this good work” (Canadian Preacher).

“My friends and I read your ‘Studies’ with relish, and our wish is that the God of blessings will continue to bless readers and writer. In this ‘day of small things,’ His people rejoice to find a faithful witness” (Scottish Reader).

We might quote letters received from half a dozen young preachers in various parts of the world, but lack of space prevents. Not only should these unsolicited testimonials evoke praise unto the Lord for deigning to make use of our pen, but definite prayer too—that He may graciously *increase the circulation* of this magazine, bring us into touch with many more whose hearts He has prepared for His message through us, that they also may share in the blessing and enjoy with us some of the green pastures provided for His sheep.

Thankfully yours, A. W. and V. E. Pink

[Note: while subscriptions to the Studies were in the 400 to 500 range for most of its years, and grew to approximately 1,000 at its zenith before shrinking back, the modern printings have steadily grown, passing 2,000 subscriptions in North America in October of 2006. Praise to our great God!]



# August

## FAITH AS A MASTICATOR

### Part 2

What we said in our last month's issue under this title was designed chiefly for "seekers"—or awakened sinners—longing for peace of soul. For this occasion, it is to the young Christian we would more especially address our remarks—and to him, we would say, 'The secret of success in the Christian life is to *continue* as you began. As you obtained the pardon of your sin in the first case by mixing faith (Heb 4:2) with the Gospel, so you will only grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by mixing faith with the Word of God. Only by so doing, will you become a fruitful branch of the Vine; only thus will you obtain strength for the production of good works; only thus will you glorify God in your spirit and body which are His, adorn your profession, and be a real help to your fellows.

While we may not be able to fully analyse and understand the whole process of physical nutrition, yet there is no mystery about it—for it is regulated by certain laws of dietetics appointed by our Maker. The growth and development, the health and strength of the body is determined, in the first instance, by our regular partaking of food—wholesome food properly masticated. The analogy holds good spiritually. The food which God has provided for our souls is His own Word, the heavenly manna; and that Word does not act upon us magically, but according to fixed principles instituted by God—the first of which is that it must be received *by faith*. For that reason, it is called "the word of faith" (Rom 10:8)—it is the Word to which faith is due, the Word which profits us not until received by faith. For the same reason, we read of being "nourished up in the word of faith" (1Ti 4:6)—that is, the Word broken up into words and "mixed with faith."

Seed which is cast into the earth brings forth no fruit, unless it incorporates the fructifying virtues of the soil. And the Word of God, as it falls on our ears, or beneath our eyes, will produce no fruit—unless it be mixed with faith. It is faith which admits the Word into our hearts and gives it a subsistence in the soul. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). That is not a definition of what faith is, but a description of what faith produces. The Divine, spiritual heavenly and supernatural objects, which are presented to us in the Word, appear intangible and nebulous to the unbeliever—but *faith* gives them substance and reality. Though the things hoped for be invisible; yet future, faith makes them sure and solid and



gives them a real subsistence in the soul. Faith does for us spiritually what fancy does for us naturally. Faith gives the things promised by God a present actuality in the heart, and makes Christ and Heaven more certain than if seen by the physical eye.

The material food that we eat only advantages us as it is duly mixed with our saliva, swallowed, and then digested by the juices of the stomach. When that food is masticated and assimilated, it becomes a means of strength within us, being made a part of our bodies. In like manner, when the Word is properly meditated upon, “mixed with faith” and assimilated, it is a means of spiritual energy within us and becomes a part of our lives. When Truth is really believed, it becomes so united to the faith which receives it, that it is incorporated with it, is realised in the soul, and is taken up into that new nature whereby we live unto God. Only as the words of God are personally appropriated and spiritually digested do they become a living principle within us, energizing unto obedience. Faith is not a mere assent to the truth of the things presented, but is such a reception thereof, as gives them a real inbeing in the soul so that they produce their proper effects.

We are bidden to “lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the *engrafted* word” (Jam 1:21). As a “graft” draws all the sap of the stock unto itself, so when the Word is “engrafted” into us, it causes the faculties of the soul—our thoughts, affections, energies and wills—to serve God. When Christ spoke of His disciples as branches of the Vine, He said, “the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine.” To which, He added, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you” (Joh 15:4, 7)—not only do our persons need to be engrafted into Christ, but in order to fruitfulness, His words must be engrafted into us. By receiving the Word in faith and meekness, it becomes incorporated with the soul; and as the nature of the stock and graft become one common principle of fruitbearing, so the Word received by faith into the soul becomes one common principle of obedience.

We are also exhorted to “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col 3:16), and that can only be done by “mixing faith” with it. One great aid to that is to *ruminate* frequently upon some portion of Scripture. The word “ruminate” signifies to “chew the cud,” as all clean animals do—that is, those that were “clean” under the Mosaic law. But the counterpart in us is to muse upon what we have heard or read, which is the best aid there is for a weak memory. Meditation stands to reading, as mastication does to eating. If we are to “mix faith” with the words of God, we must fix the mind on them. That is the force of the contrast presented in James 1:23-25—the ideal and profitless hearer of the Word is likened “unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass,” but “straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.” “But whoso looketh [bows down and inquires] into the perfect law of liberty, and *continueth* therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

As we meditate upon the Word and mix faith therewith (appropriate it to ourselves), it sets *love* a-work: “While I was musing the fire burned” (Psa 39:3)! As the Truth is believed, and its purity, its sweetness, its value, its suitability unto our case is realised in the soul—under such a consideration of it, love is drawn forth unto its Author, and obedience becomes easy. In this way, a delight for the things of God is increased within us, and we perceive them to be excellent and precious. Faith makes the soul in love with spiritual things, and love fills us with the desires after them. By the Word being incorporated into the soul, its natural operations are changed and moved to the production of spiritual effects; unto which, previously, it had no virtue, no desire, no strength. Finally, as faith is mixed with the Word of God, it transmutes it into earnest prayer.

What has been pointed out above of the Word in general, pertains to each part of it in particular. Take its doctrinal parts: They will profit you nothing, unless faith be mixed with them; that is,

until carnal reasoning on them is completely set aside, and I receive them unhesitatingly as a part of Divine revelation unto me personally. So it is with its precepts. Said the Psalmist, “I have believed thy *commandments*” (Psa 119:66); that is, he regarded them as addressed to himself personally, as Divine laws which must regulate his life, and he applied them to his own walk. So with the promises: Where they are given in the plural number, faith puts in its claim and individualizes them; and for the personal pronouns, substitutes my own name. Equally so with the Divine warnings and threatenings: Not until I view them as meaning what they say, and as addressed to myself individually, do they have any effect upon me; but when I mix faith with them, I tremble at God’s Word (Isa 66:2).

## THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

### 20. Ephesians 1:15-23

#### *Part 6*

“That ye may know...what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward” (Eph 1:18-19). In our last, we suggested several reasons why it is necessary that such a request should be made. It is of no small importance—both for our own good and for the glory of God—that we should obtain a better understanding and clearer apprehension of *how* the wondrous change within us has been brought about, for our ignorance concerning the same is very great. Nevertheless, the workings of omnipotence to us-ward must, by no means, be restricted unto the initial miracle of regeneration—amazing and blessed though that be—for it was but the forerunner, the sure earnest, of further marvels of grace. None but God can save a sinner, and He alone can *preserve* him in such a world as this. If the exceedingly great power of God is required to deliver a soul from spiritual death, the continued exercise of it is equally essential in bringing him safe home to Heaven. If nothing short of the infinite strength of the Almighty was sufficient to free one of Satan’s captives, anything less would be quite inadequate to prevent the arch-enemy of man recovering his former victim.

“Who are kept by the *power of God* through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1Pe 1:5). “He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper” (Psa 121:4-5). Of His vineyard, it is said, “I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day” (Isa 27:3). Such blessed assurances are not given to encourage carnal confidence and presumptuous carelessness, but are recorded for the comfort and heartening of those who have been brought to realise they have “no might” of their own and would certainly make shipwreck of the faith were they left to themselves and their own resources. But thank God, the same mighty power, which was put forth at first to make them new creatures in Christ, is engaged to carry forward the work of grace within them, to defend from all enemies, to supply their every need while left in this “howling wilderness” (Deu 32:10). Thus,

their eternal security is infallibly guaranteed, and the Lord of Hosts is their sole, but all-sufficient, confidence, the might of His omnipotence, their ever-available resource.

The exceeding greatness of God's power *to us-ward* not only includes the operations of His grace upon and within His people, but also comprehends His wondrous providences unto them in meeting every need, and making things work together for their good (Rom 8:28). There is also one other exercise of Divine omnipotence unto the saints, which we must at least mention—and that is, their *glorification*, when, in spirit and soul and body, they shall be perfect and permanently conformed to the image of God's Son. Their very bodies, which were sown in dishonour, will be raised in glory; and what before was natural will then be made spiritual. Whatever difficulties carnal reason and unbelief may advance about the supposed change of the particles—which comprise our present bodies and the alleged impossibility of the same bodies coming forth on the resurrection morning—faith disposes of them all by confident appeal to “The Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby *he is able* even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phi 3:20-21). The resurrection of the body is as great a miracle as the regeneration of the soul, and the same mighty power which effected the one, will accomplish the other.

We turn now to a technical detail, yet it is not devoid of interest and importance. Careful readers will have observed that in our quoting of Ephesians 1:19a, we stopped at the word “us-ward,” rather than “believe”—as in the A.V. [Authorized Version]. Two things require to be determined—namely, the precise point at which the petitionary part of the prayer ends, and the punctuation of verse 19; really, the two things are one, for as soon as the former be settled, the latter is at once determined. In our March article, we outlined the prayer thus: First, its occasion (Eph 1:15); second, its nature (Eph 1:15-16); third, its object (Eph 1:17); fourth, its request (Eph 1:17-19); fifth, its revelation (Eph 1:19-23)—our reason for so designating this last section, we give below. Now, it is our impression that we have already reached the conclusion of the petitionary portion of this prayer at the word “us-ward,” and that a colon should follow it; and therefore, that the “who believe” are to be connected and considered with what immediately follows.

It is quite clear that the requests made, begin at the words “may give unto you” etc. (Eph 1:17); whether they end at the word “us-ward” or “believe” is a point on which the commentators differ—the great majority favouring the latter, as our translators did. Yet personally, we much prefer the former; and that, for the following reasons. First, the added words, “who believe” are not necessary for the purpose of defining the “us-ward”—the subjects or beneficiary of God's power—for they are manifestly the “saints” of the preceding clause. Second, to say that God's power is “to us-ward who believe” unwarrantably *restricts* the idea—for God's omnipotence wrought in the saints *previously*; and had it not done so, they never had believed! Third, if the “who believe” is linked to the preceding clause, then the final section of the prayer begins as abruptly—“according to.” Fourth, if the “who believe” commences a noun clause, they present a most important truth, which our passage would otherwise omit—namely, that our believing is itself the immediate result of the Divine operations.

“Who believe, according to the working of his mighty power” (Eph 1:19). Before attempting to open up the meaning of those words, let us seek to point out their wider scope, or the relation which they bear to what follows. True prayer is something more than the making known of our requests unto God, even with thanksgiving; it is something more than an act of adoration, wherein the believer praises and adores Deity. It is also a *communing* with God, and communing or fellowship is *mutual*. When the redeemed soul is favoured to have an audience with the Divine Majesty, not only does He hearken to his petitions, but He graciously condescends to speak with

him. A beautiful illustration of that is found in Numbers 7:89: “When Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat” (compare Exo 33:11)! This was the case here in Ephesians 1: While the apostle was making known his requests unto the Father of glory, he received a revelation from Him, which is recorded in the closing verses of our chapter.

Wondrous things were here made known, things which had not been disclosed heretofore. In the closing verses of Ephesians 1, certain aspects of truth are revealed, which are nowhere else set forth again in the Scriptures. In Psalm 110:3, it was plainly intimated that there must be a putting forth of Divine power, before the people of God are made willing to abandon their prejudices and idols. Once and again, Christ affirmed the natural man to be incapable of exercising faith (Joh 5:44; 8:43; 10:26), but here alone do we learn that God puts forth the *same* power in working faith in us, as He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. On the day of Pentecost, Peter declared that God had raised the crucified Jesus and made Him “both Lord and Christ” (Act 2:36); but here alone, is it formally stated that the Redeemer has been exalted “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion” (Eph 1:21). In 1 Corinthians 15:27, it is said that God has “put all things under” Christ; but here alone, do we discover that God “gave him to be the head over all things *to* the church” (Eph 1:22). In 1 Corinthians 12:27, the Church is designated “the body of Christ;” but here alone, is she called *His* “fulness” (Eph 1:23).

Wondrous indeed are those things to which we have just called attention above; things which it should be our joy to carefully contemplate, and not carelessly dismiss with a passing glance. Some readers may chafe at the slowness of our progress, but why should we hurry over such a passage as this? Is there anything more sublime or precious in the prayers yet to follow, that we should get through with this one as quickly as possible? If the writer followed his own inclinations, he would write another twelve articles on these closing verses of Ephesians 1; but he realises that would unduly tax the patience of many. On the other hand, not a few welcome a detailed exposition and sermonizing of such a passage, desiring something more instructive and edifying than the superficial generalizations, which characterize most of the productions of our day. May the Spirit of Truth graciously shine upon our understanding and enable us to so “open” these verses, that faith may be instructed, souls fed, God glorified, and His Son endeared to His redeemed.

“Who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.” To savingly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ lies not within the ability of the natural man’s will, for his will—like every other faculty of his being—has been depraved and ruined by the Fall. The will follows the dictates of the mind, and the inclinations of the affections: In other words, we will or choose that which is most agreeable to us. We do not choose that to which we are averted. Now, the heart of the natural man is averse to the thrice holy God and the carnal mind is enmity against Him—how then can he voluntarily and gladly choose Him for his Lord and Portion? The bent of his desires must be changed, before his will embraces God as his absolute End. No man, by a mere act of his will, can make himself love any person or thing that he hates. If there I have been brought to esteem and receive as my Lord the One whom I formerly despised and rejected, a radical change must have been wrought within me. Hence, we read of “the operation of *God*” (Col 2:12).

“Who *believe*”—that word must be understood here in its widest scope, as including repentance, and as issuing in conversion. Such believing is the outcome of “the working of his [God’s] *mighty* power.” Not a single word of His Writ is superfluous; and there is good reason why the power of God is here called a “mighty” one. Speaking after the manner of men, we may say that God *proportions* His power, according to the work before Him, exercising more in one particular

operation than another—as we only put forth the utmost of our strength, when faced with a more than ordinary occasion. This is clearly borne out by the language of Scripture, wherein its Author is pleased to accommodate His terms to our feeble intelligence. Thus, where physical miracles were wrought, it was by “the *finger* of God” (Exo 8:19; Luk 11:20)—but it was by “strength of *hand*” He brought forth His people from Egypt (Exo 13:14, 16) and “upholdeth” His saints (Psa 37:24). And in yet other passages, we read that God has a “mighty *arm*” (Psa 89:13), “He hath shewed strength with his arm” (Luk 1:51).

Had such distinctions as the above—and particularly their import and purport—been more closely attended to, it had been much easier to bring to a decisive conclusion the age-long controversy between Arminians and Calvinists, concerning the invincibility of God’s power upon the unconverted. The great majority of Calvinists erred when they denied the contention of their opponents that there is a power of God which works in the hearts of men that can be and so *resisted*—as they have failed to fairly interpret many of the verses advanced by Arminians. “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost” (Act 7:51) must not be “explained away,” but honestly expounded in harmony with the Analogy of Faith. There are “differences of administrations” and “diversities of operations...of the Spirit” (1Co 12:5-7), according to His several designs. The Spirit puts forth different proportions of power, according to the various ends before Him. Those spoken of in Hebrews 6:4, 5 and 2 Peter 2:20 were the subjects of His inferior or lesser operations, but not of His regenerating power. Many are enlightened by the Spirit (as Balaam), their corruptions are restrained, their consciences pricked—yet without His making them new creatures in Christ Jesus (Gal 6:15).

The writer has no hesitation in declaring he is convinced that thousands of people have been drawn by God to sit under a faithful preaching of His Word, been convicted by the Spirit of their sinful and lost condition, found something in their souls of “the powers of the world to come” (Heb 6:5)—but were not brought from death unto life. Yet while we believe many are the subjects of God’s power working upon and within them—which power they resist and quench—yet, we emphatically deny that a single soul ever did or will defeat or defy “the working of his mighty power” (Eph 1:19). That such a distinction is a necessary and valid one is surely indicated in the verse now before us—for why else should the Holy Spirit here declare that God’s work in bringing us to believe holds proportion with that stupendous wonder when He “raised him [Christ] from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places”! (Eph 1:20). Such power He does not put forth in His lesser and lower works. This “working of his mighty power” (Eph 1:19) is effectual, prevailing, invincible, and cannot be withstood.

The force of the Greek is conveyed more vividly by the marginal rendering of the A.V.: “According to the working of the might of his power.” One word was not sufficient to express the power that works so mightily, so the apostle doubled it, as was the manner of the Hebrews—as “holy of holies” signifies the most holy; and thus, “the might of his power,” His utmost strength. When Scripture would express the greatness of God’s might and the certainty of bringing a thing to pass, it adds one term to another or doubles the expression: Thus, He is “mighty in strength” (Job 9:4). And again, “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth” (Isa 40:26)—there can be no failure when He putteth forth the might of His strength. Despite what they are by nature, and notwithstanding the might of Satan and his determination to retain all his subjects, the mighty power of God works efficaciously and infallibly in all them that believe. The combined efforts of all creatures in the universe

could not have prevented God from raising Christ from the dead; neither can they hinder Him from working faith in His elect.

There has been much disputing among theologians concerning the power put forth by God in the converting of sinners, yet there is no real occasion for it. As Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) pointed out, “If you would know what power is put forth in any work, ask the agent himself.” Well, here the Converter of souls is the Indicter of this very verse, and He tells us it is by “the working of his mighty power” (Eph 1:19). In view of those words, every preacher of the Gospel ought to be bowed before God, conscious of his own impotency, begging Him to graciously exercise His omnipotence among his spiritually-dead hearers. It is true that in connection with the sudden conversion of a sinner, beholders perceive not that a miracle of Divine power has been performed. When the woman was healed by a touch of the hem of Christ’s garment, those that stood by discerned no such thing. But what did He say? This: “Virtue is gone out of me” (Luk 8:46)—His life-giving power had effected the cure instantaneously. Nor was the subject of that miracle unaware of the grand change wrought—for she knew “what was done in her” (Mar 5:33).

Should the reader ask, “Why is the working of God’s ‘mighty power’ necessary in order to the converting of a soul?” The answer is, Because of the nature of the work performed. As in the case of one who is physically ill, the more desperate his case, the more skill is required from the physician if he is to be healed. So it is, only as we learn from Scripture and actual experience, the hopeless condition that fallen man is in, can we see the needs-be of Omnipotence itself intervening if ever he is to be saved. The converting of a sinner is a greater miracle and calls for the putting forth of more power than the creating of man did. How so? Because creation is simply the bringing of a creature into existence; but conversion is the transforming of one who is opposed to it—in the one, there is no impediment; in the other, there is every possible resistance. Though there is nothing to help, yet in the old creation, there was nothing to oppose; but in connection with the new creation, there is: “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, *neither indeed can be*” (Rom 8:7). Water is not more opposite to fire than sin is to holiness, the natural man to God. Only omnipotence can subdue that enmity and impart a love for His Law.

“(For the weapons of our [ministerial] warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth” (2Co 10:4-5). In those words, the apostle intimates something of the difficulties which face the preachers of the Gospel. He likens the reasonings of the carnal mind and the prejudices of the depraved heart—behind which the natural man seeks shelter against the demands of the Gospel, to a company in a powerful fort who refuse to surrender. No matter how winsomely the invitations, or how authoritatively the requirements of the Gospel be pressed, the natural man has a score of objections which yield not thereto. It is only as the Truth is made “*mighty* through God” that the sinner’s pride is subdued, and he is brought to yield to the claims of Christ’s Lordship. So wedded is man to his lusts, so in love with his idols, that unless the “mighty power” of God work within him, all the persuasions of the whole apostolate and the endeavours of all the angels could not induce him to forsake them.

“Who believe according to the working of his mighty power” (Eph 1:19)—was not the truth of those words most strikingly and blessedly exemplified by the one who first penned them?! Behold, Saul of Tarsus “was consenting unto” the death of Stephen and making “havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison” (Act 8:1, 3). See him “yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” (Act 9:1), going to the high priest and requesting letters of authority, that if he found any such in

the synagogues of Damascus “whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem” (Act 9:2). Why was it that less than a week later, “he preached Christ in the synagogues” of Damascus (Act 9:20)? What had wrought such an amazing transformation? What was it that made this rebel cry, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Act 9:6). What was it transformed the persecuting Saul into the evangelizing Paul? Nothing less than the mighty power of God, and he declared *his* was a “pattern” case (1Ti 1:16). True, there was something extraordinary in the manner of it, but the *power* is the same in every instance.

In conclusion, let us carefully observe that this working of God’s mighty power is not restricted to the past: It is not “who believed,” but “who believe, according to” (Eph 1:19). The reference is not to be limited unto God’s working faith in us at the first, but takes in His *maintaining* of it. The Christian can no more exercise faith of himself, still less increase it, than he could originate it. This is clear from another prayer of our apostle’s, wherein he requested God to “fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power” (2Th 1:11)—faith could only continue working by the Divine power. This point is jealously guarded: “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” is immediately preceded by “whatsoever is *born of God* overcometh the world” (1Jo 5:4). While faith be the instrument, God alone makes it effectual; and therefore, we must exclaim, “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Co 15:57).

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

### 9c. Its Means

3. *Honouring the Word.* By which we mean according to God’s holy and infallible Word, the place which is due it in our affections, thoughts, and daily lives. But we shall only do so as we are deeply impressed with *whose* Word it is, and the reasons for which it has been given to us. God has “magnified” His Word “above all” His Name (Psa 138:2); and if we be in our right minds, we shall value it far more highly than anything else (Psa 119:72). Apart from the Word, we are in total darkness spiritually (Eph 5:8). Without the Scriptures, we can know nothing about the character of God, His attitude toward us, or our relation to Him. Without the Scriptures, we are ignorant of the nature of sin and its infinite demerits, nor are we capable of discovering how to be saved from the love, guilt, and pollution of it. Without the Scriptures, we know not whence we sprang, whither we are going, nor how to conduct ourselves in the interval between. Even as Christians, we have no other means for ascertaining God’s will for us, the path we should tread, the enemies we must fight, the armour we require, and how to obtain grace to help in time of need.

All who profess to be Christians will give at least a mental assent to what has just been pointed out. But when it comes to the applying or working out of the same, there are wide differences of practice. In the matter of *what use* is to be made of God's Word, there is considerable diversity of opinion. Rome does all she can to *withhold* the Scriptures from the people, forbidding the reading of them; or, where that is deemed impolitic, seeking to discourage the same. Her evil leaven has spread far and wide—for multitudes of nominal "Protestants" who do not formally accept the dogmas of the papacy suppose that the Bible is a mysterious Book, quite beyond the comprehension of the uninitiated, and that "the Church" alone is competent to explain its teachings. Therefore, they are quite content to receive their religious instructions second-hand, accepting what the prelate or preacher tells them from the pulpit, and since they do not "search the Scriptures" (Joh 5:39; Act 17:11) for themselves, they are unable to *test* what he tells them, and are liable to be deceived concerning their eternal interests. Thus, there is no difference in this respect between them and the infatuated Papists.

But there are others who "read the Bible" for themselves. But here, there are many types: Some do so *traditionally*, because their parents and grand-parents read a portion each day; yet in few cases, do they give evidence of possessing a saving knowledge of the Truth. Others read it *superstitiously*, regarding the Bible as a sort of religious charm—when in great perplexity or deep sorrow, they turn to the Book they generally neglect, hoping to find guidance or solace from it. Many read it *educationally*. If their closest friends are more or less "religious," they would feel ashamed if unable to take an intelligent part in the conversation, and so seek a general acquaintance with its contents. Others read it *denominationally*, that they may be equipped to defend "our Articles of Faith" and hold their own in controversy, seeking texts which will refute the beliefs of others. A few read it *professionally*—it is their text-book. Their principal quest is material suitable for sermons and "Bible readings." Some read it *inquisitively*, to satisfy curiosity and feed intellectual pride—they specialize on prophecy, the types, numerics, and so on.

Now, one may read the Bible from such motives as those until he is as old as Methuselah—and his soul be profited nothing! One may read and re-read the Bible through systematically from Genesis to Revelation, he may "search the Scriptures" diligently—comparing passage with passage—he may become quite an accomplished "Bible student;" and yet, spiritually speaking, be not one whit better off for his pains. Why so? Because he failed to realise the chief reasons why God has given us His Word and to act accordingly—because his motive is faulty, because the end he had in view is unworthy. God has given the Word to us as a revelation of Himself—of His character, of His government, of His requirements. Our motive in reading it, then, should be to become better acquainted with Him, with His perfections, with His will for us. Our end in perusing His Word should be to learn how to please and glorify Him; and that, by our characters being formed under its holy influence and our conduct regulated in all its details by the rules He has there laid down. The mind needs instructing, but unless the conscience be searched, the heart influenced, the will moved, such knowledge will only puff us up and add to our condemnation.

In the preceding articles, we pointed out that in order for spiritual growth, the Christian must needs engage daily in mortifying the flesh and in devoting himself as a living sacrifice unto God, giving our reasons for placing them first and second among the principal aids to prosperity. Obviously, giving due place to the Word comes next, for only by its instructions can we learn *what* has to be mortified and *how* to please God in our walk. Some thought was required on how best to formulate this third grand help. Many have describe it as *studying* the Word, but as pointed out above, one may "study" it (as the "scribes" of our Lord's day had), and yet be none the better for it. Others use the expression "*feeding* on the Word," which is better—though today, there are



thousands who think they *are* feeding thereon, and yet give little or no sign that their souls are being nourished, or that they are becoming more fruitful branches of the Vine. We have, therefore, chosen “*honouring the Word*” as being a more comprehensive term.

Now, in order to honour the Word, we must ascertain the purposes for which God has given it to us, and then regulate our efforts accordingly. The Word expressly informs us the chief ends for which it *was* written: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2Ti 3:16). Since they are inspired by God, it naturally and necessarily follows that they are “profitable”—for He could not be the Author of what was purposeless and useless to its recipients. For *what* are the Scriptures “profitable”? First, *for doctrine*—that is, for sound and wholesome doctrine, “doctrine which is according to godliness” (1Ti 6:3). The word, “doctrine” means “teaching” or instruction, and then the principle or article received. In the Scriptures, we have the Truth, and nothing but the Truth, on every object and subject of which they treat, such as no mere creature could have arrived at or invented. The unfolding of the doctrine of *God* is a revelation of His Being and character, such as had never been conceived by philosophers or poets. Their teaching concerning *man* is such as no physicist or psychologists had ever discovered by his own unaided powers. Such, too, is its doctrine of sin, of salvation, of the world, of Heaven, of Hell.

Now, to read and ponder the Scriptures for “doctrine” is to have our *beliefs* formed by its teachings. So far as we are under the influence of prejudice, or receive our religious ideas on human authority, and go to the Word—not so much with the desire to be instructed on what we know not; but rather, for the purpose of finding something which will confirm us in what we have already imbibed from man, be it right or wrong—so far as we exercise a sinful disregard to the Sacred Canon, we may justly be given up to our own deceits. Again, if we set up our own judgment so as to resolve not to accept anything as Divine Truth but what we can intellectually comprehend, then we despise God’s Word, and cannot be said to read it either for doctrine or correction. It is not enough to “call no man your father [Master]” (Mat 23:9)—if I exalt my reason above the infallible dictates of the Holy Spirit, then my *reason* formulates my *creed*. We must come to the Word conscious of our ignorance, forsaking our own thoughts (Isa 55:7), with the earnest prayer, “That which I see not teach thou me” (Job 34:32)—and that, so long as we remain on earth.

First and foremost, then, the inspired Scriptures are profitable for *doctrine*—that our thoughts, ideas, and beliefs concerning all the subjects of Divine revelation may be formed and regulated by their infallible teachings. How that rebukes those who sneer at theological instruction, who are prejudiced against the doctrinal exposition of the Gospel, who ignorantly account such as “dry” and uninteresting, who are all for what they term “experimental religion.” We say, “ignorantly,” for the distinction they seek to draw is an unscriptural and invalid one. The Word of God nowhere draws a line between the doctrinal and the experimental. How could it?—when true experimental piety is nothing but the *influence of Truth* upon the soul under the agency of the Holy Spirit. What is godly sorrow for sin but the influence of the Truth upon the conscience and heart! Is it anything else than a realisation or feeling sense of the heinousness of sin, of its contrariety to what ought to be, of its being committed against light and love, dissolving the heart to grief? Until those truths are realised, there will be no weeping over your sin. Peace and joy in believing—yes, but you must have an Object to believe in; take away the great doctrine of the Atonement, and all your faith and peace are annihilated.

Yes, first and foremost, the Scriptures are “profitable for *doctrine*” (2Ti 3:16): *God* says so, and those who declare otherwise are liars and deceivers. That refutes and condemns those who are

prejudiced against the doctrine of the Gospel, on the pretense that it is unfriendly to the *practical* side of the Christian life. That personal piety or holy living may be neglected through an excessive attachment to favourite theological tenets is, readily granted; but that doctrinal instruction is inimical to following the example which Christ has left us, we emphatically deny. The whole teaching of Scripture is “the doctrine which is according to godliness” (1Ti 6:3)—that is to say, it is the doctrine which inculcates “godliness,” which supplies motives to godliness; and which, therefore, promotes it. If Divine Truth be received according to the lovely proportions in which it is presented in the Word—so far from such a reception of it enervating practical godliness—it will be found to be the *life* of it. Doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion are so necessarily connected together that they could have no existence apart from each other. The influence of the Truth upon our hearts and minds is the source of all our spiritual feelings, and those feelings and affections are the springs of every good word and work.

Second, the inspired Scriptures are “profitable...for *reproof*” (2Ti 3:16) or conviction. Five times the Greek word is rendered “rebuke” and once, “tell him his fault” (Mat 18:15). Here is the chief reason why the Scriptures are so unpalatable to the unsaved: They set before him a Standard concerning which he knows he falls far short. They require that which is thoroughly distasteful to him, and prohibit those things which his evil nature loves and craves. Thus, their holy teachings roundly condemn him. It is because the Word of God inculcates holiness and censures every form of evil that the unregenerate have such a disrelish for it. It is because the Word *convicts* its reader of his sins, upbraids him for his ungodliness, blames him for his inward as well as outward lack of conformity thereto, that the natural man shuns it. Flesh and blood resent interference, chafes against being censured, and is angry when told his or her faults. It is much *too humbling* for the pride of the natural man to be rebuked for his failures and chidden for his errors. Therefore, he prefers “prophecy” or something which pricks not his *conscience*!

“Profitable...for *reproof*.” Are you, am I, willing *to be reproofed*? Are we really, honestly desirous of having made known to us everything in us which is contrary to the Law of the Lord; and is, therefore, displeasing to him? Are we truly agreeable to be searched by the white light of the Truth, to bare our hearts to the Sword of the Spirit? The true answer to that question reveals whether or not we are regenerate, whether a miracle of grace has been wrought in us, or whether we are still in a state of nature. Unless the answer be in the affirmative, there cannot possibly be any spiritual growth for us. Of the wicked, it is said, “They despised all my reproof” (Pro 1:30). On the one hand, we are told, “he that hateth reproof is brutish” (Pro 12:1) and “shall die” (Pro 15:10); on the other, “reproofs of instruction are the way of life” (Pro 6:23), “he that heareth reproof getteth understanding” (Pro 15:32). If we are to profit from the Scriptures, we must ever approach them with an honest desire that all amiss in us may be rebuked by their teachings and be humbled into the dust before God in consequence thereof.

Third, the Scriptures are “profitable...for *correction*” (2Ti 3:16). The Greek word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, but signifies “setting right.” The reproofing is but a means to an end: It is showing us what is wrong, that it may be put right. Everything about us, both within and without, needs correcting—for the Fall has put man all out of joint with God and holiness. Our thoughts on everything are wrong and need readjusting. Our affections are all disorderly and need regulating. Our character is utterly unlike Christ’s and has to be conformed to His image. Our conduct is wayward and demands squaring with the Rule of righteousness. God has given to us His Word, that under its guidance, we may regulate our beliefs, renovate our hearts, and reform our lives. Hence, it answers but a poor end to read a chapter once or twice a day for the sake of decency, without any definite intention of complying with the mind of God as revealed therein.

Since He has given us the Scriptures “for correction,” we should ever approach them with a sincere purpose of bringing into harmony with them everything that is disorderly within us and irregular without us.

Fourth, the Scriptures are “profitable...for *instruction in righteousness*” (2Ti 3:16). *That* is the end for which the other three things are the means. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) pointed out: The Scriptures are “profitable to us for all the purposes of the Christian life. They answer all the ends of Divine revelation. They instruct us in that which is true, reprove us for all that which is amiss, direct us in all that which is good.” “Instruction in righteousness” refers not to the imputed righteousness of Christ—for that is included in “doctrine”—but relates to integrity of character and conduct: It is inherent and practical righteousness, which is the fruit of the imputed. For *that* we need “instructing” out of the Word, for neither reason nor conscience are adequate for such a task. If our judgment be formed or our actions regulated by dreams, visions, or supposed immediate revelations from Heaven, rather than by the plain meaning of the Holy Scriptures, then we slight them, and God may justly give us up to our own delusions. If we follow the fashion, imitate our fellows, or take public opinion for our standard, we are but heathen. But if the Word of God is the alone source of our wisdom and guidance, we shall be found treading “the paths of righteousness” (Psa 23:3).

The Bible is something very different from a picture-book for amusing children, though it contains beautiful types, and depicts scenes and events in a manner no artist’s brush could convey. It is something more than a precious mine of treasure for us to dig into, though it contains wonders and riches far more excellent than any unearthed at Kimberely. It has not been sufficiently realised that God has given us His Word for the *ordering of our daily lives*. “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, *that* we may DO all the words of this law” (Deu 29:29). How very rarely do we hear or see that *last* clause quoted! Is not the omitting of it a significant and solemn comment upon our times? God has given us His Word not for intellectual entertainment, not for the merely curious to exercise his imagination upon, not for making it a battleground of theological strife, but to be “a lamp unto” our feet, and “a light unto” our path (Psa 119:105)—to point out the way in which we should walk, and to sedulously avoid those by-ways which lead to certain destruction.

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom 15:4). Thus, the whole of the Old Testament is for our instruction “in order that by patiently cleaving to the Lord in faith and obedience, amid all our trials and temptations, and by taking comfort from the daily perusal of the Scriptures, we might possess a joyful hope of Heaven, notwithstanding past sins and present manifold defects” (T. Scott). “Now all these things [concerning Israel’s sins in the wilderness and God’s judgments upon them] happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for *our* admonition” (1Co 10:11)—or warning: For us to take to heart, to heed, to avoid. We shall meet with similar temptations, and there is still the same evil nature in us as was in them, and unless it be mortified, the same awful fate will overtake us. “Make me to go in the path of thy commandments” (Psa 119:35). It will profit us nothing—nay, it will add to our condemnation—if we read the preceptive parts of the Scriptures without attention and determination, through God’s help, to conform our conduct thereto.

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not” (1Jo 2:1). *That* is the design, bearing, and end—not only of this epistle, but of all the Scriptures. *That* is the object at which every doctrine, every precept, every promise aims: “That ye *sin not*.” The Bible is the only book in the world which pays any regard to sin against God. The revelation which it makes of God’s

omniscience—“Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off” (Psa 139:2)—says to me, *sin not*. So of His omnipresence—“The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Pro 15:3)—says to me, *sin not*. Are we taught the holiness of God?—it is that we should be holy. Is the truth of resurrection revealed?—it is that we “awake to righteousness, and sin not” (1Co 15:34). For what purpose was the Son of God manifested?—“that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1Jo 3:8). Precious promises are given us with the express design that we should “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1).

“Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1Pe 2:2). In order to be nourished by the Word, we must desire it, and like every other *desire*, that one may be cultivated or checked—as after a time, the manner was loathed by those who lusted for the flesh-pots of Egypt. The aim of that desire for the Word is “that ye may *grow* thereby”: Grow in knowledge, in grace, in holiness, “grow up into him [Christ] in *all* things” (Eph 4:15); grow in fruitfulness to God and helpfulness to your fellows. The Word must not only be desired, but received “with *meekness*” (Jam 1:21)—that is, with yieldedness of will and pliability of heart, with readiness to be moulded by its holy requirements. It must also be “mixed with *faith*” (Heb 4:2)—that is, received unquestioningly as God’s own Word to me, appropriated and assimilated by me. It must be approached humbly and *prayerfully*, as the Hebrews had to bow down or go upon their knees to obtain the tiny manna on the ground. “Teach me thy statutes” (Psa 119:12)—their meaning, their application to all the details of my life, how to perform them.

If we would read the Scriptures to advantage, if our souls are to be nurtured by them, if we are to make true Christian progress, then it must be by earnest prayer and constant *meditation*. It is only by pondering the words of God that they become fixed in our minds and exert a salutary influence upon our thoughts and actions. Things forgotten have no power to regulate us and Scripture *is* soon forgotten, unless it be turned over and over in the mind. A wondrous blessing is pronounced upon the man who *meditates* in God’s Law day and night: “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psa 1:3). “These things write we unto you, that your *joy* may be full” (1Jo 1:4). Holiness and happiness are inseparably connected. Destruction and misery are in the ways of the wicked (Rom 3:16), but Wisdom’s ways are “ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Pro 3:17).

## THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

### 7d. Its Meaning

A beautiful type of what we have contended for in these articles is found in Genesis 8. In the preceding chapter, we behold the fearful judgment of God upon the antediluvian world because of its wickedness—solemn figure of which our Sinbearer endured for us as He was “made a curse” (Gal 3:13) when He cried, “Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves

and thy billows are gone over me” (Psa 42:7). After the storm of wrath had done its awful work, Noah (who represented the company of God’s elect in the place of safety, exempted from the Divine vengeance) opened the window of the ark and “sent forth a dove” (Gen 8:8). Later, he sent her forth again, and “the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf” (Gen 8:11)—the emblem of peace! Christ was the Pacifier of God, and He is “our peace” (Eph 2:14). He is the former, because He was “to make reconciliation for iniquity” (Dan 9:24). He is the latter, because He has satisfied every claim of God upon us. Therefore, He is designated “Shiloh” (Gen 49:10)—an appellation which signifies, “the Peacemaker”—and “The Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6).

Reconciliation was one of the effects which resulted from the atonement which Christ made unto God; and in our last, we pointed out that the simplest and surest way of ascertaining the significance of the antitype is to attend closely to the types. Now, the Levitical offerings were not designed to produce any change within the offerer, but were presented for the express purpose of placating and propitiating God Himself. The Israelites did not offer them with the object of turning away their own enmity from Jehovah; but rather, to turn away *His* anger from them; and since the sacrifices which they presented were emblems of the one great Sacrifice of Christ, it necessarily follows that the chief end of His oblation was to divert God’s wrath from those on whose behalf it was made. The great fact—the terrible thing—brought out by this doctrine is, that God is the offended Party; while the central fact—the grand thing—proclaimed by it is, that Christ is the all-sufficient Pacifier of God.

We are afraid that some of our friends will feel that we have drawn out these articles on the *meaning* of Reconciliation to a rather wearisome length—and for their sakes, we regret that it was necessary for us to do so. But while they may not have been troubled by the errors we have refuted, or the objections answered, yet a considerable number of our readers have been much bewildered by them; and therefore, as a servant of God, it was part of our duty to “prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people” (Isa 57:14). At the beginning of our first article on this branch of the subject, we stated that we proposed to do much more than barely furnish a definition of the word “reconciliation”—having sought to make good that promise, we must now look more closely at the term itself and ponder carefully *how* it is used in Scripture.

Reconciliation presupposes *alienation*; and therefore, it results from the removal of hindrance to concord, and is the act of uniting parties which have been at variance: It is the putting an end to strife, and changing enemies into friends. Sin has placed God and man apart from one another—all harmony between them being disrupted; therefore, satisfaction must be made for sin before peace can be restored. Consequently, to be “reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Rom 5:10) is to be restored to His favour: It is the reconciliation of the King to His rebellious subjects, of the Judge to offenders against Himself. To reconcile is to bring to agreement, to unite those who were divided, to restore to unity and amity. Reconciliation is a relation, a mutual one: On God’s part, it denotes a change from wrath to favour; on ours, from one of contempt and opposition to loyal and loving obedience. It is, therefore, a change from hostility to tranquility; from strife to fellowship.

The “peace” which Christ procured for His people was effected through chastisement. “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:5). There are three things here. First, the *history* of Christ’s sufferings: Set out by wounds, bruises, chastisements and stripes—the expressions being multiplied to impress our hearts more deeply. The *cause* of those

sufferings: Our transgressions and iniquities—the difference being between sins of commission and omission. The fruits or *benefits* thereof: Peace and healing—a summary of the objective and subjective results thereof. The punishment due our sins was borne by Christ that we might have “peace with God” (Rom 5:1). “He, by submitting to those chastisements, slew the enmity and settled an amity between God and man; He made peace by the blood of His cross. Whereas by sin, we were become odious to God’s holiness and obnoxious to His justice, through Christ God is reconciled to us, and not only forgives our sins and saves us from ruin, but takes us into friendship and fellowship with Himself” (Matthew Henry).

“The chastisement of our peace was upon him” (Isa 53:5) is explained by “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1)—where the reference is not to a state of heart, but to a relationship with God. “Peace with God” does not have reference to anything that is subjective, but only to what is objective—not to an inward peace of conscience (though that follows if repentance and faith be in exercise), nor to that “peace *of* God, which passeth all understanding,” which keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phi 4:7), but to “peace *with* God”—in other words, to reconciliation. It means we are no longer the objects of His displeasure, and have no more reason to dread the Divine vengeance. It is that blessed relation which results from the expiation of our sins—because Christ endured the penalty of them, we are no longer God’s enemies in the objective sense, but the subjects of His favour. Every one that is “justified” does not enjoy peace of conscience (though he should); but every justified person *has* “peace *with* God” (whether he knows it or not)—for His quarrel against him is ended, Christ having made God (judicially) his Friend.

There is an interesting passage in 1 Samuel 29, which makes quite clear the meaning of this controverted word, and shows it signifies the very opposite of what the Socinians understand by it. While a fugitive from Saul, David and a company of his devoted followers found refuge in Gath of Philistia, where Achish, its “king” (“lord” or “chief”), showed kindness to him (1Sa 27:2, 3). While he was there, the Philistines planned a concerted attack upon Israel, and Achish proposed that David and his men should accompany him (1Sa 28:1, 2)—to which he acceded. But when the other “lords” of the Philistines discovered the presence of David and his men among the forces of Achish, they were angry, for they feared he would not be loyal to their cause, saying, “Let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he *reconcile himself unto* his master? should it not be with the heads of these men?” (1Sa 29:4). “Reconcile” there means not, How shall he remove his own anger against Saul, but Saul’s against him, and how shall he restore himself again to his master’s favour.

The great thing to be clear upon in connection with reconciliation is that it is objective in its significance and action—in other words, it terminates upon the object and not upon the subject. The offender does not reconcile himself, but the person whom he has wronged; and that, by making suitable amends or reparation. Socinians and Arminians have sought to make capital out of the fact that in the Scriptures, it is never said in so many words that “God is reconciled to us,” but that they uniformly speak of our “being reconciled” to Him (Rom 5:10). The explanation of that is very simple: God is the Party offended, and we, the parties offending; and it is always the offending party who is said to be the one reconciled, and not the offended. Another clear proof of that is found in Matthew 5:23-24, “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”

There we have a “brother” offended, a grievance against one who has injured him. Aware of that, the duty of the wrong-doer is clear: He must do all in his power to right the wrong, remove

the ground of grievance, and secure amity between them—for until that be done, a holy God will not receive his worship. “Be reconciled to thy brother” does not refer to any state of mind or feeling in the emotions of the wrong-doer, but signifies to make reparation to him, pacify him. The offender is not bidden to lay aside his *own* enmity—though that is understood—but is to go to the aggrieved one and seek to turn away his wrath from him, by means of an humble and frank confession of his sin, thereby gaining an entrance again into his good-will and favour. Nothing could be plainer: “Be reconciled to thy brother” means to put right what is wrong, conciliate him; and thus, heal the breach between you, which is hindering your communion with God.

Before going further, we want the reader to be thoroughly clear upon what has been said. At first sight, “wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master?” (1Sa 29:4) seems to mean David’s laying aside his own ill-will and healing a breach *he* had made—yet, the very opposite is its actual sense. It was Saul who hated him! The Philistines feared that David and his men would slay them and take their heads to Saul, and thereby cause him to *look favourably* again on David. So, too, a careless reader of Matthew 5:24 would conclude, “be reconciled to thy brother” signifies that the one addressed was the offended party, who needed to change his own feelings toward the other. But again, the very opposite is the case. It was the brother who had something “against” *him*, because of a wrong he had done him; and thus, the one addressed is the offender and so “be reconciled to thy brother” means, go and confess your fault and appease him. The *sense* of the words is the reverse of their *sound*!

Matthew 5:24 contains the *initial* occurrence of our term, and in accordance with the law of first mention intimates how the word is used throughout the New Testament. It definitely establishes the fact that to be “reconciled to” another connotes the pacifying of the offended party, so that a state of concord is the result; and it was precisely the same force whenever it is used in connection with *God*: We are reconciled to Him as we are to an injured brother—reparation having been made to Him, we are restored to His favour. This is plain, again, from the next occurrence of the word in Romans 5:10. There, the whole context makes it plain that God is the offended One, that the cause of His indignation against us was our sins, that Christ offered a sufficient satisfaction unto Him, thereby removing His wrath and conciliating Him unto us. Christ’s sacrifice averted God’s displeasure as our Governor and Judge—His relation and judicial attitude toward us was *changed* by a great historical transaction: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom 5:10).

Here, then, is the issue: Do those words “reconciled to God by the death of his Son” signify that Christ pacified God so that He has laid aside His judicial wrath against His people?—or, that Christ moves us to lay aside our enmity and hostility against God? We contend that it means the former; that, in the language of William Shedd, “Here the reconciliation is described from the side of the offending party—*man* is said to be reconciled. Yet this does *not* mean the subjective reconciliation of the sinner toward God, but the objective reconciliation of God towards the sinner. For the preceding verse speaks of God as a Being from whose “wrath” the believer is saved by the death of Christ. This shows that the reconciliation effected by Christ’s atoning death is that of the Divine anger against sin.” The reconciliation which is here mentioned is prior to conversion; and therefore, quite distinct from conversion (which is when we lay aside *our* enmity)—for it occurred when Christ laid down His life for us, and not when the Holy Spirit quickened us.

We submit that, from the following considerations, “reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Rom 5:10) refers to God’s reconciliation to His people. First, from the relation which that clause bears to “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8)—the one being parallel

with the other. *Why* did Christ die for sinners? Was it not in order to deliver them from the curse of God, and to secure everlasting felicity for them! Second, from the fact that the same expression is described as “being now justified by his blood” (Rom 5:9)—for in the previous verse, the apostle speaks of Christ’s dying for sinners or rebels against God. The consequence of His death is that believers are “justified by his blood” (Rom 5:9); and, as every Scripturally-enlightened person knows, to be “justified” is to be received into God’s favour (being His acceptance of us, and not ours of Him)—which is precisely what “reconciliation” is. Third, from the fact that the “when we were *enemies*” (Rom 5:10) refers to the relation we stood in to God—the objects of His displeasure. “Sinners...justified by his blood” (Rom 5:8-9) and “enemies...reconciled to God” by Christ’s death (Rom 5:10) correspond exactly the one to the other.

Fourth, from the obvious sense of the verse, the apostle is arguing (as his “if” and “much more” shows) from the less to the greater: If when we had no love for God, Christ’s sacrifice procured His favour, much more—now that we are converted, will His mediation on high deliver us from our sins as Christians. Fifth, from the reconciliation being ascribed to Christ’s *death*—which was definitely and solely *Godward*—had it been the removing of *our* enmity and turning us to love God, it had been attributed to Christ’s *Spirit*. Sixth, from the obvious meaning of the term—as we have shown from 1 Samuel 29:4 and Matthew 5:23, 24—it is the injured party who is the one needing to be reconciled to the offender. Seventh, from the fact that our reconciliation is something which is tendered to us—“we have now received” the reconciliation (Rom 5:11)—we received the reconciliation effected by Christ, and then presented for our acceptance in the Gospel. It would be the height of absurdity to say that we “received” the laying down of the weapons of our warfare against God.

“All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2Co 5:18-19). That His reconciling of “us” or “the world” unto Himself refers to *God’s* placation unto the favour toward us is clear. First, because it was effected by “Jesus Christ;” therefore, it signifies the removing of God’s anger. Second, because had it meant His work of grace within us, subduing our enmity, it had said, “God is in Christ”—or more precisely, “God by His Spirit is reconciling the world unto Himself.” Third, because “God *was* in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (2Co 5:19), it means God appointed and anointed Christ to procure His reconciliation: He was in Christ as the Surety—God *out* of Christ is “a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29) to the wicked. Fourth, because the term is here formally defined as “not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2Co 5:19), which is *God’s* act and not the creature’s—“not imputing” etc. means, not dealing with us as justice required for our sins, on account of Christ’s atonement. Fifth, because the “ministry” and “word of reconciliation” (2Co 5:18-19) was committed to the apostles—i.e. the Atonement was the grand theme of their preaching (1Co 2:2). Sixth, because on that ground, sinners are exhorted to be “reconciled to God” (2Co 5:20)—since God has changed His attitude unto you, change yours towards Him. Seventh, because our sins were imputed to Christ, and since He atoned for them, His righteousness is imputed to us (2Co 5:21).

“And that he [Christ Jesus] might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you” (Eph 2:16, 17). As these verses and their context will come before us again (D.V.), we will confine ourselves now to that which concerns our present purpose. The “both” refers to Jews and Gentiles, “in one body” signifies the Saviour’s humanity—compare “in the body of his flesh” (Col 1:22). “By the cross” speaks of a definite historical action in the past, and not a protracted process throughout the whole Gospel



era. “Having slain the enmity thereby” signifies not that between Jew and Gentile (which is mentioned in the former verse), but of God’s judicial disapprobation against both. This is confirmed in the next verse, where the “preached peace” means preached the peace made with God, as the “access” in verse 18 clearly indicates. Having effected peace, Christ, after His resurrection, ministerially (2Co 5:18-20), announced it.

“And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself” (Col 1:20). This passage, we also hope to enter into more fully in a later article, but suffice it now to point out that—since *peace* was “made,” there must previously have been hostility; and since that peace was made “through the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20), then the shedding thereof was for the placating of God, by offering a satisfaction to His violated Law. In Scripture, man is never represented as making reconciliation Godward: It is what he experiences or embraces, and not what he makes. It should also be pointed out that never is reconciliation ascribed to the risen Christ, any more than that we are justified in a risen Christ. It is His *blood* that justifies (Rom 5:9), which brings redemption (Eph 1:7), by which we are brought nigh (Eph 2:13), which sanctifies (Heb 13:12), which gives us the right of approach to God (Heb 10:19).

We have been contending for a great truth, and not merely for a word or syllable. When Socinians object that Scripture nowhere says in so many *words* that ‘God is reconciled to us,’ they are guilty of mere trifling—for *equivalent* expressions most certainly *do* occur. If it be admitted that sin is displeasing to God, and that His vengeance is proclaimed against the sinner, it must also be admitted that if God’s anger has been turned away from sinners by a propitiatory sacrifice, then He must have been reconciled to them. “He who once threatened to punish another, but has since pardoned him and now treats him with kindness, has certainly been reconciled to him” (J. Dick). The emphasis is thrown upon *our* reconciliation to God, because *we* were first in the breach—we fell out with God, before He fell out with us; and because the averseness is on our side, the Gospel makes known His willingness to receive us (because of Christ’s sacrifice) if we are prepared to cease our fighting against Him.

If it be asked, Was God reconciled to all the elect, and they to Him, the moment Christ cried, “it is finished” (Joh 19:30)?—the answer is both yes and no. We must distinguish between: (1) reconciliation in the eternal purpose of God; (2) as it was effected by Christ; (3) as it is offered to us in the Gospel; (4) as it actually becomes ours when we believe.

## CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM

### Part 2: Continuation of a sermon from an unnamed preacher in the early 1800s

You know, my brethren, I have always deprecated war as one of the greatest calamities, but it does not follow from hence that it is in *all* cases unlawful. Christianity, I allow, is a religion of peace; wherever it universally prevails, in the spirit and power of it, wars will be unknown. But so

will every other species of injustice; yet while the world is as it is, some kind of resistance to injustice is necessary, though it may at some future time become unnecessary. If our Saviour's command that we resist not evil be taken literally and universally, it must have been wrong for Paul to have remonstrated against the magistrates at Philippi (Act 16:37), and He Himself would not have reproved the person who smote Him at the judgment seat (Joh 18:22-23).

I allow that the sword is the last weapon to which we should have recourse. As *individuals*, it may be lawful by this instrument to defend ourselves or our families against the attacks of an assassin—but perhaps this is the only case in which it is so; and even there, if it were possible to disarm and confine the party, it were much rather to be chosen than in that manner to take away his life. Christianity does not allow us, in any case, to retaliate from a principle of revenge. In ordinary injuries, it teaches patience and forbearance. If an adversary smite us on the one cheek, we had better turn to him the other also (Luk 6:29), than go about to avenge our own wrongs. The laws of honour, as acted upon in high life, are certainly in direct opposition to the laws of Christ; and various retaliating maxims ordinarily practiced among men will no doubt be found among the works of the flesh. And if, as *nations*, we were to act on Christian principle, we should never engage in war but in our own defence; and not for that, till every method of avoiding it had been tried in vain.

Once more, it is allowed that Christians as such are not permitted to have recourse to the sword for the purpose of defending themselves against persecution for the Gospel's sake. No weapon is admissible in this warfare but *Truth*, whatever be the consequences. We may remonstrate as Paul did at Philippi, and our Lord Himself when unjustly smitten, but it appears to me that this is all. When Peter drew his sword, it was with a desire to rescue his Master from the persecuting hands of His enemies, in the same spirit as when he opposed His going up to Jerusalem; in both which instances, he was in the *wrong*—and the saying of our Saviour that “all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Mat 26:52) has commonly been verified, in *this* sense of it. I believe it will be found that when Christians have resorted to the sword in order to resist persecution for the Gospel's sake, as did the Albigenses, the Bohemians, the French Protestants, and some others within the last six hundred years, the issue has commonly been that they have *perished* by it—that is, they have been overcome by their enemies and exterminated; whereas in cases where their only weapons have been “the blood of the Lamb, and...the word of their testimony” loving “not their lives unto the death” (Rev 12:11), they have overcome. Like Israel in Egypt, the more they have been afflicted, the more they have increased.

But none of these things prove it unlawful to take up arms as members of civil society, when called upon to do so for the defence of our country. The ground on which our Saviour refused to let His servants fight *for Him*, that He should not be delivered into the hands of the Jews, was that His was a “kingdom...not of this world” (Joh 18:36)—plainly intimating that, if His kingdom *had been* of this world, a contrary line of conduct had been proper. Now, this is what every other kingdom is. It is right, therefore—according to our Lord's reasoning—that the subjects of all civil states should, as such, when required, fight in defence of them.

Has not Christianity, I ask, in the most decided manner, recognised civil government by requiring Christians to be subject to it (Rom 13:1)? Has it not expressly authorised the legal use of the sword? Christians are warned that the magistrate “beareth not the sword in vain,” and that he is “the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Rom 13:4). But if it be right for the magistrate to bear the sword, and to use it upon evil-doers within the realm, it cannot be wrong to use it in repelling invaders from without—and if it be right on the part of the magistrate, it is right that the subjects should assist him in it; for otherwise, his power would be

merely nominal, and he would indeed beareth “the sword in vain.” We have not been used, in things of a civil and moral nature, to consider one law as made for the religious part of a nation, and another for the irreligious. Whatever is the duty of one—allowing for different talents and situations in life—is the duty of all. If, therefore, it be not binding upon the former to unite in every necessary measure for the support of civil government, neither is it upon the latter; and if it be binding upon neither, it must follow that civil government itself ought not be supported, and that the whole world should be left to become a prey to anarchy or despotism.

Further, if the use of arms were, of itself, and in all cases, inconsistent with Christianity, it were a sin to be a soldier; but nothing like this is held out to us in the New Testament. On the contrary, we there read of two believing “centurions” (Mat 8:5-13; Act 10), and neither of them was reprov’d on account of his office, or required to relinquish it. We also read of publicans and soldiers who came to John to be baptized, each asking, “What shall we do?” (Luk 3:14). The answer to both proceeds on the same principle: They are warned against the abuses of their respective employments; but the employments themselves are tacitly allowed to be lawful. To the one, he said, “Exact no more than that which is appointed you” (Luk 3:13); to the other, “Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages” (Luk 3:14). If either of these occupations had been, in itself, sinful or inconsistent with that kingdom which it was John’s grand object to announce—and into the faith of which his disciples were baptized—he ought, on this occasion, to have said so, or at least not to have said that which implies the contrary.

If it be objected that the sinfulness of war would not lie so much at the door of the centurions and soldiers, as of the government by whose authority it was proclaimed and executed, I allow there is considerable force in this—but yet, if the thing itself were necessarily, and in all cases, sinful, every party voluntarily concerned in it must have been a partaker of the guilt, though it were in different degrees. But granting, it may be said that war is not, in itself, necessarily sinful; yet it becomes so by the injustice with which it is commonly undertaken and conducted. It is no part of my design to become the apologist of injustice, on whatever scale it may be practiced. But if wars be allowed to be *generally* undertaken and conducted without a regard to justice, it does not follow that they are *always* so; and still less, that war itself is sinful. In ascertaining the justice or injustice of war, we have nothing to do with the motives of those who engage in it. The question is, Whether it be *in itself* just? If it appeared so to me, I should think it my duty to stand aloof from it as far as possible. There is one thing, however, that requires to be noticed, before we condemn any measure as unjust: We ought to be in possession of the means of forming a just judgment concerning it.

If a difference arise only between two families, or two individuals, though every person in the neighbourhood may be talking and giving his opinion upon it, yet it is easy to perceive that no one of them is competent to pronounce upon the justice or injustice of either side—till he has acquainted himself with all the circumstances of the case, by patiently hearing it on both sides. How much less, then, are we able to judge of the differences of *nations*—which are generally not a little complex both in their origin and bearings, and of which we know but little but through the channel of newspapers and vague reports! It is disgusting to hear people, whom no one would think of employing to decide upon a common difference between two neighbours, take upon them to pronounce with the utmost freedom upon the justice or injustice of national differences. Where those who are constitutionally appointed to judge in such matters have decided in favour of war, however painful it may be to my feelings as a friend of mankind, I consider it my duty to submit

and to think well of their decision—till by a careful and impartial examination of the grounds of the contest, I am compelled to think otherwise.

After all, there may be cases in which injustice may wear so prominent a feature that every thinking and impartial mind shall be capable of perceiving it; and where it does so, the public sense of it will and ought to be expressed. In the present instance, however, there seems to be no ground of hesitation. In arming to resist a threatened invasion, if we merely act in the defensive (and not to resist an enemy whose ambition, under the pretence of liberating mankind, has carried desolation wherever he has gone), then we prove ourselves unworthy of the blessings we enjoy. Without taking upon me to decide on the original grounds of the difference, the question at issue with us is: Is it right that any one nation should seek absolutely to ruin another, and that other not be warranted, and even obliged to resist it? That such is the object of the enemy, at this time, cannot be reasonably doubted. If my country were engaged in an attempt to ruin France as a nation, it would be a wicked undertaking; and if I were fully convinced of it, I should both hope and pray that they might be disappointed. Surely, then, I may be equally interested in behalf of my native land!

2. *“Seek the peace of the city...and pray unto the LORD for it” (Jer 29:7).* There is another duty that we owe to our country—which is, that we pray to the Lord for it. It is supposed that religious people are a praying people. The godly Israelites, when carried into Babylon, were banished from temple-worship; but they still had access to their God. The devotional practice of Daniel was well-known among the great men of that city, and proved the occasion of a conspiracy against his life. King Darius knew so much of the character of the Jews as to request an interest in their prayers, on behalf of himself and his sons. My brethren, your country claims an interest in yours; and I trust that if no such claims were preferred, you would, of your own accord, remember it.

You are aware that all our dependence as a nation is upon God; and therefore, should importune His assistance. After all the struggles for power, you know that in His sight, all the inhabitants of the world are reputed as nothing—He doth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, ‘What doest Thou?’ Indeed, this has been acknowledged—and at times, sensibly felt—by irreligious characters; but in general, the great body of a nation—it is to be feared—think but little about it. Their dependence is upon an arm of flesh (2Ch 32:8). It may be said, without uncharitableness, of many of our commanders, both by land and sea, as was said of Cyrus, that God hath girded them, though they had not known Him (Isa 45:5). But by how much you perceive a want of prayer and dependence on God in your countrymen, by so much more should you be concerned as much as in you lies to supply the defect. “The prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jam 5:16).

You are also aware, in some measure, of *the load of guilt* that lies upon your country; and should, therefore, supplicate mercy on its behalf. I acknowledge myself to have much greater fear from *this* quarter, than from the boasting menaces of a vain man. If our iniquities provoke not the Lord to deliver us into his hand, his schemes and devices will come to nothing. When I think, among other things, of the detestable slave traffic—in which we have taken so conspicuous a part and have shed so much innocent blood—I tremble! When we have fasted and prayed, I have seemed to hear the voice of God saying unto us, “Loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke” (Isa 58:6)! Yet, peradventure, for His own name’s sake, or from a regard to His own cause—which is here singularly protected—the Lord may hearken to our prayers and save us from deserved ruin. We know

that Sodom itself would have been spared, if ten righteous men could have been found in her. I proceed to consider.

II. The *motive* by which these duties are here enforced: “In the peace thereof shall ye have peace” (Jer 29:7).

The Lord hath so wisely and mercifully interwoven the interests of mankind, as to furnish motives to innumerable acts of justice and kindness. We cannot injure others—nor even refrain from doing them good—without injuring ourselves. The interest of individuals and families are closely connected with those of a country. If the latter prosper, generally speaking, so do the former; and if the one be ruined, so must the other. It is impossible to describe or to conceive beforehand, with any degree of accuracy, the miseries which the success of a foreign enemy—such as we have to deal with—must occasion to private families. To say nothing of the loss of property among the higher and middle classes of people (which must be severely felt; as plunder will, undoubtedly, be the grand stimulus of an invading army), who can calculate the loss of lives? Who can contemplate without horror the indecent excesses of a victorious, unprincipled, and brutal soldiery? Let not the poorest man say, ‘I have nothing to lose.’ Yes, if men of opulence lose their property, you will lose your employment. You have also a cottage, and perhaps a wife and family with whom—amidst all your hardships—you live in love; and would it be nothing to you to see your wife and daughters abused; and you yourself unable to protect them, or even to remonstrate, but at the hazard of being thrust through with the bayonet? If no other considerations will induce us to protect our country, and pray to the Lord for it, our own individual and domestic comfort might suffice.

To this may be added, our interests as *Christians*—no less than as men and as families—are interwoven with the well-being of our country. If Christians, while they are in the world, are, as has been already noticed under various relative obligations, it is not without their receiving, in return, various relative advantages. What those advantages are, we should know to our grief, were we once to lose them. So long have we enjoyed religious liberty in this country, that I fear we have become too insensible of its value. At present, we worship God without interruption. What we might be permitted to do under a government which manifestly hates Christianity, and tolerates it even at home only as a matter of policy, we know not. This, however, is well known, that a large proportion of those unprincipled men in our own country—who have been labouring to overturn its constitution—have a deep-rooted enmity to the religion of Christ. May the Lord preserve us, and every part of the United Kingdom, from their machinations!

Some among us—to whatever extremities we may be reduced—will be incapable of bearing arms; but they may assist by their property, and in various other ways. Even the hands of the aged poor, like those of Moses, may be lifted up in prayer, while their countrymen—and it may be their own children—are occupying the post of danger. I know it is the intention of several, whom I now address, freely to offer their services at this important period. Should you, dear young people, be called forth in the arduous contest, you will expect an interest in our prayers. Yes, and you will have it. Every one of us—if they can pray for anything—will importune the Lord of hosts to cover your heads in the day of battle.

Finally, it affords a satisfaction to my mind to be persuaded that you will avail yourselves of the liberty granted to you of *declining* to learn your exercise on the Lord’s Day. Were you called to resist the landing of the enemy on that day, or any other work of *necessity*, you would not object to it; but in other cases, I trust you will. “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mar 12:17).

# September

## FAITH AS A SHIELD

A shield is a weapon of defense, held in front of the person to prevent the missiles of the foe injuring the body. A “shield” then is a means of *protection*. In Scripture, it is used as a metaphor of that which affords security against the assaults of the Devil. Varied indeed are the shifts and shields which professing Christians employ. Some trust in the sufficiency of carnal reasoning to repel the attacks which Satan makes on their souls. Some shelter behind human traditions—and poor protection they give! Some seek refuge beneath the shield of fatalism, but get sorely wounded. It is indeed blessedly true that whatsoever cometh to pass was eternally foreordained by God; yet, that truth was not revealed in Scripture as a rule for us to walk by. Others attempt to hide behind an avowed inability to do anything to help themselves, though they act very differently when menaced by physical perils! Others take presumption for their shield: Heedless of warnings and reckless of dangers, they imagine themselves to be strong and proof against the attacks of Satan. Peter fell through self-confidence!

“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Eph 6:16). This is one of the seven pieces of the “armour of God,” which the Christian is bidden to “take unto” himself and “put on,” in order that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil (Eph 6:11-17)—here likened unto “fiery darts” because his temptations are noiseless, swift, piercing, and dangerous, designed to enflame our lusts. And as we are exhorted to “resist stedfast in the faith” (1Pe 5:9), our Adversary the Devil, who “as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1Pe 5:8), so here, we are told “above all, [to be] taking the shield of faith” (Eph 6:16), for that is the only effectual “shield” which will stand the soul in good stead when the Enemy launches his attack upon us. The “above all” has a double force: First, it means *over* all the other pieces of armour, serving as a protecting roof above them. The shield of the ancients was made of light but hard metal, having a loop attached to the inner side, through which the hand was thrust to secure a firm hold; and then, the shield could be raised or lowered according as need required.

The different pieces of armour represent the various spiritual graces of the Christian, and the “above all” in our text signifies, second, pre-eminently, chiefly, supremely. It is an all-important and essential thing that we should take the shield of faith. First, because it is to guard the whole man. Satan assaults the *head*, seeking to deceive with subtle error and false doctrine, or by unsettling us with doubts. Nothing but faith will enable us to retain what we have received from the

Word. When Satan calls that Word in question, faith will interpose with “It is written,” written by Him who “cannot lie” (Ti 1:2)—and that is an effectual shield. He assails the *heart*, seeking to get us to question the love of God in the day of adversity, or to draw out our affections world-ward in the day of prosperity; but faith declares, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15), and will esteem “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt” (Heb 11:26). Or he may direct his fiery darts at your *knees*, telling you it is vain to pray, for God will not hear you; but faith lays hold of one of the prayer promises and betakes itself to the throne of grace.

But the “above all” signifies not only that “the shield of faith” is for guarding the whole man, but also that it is essential for the preservation of our *other graces*. As Spurgeon well said in his sermon on this verse, “The man of God is to put on the girdle and the breastplate, and he is also to be shod and wear his helmet. Though these are all armour, faith is an armour for his armour; it is not only a defence for him, but a defence for his defences.” In other words, unless faith be kept healthy and active, the other graces will languish and be helpless. As Charnock says, “Other graces may fail and the soul recover, but if faith failed, all would be lost.” Satan will attack our sincerity by attempting to sever the girdle of truth (Eph 6:14), and only faith in exercise will preserve our sincerity. He will attack our practical righteousness or holiness, seeking to batter in “the breastplate” (Eph 6:14); and only faith will enable us to say with Joseph, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen 39:9)! All the Christian graces need Divine grace to preserve them, and that grace is given in response to the exercise of faith.

“Above all, taking the shield of faith” (Eph 6:16). The faith which God has given to His child is to be *made use of*. It is to perform varied duties and is fitted to accomplish many useful ends. It is not only the instrument by which the soul feeds on God’s Word, but it is also the grand defensive weapon for protecting the soul against Satan’s temptations. Since the Christian’s faith was imparted by God, it turns to God as its Object. Such a faith is not grounded on fancies and feelings, dreams and visions, but is based upon and built up by the Word. Faith credits the testimony of Holy Writ: It does not regard the Devil as a fiction, but as a solemn reality; and views sin not as a trifle, but as that “abominable thing” which God hates (Jer 44:4). It does not look upon the warnings and threatenings of Scripture as mere bogies, but as danger-signals, which we disregard at our peril. And therefore, as the Psalmist declared, “His truth shall be thy shield and buckler” (Psa 91:4). If the saint be “girt about with truth” (Eph 6:14), his soul would will be more secure against the fiercest assault of Satan than was the body of the knight of old who went forth into battle clad in this coat of mail.

Now, as the best of shields is of no value to the soldier in the day of battle, unless he *uses* it, so faith is of no avail to the Christian when tempted by the Devil, unless he has it in exercise. There is a sacred art in being able to handle the shield of faith, and that art consists of having God’s Word stored in our hearts, and then drawing promptly upon the same in the hour of need. Let us be very simple and practical. If tempted to covetousness, I must use that Word, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth” (Mat 6:19). If solicited by evil companions, I must heed that injunction, “If sinners entice thee, consent thou not” (Pro 1:10), and that will prove an effectual shield. If the Devil seeks to enkindle anger or bitterness against a brother or sister, and I lay hold of the precept, “Be kindly affectioned one to another” (Rom 12:10), his fiery darts will be quenched. It is because the *details* of Scripture have so little place in our meditations that Satan trips us so frequently. How pertinent was the Saviour’s responses to the wiles of Satan! Without modification, could He say, “By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer” (Psa 17:4).

But faith is not only to deliver from Satan's solicitations to evil, but also from his temptations to fears and frights, despondency and despair; and therefore, it must make use of the Divine *promises*, as well as precepts. There must be full confidence in God's faithfulness and power to make good His pledges. The Devil will tell you, 'Things will be so bad after the war is over, and the coffers of the government so empty, that you will starve;' but faith will repel his dart with, "My God shall supply all your need" (Phi 4:19). He may argue, 'Things will come to such a pass that no servant of Christ will be allowed to minister unto the saints;' but faith will quench that dart with the grand promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb 13:5). He may answer, 'But your corruptions will prove too strong for you;' 'No,' replies faith, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phi 1:6). 'But,' continues Satan, 'you are weak, and I shall yet destroy you!' 'No,' says faith, 'Christ gives to the feeblest of His sheep eternal life, and none shall pluck them out of His hand' (Joh 10:28-29). That is what we understand by *using* faith as a *shield*.

Some may be inclined to object unto what is said above, by pointing out that the implication throughout is that the Christian has it in his own unaided power to make use of faith whenever he pleases; whereas, in fact, he is as much dependent upon God for the motions of his faith, as he was for the original impartation of it. That is not disputed; but is it relevant? We are not discussing the Christian's ability or his inability, but rather, are pressing one phase of his accountability; and in so doing, we are but emulating the apostle. After telling the saints they were opposed by the whole of the organized forces of Satan, he bade them, "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day" (Eph 6:13); and then, specified the use they were to make of each particular part of their armour. Therein, he was enforcing the Christian's responsibility, and he did not weaken—or rather, annul the same—by adding, 'though of yourselves, ye are incapable of so doing.' Not so did the Divinely-inspired teacher act!

While it is true that the Christian is wholly dependent upon God; yet, it is not true that he is wholly impotent as the non-Christian—to insist that he *is*, is to deny that regeneration has effected any radical change in him, that there is an essential difference between those who have been made new creatures in Christ, and those who are dead in trespasses and sins. If the Christian's faith be weak and sickly, the fault is entirely his own. The way to obtain more faith is to exercise that which we already have—see Luke 8:18. The best way to exercise the faith we have is to expectantly ask the Lord for an increase of it—Luke 17:5. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phi 4:13).



# THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

## 21. Ephesians 1:15-23

### *Part 7*

In our last two articles, we have been occupied with the power of God as it is exercised in connection with His people. First, we have described the *excellency* of the same—"the exceeding greatness of his power" (Eph 1:19); and then follows a brief declaration that it is "to us-ward"—which comprehends in general terms *all* its operations upon, within, and unto the saints. Second, there is a magnifying of its *efficiency*: "Who believe, according to the working of his mighty power" (Eph 1:19). Briefly, that includes two things: The quickening of the soul; and the communication of the principle of faith as a Divine gift. One who is spiritually dead cannot spiritually believe. The natural man is able to believe the Scriptures in a natural or mental way (as he believes authenticated human history), but he cannot savingly believe the Gospel, until he is born again (Joh 1:12, 13; 3:3, 5). And for those things, we need to pray for a better apprehension: "That we may *know* him that is true" (1Jo 5:20). And now, third, we are to consider how that mighty power of God operated in connection with our Saviour.

"Who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead" (Eph 1:19-20). In our examination and contemplation of these words, four questions will supply our focal points. First, what was there in connection with the raising of Christ, which called for the putting forth of "the working of his mighty power"? Second, why is God's raising of Christ made the unit or standard of measurement of the power which He exerts in those "who believe"? Third, what is the precise nature of the power which God then exercised? Was it simply His omnipotence or something in addition thereto? Was it merely physical power?—if not, what? Fourth, what are the principal points of analogy between God's raising of Christ from the dead and His bringing us to "believe"? While quite distinct, these questions overlap at certain points, so while attempting to supply answers to all of them, we shall not confine ourselves to a strict observance of their order. Perhaps the reader would find it interesting to think out his own answers before proceeding further.

Ephesians 1 is not the only passage which directly associates the Divine power with the raising of Christ from the dead. In Romans 1:3-4, we are told that our Lord Jesus Christ was "made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Of all the wondrous works which God did for Christ—in the miracle of His incarnation, in preserving Him as an infant from the malice of Herod, in anointing Him with the Holy Spirit—this bringing of Him forth from the tomb is singled out for particular mention. Christ had presented Himself to Israel as their Messiah and had affirmed, "I and my Father are one" (Joh 10:30). Had His claims been false, the grave would have retained Him. By raising Him from the dead by His power, God set His seal upon all Christ's teaching and demonstrated He was indeed "the Son of God." Again, we read that "though he was crucified through weakness [for He made no effort to resist His enemies and deliver Himself out of their hands], yet he liveth by the power of God" (2Co 13:4). In other passages, we

learn that Christ rose again by His *own* power, but that is not the side of the Truth which is now before us.

The first question we are here to consider is, What was there particularly in connection with the raising of Christ from the dead which made manifest God's "mighty power" (Eph 1:19)?—far more so than the future raising of the whole human race will. It should be obvious that the first answer must be: since the death which Christ died was no ordinary one, then His resurrection must be an extra-ordinary one. Here, we enter the realm of profoundest mystery, and only as our thoughts are formed by the clear teaching of Scripture can we, in any measure, enter into its meaning. God made Christ to be sin for His people when He laid upon Him the iniquities of them all. Consequently, He was "made a cure" and was required to receive the awful wages of sin, which involved much more than the dissolution of soul and body. Christ not only died, but was committed to the grave. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more *dominion* over him" (Rom 6:9), which clearly implies that during those three days, He was under death's power, He was death's prisoner, He was death's "lawful captive" (Isa 49:24), held fast in his terrible grip.

"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Act 2:24). Here is New Testament proof that Christ was held by death and that God "loosed" Him from something in order to His resurrection. There is such a fullness to the words of Scripture that, often, no single definition can bring out their meaning. Such is the case here. The "pains of death" refer to what Christ endured upon the cross—not only, and not primarily, the bodily pains of natural death (acute and many though they were), but the soul anguish of spiritual death. "If Christ had merely died a corporal death, no end would have been accomplished by it: it was requisite also that He should feel the smart of the Divine vengeance in order to appease the wrath of God and satisfy His justice. Hence, it was necessary for Him to contend with the power of hell and the horror of eternal death" (J. Calvin). The pains of *that* "death" came upon Him when He exclaimed, "Now is my soul troubled" (Joh 12:27), increased in their intensity in Gethsemane, and were experienced in their fullness during the three hours of darkness when God then "loosed" them, so that He experienced a resurrection of soul.

The Greek word for "pains" in Acts 2:24 is rendered "*travail* upon a woman with child" in 1 Thessalonians 5:3—literally, it means "the birth-throes of death." Light is cast on that almost paradoxical expression by Isaiah 53:11, where it was fore-announced that the Saviour should "see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Before His Church could be vitally brought forth, Christ had to endure in His soul the pangs of labour, and He *died* under the same spiritually, when He was separated from God—though three hours later, He was "loosed" therefrom. Those words, "the pains of death" are a quotation of a Messianic utterance in Psalm 18:5: "The *sorrows* [cords] of hell compassed me about," which, under another metaphor, brings out a *different* aspect of Christ's death, namely, that of one imprisoned and bound—compare Matthew 5:25-26 for the same figure. As our Surety, Christ was arrested by Divine justice and could not be discharged till He had paid our debt to the uttermost farthing. His "it is finished" (Joh 19:30) announced that full payment had been made; yet, His body was not "loosed" from the grave till three days later—compare "He was taken from prison" (Isa 53:8).

The *two* things are distinguished again in Christ's declaration, "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [rather was it "loosed" and went to Paradise]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psa 16:10). Christ not only died, but was "buried," and for three days remained in the *death state*. Hence, God raised Him not merely from death, but "from the dead," from the state of death. Had He "revived" or quickened Him immediately after His expiring on

the cross, that would have been raising Him from “death,” but not “from the dead.” Christ gained a victory not only over death, but also over the grave—note they are distinguished in “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1Co 15:55)! That is what explains “he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption” (Act 13:34)—i.e. the death state. Christ entered the state or place of corruption; namely, the grave, but “as His body was free from sickness while He lived, so it was free from corruption when He died” (Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680).

We believe, then, that there is a threefold *double* allusion in Acts 2:24: First, that the “death” from whose pains and cords God loosed Christ was the second death, which He “tasted” (Heb 2:9), and physical dissolution. Second, that He was “loosed” from the pangs of the former at the close of the three hours darkness, for His “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luk 23:46) evinces that He was again in communion with Him; and of the latter, when He came forth from the sepulcher. Third, that the Greek word in Acts 2:24 is rightly rendered “pains” or travail-throes, whereas the Hebrew word of Psalm 18:5 signifies “cords”—a clear hint of a *double* line of truth here—bringing in the idea of one held in prison. It “was not possible that He should be holden” (Act 2:24) of death, because the Divine veracity was involved (God had announced His resurrection), because His covenant-faithfulness was at stake, because the basic principle of His government (“them that honour me I will honour,” 1Sa 2:30) required Christ should be raised, and because the Law demanded He should receive its award.

Now, as it was God who delivered up Christ to death for our offences (Act 2:23, Rom 4:24)—not only physical death, but the whole of what is included in “the wages of sin” (Rom 6:23)—so He alone could deliver Him from that death, and subsequently, from the prison-house of the grave. Personally, we believe that God also then delivered Christ from *the powers of darkness*. On this point, Scripture is not very explicit, yet we consider it is quite implicit. We know of no writer who has attempted to deal with this point—an admittedly mysterious one—and therefore, we would be doubly cautious, and inform the reader that what we now advance is in no spirit of dogmatism, but is submitted to his careful judgment. First, from the law of analogy, does it not seem highly probable that Satan would make every possible effort *to prevent* the resurrection of Christ? Very shortly after His birth, the Devil stirred up Herod to slay Him (Rev 12:4), and should we not regard the second temptation (Mat 4:5, 6) as another desperate move in the same direction? We do know he put it into the heart of Judas to betray Him (Joh 13:2).

Second, when arrested in the Garden, Christ said to His enemies, “this is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luk 22:53)—for how long was that “hour” protracted? If Revelation 12:4 warrants the conclusion that the Devil prompted Herod to slay Him as a child, may we not fairly infer that he inspired the chief priests and Pharisees to say to Pilate, “Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure” (Mat 27:64), so that a heavy stone was placed over its mouth, the stone “sealed” and “a watch” of soldiers set to guard it? Third, does not “having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Col 2:15) clearly imply a concerted effort on the part of the powers of evil to *oppose* His resurrection and ascension—how else did He triumph “over them”? Why was “the King of glory,” on His entrance into Heaven, greeted as “The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty *in battle*” (Psa 24:7-8)—is not the likely reference to His victory over the internal forces? Psalm 68:18 seems to supply confirmation.

Finally, does not *the analogy* here drawn with our conversion necessitate this conclusion? We are here stated to “believe, *according* to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly plac-

es” (Eph 1:19-20). Now, we know beyond any room for doubt that the mighty power of God in bringing us to savingly believe is concerned, in considerable part, in delivering us from the bondage of Satan—see Acts 26:18, Colossians 1:13, Hebrews 2:14, 15. If then Satan sought to hold us forever, but was foiled by the Divine omnipotence, and if there be an accurate and perfect parallel between that aspect of our conversion and what God wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, then must we not conclude that Satan also sought to forever hold Christ fast in the grave, but that God defeated Him and triumphed over all his resistance? There is no doubt at all in our own mind on the matter.

We turn now to consider why God’s raising of Christ from the dead is made the unit or standard of measurement of the power which He exercises in those “who believe.” It is both the pattern and pledge of what God can and will do for His people. In the Old Testament, the standard miracle was the deliverance of Israel from Egypt—again and again, appeal was made to the Red Sea as the supreme demonstration of God’s power to help and to save. When the prophets sought to inspire courage and confidence, they pointed back to that mighty deliverance (Isa 43:16-18; 51:9, 10), and when God renewed His promise to Israel, He took them back to the same spot and said, “According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things” (Mic 7:15). But in the New Testament, the Red Sea is superseded by the empty tomb, and the resurrection of Christ from the dead is pointed to as the grand triumph of omnipotence and the standard of what God will do for us “who believe.”

What comfort should this impart! What holy confidence should it inspire in the hearts of believers—that the mighty power of God is engaged to act for them! That the same power which wrought in Christ in raising Him from the dead operates both toward and in them. It is a power which is beyond resistance: “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31). It is a power which is superior to and triumphs over all our weakness: “Now unto him that is able to keep you” (Jude :24). It is a power all-sufficient to supply our every need—when the Saviour taught us to pray for our daily sustenance, deliverance from evil, the forgiveness of our sins, what arguments did He bid us use?—“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory” (Mat 6:13). It is a power which will do for us “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph 3:20). How thankful we should be that this is so. How constantly we should look to and depend upon that power. How it should strengthen our faith to know that the One who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus will yet make us “perfect in every good work to do his will” (Heb 13:20-21).

Let us now endeavour to supply answer to the question, ‘What is the precise nature of the “power” which God exerted in the raising of Christ and in the bringing of us to savingly believe? Was it simply His omnipotence, or something in addition thereto? Was it merely physical power?—if not, what?’ By “physical power,” we mean the might of God operating in the material realm, producing physical effects. Now, if we keep in mind the nature of Christ’s death as a satisfaction for sin, it should be quite obvious that more was involved in the raising of Him from the dead than there will be in the destruction of this earth and the creating of a new one. It may not be easy to find terms suited to express what we have in mind—still less, to convey the idea intelligently to our readers—yet, we will make the attempt. When Christ cleansed the leper, opened the ears of the deaf, and gave sight to the blind, there was an exercise of omnipotence. There was the same, too, when God raised Christ from the dead—but there was something more.

“Persons often misunderstand the meaning of power as put forth by God, and conclude because He is almighty in power, He can therefore do one thing as easily as another. But they do not see that infinite power in God is but one of His glorious perfections. He is infinite also in holiness, in justice, in wisdom, in knowledge, etc. The question, therefore, is not what God *can* do,

but what God *will* do—and thus, His power, not His absolute power, but His power working in harmony with all His other perfections, is to be taken into consideration. There is, therefore, what we may call God’s moral power; that is, His power as working with and co-ordinate to all His other perfections, as well as His almighty power. Now, to raise Christ from the dead was the act of God’s *moral* power, as well as His omnipotent power. There were no circumstances attending the death of Lazarus which drew upon the depths of infinite justice, infinite holiness, infinite wisdom, as well as infinite grace, mercy, and love” (J.C. Philpot). That statement points in the right direction; yet, it scarcely goes far enough.

The death of Christ was a legal transaction; and therefore, the *legal element* entered into His resurrection. His death was an enduring of the full penalty of the Law, inflicted by the Judge of all. It was endured “the just for the unjust” (1Pe 3:18), the holy Surety receiving the awful wages due those He represented. And it was endured with fullest confidence as to the blessed issue therefrom. When Christ had magnified the law by serving and suffering, doing and dying, He “committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1Pe 2:23), declaring “I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me” (Isa 50:7-8). And God’s raising of Him from the dead was His *answer* to the dying appeal of the One who had been cast out by the world. It was God’s response to the Saviour’s trust in Himself. It was God acting as the Divine Umpire in the controversy between His own Anointed, and the world which had disowned Him—God reversing their erroneous verdict and exonerating the One who endured their malice to the extreme limit.

Righteousness required that God should raise Christ from the dead. The Law demanded that He who had so illustriously honoured it should enter into its award. Holiness insisted that the sinless One should be released from the grave. By raising Him from the dead, God openly declared that all Christ taught was true, set His seal upon the triumphant ending of His stupendous mission, and attested His acceptance of the satisfaction, which He had made for His people. To create originally displayed the “eternal power and Godhead” (Rom 1:20), but what we are now considering did more than that: “Christ was raised up from the dead by the *glory* of the Father” (Rom 6:4). Christ was raised not simply as a private person, but as the Head of His people—the Church rose in and with Him: Ephesians 2:5, 6, Colossians 3:1. To create was an act of power, but to bring forth a new creation out of the wrecked and ruined old creation was glorious power, a moral triumph. It was glorious power which transformed a curse into never-ending blessing.

Christ was “made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13), yet God “hast made him most blessed for ever” (Psa 21:6). Down to the grave itself, the power which prevails over man (and prevailed over the Son of man) is that of *death*. It is thus that the universal empire of sin has been attested—“Sin reigned in death,” as the Greek of Romans 5:21 may be rendered. But resurrection makes manifest the more excellent power of *righteousness* by the triumphant re-entering of the once-slain Just One into life, and it is with His liberty that His people are freed. Hence, the verse which declares, “That as sin hath reigned unto [or “in”] death” (Rom 5:21), concludes by saying, “even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” Thus, our answer to the third question is, ‘Not only the bare omnipotence of God, but the power and glory of His righteousness, or His righteous power.’ That very expression is found substantially in His promise to the trembling saints: “Fear thou not;...I will uphold thee with *the right hand* of my *righteousness*” (Isa 41:10).

What are the principal points of analogy between God’s raising Christ from the dead, and His operations in and unto those “who believe” (Eph 1:19)? Ere answering that question, let it be pointed out that the resurrection of Christ was not only the pattern of ours, but also both the pledge and procuring cause thereof—for He “was raised again for *our* justification” (Rom 4:24-

25). The resurrection of Christ was necessary not only to evince God's acceptance of His satisfaction on our behalf, but as a necessary step to secure the application of the merits of His sacrifice to us, to communicate "the sure mercies of David" (Act 13:34) unto us. "Because I live" said He, "ye shall live also" (Joh 14:19); otherwise, He would be a Bridegroom without a Bride, a Redeemer with no redeemed, the living Head of a lifeless body. God's raising of Christ from the dead was the pledge He would quicken into newness of life all for whom He died. The Corn of wheat which died "bringeth forth much fruit" (Joh 12:24).

The margin of Isaiah 53:9 tells us that Christ was "with the wicked, and with the rich in his *deaths*," for in His soul, He tasted of the second death; and in His body, He suffered natural death—thus, He experienced both a spiritual and natural resurrection. So, too, do His people: The former at their regeneration; the second, at Christ's return. As Christ was delivered from penal death by the righteousness of God, so, too, are all who believe (Rom 1:16, 17). As Christ was delivered from the forces of Satan, so are we from "the power of darkness" (Col 1:13). As Christ has been made "after the power of an endless life" (Heb 7:16), so we shall "not perish, but have everlasting life" (Joh 3:16). As Christ was raised to honour and glory, so shall we be. Even now, are we the sons of God, but it is not yet made manifest what we shall be: "But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be *like him*; for we shall see him as he is" (1Jo 3:2). Hallelujah!

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

### 9c. Its Means

4. *Occupation with Christ.* Clearly, this comes next. We must have the Scriptures before we can have Christ, for they are they which testify of Him (Joh 5:39)—where the Bible has not gone, Christ is unknown. But in the Scriptures, He is fully revealed: In the volume of the Book, it is written of Him. In Him, all its precepts are perfectly fulfilled. In Him, all its promises are certified (2Co 1:20). In Him, all its prophecies culminate, for "testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev 19:10). Divorce doctrine from Christ, and it is indeed "dry." Separate precepts from Christ, and we have no perfect exemplification of them. Sever the promises from Christ and they are no longer "Yea and Amen." Part asunder the prophecies from Christ, and they are of no profit to the soul, but rather enigmas for useless speculation. Christ is the Alpha and Omega of the written Word: "Jesus Christ" is the first name mentioned in the New Testament (Mat 1:1), and the last (Rev 22:21), and the Old Testament is filled with foreshadowings and forecasts of Him.

If the Christian desires the milk of the Word that he may grow thereby, it is that he "may grow up *into him* in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Eph 4:15). It is unto the image of God's Son that the saint is predestinated to be conformed. It is upon Christ, now seated at God's right hand, that he is to steadfastly set his affection (Col 3:1-2). It is with his eyes fixed upon Christ

that he is to run the race which is set before him (Heb 12:1-2). It is of Christ he is to learn (Mat 11:29), for His fullness he is to receive (Joh 1:16), by His commandments be directed (Joh 14:15). It is on Christ he is to feed, as Israel did on the manna in the wilderness (Joh 6:31, 49, 58). It is unto Christ he is to go in all his troubles (Mat 14:12), for He is a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. It is for the honour and glory of Christ he is ever to aim (Phi 1:20). In short, the Christian is so to act that he can say, “For to me to live is *Christ*” (Phi 1:21).

Now, in order to have fellowship with another, there must be three things: That other must be known, he must be present, and I must have a free and familiar access to him. Thus, it is with the soul and Christ. First, I must be personally acquainted with Him: He must be a living reality to my soul. Therefore, it follows that if I am to have close fellowship with Him, I must become better acquainted with Him; and in proportion as I do so, such will be my true progress. We agree with Pierce that the words “grow in grace” are explained (in part, at least) by the clause, which immediately follows: “...and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 3:18)—for the second verse of that epistle tells us that grace and peace are multiplied unto us “*through* the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord” (2Pe 1:2). One of the chief things which retards the Christian—which renders him weak in faith and causes his graces to languish—is his failure to increase in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour, and thereby attain unto a deeper and more intimate acquaintance with Him. How can we fully trust, or set our affections upon, One who is well nigh a stranger to us?

Though the Christian believes in an *unseen* Christ, he does not—he could not—trust in an *unknown* Christ. No, his testimony is “I know whom I have believed” (2Ti 1:12), which does not mean I know Him because I have believed; but rather, I believed in Him because He stood revealed to my heart. Take the experience of the one who penned those words. There was a time when Paul was ignorant of Christ. Before his conversion, the apostle knew Him not; and consequently, he then had no faith in Him, no love for Him, no pantings after Him. And it is thus with all before regeneration: They knew not the things which belong to their everlasting peace. Paul was a great scholar, a strict moralist, a devout religionist; yet, he was completely ignorant of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom to know, is life eternal. He was trained by Gamaliel, the famous teacher of that day, was deeply versed in the contents of the Old Testament, and had listened to the sermon of dying Stephen; and yet, was a total stranger to the Christ of God. Nor did his theological training, philosophic mind, or acquaintance with the Scriptures lead him to a saving knowledge of Christ.

All that Paul knew of Christ was by teaching from Above. It was God who enlightened his mind with a saving knowledge of the Truth and who drew his heart unto the Lord Jesus by His own invincible grace and love. And thus, it is with each one whom the Lord God omnipotent calleth. Every person in his natural state is altogether ignorant of the true God and is an utter stranger to the alone and all-sufficient Mediator, the righteous Redeemer, who is mighty to save. And *how* are they brought into an acquaintance with Him? It is wholly of grace, and through the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit upon their souls. As the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, He is pleased to quicken the soul with spiritual life and to illumine the mind with a knowledge of Divine Truth, imparting an inward spiritual perception of Christ to the heart thereby. The outward revelation of Christ unto us is in the written Word, which sets Him forth and testifies of Him, in which He is clearly, freely, and fully exhibited. But that external revelation has no saving effect upon us until the Holy Spirit shines upon our blind minds, removes the veil

which is over our hearts (2Co 3:14, 16), and opens our understandings that we might understand the Scriptures (Luk 24:45) and what is written therein concerning Christ.

It is only as the soul is regenerated that it is capacitated to take in spiritual views of the person, office, and work of Christ, to obtain a real and satisfying knowledge of His Godhood and Manhood, the purpose and design of the Father in His miraculous incarnation, life, obedience, death, and resurrection. It is the great office and work of the Holy Spirit to “testify” of the Son (Joh 15:26), to “glorify” Him (Joh 16:14), to take of the things of Christ and “shew it unto” those for whom He died (Joh 16:15), to make Him known unto the hearts of poor sinners. He does this in and by the Word, after He has fitted the soul to receive it. Hence, the apostle said, “And we know that the Son of God is come” (1Jo 5:20). How did John and those to whom he wrote “know” that? His next words tell us: “...and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.” A spiritual understanding, which is the gift of God, is a principal part of the Holy Spirit’s work in regeneration, and it is by that spiritual understanding, the quickened soul is enabled to receive from the Word a spiritual and supernatural knowledge of Christ, just as it is by means of the eye—and that alone—we can see and admire the glorious shining of the sun.

If it be asked: ‘What are those sights which the Holy Spirit gives us, whereby He begets faith in the heart, or whereby He makes a discovery of Christ unto the soul?’ The answer is: ‘The Spirit gives us no other views of Christ than what are in exact accordance with the revelation made of Him in the Scriptures of Truth.’ But more specifically: The first discovery which the Spirit makes of Christ to the poor sinner is as a fully-suited and all-sufficient Saviour, whose person and perfections are eternal and infinite, who was born into this world and called Jesus that should “save his people from their sins” (Mat 1:21). He makes known to the soul the wondrous love and amazing grace of Christ, His robe of righteousness, His efficacious blood which was shed for those deserving of naught but Hell. He thereby takes of the things of Christ and makes such a discovery of them that the soul is captivated, the will captured, and the heart won to Him; and thereby, the sinner is led to believe in His person, surrender to His scepter, and rest on His finished work. The Spirit enlightens the understanding, brings the will to choose Him as his absolute Lord, his heart to love Him, and his conscience to be satisfied with His sacrifice, and his whole being yields to be governed and guided by Him.

Thus, Christ is revealed in the hearts of His people (Gal 1:16) as their one hope of eternal glory. The Word of God is the sole rule and ground of their faith. Christ is exhibited therein as the immediate Object of it, and as the Spirit takes of the things of Him and reveals them to the renewed soul, He draws forth its acts upon Christ as He is made known; and thereby, He becomes real and precious to the soul; thereby, the heart is brought into the enjoyment of His love, to delight in His perfections, to behold Him as “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16). As Christ is made the Object of faith, faith is a spiritual perception of Him; and thereby, He has become a living and present Reality. As the heart is engaged with Him, as the thoughts are exercised upon His person, His titles, His offices, His perfections, His work, the soul exclaims, “My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD” (Psa 104:34). Believers love not an unknown Christ, nor do they trust in One with whom they are unacquainted. Though unseen by the natural eye, when faith is in exercise that one can say, “I *know* that my redeemer liveth” (Job 19:25).

Now, it is from this personal, inward and spiritual knowledge of Christ, received from the Word, as taught by the Spirit, that faith in Christ takes its rise, and love to Him springs therefrom as its proper case. But all believers do not possess an equally clear and full knowledge of Christ. To some, He is more fully revealed, whilst others have a vaguer view and lesser apprehension of Him, which constitutes the difference between a strong and a weak Christian. The weak believer



knows but little of Christ; and therefore, does not trust or delight in Him so much as does a stronger one, for the latter differs from him in that he is led into a closer and fuller acquaintance with the Saviour. That may be accounted for both from the Divine side of things and from the human. As we cannot see the sun but in its own light, so neither can we see the Sun of righteousness, but in His light (Psa 36:9). As we cannot see temporal things and objects without light, so faith cannot see Christ but as the Holy Spirit shines upon and enlightens it. Nevertheless, Christ is not capricious in His shining, nor is the Spirit arbitrary in His illumination.

Christ has declared, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me:...and I will love him, and will *manifest myself* to him” (Joh 14:21). But if the Christian yields to a spirit of self-pleasing, and for a season keeps not the commands of his Lord, then such precious manifestations of Him to his soul will be withheld. It is the office and work of the Spirit to take of the things of Christ, and show them to the renewed; but if the believer disregards that injunction, “grieve not the holy Spirit of God” (Eph 4:30), and allows things in his life which are displeasing to Him, so far from regaling him with fresh views of Christ, He will withhold His cordials and comforts, and make him wretched, until he is convicted of his backsliding and brought to full confession thereof. On the one hand, the Christian who is favoured with a deeper knowledge and clearer acquaintance with Christ frankly disavows any personal credit and freely ascribes his blessings wholly unto distinguishing grace; but on the other hand, the Christian who makes little progress in the school of Christ and enjoys but little intimate fellowship with Him, must take the entire blame to himself—a distinction which ever needs to be borne in mind.

Concerning Israel of old and the supply of food which God gave them in the wilderness, it is recorded “and gathered, some more, some less” (Exo 16:17). The manna (type of Christ) was freely given, made accessible to all alike: If then some were more indolent to appropriate as goodly a portion as others, they had only themselves to blame. So it is with the saint and Christ. We are instructed to pray that we may be “increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10), but if we are negligent to do so—or offer the petition only halfheartedly—we shall have not. We are assured, “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD” (Hos 6:3). The Hebrews word for “follow on” signifies “persevere,” “follow after.” It is a forceful word, connoting earnestness and diligence. The way and means are there described: We must highly value and steadfastly endeavour after the same, making it our principal quest (*see* Pro 2:1-4, Phi 3:12-15!); and then, if we perform the prescribed duty, we may certainly expect the promised blessing. But if we be lethargic and rest on our oars, no progress is made, and the fault is entirely ours.

Since the believer owes his salvation unto Christ and is to spend eternity with Him, surely, he should make it his chief business and absorbing concern to obtain a clearer and better knowledge of Him. No other knowledge is so important, so blessed, so satisfying. We do not mean a bare, theoretical, speculative and uninfluential knowledge of Him—but a supernatural, spiritual, believing and transforming one. Said the apostle, “I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phi 3:8). Observe how *comprehensive* is this knowledge: “Christ, Jesus, Lord”—comprising the principal aspects in which He is set forth in the Word. “Christ” respecting His person and office; “Jesus,” His work and salvation; “Lord,” His dominion and rule over us. Note, too, it is an *appropriating* knowledge: “Christ Jesus *my* Lord” (Phi 3:8)—to apprehend Him as Mine, on good grounds, is the excellency of this knowledge. The demons know Him as Prophet, Priest and King, but they apprehend Him not with personal appropriation to themselves. But this knowledge enables its possessor to say, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

This spiritual and saving knowledge of Christ is an *effectual* one. As Hebrews 6:9 speaks of “things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak,” so there are things which accompany this knowledge. “They that know thy name [the Lord as revealed] *will* put their trust in thee” (Psa 9:10)—it cannot be otherwise, and the better they know Him, the firmer and fuller will be their trust. “Every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life” (Joh 6:40) The more we study and meditate upon the glorious person of Christ and His perfect salvation, the more we realise the everlasting sufficiency of His life and death to save us from all our sins and miseries, the more will faith be fed and spiritual graces nourished. So, too, the more will our hearts be enflamed and our affections drawn out to Him. It must be so, for faith “worketh by *love*” (Gal 5:6). The more Christ is trusted, the more He is endeared to the soul. The more we live in sights and views of all He has done for us, of all His office relations to us, the more glorious will He be in our esteem. It is a spiritual view of Christ by faith which removes guilt from the conscience, produces a sense of peace and joy in the heart, and enables the soul to say, “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Song 2:16).

As this knowledge is accompanied by faith and love, so also is it with *obedience*. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1Jo 2:3)—we *know* no more than we practice! “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk ye in him” (Col 2:6)—submitting to His authority, believing His Gospel, leaning on His arm, counting on His faithfulness, looking to Him for everything. To “walk...in him” means to act in practical union with Him. The “walk” is to be regulated by His revealed will, to tread the path He has appointed for us. To submit to His will is the only true liberty, as it is the secret of solid peace and joy. To take His yoke upon us and learn of Him ensures genuine rest of soul. But as we only enjoy the good of Christ’s promises as they are received by faith (appropriated unto myself and relied upon), so with His precepts—they must be personally taken unto myself and submitted unto. Hence, we read of “obedience to the faith” (Rom 16:26). So, too, they can only be performed by *affection*: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (Joh 14:15).

In order to commune with Christ, there must be a spiritual knowledge of Him and an *acting faith upon Him*. Said the one who most perfectly exemplified the Christian character, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). Christ was his all-absorbing Object, the Object of his faith and love. Christ was the One who had won his heart, whom he longed to please and honour, whose name and fame he sought to spread abroad, whose example he endeavored to follow. It was upon Him he fed by faith, and unto Him he lived in all his actions. It was from Him he had received his spiritual life, and it was to glorify Him that he desired to spend and be spent. All our fellowship with Christ is by faith. It is faith which makes Him real—“seeing him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). It is faith which makes Him present: “Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (Joh 8:56). It is faith which enables us to prefer Him above all things and to say, “There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psa 73:25).

“And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” (Joh 1:16). The “we” are those spoken of in verses 12-13. In verse 14, “full of grace and truth” (Joh 1:14) has reference to His own personal perfections, but in verse 16, it is His mediatorial fulness which God has given Him for His people to draw upon. The word “fulness” is sometimes used for abundance, as in “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof” (Psa 24:1), but as one of the Puritans pointed out, that is too narrow for its meaning here. In Christ, there is not only a fulness of abundance, but of redundancy—an overflowing fulness of grace. There is a communication of this fullness of Christ unto all believers, and they have it in a way of “receiving”—compare Romans 5:11, Galatians 3:2

and 4:5. That which believers receive from Christ is here said to be “grace for grace,” by which is meant grace answerable to grace—as “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” (Mat 5:38) signifies an eye answerable to an eye. Whatever grace or holiness there is in Jesus Christ, there is something in the saint answerable thereto—there is the same Spirit in the Christian as in Christ.

There is in Christ, as the God-man mediator, a “fulness...[of] grace” which is available for His people. There is laid up in Him, as in a vast storehouse, all that the believer needs for time and eternity. Of that fullness, they have received regenerating grace, justifying grace, reconciling grace; from that fullness, they *may* receive sanctifying grace, reconciling grace; from that fullness, they may receive sanctifying grace, preserving grace, fruit-bearing grace. It is available for *faith to draw upon*—all that is required is that we expectantly bring our empty vessels to be filled by Him. There is a fullness of grace in Christ which infinitely exceeds our fulness of sin and want, and from it, we are freely invited to draw. “Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (Joh 7:37). Those words are *not* to be limited to the sinner’s first coming to Christ, nor is the “thirst” to be understood in any restricted sense. If the believer thirsts for spiritual wisdom, for purity, for meekness, for any spiritual grace, then let him come unto the Fountain of grace and “drink”; for what is drinking but “receiving”—our emptiness ministered unto by His fulness.

When poor Martha—weighed down by her “much serving”—fretfully asked the Saviour to chide her sister, He answered, “But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luk 10:40-42). What was that “good part” which she had chosen? This, she “sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word (Luk 10:39). Mary had a felt sense of her need, and she knew where that need could be supplied: She came to receive out of Christ’s fulness. And He declared that *that* is the “one thing...needful,” for it includes everything else. Put yourself in that posture of soul, that expectation of faith, whereby you can receive from Him. To be occupied with Christ was “that good part,” which would never be taken from her. But in this restless age, “sitting at the feet of Jesus” (Luk 8:35) is a lost art. Instead of humbly recognising their *own* deep need of being ministered unto, puffed up with a sense of their importance and actuated by the energy of the flesh, they are “cumbered with much *serving*”—looking after the vineyards of others, but neglecting their own (Song 1:6).

If the Christian is to make real progress, he must needs be more occupied with Christ. As He is the sum and substance of all evangelical truth, then an increasing acquaintance with His person, offices, and work cannot but nourish the soul and promote spiritual growth. Yet, there must be constantly renewed acts of faith upon Him, if we are to draw from His fulness and be more conformed to His image. The more our affections be set upon Him, the lighter shall we hold the things of this world, and the less will carnal pleasures appeal to us. The more we spiritually meditate upon His humiliations and sufferings, the more will the soul learn to loathe sin, and the more shall we esteem our heaviest afflictions but “light” (2Co 4:17). Christ is exactly suited to our every case and Divinely qualified to supply our every need. Look less within and more unto Him. He is the only One who can do you good. Abhor everything which competes with Him in your affections. Be not satisfied with any knowledge of Christ, which does not make you more in love with Him and conform you more to His holy image.

# THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

## 1. Introduction

“I am fearfully and *wonderfully* made: marvellous are thy works” (Psa 139:14). The reference there is to the physical body of man, which is the product of Omniscience. “Thy testimonies are *wonderful*: therefore doth my soul keep [treasure and submit to] them” (Psa 119:129). The Maker of man’s body is the Author of the Word, and each is alike “wonderful,” evidencing its Divine source. The human body is made up of two halves: Two arms and legs, two eyes and ears, two lungs and kidneys, etc.; so also the Word is made up of the two Testaments. Each is a living organism—a single and complete entity, yet with many members. Each of those members is necessary to give completeness to the others, and cutting off of one results in mutilation to the whole. Each of those members has its own function to fulfil, and each book in the Scriptures makes its own separate contribution to the sum of Divine revelation. As each physical member is fitted for discharging its own distinctive office, so the substance of each book in the Bible is suited to its own special theme. As there is a real difference between both the texture and purpose of the eye and the ear, so there is between the contents and leading subjects of any two books in the Word.

The analogies drawn between the living and physical body of man and the living and holy Word of God might be considerably extended. The design and functions of some members of our bodies are self-evident even to the layman. But there are others which are understood only by a trained physician. In like manner, the purpose and purport of some of the books of the Bible is more or less apparent to the rank and file of God’s people, but the special character and distinctive features of others is discerned only by the Spirit-qualified teacher. That particular parallel may be extended still further: As there are certain glands of the body which still puzzle anatomists, so there are some books of Scripture the theme of which is by no means certain to the most diligent student. After all the centuries that have passed and all the attention that has been devoted to the human body and the Divine Word, there yet remains an element of mystery about the one and the other, and only the blatant or the ignorant will deny it.

Now, it should be evident that in approaching the study of one of the books of Scripture, it must be of considerable help to the student if he can ascertain what is its main design, and what is its outstanding topic. As we pointed out in these pages over twenty years ago, in our Introduction to Exodus (now out of print), each book in the Bible was a prominent and dominant theme—which, as such, is peculiar to itself, around which everything is made to centre, and of which all the details are but the amplification. What that leading subject may be, we should make it our business to prayerfully and diligently ascertain. This can best be discovered by reading and re-reading the book under review, noting carefully any particular feature or expression which occurs frequently in it—such as “under the sun” in Ecclesiastes or “the righteousness of God” in Romans. If other students before us have published the results of their labours, it is our bounden

duty to closely examine their findings in the light of Holy Writ, and either verify or disprove. Before pointing out the peculiar character and dominant subject of Joshua, let us briefly state that of the books preceding.

Genesis is obviously the book of *beginnings*. Considered historically, there is a three-fold beginning recorded: Of the heavens and the earth, of the post-diluvian world, of the nation of Israel—in the call of Abram. Viewed doctrinally, it illustrates, as might be expected, the foundation-truth of *election*, for our salvation began in God's eternal purpose. Thus, we see here that Noah (alone of the antediluvians) "found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Gen 6:8), and that Shem (rather than Japheth or Ham) was the one selected to be the channel through which should ultimately issue the Saviour (Gen 9:26). Here, we see God singling out Abram to be the father of the chosen Nation. Here, we see God choosing Isaac and passing by Ishmael, loving Jacob but hating Esau. Here, we behold God appointing Joseph from the twelve sons of Jacob to be the honoured instrument of saving them all from the famine. The same principle appears again in the passing by of Joseph's older son and bestowing the portion of the firstborn upon Ephraim (48:13-20). "God hath from *the beginning* chosen you to salvation" (2Th 2:13).

Historically, the book of Exodus treats of the deliverance and departure of the Hebrews out of Egypt, but doctrinally, its theme is clearly that of *redemption*. That is just what the spiritual mind would expect, for it is by means of the redemptive work of Christ that the Father's eternal purpose is made good. If the first book of the Bible reveals a sovereign God passing by some and choosing others to salvation, Exodus makes known how that salvation is accomplished; namely, by the mighty power of God and through the blood of the Lamb. Moses was bidden to say unto the children of Israel, "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will *redeem* you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments" (Exo 6:6)—the first clause showing what redemption is from; and the last, how it is effected. At the Red Sea, they sang, "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast *redeemed*: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation" (Exo 15:13). Between those two passages comes the record of the slaying of the lamb, and the efficacy of its blood, while the remainder of the book is devoted to instructions regarding God's habitation.

The book of Leviticus covers a period in Israel's history of less than two months, for the whole of it (as well as the first ten chapters of Numbers) treats of what occurred between the first day of the second year, the twentieth day of the second month (Exo 40:17, Num 10:11). As we might expect, being the third book of Scripture, it views the people of God as on resurrection ground—regenerated. It is not so much doctrinal as experimental. The key is hung upon its door: "And the LORD called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the *tabernacle*" (Lev 1:1). It naturally and necessarily comes after Exodus, informing us what we are redeemed for, being the book of Divine *fellowship and worship*. Here, we are shown the glorious privileges of the believer, the holy requirements of God, and the gracious provisions which He has made to meet them. It proclaims that God "will be sanctified in them that come nigh me" (Lev 10:3). Typically, it is full of Christ, setting Him before us as our Altar, Sacrifice, and High Priest.

The fourth book of Scripture treats of the practical side of the spiritual life, tracing the history of the believer in the world—for four is the number of the earth. Its key is also hung upon the porch: "And the LORD spake unto Moses in the *wilderness* of Sinai" (Num 1:1)—the "wilderness" being a symbol of this world in its fallen condition, alienated from God. It records at greater length than Exodus the history of Israel's journeyings and sojournings. Its theme then is the *walk and wanderings* of the believer during this life, depicting his testings and trials in the world. Note well, it is preceded by Leviticus, for only as we first commune with God within the veil are we

fitted to go out into the world, and there, walk before Him. Typically, it represents the experiences we encounter in this scene of sin and suffering, our repeated and excuseless failures and God's longsufferance. It reveals God maintaining His holy government and yet dealing in grace with His own; destroying unbelieving rebels, yet preserving the faithful.

Deuteronomy is the bridge between the four books which precede, and the seven which follow it, for the former deal with Israel before they entered Canaan; and the latter, with their history after settling there. Its name signifies "a second law"—the ten commandments of Exodus 20 being repeated in Deuteronomy 5—the reason for this being, because of their awful sin at Kadesh-barnea (Num 13:26-14:4). God swore that all the adult Israelites who came out of Egypt (with the sole exception of Caleb and Joshua) should perish in the wilderness (Num 14). That fearful threat had now been carried out; and in Deuteronomy, we find Moses (himself on the eve of death) addressing the generation who had grown up in the wilderness. That new generation required to know on what terms they were about to enter Canaan, and on what conditions they should hold and enjoy it. The addresses of Moses, therefore, centered around two things: Reviewing the past and giving instructions for the future, pressing upon them the claims of God (Deu 10:12-13)—hence, the key words are "remember" (14 times), "hear" (over 30) and "do" (about 100). In its application to us, it reveals that whole-hearted *obedience to God* is the grand condition of possessing our possessions.

The book of Joshua records one of the most interesting and important portions of Israel's history. It treats of the period of their estate as a nation, of which Genesis was prophetic, and the rest of the Pentateuch immediately preparatory. The books of Moses would be imperfect without this one—as it is the capstone of them, so it is the foundation of those which follow. Omit Joshua, and there is a gap left in the sacred history which nothing could supply. Without it, what precedes would be incomprehensible and what follows unexplained. The sacred writer was directed to fill that gap by narrating the conquest and apportionment of the promised land. Thus, this book may be contemplated from two distinct, but closely related, standpoints: First, as the end of Israel's trials and wanderings in the wilderness; and second, as the beginning of their new life in the land. It is that twofold viewpoint which supplies the clue to its spiritual interpretation, as it alone solves the problem which so many have found puzzling in this book.

As the inheritance which the Lord appointed, promised, and gave to Israel, Canaan has rightly been regarded as a type of Heaven, unto which the Church is journeying through this wilderness-world. But Canaan was the scene of fierce battles, and that presents a serious difficulty unto many, though it should not. They point out that Heaven will not be the place of fighting, but of eternal rest and felicity; and then ask, 'How could Israel's history in Canaan prefigure our experience on High?' It did not, but it strikingly and accurately foreshadowed what Christians must accomplish if they are to enter and enjoy "the purchased possession" (Eph 1:14). The book of Joshua not only exhibits the sovereign grace of God, His covenant-faithfulness, His mighty power put forth on behalf of His people, but it also reveals what was *required from them* in the discharge of their responsibility: Formidable obstacles had to be surmounted, a protracted warfare had to be engaged in, fierce foes overcome, before they entered into the actual enjoyment of the land.

If our conception of what constitutes a Christian or the character of the Christian life be altogether lop-sided, little wonder that we have difficulty in rightly applying to ourselves the contents of that book which typically contains so much important instruction for us. If we will confine our viewpoint solely unto the sovereign grace of God in connection with our salvation, and deliberately close our eyes to all that Scripture teaches upon the discharge of our responsibility in relation thereto, then it would indeed be strange if we apprehended how that on the one hand, Ca-

naam was a free gift unto Israel, which they entered by grace alone; and on the other, that they had to fight for every inch of it! But when we realise that “eternal life” is both the gift of God (Rom 6:23) and a “crown” which has to be won by faithfulness (Rev 2:10), that the Christian inheritance is not only purchased by the blood of the Lamb, but is also the “reward” of those who “serve the Lord Christ” (Col 3:24), then we should have no trouble in perceiving how the type answers to the antitype.

“Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life” (Mat 7:14), i.e., unto Heaven, unto Glory. There is but one way that “leadeth unto” it, and that is the way of personal and practical holiness (Isa 35:8), “without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). That “way” is a narrow one, for it shuts out the world and excludes self-pleasing. True, the few who tread it have previously been made partakers of spiritual life, for none of the unregenerate walk therein. Nevertheless, they must persevere in it to the end, resisting temptations to forsake it, and overcoming whatever would impede—if they are to enter Life itself. Salvation is indeed by grace, and grace alone, for human merit has no place therein; yet, good works are necessary, because it was to fit us for them that grace is given. In Joshua, we have a striking and blessed exemplification of the twofoldness of Truth, and the perfect balance of its essential parts. The sovereign grace of God and the discharge of His peoples’ responsibility run side by side therein. Canaan was God’s free gift unto Israel, yet, they had to fight for possession of it—let *that* be carefully pondered, and remember, it was typical.

The reader should keep steadily in mind that Israel’s entrance into Canaan occurred at the *end* of their trials in the wilderness. Taking that alone, by itself, we have a foreshadowing of our entrance into Heaven at the close of this life (Rev 14:13); but viewing Israel’s entrance into Canaan in the light of all that is recorded in the book of Joshua, we must regard what precedes as the experiences of the soul prior *to* conversion, and Israel’s history there as adumbrating his *new* life. Thus, in Exodus, we see the natural man in bondage to sin and Satan; in Leviticus, we behold him as one to whom God is speaking, making known His holy requirements; in Numbers, he finds himself in a great howling wilderness, which is what the world appears to one who has been awakened by the Spirit; while in Deuteronomy, he learns the strictness and spirituality of the Law, which cuts into pieces his self-righteousness and reveals that Another than Moses must become the Captain of his salvation, if ever he is to be estated in the antitypical Palestine.

Let the reader also remember that Israel’s entrance into Canaan marked the beginning of a distinct state in their history, and there we have a figure of the new life of the converted soul. Observe carefully how definitely and clearly this is brought out in the type. It was a *new* generation of Israel (the second and not the adult one that came out of Egypt), which is here in view; that they were under a new leader—no longer Moses but Joshua; that they were inducted into a new sphere—delivered from the wilderness, entering into Canaan. Thus, we have a picture of those who have passed through a season of conviction of sin, who have felt the terrors of the Law, and have now been brought to put their trust in Jesus Christ, the antitypical Joshua. Conversion dates the end of the old life and the beginning of the new. As Israel’s entrance into Canaan marked the end of their wilderness wanderings, so at conversion, the soul experiences the verity of Christ’s promise, “Come unto me...and I will give you rest” (Mat 11:28). Likewise, as Israel’s entrance into Canaan marked the beginning of their life of conquest, so at conversion we begin that “good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12), which is required before we can enter our Eternal Rest.

Those two aspects of the Christian’s rest are brought together in Hebrews 4. First, “We which have believed *do* enter into rest” (Heb 4:3). The moment a regenerated, awakened, convicted soul savingly believes in Christ, the burden of his sins rolls away, and peace of conscience, rest of

soul, assurance of acceptance by God, are his. Yet, he is not there, and then taken to heaven. No, indeed, he is now made conscious of foes—both within and without—of which previously, he knew nothing. He is now called upon to mortify the flesh, resist the Devil, overcome the world. Not by his own might, but in the strength of the Lord, under the leadership of the antitypical Joshua; and this, *in order to* an entrance into the promised inheritance. Thus, second, Hebrews 4:11 bids us “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest” Yes, “labour” is necessary (compare Joh 6:27, 2Co 5:9): Fighting the good fight, finishing our course, keeping the faith is required, if we are to receive “a crown of righteousness” (2Ti 4:7-8).

## THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

### 8. Its Scope

Who are the ones from whom the wrath of God has been turned away and to whom He is reconciled? Who are they whose enmity against God has been slain and are actually reconciled to Him? Though those questions be quite distinct; yet are they intimately allied the one to the other. Though they relate to separate transactions, yet, really, they are but parts of one whole. Those inquiries signify much the same as though we asked, ‘On whose behalf did Christ satisfy God?’ Who are the ones who must eventually partake of the saving benefits of His mediation? Theologians have been by no means agreed in the answers they have returned, for those questions necessarily raise the fundamental issues which have divided Christendom into Calvinists and Arminians. That issue may be more clearly drawn, if we make our question yet more definite and specific: ‘For whom did Christ act as Surety and Substitute?—For all the human race, or the Church only?’ ‘What was the scope of the Everlasting Covenant?—Did it embrace the whole of Adam’s posterity, or did it respect only a chosen remnant of them?’

Who are the ones who will eternally benefit from the great Propitiation? Probably most of our readers would reply, ‘All who truly exercise faith in the blood of Christ.’ Nor would their answer be incorrect, though it would be more satisfactory to frame it from the Divine side of things, rather than from the human side. As it is made from the latter, we have to push the inquiry further back and ask, ‘Who are the ones who savingly trust in the blood of Christ?’ Not all who hear the Gospel—for even the majority of them turn a deaf ear unto it, so that its preachers have to exclaim, “Who hath believed our report?” (Isa 53:1). Perhaps the reader will return answer to this last inquiry: ‘Those who are willing to receive Christ as their Lord and Saviour.’ Correct—But who are they? By nature, none are willing to do that: “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Joh 6:44), i.e. overcome his reluctance. “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power” (Psa 110:3) gives the Scriptural answer. From the Divine side, the reply to our opening question is: ‘Those on whose behalf the great propitiation was made—God’s people.’

If there were no explicit statements in Scripture, there are many implicit ones therein from which we may determine with certainty the precise scope of reconciliation. The ordination, impe-



tration (accomplishment), and application (bestowal of the benefits) of Christ's work must of necessity be co-extensive. We say "of necessity," for otherwise, we should be affirming that the ways of God were "unequal"—inconsistent, inharmonious. What God the Father purposed, that God the Son effected; and what He effected, God the Spirit applies and bestows. The only other possible alternative is to predicate a defeated Father, a disappointed Christ, and a disgraced Holy Spirit—which is the kind of "God" the Arminians believe in. But there are clear and decisive statements in Scripture, which reveal to us the extent of the Father's purpose and the scope of the Son's purchase. Says the Father concerning His Son, "For the transgression of *my people* was he stricken" (Isa 53:8). "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Mat 1:21). Said the Son, "the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (Joh 10:11)—and not the goats.

The idea of a mere conditional "provision" for the reconciliation of all mankind is a theory which sets aside the absolute purpose of God, respecting the work of Christ. That theory renders of no account the promises of God concerning the death of His Son, for by pleading that, it made the salvation of all men possible; in actuality, it denies that it made the salvation of any man *certain*. God the Father promised His Son a definite reward upon the successful accomplishment of His work. "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa 53:10, 11). How could He be satisfied if any of those for whom He was their sin-offering were finally lost? "By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" (Zec 9:11). But what security could there be for the fulfilment of those promises if no infallible provision was made for the regeneration of those persons; and instead, everything was left contingent on the wills of men!

Consider the special character in which Christ died. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great *shepherd* of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ" (Heb 13:20, 21). In serving as the Shepherd, Christ died for the sheep, and not for the goats. Said He, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (Joh 10:11); and mark it well, they are represented as being His "sheep" *before* they believe: "And other sheep I have [as the Father's gift and charge], which are not of this [*Jewish*] fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice [when the Spirit quickens them]; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (Joh 10:16). But all men pertain not to the "sheep" of Christ; said He to those who rejected Him: "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you" (Joh 10:26). The "sheep" are the elect, God's chosen people. Christ Himself declared that His "flock" is a "little" one (Luk 12:32); and therefore, not the whole human race.

Christ laid down His life as a *Husband*. "For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth [and not merely Palestine] shall he be called" (Isa 54:5)—note this comes right after Isaiah 53! Equally clear is the teaching of the New Testament: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might [should] sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church" (Eph 5:25-27). As the Husband, He died for His *Wife* (Rev 19:7). It was His love which caused Him to do so, and it was a discriminating love—set upon a definite object. And again, we say, note this well, that the Church for whom Christ gave Himself is not here viewed as a regenerated and believing company, but as one whose members needed *to be* sanctified and cleansed (Eph 5:26). He died not for

believers as such, but while “we were enemies” (Rom 5:10). Nor can Christ be foiled of His design, for He will yet present the Church to Himself “a glorious Church” and not a mutilated one—as it would be if any of its members were finally missing.

Christ served as a *Surety*. He is expressly denominated the “surety” of a better covenant (Heb 7:22); and unless we are prepared to believe that Christ is defeated in His undertaking, then we cannot extend the persons for whom He was Sponsor beyond those who are finally saved. To speak of a “surety” failing is surely a contradiction in terms. If he does not, with certainty, prevent loss, how can he be a “surety”? To remove any doubt on this point, Scripture declares, “He shall not fail” (Isa 42:4). He shall yet triumphantly exclaim, “Behold I and the children which God hath given me” (Heb 2:13). Christ’s suretyship was no fictitious one, but real. Under that office, He engaged Himself to make satisfaction for certain people, and by His engagement to cancel all their debt and fulfill all righteousness in their stead. And since He has perfectly performed this—as much and as truly as though those for whom He acted had themselves endured all the punishment due their sins and had rendered to the Law all the obedience it required—the consequence is clear and unescapable: Those for whom He engaged and satisfied are they who are actually saved from their sins and pronounced righteous by God, and none else.

The very nature of Christ’s satisfaction determines to a demonstration those who are the beneficiaries of it. It was a *federal* work. There was both a covenant and legal oneness between Christ and those for whom He transacted. The Saviour stood as the Bondsman of a particular people, and if a single one of those whose obligations He assumed received not a full discharge, then Divine justice would be reduced to a farce. It was a substitutionary work. Christ acted not only on the behalf of, but in the stead of, those who had been given to Him by the Father; therefore, all those whose sins He bore must of necessity have their sins remitted—God cannot punish twice: First, the Substitute; and then, the subject. It was a *legal* work: Every requirement of the Divine law, both preceptive and punitive, was fulfilled by Christ. Therefore, all for whom He acted must receive the reward of His obedience, which is everlasting life. It was a *priestly* work: He presented Himself as an offering to God, and since God accepted His sacrifice, its efficacy and merits must be imputed unto all those for whom it was offered.

The *intercession* of Christ defines the scope of His atoning sacrifice. The death and intercession of Christ are co-extensive: Define the extent of the one, and you determine the extent of the other. That must be so, for the latter is based upon the former and is expressive of its grand design. Scripture is too plain on this point to allow of any uncertainty or mistake. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession *for us*.” (Rom 8:33, 34). “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25). To make assurance doubly sure on this important matter, our great High Priest has expressly declared, “I pray not for the world” (Joh 17:9); thus, there must be a “world” for whom He did not die. For whom did He say He prays? “But for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine” (Joh 17:9).

There are those who suppose that the doctrine of particular redemption detracts from the goodness and grace of God and from the merits of Christ; and therefore, conclude it cannot be true. But this mistake becomes manifest if we examine the alternative view. Surely, it is not honouring the goodness and grace of God to affirm that the whole human race has nothing but a bare possibility of salvation; yea, a great probability of perishing, notwithstanding all that He has done to save them. Yet, that is exactly what is involved in the Arminian scheme, which avers that

Christ died to make the salvation of all men possible. That love and grace must indeed be greater, which *infallibly secures* the salvation of some, even though a minority than that which only provides a mere contingency for all. To us, it seems to indicate coldness and indifference for God to leave it a second time to the mutable will of man to secure his salvation, when man's will at its best estate ruined Adam and all his posterity.

If infinite love and goodness was shown to all men in giving Christ to die for them, would it not also give the Holy Spirit to all of them to effectually apply salvation—to subdue their lusts, overcome their enmity, make them willing to comply with the terms of the Gospel, and fix their adherence to it? The Scriptures set forth the love and kindness of God as one which makes not merely a bare offer of salvation to sinners, but as *actually saving* “by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Tit 3:4-5). The Word of Truth declares that the “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)” (Eph 2:4-5). How would God's love and mercy toward men appear if He gave Christ for all, only to make it possible that they might be saved, and then left by far the greater part of them ignorant of even the knowledge of salvation; and a large number of those who are acquainted with it, not made willing to embrace it in a day of His power?

But over against all that has been set forth in the above paragraphs, some will quote, “God was in Christ, reconciling the *world* unto himself” (2Co 5:19), and suppose that by so doing, they have completely overthrown the whole of what has been brought out. But surely, the candid reader can perceive for himself that what has been presented in the whole of the foregoing is not the theories of Calvinistic theologians, nor the subtle reasonings of metaphysicians, but rather the plain and simple teaching of Holy Writ itself. Thus, whatever 2 Corinthians 5:19 does or does not mean, it cannot annul all the other passages which have been appealed to. God's Word does not contradict itself, and it is positively sinful for any of us to pit those verses we like against those we dislike. If we humbly look to God for wisdom and patiently search His Word, it should be found that 2 Corinthians 5:19 can be interpreted in perfect harmony with all other Scripture; and that, without any wresting or straining; namely, by the same principles of exegesis, which we apply to all other passages.

Like every other portion of the Word, 2 Corinthians 5:19 needs *interpreting*, by which is meant, its terms explained. Perhaps some demur and say, ‘No explanation is necessary: The verse says what it means and means what it says.’ We fully agree that it means what it says, but are we sure that we *understand* what it “means”? The meaning of a verse is not obtainable from the sound of its words, but rather, from the sense of them; and that can only be ascertained from the way in which they are used, and by comparing other passages where the same subject is in view. If we take general and indefinite terms and understand them in an unlimited sense, then we soon land ourselves in the grossest absurdities. For instance, when the apostle said, “I am made *all things* to all men, that I might by *all means* save some” (1Co 9:22), he surely did not include duplicity, unfaithfulness, or the use of carnal means. When we are exhorted, “In *every* thing give thanks” (1Th 5:18), we must exclude a course of sinning, for God condemns the one who blesses himself in a wicked way (Deu 29:19).

Now, just as “all things” and “all means” in 1 Corinthians 9:22 are general expressions, which other passages (and considerations) require us to qualify, so the term “world” in 2 Corinthians 5:19 is an indefinite one; and its scope is to be determined by the tenor of the passage in which it occurs, and its meaning understood in a way harmonious with the teaching of Holy Writ. Any one who has taken the trouble to make a concordant study of the word “world” will have discovered

that it is a most ambiguous term, that it has widely different significations in Scripture; and therefore, no definition of its extent can be framed from the bare mention of the term itself. Sometimes the “world” has reference to the material world, and sometimes, to its inhabitants; it is used in both those senses in John 1:10. In some cases, it refers to only a very small part of its inhabitants, as in “shew thyself to the world” (Joh 7:4), and “the world is gone after him” (Joh 12:19), where the references are to only a portion of Judea, and *cannot* signify “all mankind.” Other passages will be noticed in the article which immediately follows, where further proof is given that the term “world” is far from being used with one uniform significance—and that it rarely means the whole human race. ❧

# October

## FAITH AS AN OVERCOMER

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1Jo 5:4). Four questions call for answer: Why “whatsoever” rather than “whosoever”? What is “the world” which is to be overcome? How does faith overcome it? What is the extent of its victory? The persons spoken of are the regenerate, and “whatsoever” is used because it takes in whatever may be their station or situation in this life. Whosoever is born of God, no matter what his rank or situation, “overcometh the world.” Regeneration is wrought equal and alike in all, and it produces the same fruits and effects in all, as it respects the essentials of godliness. It is not drawn forth into exercise and act in all alike, for there are particular duties to be performed and particular graces to be exercised—according to such times and places as are personal, but not universal—as, for example, one called to endure martyrdom. But “whatsoever [person] is born of God [no matter how distinguished from others by His providence] overcometh the world.”

The “world” is a term which is used in Scripture with many shades of meaning. Sometimes it means the earth; at others, the Church of Christ; at others, empty professors. When used in an ethical or religious sense, it denotes that system over which Satan presides as “prince” (Joh 14:30) or as “god” (2Co 4:4)—the supreme director of all false religions. Since there is nothing which the Devil hates so much as the Gospel, his main activities are engaged in the corrupting of it, in deceiving souls by plausible counterfeits. But that “faith” in Christ and His salvation—as results from a Scriptural knowledge of Him, imparted to the spiritual mind by the light and teaching of the Holy Spirit—sees through Satan’s imitations. Only by a believing reception of the Truth can error be overcome. One of the fruits of the new birth, then, is a faith which not only enables its possessor to overcome the sensual and sinful customs, and the carnal maxims and policies by which the profane world is regulated, but also the lying delusions and errors by which the professing world is fatally deceived.

1 John 5:4 opens with “For,” which intimates the reason why that to the regenerate the commandments of God “are not grievous” (1Jo 5:3); so in this verse, “the world” signifies whatever has the effect of rendering the Divine precepts distasteful to men. The “world” is in direct antagonism to God and His people, and we may detect its presence and identify it with certainty by perceiving the effect it produces on our hearts in *this* way: The world is that which ministers to the carnal nature—be it persons or things—and which tends to render obedience to God irksome

and unpleasant. Any one or any thing which draws your heart away from God and His authority is *for you* “the world.” Whatever lessens your estimate of Christ and heavenly things, and hinders practical piety is, *for you*, “the world”—be it the cares of this life, riches, receiving honour from men, social prestige and pomp, the fear of man lest you be dubbed “peculiar” or “fanatical” is, *for you*, “the world”—and either you overcome it, or it will fatally overcome you.

Now, the only thing which will or can “overcome the world” is a God-given, but self-exercised faith. And faith does so, first, by receiving into the heart God’s infallible *testimony* of the same. He declares that “the world” is a corrupt, evanescent, hostile thing, which shall yet be destroyed by Him. His Holy Word teaches that the world is “evil” (Gal 1:4), that “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1Jo 2:16), that “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1Jo 5:19) and shall yet be “burned up” (2Pe 3:10). As faith accepts God’s verdict of it, the mind is spiritually enlightened; and its possessor views it as a worthless, dangerous, and detestable thing. Second, *by obeying* the Divine commands concerning it, God has bidden us, “Be not conformed to this world” (Rom 12:2), “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1Jo 2:15), and warns us that “whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jam 4:4). By heeding the Divine precepts, its spell over the heart is broken.

Third, by occupying the soul with more glorious, soul-delighting and satisfying objects. We often hear and see 2 Corinthians 4:16 or 17 quoted, but rarely the explanatory words which follow. The daily renewing of the inner man and our afflictions working for us an eternal weight of glory are qualified by: “*While* we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2Co 4:18). The more the substance of the world to come engages the heart, the less hold will the shadows of this world have upon it. Thus, faith wrought in the saints of old: “For ye...took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance” (Heb 10:34). “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: *For* he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb 11:9-10).

Fourth, by drawing out the heart unto Christ. As it was, by fleeing to Him for refuge that the soul was first delivered from the power and thralldom of this world, so it is throughout the Christian life. The more we cultivate real communion with Christ, the less attraction will the baubles of this world have for us. The strength of temptation lies entirely in the bent of our affections, “for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mat 6:21). While Christ is beheld as “the chiefest among ten thousand” (Song 5:10) as “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16), the things which charm the poor worldling will repel us. Moreover, as faith beholds in the mirror of the Word, the “glory of the Lord,” the soul itself is “changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:18). The world gains the victory over the unregenerate by captivating their affections and capturing their wills; but the saint overcomes the world, because his affections are set upon Christ and his will yielded to Him.

What is the extent of the Christian’s victory? Through temporary weakness of faith, he may neglect the means of grace and fall into sin, yet his soul will be so wretched that he will return to Christ for cleansing and fresh supplies of grace. “Though the conflict of grace with corrupt nature, and the attractions and terrors of the world, is often very sharp, and though regenerate men may be baffled, cast down, and appear slain in the battle; yet the Divine life within him, being invigorated by the Holy Spirit, will again excite him to arise and renew the conflict with redoubled fortitude and resolution; so that at length, the victory will be his decidedly” (Thomas Scott, 1747-

1821). The life of faith is a “fight” (1Ti 6:12), a warfare in which there are no furloughs or “leaves,” and our success therein depends upon renouncing our own strength and counting solely on the sufficiency of Christ’s grace.

Here, then, we have a sure criterion by which we may determine our Christian progress or spiritual growth. If the things of this world have a decreasing power over me, then my faith is becoming stronger. If I am holding more lightly the things most prized by the ungodly, then I must be increasing in an experimental and soul-satisfying knowledge of Christ. If I be less cast down when some of the riches and comforts of this world be taken from me, then that is evidence they have less hold upon me. If I find the company of the most cultured and charming worldlings have a dampening effect upon my spirit, and I am happy when relieved of their presence, then my faith is overcoming the world. Yet the tense of the verb must not be overlooked: Faith which “overcometh the world” (1Jo 5:4)—not which “has overcome.” So far from being an immediate achievement, it is a lifelong business, a prolonged and continuous strife.

*“O may my heart be occupied,  
So wholly, Lord, with Thee,  
That with Thy beauty satisfied,  
I elsewhere none may see.”*

## THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

### 22. Ephesians 1:15-23

#### *Part 8*

For the past three months, we have been occupied with the exceeding greatness of God’s power in connection with His work of grace within His saints. Let us remind the reader that the passage we have been and are considering is not part of a formal statement of doctrine, but rather of a *prayer*. In it, the apostle made request that God’s people might know, first, what is the sublime excellency of that power; second, that it is “to us-ward”—for us, acting on our behalf, our grand recourse; third, that it is effectual, for we “believe” according to its invincible might. Fourth, that it operates unto and within us “according to” what it wrought in Christ when God raised Him from the dead: A might no less than *that* is carrying forward the “good work” in our souls to a triumphant completion. Now, it is of vast importance that Christians should more firmly and fully “know” and apprehend these things; otherwise, we should not here be taught (by Paul’s example) to make earnest supplication for the same. Ere passing on, let us briefly point out the *kind* of “knowledge” which is here in view.

There are three ways by which the believer may obtain a knowledge of spiritual things: By a diligent application of the mind to the teaching of Scripture, by the exercise of faith on what is revealed, by a personal experience of them in the soul and life. Obviously, it is not a mere mental

understanding of them that is here in view, for that may be obtained without having recourse to prayer. Nor do we think that this fourth petition had reference to an enlarged experience of the substance of it, and those who have followed *closely* our exposition of Ephesians 1:17-19 should neither be surprised, nor stumbled at our conclusion. When Paul expressed the longing, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection” (Phi 3:10), he was undoubtedly referring to a closer acquaintance with Christ and an increased measure of the virtue of His resurrection *in the effects* of it—that he might experience more deliverance from that spiritual deadness which the workings of unbelief produce even in the renewed. But this is not the particular aspect of Truth or of Christian experience which is before us in Ephesians 1:19-21.

In our comments upon “in the knowledge of him” (close of Eph 1:17), we sought to show the reference there is to a more intimate and influential knowledge of God in Christ, an increasing experimental acquaintance with Him, resulting in our delighting ourselves in Him and enjoying closer fellowship, leading to an open “acknowledgement” of Him by lip and life. Then we pointed out what “ye may know what is the hope of his calling” (Eph 1:18) means, that ye might perceive the grounds on which rest your realization of having received an effectual call from God—the clear evidences of the same—and thereby, be assured of your filial relation to Him. “And what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” we defined as: That ye may have a better apprehension of the object of your hope, and realise what a glory you have been called unto. “And what is the exceeding greatness of his power” (Eph 1:19) signifies that our hearts may be assured that, notwithstanding, all hindrances and obstacles, God will complete His good work in us and bring us safely into the promised inheritance.

Observe well, it is not “what is the exceeding greatness of his [God’s] power *in us*,” but which is “*to us—ward*” (Eph 1:19)—something objective for faith, and not subjective in experience. We, thus, concur with Thomas Goodwin, “For a man to take in and understand that he may glorify God and believe what a great power it was that raised up Christ from death to life, and that no less power works in believers when it produces faith, *that* is the ‘knowledge’ the apostle meant here.” That believers might realise from the effects produced in them by the presence and operations of a God-given faith, what a mighty power must have wrought in them, and will continue doing so. Not only to have evidence of what God’s power had wrought in them, but to perceive more clearly *the character of* that power itself and be trustfully occupied with the same. The power of God infinitely transcends all our feelings or experiences of it: It is the thing itself—and not merely the effects of it—that faith needs to be absorbed with.

The knowledge which faith conveys to the soul is all too little realised. Saving faith enables its possessor to conceive of things which are incomprehensible to mere human reason, imparting a knowledge to which scientists and philosophers are strangers: “Through faith we *understand* that the worlds were framed by the word [or mere fiat] of God” (Heb 11:3). Faith gives subsistence in the mind to the things hoped for and makes real things unseen. Faith engages the heart with objects which lie far beyond the reach of any feeling sense—such as, for example, the future resurrection of our bodies. Faith knows what reason cannot grasp and which feelings have nothing to do with. Man wants to know before he will believe, but faith has to be exercised before the things of God can be *known*—“which believe *and* know the truth” (1Ti 4:3). It is not we are assured, therefore believe; but “we believe and *are sure*” (Joh 6:69). If, then, we would experience more of God’s power, we must *know* more about it through the exercise of faith upon it. “If thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God” (Joh 11:40)—that is His unchanging order.



In the preceding article, we dwelt on the fact that the power exercised by God in His “work of grace” within us is “according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead” (Eph 1:19-20), but that does not complete the inspired statement: “*And set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power*” (Eph 1:20-21)—that also exemplifies the power of God to us-ward. Not only God’s raising of Christ, but His translation and exaltation of Him are also an essential part of the standard of His operations in and unto His saints. *This* is what God would have us *know*, and this is what our *faith* needs to be engaged with and exercised upon. That what God wrought in the Head, He will work in His members: That Christ is here represented as the pattern or standard of God’s operations unto Christians. The love which moved the Father to work so gloriously in His Son is the love which the Father has for His sons (Joh 17:23). The physical, legal, and moral power which was put forth unto Christ is and will be unto us. The wondrous works it performed on the Redeemer, He will duplicate in the redeemed.

“And set him [or ‘caused Him to sit’] at his own right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:20). This brings before us one of the grand articles of the Christian Faith: The death, the resurrection, and the exaltation of Christ from the three-fold foundation on which rest all our hopes. Each transcends the grasp of finite intelligence, yet they are “without contradiction” to those taught of God. The moment we begin to reason about them, we create difficulties and confuse ourselves. Only as we receive in simplicity what is Divinely revealed thereon will our faith “stand...in the power of God” (1Co 2:5). The exaltation of Christ is as profound a mystery to carnal wisdom as His death and resurrection, but the one is as clearly set forth as the other in the Word of Truth. If it be asked, “How was it possible for God the Son to be exalted?”—it is sufficient reply to inquire, “How was it possible for Him to be abased?” It is not God the Son simply and absolutely considered that we are here contemplating, but God the Son as He had taken human nature into personal and permanent union with Himself. It was the God-man who died, who was raised again, who was exalted.

The question of how it was possible for a Divine person to be exalted is best resolved by considering what it consisted of. So far as we can perceive, it included three things: The removing of that veil which had been thrown over the Divine glory of the Son of God by His incarnation, the elevation of human nature into Heaven, the Divine reward bestowed upon the Person of the Mediator for His blessed work. “His exaltation answered His humiliation: His death was answered by His resurrection, His going into the grave by His ascending into heaven, His laying in the tomb by His sitting at God’s right hand” (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677). So much for a general statement. Now let us proceed to amplify the same. None who accredit the declarations of Holy Writ will challenge the statement that in becoming incarnate, the glory of the Son was *veiled*—and it had to be, for no man can see God and live (Exo 33:20). “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phi 2:6-7).

The earthly life of our Saviour was one of profound abasement. From the manger to the tomb, it was a course of shame, suffering, and sorrow. During those thirty-three years, His Divine glory was eclipsed, though some rays of it broke through occasionally, manifesting to the attentive—and especially the spiritual—observers something of His essential and official dignity. Thus, the angelic hosts announcing His birth, the holiness of His life, the miracles He performed, the testimony of the Father from Heaven, His transfiguration on the mount—all proclaimed Him to be the Son of God, the promised Redeemer of Israel. Even the dark scene of His death was relieved by the phenomena which signified He was no ordinary sufferer—the darkness at mid-day,

the earthquake, the rending of the temple veil by an invisible Hand. Nevertheless, sorrow and shame was Christ's experience from infancy unto death. He was, for the most part, despised and rejected of men and had not where to lay His head. It was not until His resurrection that the ignominy of His crucifixion was removed, the hope of His disciples renewed, and that His prayer in John 17:5 began to receive answer.

Let it be clearly understood that at the incarnation, there was no diminishing of the Son's essential glory, for that admits of neither decrease nor increase; but it was obscured in its *manifestation* before the eyes of both angels and men. The Puritans were wont to illustrate this by a total eclipse of the sun. During that eclipse, the sun loses none of its native light and beauty, but remains the same in itself; but, because of heavy clouds or the moon coming between it and the earth, the sun *appears* dark unto us. Yet, as soon as the clouds are dispersed, or the sun is freed from the lunar interposition and resumes its normal place again unto us, its splendour is again revealed. So the Divine majesty of the Son was obscured when "the Word was made flesh" (Joh 1:14) for "the mighty God" took upon Him "the form of a *servant*" (Phi 2:7), entering the place of subserviency and submission, and became obedient unto death; yet, it was "Immanuel" (Isa 7:14; 8:8; Mat 1:23) who did so, and it was none other than "the Lord of glory" (1Co 2:8) who was crucified.

It was necessary that the Divine glory of Christ should, in large measure, have been concealed during "the days of his flesh" (Heb 5:7), for had it been manifested in its native brightness the sons of men had been utterly overwhelmed. But it was not meet that His Divine majesty should be obscured after He had accomplished His great work: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luk 24:26)—that "ought" governs and applies equally to both clauses. The sufferings of Christ were necessary for the expiating of our sins, and His exaltation was equally necessary for applying to us the merits of His death. The resurrection of Christ was a requisite step unto His elevation or entrance into glory, as the fetching of Joseph out of prison was ere he could be made next to Pharaoh—he could not be the governor of Egypt while he was a prisoner! Having accomplished the undertaking assigned Him by the Father and being brought forth from the tomb, there was no occasion for Him to prolong His stay on earth.

After establishing the faith of His apostles, His ambassadors by "many infallible proofs" (Act 1:3)—that He had triumphed over death and the grave, thereby vindicating His character from the aspersions of His enemies and demonstrating that He had "obtained eternal redemption" (Heb 9:12) for His people—it was expedient that He should be taken to Heaven, so that He might exercise His priestly office within the veil and send to them the Holy Spirit to carry forward His work on earth (Joh 16:5-7). In ascending to Heaven, Christ did not leave behind the veil of His flesh, but went there as still clothed in humanity, having taken the same into eternal union with His Divine person, and so He entered the Father's presence in our nature. Scripture is too plain for any mistake on this score. The risen Christ appeared to His disciples in a body of "flesh and bones" and ate food before them (Luk 24:39, 43), and after "being seen of them forty days... while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Act 1:3, 9); yet two angels assured them "this *same Jesus*, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have *seen* him go into heaven" (Act 1:11).

The change of place was followed immediately by a change of state. "As He descended to assume our nature, so He ascended to glorify our nature. By translating it to Heaven, assurance was given that it should never be laid aside, but be forever preserved in that marriage knot with the Divine" (Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680). The glorification of our Lord's humanity (a foreshadowing of which was vouchsafed upon the holy mount) is altogether beyond human

comprehension, but several details are given to help us form some conception of it. At His baptism, God anointed Him “with the Holy Ghost and with power” (Act 10:38), but upon His ascension, it is said of Him “thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness (the Spirit) *above* thy fellows” (Heb 1:9), which we believe was to capacitate His humanity for the offices which were henceforth to be performed in it. “It was so enlarged and spiritualized as to be a convenient habitation for the fulness of His Deity to reside in and perform all its proper operations: ‘For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily’ (Col 2:9): Not dwelling as if imprisoned, but to break forth in all its glories and graces; not formerly so dwelling in it, but now dwelleth” (S. Charnock).

The glorified humanity of Christ is luminous and radiant. “If the righteous are to ‘shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father’ (Mat 13:43), the Head of the righteous shines with a splendour above the sun, for He hath a glory upon His body, not only from the glory of His soul (as the saints shall have), but from the glory of His Divinity in conjunction with it. The glory of His Divinity redounds upon His humanity like a beam of the sun that conveys a dazzling brightness to a piece of crystal” (S. Charnock). What that dazzling brightness appears like may be gathered from the blinding effect which a momentary appearance of it had upon Saul of Tarsus: It is described as “There shone from heaven a great light round about” (Act 22:6) him, accompanied by the voice of “Jesus of Nazareth;” and we are told that for a while, he “could not see for the glory of that light” (Act 22:6-11). How necessary it was then for Him to be taken to Heaven: No mortal could have lived in the presence of a glorified Christ on earth. The Man of Sin will be destroyed by “the brightness of his coming” (2Th 2:8).

Third, the exaltation of Christ was the Divine reward bestowed upon the Mediator for His blessed work. It was meet that God should glorify Christ, because of the glory which redounded unto Him from His work. The Redeemer was but stating a fact when He said to the Father, “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (Joh 17:4). God received more glory from the completed work of Christ than He did from all the works of His own hands. His Law was magnified, His government vindicated, His arch-enemy overthrown, His image restored to His people; and therefore, it was fitting that He should crown the Mediator with glory and honour. Because He had poured out His soul unto death, God said, “*Therefore* will I divide Him a portion with the great” (Isa 53:12). Because He had loved righteousness and hated iniquity, “Therefore God anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows” (Psa 45:7). Because He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” (Phi 2:9). That was a mediatory glory which was conferred upon Him.

What that reward consists of, the closing verses of Ephesians 1 go on to inform us. It was the seating of Christ as the Mediator at God’s own right hand. It was the elevating of Him above all the celestial hierarchies. It was the putting of all things under His feet, so that the very forces of evil are now beneath His immediate control. It was the giving of Him to be Lord over all things, the actual Governor of the universe. It was that He might exercise universal dominion for the good of His Church. It was that He might fill all things. Thus, we see again the needs-be for translating Christ from earth to Heaven. Since all providence is administered from Heaven, and since all power (Mat 28:18) and all judgment (Joh 5:22) has been committed unto Christ, it was meet that He should sit upon a celestial throne. He who has been given the nations for His inheritance and the uttermost part of the earth for His possession could not suitably sway His scepter from some local corner of His empire. As Charnock pointed out, “It was not congruous that He who was made the Head of principalities and powers, the Governor of the angelic spirits, should have

a meaner dwelling than the greatest of His subjects and as low as the vilest of His vassals.” “And such a high priest *became* us—holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (Heb 7:26).

So, too, did the French Puritan Jean Daille (1594-1670) ably argue: “The wisdom of God hath disposed all causes in an order superior to those effects which depend upon them: The heavens are above the earth because the earth is influenced by them; and the sun above the earth because the earth is enlightened by it. It was no less necessary according to the order of God’s wisdom, that He who was made by God His Viceroy both in heaven and in earth, and had the management of all things conferred upon Him, should be lodged in a place superior to those things He governs, and from whence He might send forth His directions to all His subjects.” It was meet that as an earthly king should have an earthly palace, our great High Priest should dwell in a temple not made with hands. How could He fittingly bring the Church to a happy immortality, unless He was first in possession of that Heaven to which He was to conduct it? Since He is ordained the Judge of the whole world, must He not sit in the heavenly Court; and there, in majesty, execute that solemn charge?

As Mediator, Christ was and is both God and man—or better, the God-man—and it is as such, He has been exalted and rewarded. His Divine glory is no longer eclipsed, for instead of acting in the form of a servant, He now reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords. His humanity has been elevated to Heaven and glorified with a glory that outshines every other creature. Though He is still clothed with flesh, yet His Divine glory is not now veiled as it once was, His humanity is now filled with all the Divine perfections of which a created nature is possibly capable. It is not deified, but glorified. “It is not made omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, but is exalted in a fulness of all Divine perfections and infinitely above the glory of angels and men. For the *substance* of this glory of the human nature of Christ, believers shall be made partakers of it, for when we shall see Him as He is, ‘we shall be like him’ (1Jo 3:2); but as unto the degrees and *measure* of it, His glory is above all that we can be made partakers of” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

There is very little poetry in the natural make-up of this writer, but he confesses that since his conversion, the following lines have strongly appealed to him, and we close with them because they express more sublimely than any language he can command and sum up most succinctly what he has laboured hard to set before the reader:—

*“The head that once was crowned with thorns  
Is crowned with glory now:  
A royal diadem adorns  
The mighty Victor’s brow.  
The highest seat that Heaven affords  
Is His by sovereign right:  
The King of kings and Lord of lords  
He sits enthroned in light.”*

# THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

## 2. His Earlier Days

Joshua was born in the land of Egypt, and with the sole exception of Caleb, he was the only adult Israelite in the great exodus who survived the forty years wanderings in the wilderness and actually entered Canaan. He is mentioned for the first time in Exodus 17:9, where he is introduced to our notice most abruptly, nothing being told us there of his parentage, early history, or his piety. It was on the occasion when Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim: “And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek.” From that brief statement, we gather that our hero had already attracted the notice of Moses, gained his confidence; and was, therefore, a man of valour and competent to be captain over others. The following verse also represents him in a favourable light: “So Joshua did as Moses had said to him” (Exo 17:10). He made no demure, objected not to receive orders from his superior, but obediently complied with his instructions. “And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword” (Exo 17:13)—thus, success attended his efforts.

What we have briefly glanced at above supplies a most striking illustration of the law of *first mention*. The initial occurrence of anything in Scripture invariable supplies the key to the later ones, forecasting by means of a broad outline its subsequent usage. In other words, the first time a subject or object, a person or thing, is brought before us in God’s Word, what is there said of him or it, virtually supplies a definition of its meaning—or at least gives us the principal clue to the significance of its later mentionings. Thus it is here. The very first time Joshua is brought to our notice, it is as a successful warrior—and note carefully, not slaying innocent people, but in fighting the enemies of the Lord. How this brief allusion in Exodus 17 foreshadowed the great work which lay before him! The immediate sequel confirms this: “And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of [not Israel, but] *Joshua*: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven” (Exo 17:14)—a plain hint of his future work, as an appointed instrument to execute the Divine vengeance upon His foes.

Personally, we believe there is a definite reference unto Joshua in Exodus 23:20-23, though his name be not specifically mentioned. Those verses contain a Divine prophecy and promise unto Israel, and as is so often the case with similar passages, there is, we conceive, a *double* allusion. “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared” (Exo 23:20). No doubt the primary reference is to Christ as the Angel of the Covenant, yet subordinately it points, we think, unto Joshua as God’s “messenger” or “angel”—for he was the one who actually brought Israel into the heritage which God had prepared for them. So, too, it seems clear that there is a double allusion in “my name is in him” (Exo 23:21): When the Angel of the covenant became incarnate, it was said, “They shall call his name Emmanuel” (Mat 1:23), and when our hero’s name was changed from “Oshea” to “Jehoshua” (Nu

13:16), the Divine name was incorporated into his! Israel were ordered to “obey his voice” (Exo 23:21-22); and in Joshua 1:16, they affirmed to him, “All that thou commandest us we will do”!

The next reference to him is found in Exodus 24:13, when in response to Jehovah’s bidding, Moses went up unto Him in the mount that he might receive from Him the tables of the Law, we are told that “Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God” (Exo 24:13). From this reference, we learn the peculiar and honoured position which he occupied even at this early stage in his career: He was the “minister” or assistant of Moses, the personal attendant of that eminent man of God. But there is more in it than that: He was subservient to Moses, yet he was also to complement his work. Moses brought Israel out of Egypt, but Joshua would bring them into Canaan. That the latter was not disconnected from the former is clear from the opening verses of his book, for not only is Joshua there again designated “Moses’ minister” (Jos 1:1), but when the Lord gave to him his great commission, He expressly bade him “to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee” (Jos 1:7). So in the antitype: Christ was “made under the law” (Gal 4:4).

When Moses left the camp to go unto Jehovah into the mount, his minister Joshua accompanied him, though evidently, only a part of the ascent—the attendant being left at some lower level, as Moses drew near unto the Lord. In what follows, we are furnished with a valuable sidelight on our hero’s character. Joshua was left alone for “forty days and forty nights” (Exo 24:18)! What a testing of his faith, his patience, and his fidelity was that! His response to that severe test shines out the more blessedly when contrasted from the conduct of Aaron in the camp. Exodus 25 to 31 gives a record of the instructions which Moses received, while the opening verses of 32 show us what transpired in the camp. “And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses...we wot not what is become of him” (Exo 32:1). Apparently, Aaron shared their fears that they would see Moses no more, for he yielded to their solicitation.

Now, in blessed contrast from the unbelief and impatience of the people and of Aaron, Joshua trustfully and perseveringly awaited the return of his master. Thus was he tried and proved, manifested to be “a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use” (2Ti 2:21) before the grand task of conducting Israel into Canaan was assigned unto him. Proof that Joshua had remained in the mount during those forty days and nights is supplied by Exodus 32:15-18—for there, we are informed: “And Moses turned, and went down from the mount...And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted [in their idolatrous and carnal revelry: see verse 6]...he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear”—observe that though puzzled by what he heard, yet Joshua placed a favourable construction upon it, not supposing the worst.

When Moses drew nigh unto the camp and beheld the idolatrous and lascivious scene spread before him, he was filled with righteous indignation, and took the golden calf, burnt it in the fire, ground it to powder, strewed it upon the water and made the children of Israel drink. Under his order, the Levites slew about three thousand men and the Lord “plagued the people” (Exo 32:35). After they had been severely chastened and humbled, Moses “took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp” (Exo 33:7). Then as he entered into the tabernacle, the Cloudy Pillar descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. Later, “he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle” (Exo 33:11). That is indeed a remarkable statement, yet too brief to warrant infer-

ences. But it at least shows the distinguished favour bestowed upon the honoured servant of Moses, that he—rather than Aaron—was here left in charge of the sacred tent of meeting; whether he was inside it when Jehovah stood at its door, we cannot say.

Another brief mention is made of Joshua in Numbers 11. On the occasion when Moses gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people and set them round about the tabernacle, the Lord came down in a cloud and spake unto him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and gave unto the seventy elders, so that “they prophesied, and did not cease” (Num 11:25). Two others of the elders had, for some reason, remained in the camp, yet the Spirit now rested upon them, so that they, too, “prophesied” even in the camp. Evidently deeming this irregular, a young man ran and told Moses of the unusual occurrence: “And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them” (Num 11:28). That, too, reveals his character: He did not take it upon himself to rebuke the elders, nor did he request Moses to slay them. It was zeal for his master that promoted his petition, as Moses’ reply clearly indicates: “Enviest thou for my sake?” (Num 11:29). There was no jealousy or self seeking here on the part of Joshua, but only a concern for the honour of the one he served.

We turn now to that passage which is probably the most familiar to the reader wherein our hero figures. When the Lord gave order to Moses that he send twelve men to “search the land of Canaan” (Num 13:2), a ruler from each tribe, Oshua was the one selected from the tribe of Ephraim. And it was on this occasion that his name was changed to “Jehoshua” (Num 13:16), or in its abbreviated form “Joshua,” so that he was one of the persons mentioned in Scripture—all of them of eminence—whose name was changed. “Oshua” means “salvation;” and “Jehoshua” means “he by whom Jehovah will save.” We need hardly add that, through the Greek, Joshua is precisely the same as “Jesus”—see Acts 7:45, Hebrews 4:8. When the twelve spies returned to Moses and made report of what they had seen, though they acknowledged the land was one that flowed with milk and honey, yet its inhabitants appeared to them so formidable and their cities so powerful they declared, “We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we” (Num 13:31). The immediate sequel was most solemn and sad.

Though Caleb boldly declared, “Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it” (Num 13:30), his fellow-spies persisted in their “evil report” and the whole congregation wept, murmured against Moses and Aaron, lamented that they had ever started out on their journey and said one to another, “Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt...Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly...And Joshua...and Caleb...rent their clothes” (Num 14:4-6). Then it was that our hero (and his faithful companion) evinced his spiritual character and caliber, for we are told that they said unto the whole company of Israel: “The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land...If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us...Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not” (Num 14:7-9). Thus, we see their confidence in God and their courage, for as the next verse shows, they took their lives into their hands in so remonstrating with the people.

It was there that the wayward and stiff-necked generation of Israel filled up the measure of their sin. It was then that Jehovah swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest (Psa 95:11, Heb 3:18). They had said: “Would God we had died in this wilderness!” (Num 14:2), and now He took them at their word, declaring, “Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I

sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised” (Num 14:29-31). The ten spies who brought an evil report upon the land “died by the plague before the LORD...But Joshua...and Caleb...lived” (Num 14:37-38), being the only two adults who came out of Egypt which entered into Canaan.

In Numbers 27, we have an account of the ordination of Joshua to office as the future leader of Israel. “And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; [the symbol of identification], and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight [as proof of his induction into office]. And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient [to him]. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord: at his [Joshua’s] word shall they go out and at his word shall they come in, he and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. And Moses did as the Lord commanded him” (Num 27:18-22). Thus, to all who feared the Lord and had respect unto His servant Moses, none could henceforth doubt that Joshua was the man appointed to lead Israel after the removal of Moses from this scene.

“Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt...shall see the land... Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the LORD” (Num 32:11-12). That is another statement which throws light upon the spiritual character and caliber of Joshua. When Jehovah declared he had “wholly followed” Him, He did not signify he had lived a sinless life, but that he had trod the path of obedience, faithfully performed his duty, and sincerely aimed at the glory of God in it. He had stood firm and fearless in a day of prevailing unbelief and general apostasy. In passing, it may be pointed out, at a later date, Caleb did not hesitate to affirm he *had* “wholly followed the LORD” (Jos 14:6-8), upon which Matthew Henry (1662-1714) rightly said that “since he had obtained this testimony from God Himself, it was not vain glorious in him to speak of it, any more than it is for those who had God’s Spirit witnessing with their spirit they are the children of God, to humbly and thankfully tell others, for their encouragement, what God has done for their souls.”

“These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you: Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun” (Num 34:17): Here we learn that our hero, under the guidance of the high priest (Jos 14:1), was to apportion the inheritance among the tribes. “But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it” (Deu 1:38). That was surely necessary, for well might he be discouraged after seeing Moses himself fall under the weight of leadership. A part of the encouragement which Moses gave to his successor is recorded in Deuteronomy 3:21: “I commanded Joshua at that time [namely, when reviewing the overthrow of the powerful monarchs of Bashan and Og], Thine eyes have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto these two kings: so shall the LORD do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest,” which was as though Moses reminded Joshua, when the Lord begins a work, He finishes it—His overthrow of those kings was an *earnest* of the destruction of all who opposed His people. It is blessed to remember that those whom God calls into His service, He also grants “encouragement” along the way. So we have always found it.

“And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed” (Deu 31:7-8). Here was further “encouragement” for Joshua and the final charge,



which he received from his predecessor. That “charge” was a wise mingling of precept and promise, of calling unto the discharge of duty and of informing him where his strength lay for the performance thereof. It is blessed to see that the apostle did not hesitate to apply unto all the people of God (Heb 13:5) this promise made specifically to Joshua: “He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee” (Deu 31:6)—something which should be carefully noted by those who have so much to say about “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2Ti 2:15)!

“And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses” (Deu 34:9). This is the final reference to Joshua in the Pentateuch, occurring right after the account of the death and burial of Moses. God may remove His workmen, but He ceases not to carry forward His work. When one of His servants be removed, He raises up another to take his place—not always to *fill* his place, for the work may already be completed (for the time being, at any rate) in that particular section of His vineyard; and if so, the new man may be called upon to break soil elsewhere. This was really the case here. Moses was raised up specifically to bring Israel out of the house of bondage—a stupendous and difficult task—and by Divine enablement, he accomplished it. He was Israel’s leader throughout their wilderness journeys, but now they were over. An entirely new venture lay before the people of God: Their entrance into and taking possession of their heritage, and that called for a new leader.

In the preceding paragraphs, we have seen how the new leader of Israel had been duly appointed by God (not chosen by the people!), and then publicly ordained or inducted into his office, for God requires all things—especially in connection with His immediate service—to be done “decently and in order” (1Co 14:40). We have seen, too, something of the qualifications which Joshua possessed for the work assigned him, for when God calls a man to a work, He endows him suitably for the same, equipping him both naturally and spiritually. Pharaoh might require the Hebrews to make bricks without supplying them with straw, but not so the Lord! Joshua was indwelt by the Spirit (Num 27:18), possessed of unusual faith, patience and courage, and “full of the spirit of wisdom” (Deu 34:9)—that being as necessary as any of the others. Finally, we are told above, “and the children of Israel hearkened unto him,” for God ever works at both ends of the line: When He fits a man to minister, He also prepares a people for him to minister unto.

## THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

### 8b. Its Scope

Some times the “world” signifies *the Gentiles* in general, in contrast from the Jews in particular, as in “If the fall of them [unbelieving Israel] be the riches of the world” (Rom 11:12), which is explained in the next clause: “And the diminishing of them [Jews] the riches of the Gentiles;” and “if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world” (Rom 11:12, 15). In other places, the “world” refers to the *non-elect*, as in “Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot

receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him” (Joh 14:17), and “I pray not for the world” (Joh 17:9). In Luke 2:1, it is the *profane* world that is in view: “That there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed” (Luk 2:1)—yet, even that included only those parts of the earth which were subject to the Romans; whereas in John 15:18-25, it is the *professing* world—it was the religious sections of Judaism Christ alluded to when He said, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you” (Joh 15:18).

In Romans 4:13, the “world” signifies *the Church*, for when Abram is there said to be “the heir of the world” (Rom 4:13), it manifestly expresses the same ideas as when he is termed, “the father of all them that believe” and “the father of many nations” (Rom 4:11, 18). When Christ said of Himself “For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and *giveth* [not merely “offereth”] life unto the world” (Joh 6:33), He *must* have meant His Church, for all who are not members of it remain dead in sins until the end of their careers. We have just as much right to cite the words, “the world knew him not” (Joh 1:10), as a proof that not a single member of Adam’s race knew Christ—when aged Simeon *did* (Luk 2:25-30)—as we have to argue that “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Joh 1:29) means the sin of all mankind. When it is said, “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1Jo 5:19), it cannot mean every one alive on earth, for all the saints are excluded; and “all the world wondered after the beast” (Rev 13:3), except the faithful remnant!

It should be quite clear to any candid and careful reader that, taken by itself, the word “world” in 2 Corinthians 5:19 supplies no proof and furnishes nothing decisive in enabling us to determine the scope or extent of reconciliation, for that term is an indefinite and general one: More so than usual here, for in the Greek, there is no definite article—literally, “reconciling world unto himself” (2Co 5:19). It should also be obvious that this verse calls for a careful and detailed exposition—pointing out its relation to what precedes and its connection with what follows, seeking also to define each separate expression in it. To the best of our ability, we will now set ourselves to this task; and in so doing, seek to show that everything in it and the setting in which it is found *obliges us* to regard the “world” reconciled to God as connoting His Church—and not the entire human family.

Under our next main division (D.V.)—when we shall deal with *our reception* of the Reconciliation, or our response to the Gospel call, “Be ye reconciled to God” (2Co 5:20)—we hope to enter more fully into the scope of the whole context (from verse 11 onwards). Suffice it now to begin at verse 17. Nor shall we even attempt an exposition of that much-misunderstood verse; rather, we will limit ourselves to its central truth—namely, that of regeneration. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2Co 5:17)—literally, “a new creation.” That is, if any one be favoured to be “in Christ”—first, by federal constitution or legal representation—then it will (must) sooner or later follow that he is “in Christ;” second, by vital union or regeneration. Whatever be meant by “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2Co 5:17), no explanation of those words can possibly be right if it clashes with Romans 7:21-25 and Galatians 5:17—for Scripture is perfectly harmonious.

“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ” (2Co 5:18). When expounding the “all things are of God,” Charles Hodge (1797-1878) rightly pointed out that, “this is *not* spoken of the universe as proceeding from God as its Author, nor does it refer to the providential agency of God by which all events are controlled. The meaning is: ‘But all is of God,’ i.e., the entire change of which he had been speaking. The new creation experienced by those in Christ is ‘out of God’ (Greek), proceeding from Him as its efficient cause. It is *His* work.” Proof that it *is* His work and that “God” here refers to the Father in His official character

appears in what immediately follows: “Who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.” But that last clause does something more than supply evidence that the glorious work of regeneration issues from the Father as its originating source: It also explains to us the meritorious cause by which the new creation is brought into existence—regeneration is the effect of reconciliation!

The connection then between verses 17 and 18 is plain: Having spoken of the new creation in the former, the apostle proceeded to point out the legal foundation on which that new creation rests—namely, God’s having been pacified by the work of His Son, and that work having purchased rich blessings for His people. It is not simply as our Maker, but as a reconciled God, that He quickens His people into newness of life. On verses 17-18, the eminent English Puritan, Stephen Charnock, declared: “God is first the God of peace before He be the God of sanctification: ‘And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly’ (1Th 5:23). The destruction of the enmity of our nature (against Him) was founded upon the removing the enmity in God (against us). There had been no sanctification of our natures had there not been a reconciliation of our persons.” Thus, there had been no regenerating of us by God, until He had been reconciled to us. “All the powerful effects and operations of the Gospel in the hearts of men are from God *as* reconciled by Christ, not from God as Creator” (S. Charnock).

What has just been before us in the immediate context of 2 Corinthians 5:19 provides a clear index to the scope of reconciliation, being of equal extent with the new creation! It may be stated either way: The ones whom God regenerates are those to whom He has been reconciled; all to whom He was reconciled, in due course, He makes new creatures. If the one be universal, the other is; if the one be limited, the other must be. “And hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation” (2Co 5:18): The “us” refers first to the apostles; and second, to all whom God has specially called and qualified to act as His heralds. “The ministry of reconciliation” is but another name for the proclamation of the Gospel, except that it is more specific, having in view that particular aspect of the Gospel which is concerned with the doctrine of reconciliation. Exactly what that consists of in its essential elements is stated in verses 19-21. First, “To wit [or ‘namely’] that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (2Co 5:19).

The relation of verse 19 to verse 18 is also quite clear. In the former, the apostle said, “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ” (2Co 5:18)—which signifies (as shown in an earlier article) has turned away His wrath from His fallen people and received them into His favour by virtue of the mediation of His Son. But here, he informs us that transaction was not one which began of late to be done by Him, but rather had engaged His mind and will in His eternal counsels. “God *was* in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (2Co 5:19). As the Church was in Christ from everlasting, as her Surety and Head, so God was in Him from everlasting as His ambassador, making peace for those who had revolted against Him. The reference is not to a present process by which God is little by little winning the world back into allegiance with Himself, but to something actually accomplished. God is already propitiated. “God in Christ” (Gal 3:17) signifies the *covenant*-God of His people, for out of Christ “our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29). “God *was* in Christ” (2Co 5:19) speaks, then, in the language of the “everlasting covenant” (Heb 13:20); and that embraced none but the elect.

Definite light is thrown upon what “world” it was unto which God is reconciled by ascertaining the force of that clause: “God was in Christ, reconciling” it (2Co 5:19). In His ancient designs, He formed the purpose of reconciliation in, by, and through the Mediator. The identical idea is conveyed whether it be said we are “in Christ” or God was “in Christ acting toward us”—namely, that He designed to show favour unto us as a covenant God, for God never was and never will be “in Christ” toward any other persons but His Church. Redemption was not the work

of the Son only: The Father appointed the Mediator, received the stipulated price from Him, and imputes the full value of it to His believing people. The Saviour distinctly affirmed, “the Father is in me” (Joh 10:38). As the elect were in Christ mystically, federally, and legally, the Father was in Him authoritatively and efficiently as His Plenipotentiary. Yet, the ultimate reference is to God’s being in Christ immanently by His eternal decree.

“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2Co 5:19). It is in that last clause we have the most decisive proof of all that the “world” there cannot possibly signify mankind in general, for most certainly God *does impute* their trespasses unto all who are without Christ. The great problem which confronted the Divine government was how sin could be remitted without righteousness being compromised; but since God has received full satisfaction to His broken law, He has laid aside His official wrath and justice, which can no longer clamour for punishment. The pardon of sin is one of the main branches and fruits of reconciliation. Not to impute sin is to forgive it: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity” (Psa 32:1-2). Here, then, is the “world” to which God is reconciled—the pardoned, the justified, the elect (Rom 8:33).

Not only do the verses preceding, not only do all the terms used in 2 Corinthians 5:19 oblige us to understand the “world” there as an indefinite term—including all “children of God that were scattered abroad” (Joh 11:52)—but the closing words of the passage compel us to take the same view. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21). Here we learn why God does not impute their trespasses unto His believing people: It is because they were transferred and imputed to their Surety; and accordingly, vengeance was executed upon Him. Here, too, we learn that not only is there no charge laid to the account of God’s elect, but that, positively, they are constituted the righteousness of God in Christ—all the merits of His obedience being charged unto them. Thus, the “reconciled us” of verse 18, the “their” of verse 19, and the “us” and “we” of verse 21 all refer to the same company—and that company is one and the same as “world” in verse 19.

If it be inquired, since it is the Church—the mystical body of Christ—that is in view in 2 Corinthians 5:19, why did the Holy Spirit designate her by the term “world”? First, to show it was not the fallen angels: No mediator, nor Reconciler was provided for them. Second, to show that the love of God in Christ was not restricted unto the Jews (as they supposed), but included also a people to be taken “out of them a people [Gentiles] for his name” (Act 15:14). Third, to represent the freeness of God’s grace. “The whole world lieth in wickedness” (1Jo 5:19). “In themselves God’s elect differ nothing from the rest of the world till grace prevent them: They were as bad as any in the world, of the same race as cursed mankind” (T. Manton). Fourth, “to awaken all that are concerned to look after their privilege, which is come to all nations. The offer is made indifferently to all sorts of persons where the Gospel cometh, and this grace is effectually applied to all the elect of all nations” (T. Manton).

None should be stumbled by a particular redemption which pertains only to the Church of God being expressed in such extended terms as “the world” and “all men” in the N.T. The employment of such language is fully accounted for by the change of dispensation, from the local religion of Judaism to the international reach of Christianity. The Mosaic economy was entirely exclusive, whereas that of the Gospel is inclusive. In anticipation of that, we should note the indefinite language used by the Prophets when predicting the blessings of Messiah, as extending beyond Judea and bestowed indiscriminately. “The desire of *all* nations shall come” (Hag 2:7). “Yea, *all* kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him” (Psa 72:11). “O thou that hearest prayer,

unto thee shall *all flesh* come” (Psa 65:2). “I will pour out my spirit upon *all flesh*” (Joel 2:28)—interpreted by Peter as accomplished on the day of Pentecost (Act 2:16)! Such language was as universal as any employed by Christ and His apostles, yet, it certainly did *not* signify that every individual the earth over would become a subject of Christ’s kingdom and a partaker of His saving benefits.

There are other general terms used in the New Testament besides “world,” which cannot be taken in an unlimited sense. For example, “every man.” We read of one to whom the Lord gave sight that he “saw *every* man clearly” (Mar 8:25). The kingdom of God was preached “and *every* man presseth into it” (Luk 16:16). The early Christians sold their possessions and goods “and parted them to all men, as every man had need” (Act 2:45). “God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Rom 12:3, but see 2Th 3:2!) “Then shall *every man* have praise of God” (1Co 4:5). Other passages could be quoted where “every man” cannot be understood without qualification. “The Gentiles” is another general expression which is restricted by what is predicated of them in each case. For instance, “on *the Gentiles* also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost (Act 10:45). And again, “God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Act 11:18). “Declaring the conversion of the Gentiles” (Act 15:3). “The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it” (Act 28:28). Let those who say of John 3:16 or 2 Corinthians 5:19, “We keep by the plain declaration of the passage” apply the same principle to the verses quoted in this paragraph!

“And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col 1:20). These words bring before us another aspect of our theme, and one which has been generally overlooked by writers on this subject. By means of His mediatory work, Christ has not only effected a reconciliation between God and the whole election of grace, but He has also closed the breach which existed between the celestial hosts and the Church. At the creation of the world, the holy angels sang together and even shouted for joy (Job 38:7), “because though it was not made for them, but for the children of men, and though it would increase their work and service, yet they knew that the eternal Wisdom and Word whom they were to worship (Heb 1:6), would ‘rejoice in the habitable parts of the earth’ and that a large part of ‘His delight would be with the sons of men’: Proverbs 8:31” (M. Henry). Likewise, when the grand foundations of the new creation was laid, we read of “the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luk 2:13-14).

When God made the earth and placed man therein, the angels rejoiced in the work of their Creator’s hands; and so far from being jealous at the appearing of a further order of beings, they took delight therein. But upon man’s revolt from his Maker and Lord, they would be filled with disgust and holy indignation. The sin of Adam (and of the race in him) not only alienated man from God, but also from the holy ones on high. No sooner did our first parents fall from their original estate—followed by their expulsion from Paradise—than God had employed the holy angels as the executors of His vengeance against them: Represented by the cherubim with the flaming sword (for He “maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire”—Heb 1:7) to keep them out of Eden and from the tree of life (Gen 3:24). Yet now, they are “all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14). And, my reader, it is the blood of the cross which has brought about that blessed change: The atonement of Christ has made the celestial hosts the friends and helpers of His people.

It was not that “the things in heaven” were alienated from God, but that Adam’s fall introduced disruption into the universe, so that the inhabitants of Heaven were alienated from those on

earth; but Christ has restored perfect concord again. His sacrifice has repaired the breach between the elect and the holy angels; He has restored the broken harmony of the universe. As one has well pointed out, “If Paul could address the Corinthians concerning one of their excluded members, who had been brought to repentance, ‘To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also’ (2Co 2:10), much more would the friends of righteousness (the angels) say in their addresses to the great Supreme concerning an excluded member from the moral system, ‘to whom *Thou* forgivest anything, we also.’” Hence, we find “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luk 15:10)—for another has been joined to their company as worshippers of the Most High.

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

### 10. Its Decline

First, *its nature*. That which we are here to be concerned with is what some writers term “backsliding”—a lucid and expressive word that is not employed so often as it should be or once was. Like most other theological terms, this one has been made the occasion of not a little controversy. Some insist that it ought not be applied unto a Christian since the expression occurs nowhere in the New Testament. But that is childish: It is not the mere word, but the thing itself which matters. When Peter followed his Master “afar off,” warmed himself at the enemy’s fire, and denied Him with oaths, surely he was in a backslidden state—yet, if the reader prefers to substitute some other adjective, we have no objection. Others have argued that it is impossible for a Christian *to* backslide, saying that the “flesh” in him is never reconciled to God and that the “spirit” never departs from Him. But that is mere trifling: It is not a nature, but the *person* who backslides, as it is the person who acts—believes or sins.

It is not because the word “backslide” is a controversial one that we have preferred “decline”; but because the former is applied in Scripture to the unregenerate, as well as the regenerate—to professors as such, and here we are confining our attention unto the case of a child of God whose spirituality diminishes, whose progress is retarded. There are, of course, degrees in backsliding—for we read of “the backslider in heart” (Pro 14:14), as well as those who are such openly in their ways and walk. Yet, to the great majority of the Lord’s people, a “backslider” probably connotes one who has wandered a long way from God, and whom his brethren are obliged to sorrowfully “stand in doubt of” (Gal 4:20). As we do not propose to restrict ourselves unto such extreme cases—but rather to cover a much wider field—we deemed it best to select a different term, and one which seems better suited to the subject of spiritual growth.

By “spiritual decline,” we mean the waning of vital godliness, the soul’s communion with its Beloved becoming less intimate and regular. If the Christian’s affections cool, he will delight

himself less in the Lord, and there will be a languishing of his graces. Hence, spiritual decline consists of a weakening of faith, a cooling of love, a lessening of zeal, an abatement of that whole-hearted devotedness to Christ, which marks the healthy saint. The perfections of the Redeemer are meditated upon with less frequency, the quest of personal holiness is pursued with less ardour, sin is less feared, loathed and resisted. “Thou hast left thy first love” (Rev 2:4) describes the case of one who is in a spiritual decline. When that be the case, the soul has lost its keen relish for the things of God, there is much less pleasure in the performance of duty, the conscience is no longer tender, and the grace of repentance is sluggish. Consequently, there is a diminishing of peace and joy in the soul, disquietude, and discontent more and more displacing them.

When the soul loses its relish for the things of God, there will be less diligence in the quest of them. The means of grace—though not totally neglected—are used with more formality and with less delight and profit. The Scriptures are then read more from a sense of duty than with a real hunger to feed on them. The Throne of Grace is approached more to satisfy conscience than from a deep longing to have fellowship with its Occupant. As the heart is less occupied with Christ, the mind will become increasingly engaged with the things of this world. As the conscience becomes less tender, a spirit of compromise is yielded to; and instead of watchfulness and strictness, there will be carelessness and laxity. As love for Christ cools, obedience to Him becomes difficult, and there is more backwardness unto good works. As we fail to use the grace already received, corruptions gain in the ascendancy. Instead of being strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, we find ourselves weak and unable to withstand the assaults of Satan.

A born-again Christian will never sink into a state of unregeneracy—though his case may become such—that neither himself, nor spiritual onlookers, are warranted in regarding him as a regenerate person. Grace in the Christian’s heart will never become extinct; yet, he may greatly decline with respect to the health, strength, and exercise of that grace—and that, from various causes. The Christian may suffer a suspension of the Divine influences unto him. Not totally so—for there is ever such a working of God as maintains the being of the spiritual principle of grace (or “new nature”) in the saint—yet he does not at all times enjoy the enlivening operations of the blessed Spirit on that principle, and its activities are then interrupted for a season; and in consequence, he becomes less conversant with spiritual objects, his graces languish, his fruitfulness declines, and his inward comforts abate. The flesh takes full advantage of this and acts with great violence; and in consequence, the Christian is made most miserable and wretched in himself.

If it be asked, “Why does God withdraw the gracious operations of His Spirit from His people, or suspend His comforting influences, which are so necessary for their walking in Him?”—the answer may be made both from the Divine side of things and the human. God may do this in *a sovereign way*, without any cause in the manner of their behaviour toward Himself. As He gives five talents to one, and only two to another—according as seems good in His sight—so He varies the measure of grace bestowed on one and another of His people as best pleases Himself. Should any one be inclined to murmur against this, then let him pay attention to this silencer: “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?” (Mat 20:15). God is supreme, independent, free, and distributes His bounties as He chooses—both in nature, in providence, and in grace. God takes counsel with none, is influenced by none, but “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph 1:11). As such, He is to be meekly and cheerfully submitted unto.

But it is not only from acting according to His own imperial right that God withdraws from His people the vitalizing and comforting influences of His Spirit. He does so also that He may

give them a better knowledge of themselves and *teach them* more fully their entire dependency upon Himself. By so acting, God gives His children to discover for themselves the strength of their corruptions and the weakness of their grace. Though saved from the love, guilt, and dominion of sin, they have not yet been delivered from its power of presence. Though a holy and spiritual nature has been communicated to them; yet, that nature is but a creature—weak and dependent—and can only be sustained by its Author. That new nature has no inherent strength or power of its own: It only acts as it is acted upon by the Holy Spirit. “In the LORD have I righteousness and strength” (Isa 45:24). Every believer is convinced of the former; but usually, it is only after many a humiliating experience that he learns his strength is not in himself, but in the Lord.

It is rather in a way of *chastisement* that—in the great majority of instances—God withholds from His people the gracious operations of the Spirit; and that brings us to the human side of things, wherein *our* responsibility is involved. If the saint becomes lax in his use of the appointed means of grace—which are so many channels through which the influences of the Spirit customarily flow—then he will necessarily be the loser, and the fault is entirely his own. Or if the Christian trifles with temptations and experiences a sad fall, then the Spirit is grieved, and His comforting operations are withheld as a solemn rebuke. Though God still loves his person, He will let him know that He hates his sins; and though He will not deal with him as an incensed Judge, yet He will discipline him as an offended Father—and it may be long before he is again restored to the freedom and familiarity that he formerly enjoyed with Him. See Isaiah 59:2, Jeremiah 5:25, Haggai 1:9-10.

Though God draws not His sword against His erring saints, yet He uses the rod upon them. “If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips” (Psa 89:30-34). *Then* it is our wisdom to “hear...the rod” (Mic 6:9), to humble ourselves beneath His mighty hand (1Pe 5:6), and forsake our folly (Psa 85:8). If we do not duly repent and amend our ways, still heavier chastisements will be our portion; but “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jo 1:9). When the Spirit’s influences are withheld from the Christian, it is always the safest course for him to conclude he has displeased the Lord and to cry, “Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me” (Job 10:2).

Second, *its causes*. The root cause is failure to mortify indwelling sin, called “the flesh” in Galatians 5:17, which makes constant opposition against “the spirit” or the principle of grace in the soul of believers. A carnal nature is ever present within them, and at no time is it inactive, whether they perceive it or no. Yea, they are often unconscious of many of its stirrings, for it works silently, secretly, with subtlety, deceptively—prompting not only to outward acts of disobedience, but producing unbelief, pride, and self-righteousness, which are most offensive to the Holy One. This enemy in the soul possesses great advantages, because its power to rule was unopposed by us all through our unregeneracy, because of its cursed cunning, because of the numerous temptations by which it is excited, and the variety of objects upon which it acts. Yet, it is our responsibility to keep our hearts with all diligence, to jealously watch over its workings—for the principal part of the “flight” to which the Christian is called consists of continually resisting the uprisings and solicitations of his evil principle: In other words, to *mortify* them.

The more carefully the believer observes the many ways in which indwelling sin assails the soul, the more will he realise his need of crying to God for help that he may be watchful and



faithful in opposing its lustings. But alas, we become slack and inattentive to its serpentine windings and are tripped up before we are aware of it. This is stupid folly, and it costs us dearly. By our slothfulness, we get a sore wound in the soul, our graces droop, our conscience is defiled, our relish for the Word is dulled, and we lag in the performance of duty. Grace cannot thrive while lust is nourished, for the interests of the flesh and of the Spirit cannot be promoted at the same time. And if our corruptions be not resisted and denied, they will—they must—flourish. If the daily work of mortifying the flesh be not diligently attended to, sin will most certainly become predominant in its actings in our hearts. If we fail there, we fail everywhere.

True, the lustings of the flesh cannot be rendered inactive, but we must refuse to provide them with fuel: “Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom 13:14). Those lusts cannot be eradicated, but they can (by the Spirit’s enablement) be refused. *There* is where the responsibility of the Christian comes in. It is his bounden duty to prevent those lusts occupying his thoughts, engaging his affections, and prevailing with the will to choose objects which are agreeable to them. Take covetousness as an example—a lusting after the empty things of this world. If the mind permits itself to have anxious thoughts for material riches, and the affections to be drawn unto them and pleasing images are formed in the imaginations, the lust has prevailed and our conduct will be ordered accordingly. An earnest pursuit after corrupt things preys upon the vitals of true spirituality. The preventative for that is to set our affection upon things above, to make Christ our satisfying portion, and having “food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1Ti 6:8).

It is very evident then that the Christian should spare no pains in seeking to ascertain and be sensibly affected by the real causes of his spiritual decline—for unless he knows from what causes his spiritual decays proceed, he cannot “remember therefore from whence” he has “fallen,” nor truly “repent” of his failures, or to again “do the first works” (Rev 2:5); and unless—and until—he does these very things, he will deteriorate more and more. It is equally clear that if there be certain appointed means—the use of which promotes spiritual growth and prosperity—then the slighting of those means will inevitably hinder that growth. As the first of those means is the mortifying of the flesh, it will be found that slackness at *that* point is the place where all failure begins. It is sin unmortified and unresisted, yielded to and allowed, and—what is still worse—unrepented of and unconfessed, which brings a blight upon the garden of the soul. Sin unmourned and unforsaken in our affections is more heinous and dangerous than the actual commission of sin.

Closely connected with the mortifying of sins is the Christian’s devoting of himself entirely unto God. Christian progress is largely determined by continuing as we began—by the measure in which we steadfastly adhere to the surrender we made of ourselves unto Christ at our conversion and to the vows we took upon us at baptism. If our conversion was a genuine one, we then renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil, and received Christ as our alone Lord and Saviour. If our baptism was a scriptural one, and the believer entered intelligently into the spiritual import and emblematic purport of that ordinance, he then professed to have put off the old man; and as he emerged from the water—as one symbolically risen with Christ—he stood pledged to walk in newness of life. As the adult Israelites were “baptized unto Moses” (1Co 10:1-2)—accepting him as their lawgiver and leader, so those who “have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27)—having enlisted under His banner, they now wear His uniform.

The more consistently the believer acts in harmony with the public profession he made in his baptism, the more real progress will he make. Since Christ be “the Captain” of his salvation, he is under bonds to fight against everything opposed to Him—for “they which live should not hence-

forth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again” (2Co 5:15). Each day, the saint should renew his consecration unto God and live in the realization that he is not his own, for he is “bought with a price” (1Co 6:19-20; 7:23)—no longer free to gratify his lusts. The more Christ’s purchase of him be kept fresh in his mind, the more resolutely will he conduct the work of mortification. It is forgetfulness that we belong to God in Christ, which makes us slack in resisting what He hates. It is such forgetfulness and slackness that explains the call: “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen” (Rev 2:5)—i.e. thy dedication unto God and thy baptismal avowal of identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

While there be a healthy desire after God and a delighting of ourselves in Him, an earnest seeking to please Him, and the enjoyment of communion with Him—then there is necessarily an averseness for sin and a zeal against it. While we have a due sense of our obligations to God and high valuation of His grace to us in Christ, we continue to find duty pleasant and direct our actions unto His glory. But when we become less occupied with His perfections, precepts, and promises, other things steal in; and little by little, our hearts are drawn from Him. The light of His countenance is no longer enjoyed, and darkness begins to creep over the soul. Love cools and gratitude unto Him wanes; and then the work of mortification becomes irksome, and we shelve it. Our lusts grow more unruly and dominant, and the garden of the soul is overrun with weeds. In such a case, we must “repent” and return unto “the first works” (Rev 2:5)—contritely confess our sinful failures and re-dedicate ourselves unto God.

Again, if the Christian accords not unto the Word of God that honour to which it is so justly entitled, he is certain to be the loser. If the Word holds not that place in his affections, thoughts, and daily life—which its Author requires—then sad will be the consequences. If the soul be not nourished by this heavenly bread, if the mind be not regulated by its instructions, if the walk be not directed by its precepts—disastrous must be the outcome. We must expect God to hide His face from us, if we seek Him not in those ways wherein He has promised to meet with and bless us—for such a neglect is both a violation of His ordinance and a disregard of our own good. I may spend as much time in reading the Bible today as ever before, but am I doing so with a definite and solemn treating with God therein? If not, if my approach be less spiritual, if my motive be less worthy—then a decline has already begun, and I need to beg God to revive me, quicken my appetite, and make me more responsive to His injunctions.

Finally, it requires few words here to convince a believer that if there be a decreasing occupation of his heart with Christ, his fine gold will soon become dim. If he ceases to grow in a spiritual knowledge of his Lord and Saviour, if he becomes lax in desiring and seeking real communion with Him, if he fails to draw from that fulness of grace which is available for His people—then a blight will fall upon all his graces. Faith in Him will weaken, love for Him will abate, obedience to Him slacken, and He will be “followed” at a greater distance. His own words on this point are too clear to admit of mistake: “He that abideth in me, and I in him [note the order: *We* are always the first to make the breach!], the same bringeth forth much fruit [his graces are healthy and his life abounds in good works], for without me [cut off from fellowship] ye can do nothing” (Joh 15:5). The same things which opposed our first coming to Christ will seek to hinder our *cleaving* to Him; and against those enemies, we must watch and pray.

“Faith which worketh by love” (Gal 5:6). Since it is “with the *heart* man believeth” (Rom 10:10), saving faith and spiritual love cannot be separated—though they may be distinguished. Faith engages the heart with Christ; and therefore, its affections are drawn out unto Him. Thus, faith is a powerful dynamic in the soul, and acts (to borrow the words of Thomas Chalmers, 1780-1847) as “the impulsive power of a new affection.” A little child may be amusing itself with some

filthy or dangerous object—but present to him a luscious pear or peach, and he will speedily relinquish it. The world absorbs the heart and mind of the unregenerate, because he is of the world and so knows nothing better, for the Christ of God is a Stranger to him. But the regenerate has a new nature, and by faith, becomes occupied with Him who is the Center of Heaven's glory; and the more the mind be stayed upon Him, the less appeal will the perishing things of time and sense make upon him. It is faith in exercise upon its glorious Object which overcometh the world. ❧

# November

## SUBMISSION TO GOD

“The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). When some painful loss or severe calamity befalls them, there are many who bemoan the fact that they do not have the resignation which was the patriarch’s—even under more extreme circumstances—but it is to be feared that few make any serious attempt to ascertain why they are so lacking, or that the right explanation would be arrived at if they did. Probably the majority of the professing Christians would say: “It is because the Lord has not been pleased to give me the necessary grace.” Pious as that may sound, in many cases, it would be the language of insincerity—if not of something worse. If that were said by way of excuse or self-extenuation for a spirit of murmuring, it is a wicked slander upon the Divine character. Let it be clearly recognised that the real reason—and the only reason, so far as we are concerned—why God grants us not more grace is because we have failed to use that which He has already bestowed upon us: Luke 8:18.

Acquiescence in the Divine providence when God takes from us that which is near and dear is not some high spiritual attainment which is reached on special occasions. Just as one who is not accustomed to the regular use of certain muscles is incapable of any strenuous exercise of them when put to a real test, so it is with the employment of our graces. The average man who constantly drives around in his car, or the one who sits most for the day in his office and rides on the bus or tram to and from his work, would be weary if he walked five miles on a stretch, quite exhausted if it were ten, and utterly unable to hold out for twenty. But a shepherd or farmer who spent most of his life on his feet crossing the moors or walking in his fields, would find it no undue strain to cover a single journey of twenty miles. One who has allowed his mind to wander here and there while engaged in ordinary reading cannot suddenly concentrate on a good book when he wishes to do so. The same principle obtains in the spiritual realm: There is no such thing as putting forth an extraordinary effort of any grace if it be not *in regular exercise*.

Returning to our next text: What was the character of the man who gave expression to those God-honouring words? It is very important to weigh carefully the question, for character and conduct are as inseparably connected as are cause and effect. Answer thereto is supplied in the context. Those words issued from the heart of one who was “perfect [sincere] and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1), which is but an amplified way of saying that he was a pious man. Now, the first characteristic and evidence of genuine piety is an obedient walk; and obedience is doing the will of God from the heart—or in other words, it is a *submission*

to His authority, a conducting of myself according to the rules He has prescribed for me. If, then, I have formed the habit of conforming to God's prceptive will (which necessarily presupposes denying the lusts of the flesh), there will be little difficulty in submitting myself to His providential will. If I am faithful in doing the former, I shall be unmurmuring in acquiescing with the latter. But if I flout the one, I shall rebel against the other.

"The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." That was the language of one who was accustomed to own the authority of God, as his threefold "the LORD" intimates. It was the language of one who had surrendered to His righteous claims and the throne of whose heart was really occupied by Him. It was not the sudden outburst of one who had hitherto followed his own desires and devices, but rather of a genuine saint who had truly been subject to the Divine will. It was the language of one who recognised and owned that God had a perfect right to order his lot and life as seemed good in His sight. It was the language of one who held everything in subjection to the will of Him with whom he had to do. It was not an exceptional spasm of piety, but rather that which made manifest the *general tenor* of his spirituality. The crises of life neither make, nor mar us, my reader; but instead, they demonstrate what is in us, what we really are: They make manifest the hidden things of the heart.

There is a will of God which we are required to perform, and there is also a will of God in which we should thankfully acquiesce. The former is His prceptive will, which is made known in His commandments; the latter in His providential will, which regulates all our affairs. And the more we perform the former, the easier shall we find it to accept and conform our hearts unto the latter. Christian submission is, therefore, a twofold thing; or rather, it has respect to two aspects of our duty and has to do with two different relationships which God sustains to us as our King and our Provider. The first aspect of submission is to take the Divine yoke upon us, to be in subjection to the Divine authority, to have all our ways regulated by the Divine statutes. The second aspect of submission is to receive as from God's hand whatever comes to me in a providential way, with the recognition of His absolute right to take the same away when He deems that will be most for His glory and my good.

When we pray, as we are bidden to do, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Mat 6:10), the emphasis is to be placed on the word "done." It is, first, a request that the Divine will may be wrought *in us*, for we can only work out our "own salvation with fear and trembling," as God is pleased to work in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phi 2:12-13)—for it is thus that God writes His law on our hearts. Only as His will is wrought in us are our wayward wills brought into accord with God's. Second, it is a request that the Divine will may be performed *by us*. The first is in order to the second. God's will is done by us when we consciously and voluntarily abstain from and avoid those things He has prohibited, and when we practice those things which He has enjoined upon us. Third, it is a request that the Divine will may be acceptable *unto us*, that we may be pleased with whatever pleases Him: That so far from repining, we may thankfully receive whatever God is pleased to send or give us—His chastisements not excepted.

The perfect exemplification of what we have sought to bring out above is found in our blessed Redeemer. First, there was nothing whatever within Him which was contrary to God, which was capable of resisting His will. He was essentially holy both in His Divine Person and in His human nature; and as the God-man, He declared, "Thy law is within my heart" (Psa 40:8). Second, when He entered this world, it was with the averment, "Lo, I come...to do thy will, O God" (Heb 10:7); and so completely did He make that good, He could say, "I *do always* those things that please him" (Joh 8:29). Third, He never uttered the slightest murmur against the Divine providence; but

instead, declared, “Thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in *pleasant* places” (Psa 16:5-6); and when the supreme test came, He meekly bowed, saying, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (Joh 18:11). When in Gethsemane, He prayed, “Thy will be done” (Mat 26:42), He included all three things: Be wrought in Me, performed by Me, be well-pleasing unto Me.

If, then, we are to be able to say as Job did when so severely tested, we must emulate his *previous conduct* and regularly tread the path of obedience. Furthermore, we must “learn to sit loose to all worldly comforts and stand ready prepared to part with everything when God shall require it at our hands. Some of you may perhaps have friends who are to you as your own souls; and others may have children in whose lives your own lives are bound up: All have their Isaacs, their particular delights. Labour for Christ’s sake, labour ye sons and daughters of Abraham to resign them hourly in affection to God, that when He shall require you really to sacrifice them, you may not confer with flesh and blood any more than the blessed patriarch did”—*George Whitefield* (1714-1770), closing paragraph of sermon on Abraham offering up his son.

## THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

### 23. Ephesians 1:15-23

#### *Part 9*

Those Christians are greatly the losers whose thoughts about Christ are almost confined to the manger of Bethlehem and the cross of Calvary. While we cannot be sufficiently thankful for His death, for our salvation and everlasting bliss hinged thereon; yet, it must be borne in mind that His expiry at Golgotha was not the termination of His history. Important instructions and spiritual advantages are derived by directing our attention to His resurrection also—for that blessed event not only bore conclusive testimony to the Divinity of His mission and supplies the most solid ground for our faith in Him, but it is likewise the pledge and assurance that we, too, shall be raised from the dead. Then the Word of Truth goes on to inform us that, after continuing on earth for forty days, the risen Saviour ascended to Heaven, that He is now seated at the right hand of God, where He intercedes for His people. In the Epistles, our gaze is frequently directed to the glorified and exalted state of our Saviour, and it is the privilege and duty of faith to follow Him into the Father’s presence, view Him within the veil, and eye Him as the King of kings.

In the closing portion of the apostle’s prayer in Ephesians 1, we are reminded that the risen Redeemer has been invested with all power, authority, and dominion. That was part of His reward and triumph (Phi 2:9). It was as the God-man Mediator that He was thus invested and given the scepter of the universe. It was also as the Head of the Church Christ passed within the veil: “Whither the forerunner is *for us* entered” (Heb 6:20). How that ought to strengthen the faith and encourage the hearts of all who have put their trust in Him! No room is left for doubt or uncer-

tainty of the value and acceptableness to God of Christ's obedience and death. The Father has given to the very One who bore the sins and curse of His people the supreme place of honour in Heaven. How that intimates the place which the salvation of His saints occupies in God's counsels and government! The position to which the Saviour has been elevated demonstrates beyond any peradventure the degree of importance which God Himself attaches to the redemption of His Church. The position which Christ now occupies and the power which has been given to Him are for the sake of His blood-bought ones.

"That ye may know...what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward...Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph 1:18-20). The whole emphasis is here thrown upon the mighty and wondrous operations of the Father, and not upon the exercise of the Son's Divine attributes—as in John 10:18 and Ephesians 4:8. That power of God in the raising, exalting, and glorifying of Christ was not according to or directed by the ordinary course of nature, but was special, extraordinary, supernatural—contrary to "nature" and beyond the power of any creature to effect. So also is the regeneration and sanctification of all the members of Christ's mystical Body. Their faith is "of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Col 2:12). Therefore, the transitive "and set" or "caused to sit" is here used, rather than the intransitive "to sit on his throne" as in Acts 2:30—because God is seen bestowing upon the Mediator His well-earned reward, as well as expressing His love unto the Son.

This expression of Christ's sitting at God's right hand is not to be carnalized, as though it were a literal form of speech depicting His present posture in Heaven; rather, it is to be understood as a metaphorical or similitude, and interpreted by its use elsewhere. That Christ is not actually and permanently seated is quite clear from such statements as "the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Act 7:56) and the One "who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (Rev 2:1), and "in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb" (Rev 5:6). The passages just quoted also make it plain that Christ's being "seated" is far from importing that He is now in a state of inactivity; rather, He is constantly engaged on behalf of His Church, employing His power and honours in promoting its interests, until His work of mediation is carried forward to a perfect consummation.

At least four things are connoted by Christ's being "seated." First, it is emblematic of *rest from a finished work*. We cannot contemplate aright the present state of our Lord without calling to mind the circumstances of His being there: "When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb 1:3). His sacrificial service and sufferings are ended; His work of expiation is completed. "It is finished" (Joh 19:30): He cried from the cross, and proof thereof is His being seated on high. "Every priest [of Judaism] *standeth*, daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins" (Heb 10:11). Among the furniture of the tabernacle and temple, there was no chair! "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, *sat down* on the right hand of God" (Heb 10:12). Israel's priests never accomplished the design of their office, but Christ's perfect oblation fully satisfied justice, and God bore testimony to the same by translating Him to Heaven.

Second, it marks *the beginning of a new work*. This is taught us in Acts 2 where we are told that, on the day of Pentecost, "there appeared unto them [i.e. the apostles of 1:26, the "them" of 2:1-2 and *compare* 2:14] cloven tongues like as of fire, and it *sat* upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Act 2:3-4). For three years, the apostles had companied with Christ and been trained by Him; but now, their apprenticeship was over, and their real mission as the ambassadors of the King was about to commence. To equip them for their honourous task,

they were anointed by the Spirit. Thus, it was with Christ: His work of expiation was completed, but His enthronement on high marked the *beginning* of His administration of His kingdom. The life, death, and resurrection of Christ simply laid the foundation upon which His royal conquests are now being achieved. His work as the King-Priest only began when He was invested with “all power.” He is now “upholding all things by the word of His power” (Heb 1:3), wielding His scepter to good effect.

Third, it is indicative of *honour and dignity*. When used officially, to “sit” denotes dignity and exaltation: a superior raised above his inferiors, as of a king upon his throne, the judge on the bench. Thus, that Old Testament expression to “sit in the gate” (Ruth 4:1-2 and *compare* Deu 16:18) signified the holding of a judicial court. It was to that which Job alluded when he said, “When I went out to the *gate* through the city, when I prepared my [magisterial] *seat* in the street! The young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up” (Job 29:7-8). When the Most High is pictured as holding session, the august scene is portrayed thus: “The Ancient of days did sit...his throne was like the fiery flame...thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the *judgment* was set, and the books were opened” (Dan 7:9-11). For other examples of this third meaning, see Matthew 25:31, Revelation 20:11.

Fourth, it signifies *a state of continuance*. Christ’s humiliation was only temporary, but His exaltation and enthronement is permanent. In his prophecy of Joseph’s suffering and then his glory, Jacob said, “The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength” (Gen 49:23-24)—the Hebrew verb is literally “sat,” but fittingly rendered, “abode.” So, too, “Therefore shall ye abide [sit] at the door of the tabernacle” (Lev 8:35). The position of highest honour belonging to Christ is a perpetual one: He is “seated” surely and durably. “In mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David” (Isa 16:5): To have Christ sit upon it and to have the throne established is all one. “His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Dan 7:14).

Being incorporeal, God has no physical members; and when mention is made of them, they are to be understood metaphorically. His seating of Christ at “his own right hand” (Eph 1:20) intimates *His love for Him*. It is strange that the commentators have missed the first occurrence in Scripture of that figurative expression. It is found in the marginal rendering of Gen 35:18. When his beloved Rachel gave birth to her second son, Jacob called him “Benjamin,” which signifies “the son of the right hand”—a name of endearment. He was the last of the aged patriarch’s sons; and in styling him “the son of his right hand,” he was expressing his deep affection for him and as inheriting the tender place which his mother had formerly possessed in his heart. Such we believe is the basic idea here. As God had “spared not his *own* Son” (Rom 8:32) when He was propitiating His judicial wrath, so on the completion of that work, He placed Him “at his *own* right hand” (Eph 1:20). If the Father loved Him “because He laid down His life” (Joh 10:17), would not His love be prompted to stronger manifestations of it after He had laid it down?

Christ’s being at “the right hand of God” signifies *His enjoyment of all blessedness*. This is brought out in Psalm 16:11. It is to be carefully noted that its words are those of the Messiah and spoken by Him expressly with a view to His exaltation. After saying, “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption,” He went on to declare, “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psa 16:10-11). It denotes, then, the intimacy of His fellowship with the Father in the full light of His countenance. “It is spoken assuredly of such pleasures as Jesus



Christ by way of prerogative enjoyeth beyond all the saints and angels, He being at God's right hand as none of them are. It was that peculiar encouragement that He had, not to be in heaven only as a common saint, but to be in heaven at God's right hand and to have pleasures answerable, far above all the pleasures of men and angels, imparting to Him to the utmost, all His own happiness, so far as His human nature is capable of" (Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680).

Christ's being "at God's right hand" tells of *His dignity, honour, and glory*. When kings would express their respect unto those whom they favoured, they did so by setting them at their "right hand." An illustration of that is found in 1 Kings 2:19, where Solomon bestowed this honour upon his mother; and the same thought was in the mind of the wife of Zebedee when she made request that in the day to come, her sons might sit one of Christ's right hand and the other at His left (Mat 20:20-21). So of the Church: It shall yet be said, "upon thy [Christ's] right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir" (Psa 45:9). God's placing of Christ at His right hand signified the conferring of supreme honour upon Him—the place of eminence and glory. God translated Enoch and Elijah to Heaven, but they are nowhere said to sit at His right hand. "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand" (Heb 1:13)—that is a dignity peculiar to Christ Himself.

To be seated "at God's right hand" announces *Christ's supreme power and dominion*. "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power" (Mat 26:64). It was the investing of Christ with supreme authority. As T. Goodwin pointed out, "Kings oftentimes make no other use of their kingdoms but to enjoy pleasure, state, and glory; but for their *rule*, they leave it to others; as Pharaoh did to Joseph—'only in the throne will I be greater than thou' (Gen 41:40)." But upon Christ has been conferred no inferior authority; He sits "on the right hand of the Majesty on high" and is personally "upholding all things by the word of His power" (Heb 1:3). "All power is given unto *me in heaven* and in earth" (Mat 28:18) is His own ringing avowal. The throne over the whole universe is "the throne of God *and* of the Lamb" (Rev 22:3); "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (Joh 5:23).

It requires to be pointed out that, if on the one hand, it was the Father who bestowed this blessedness, honour, and authority upon the God-man Mediator; yet, on the other hand, He had a full right thereto. Things are so carried out between the Father and the Son that Each is distinctly magnified. Christ's exaltation is the Father's gift, and therein He is owned; likewise, it is the Son's due, and so He is recognised. All power is given to Him, yet He said plainly to His apostles, "*I* appoint unto you a kingdom" (Luk 22:29). "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will" (Joh 5:21)! Therein there is perfect oneness of accord: Christ exercises sovereignty of will—for it is His right to do so—yet He does nothing but what pleases the Father. As the man Christ Jesus was united to the Son of God, He had *the right*—not simply as a reward for His work, but because of His Godhead—to all that has been bestowed upon Him. As Jehovah's "Fellow," nothing less befits Him.

We do not agree with those writers who say it was the humanity of Christ alone that was exalted. It was the Son of God Himself, though in our nature, who was accorded the highest throne in Heaven—"and set him [not "it"] at his own right hand" (Eph 1:20). It was a Person who was thus magnified. As T. Goodwin points out, it was a "whole Christ who rose and a whole Christ sitteth at God's right hand." We may not be able—nay, indeed are not—to comprehend this mystery; yet faith gladly receives it. Faith has to do with what is written, not in reasoning, nor answering the objections of the carnal mind. If we abide by what is recorded in Holy Writ, we cannot err, and Scripture declares: "The LORD said unto my Lord [not simply to "the Son of man"], Sit thou at my right hand" (Psa 110:1)—quoted more frequently in the New Testament

than any other verse. Now, the foundation of Christ's being David's "Lord" lay in His being the Son of God; and it was the second Person in the Trinity who had taken human nature into union with Himself that Jehovah the Father invited to sit at His own right hand. The throne belongs to Him both as God and as man: See Psalm 45:6 and John 5:27.

The human nature of Christ, subsisting in His Divine Person, has been exalted above all creatures in dignity, glory, and authority. That evinces the infinite love of the Father unto Him and His ineffable delight in Him. It should greatly delight our hearts and be constantly contemplated—not by fancy and imagination, but by faith and in adoring worship. As we pointed out in the preceding article, Christ's change of place (from earth to Heaven) was at once followed by a change of state, His human nature then being glorified and its capacity enlarged. Personally, we are strongly inclined to believe there is a reference to that in "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, *seen of angels*, preached unto the Gentiles" (1Ti 3:16)—the position of that clause intimating as much. Nor are we alone in that view. So cautious and conservative a commentator as Charles John Ellicott (1819-1905) interpreted it thus: "The angels now for the first time saw, gazed upon, and rejoiced in the vision of the Godhead in the glorified humanity of the Son; and what the angels gained in the beatific vision, the nations of the world obtained through the preaching of the Gospel; namely, a knowledge of the endless love of God and the surpassing glory of Christ."

"We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary" (Heb 8:1-2). Here, an additional aspect is emphasized; namely, that it is as our great High Priest Christ is exalted. *His* is a royal priesthood: He is endowed with regal, as well as sacerdotal authority. Note well this verse comes immediately after Hebrews 7 where we have Christ set forth as the antitypical Melchizedek or Priest-King. It is as such He ministers in the heavenly tabernacle: A "priest upon his throne" (Zec 6:13); that is, a Priest in kingly state, invested with royal dominion. Christ awaits no future "millennium" to enter upon His kingly office, but exercises it *now*. "Majesty" signifies the kingly power of God, and Christ is seated at the "right hand" of that very Majesty (Heb 1:3)! The One who, when here, had not where to lay His head is now "*crowned* with glory and honour" (Heb 2:9). The One whom men spat upon and smote is now the Lord Sovereign of Heaven and earth. All Heaven owns His scepter and renders homage to Him.

"And set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power" (Eph 1:20-21). Here is the place where Christ now dwelleth: in Heaven itself. Acts 7:48-49 tell us that Heaven is the court of the great God, where His throne is—and it is there that God hath appointed Jesus Christ to be honoured. His advancement corresponds to His abasement. As He descended into unparalleled depths of shame and woe, so He has been elevated to surpassing heights of honour and bliss. As 1 Peter 3:22 tells us, He "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God." It is there in "the ivory palaces" (Psa 45:8) our Redeemer abides. Though by His Deity, He be omnipresent—in the midst of every two or three who are gathered together in His name—yet in His theanthropic person, He is localized—for His humanity is not ubiquitous (everywhere) as the Lutherans erroneously suppose. Hence, when He judges the wicked, because they cannot be suffered to enter Heaven, He comes down to them—though bringing Heaven with Him, for He "shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels" (Mat 16:27).

"And set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power" (Eph 1:20-21). That tells of the *eminence* of His elevation. God has not only exalted, but "highly exalted him" (Phi 2:9), not only "above" but "far above all principality, and power;" or as Hebrews 7:26 expresses it, "made higher than the heavens." That One who glorified the Father so

superlatively on earth has been exalted to the highest conceivable honour and glory. Christ has been raised above the celestial hosts not only as their “Head,” but of vastly superior rank or dignity. There are ranks or grades among the angels, though precisely what those differences are, we know not. There is no uniformity among the creatures of God, no equality of status even in Heaven. There is “principality, and power, and might, and dominion,” but Christ is advanced high above them all, being set in authority over them all. This is dwelt upon in Hebrews 1:4, “Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they”—*i.e.* the glory He entered into upon His ascension was proportionate and consonant to the name which is His by essential right.

Ephesians 1:21 gives us a detailed account of our Lord’s supremacy. He passed by the dignitaries of Heaven when, in love, He descended to assume the form and name of a “Servant” for our sakes. But when God exalted Him, He “glorified his *Son* Jesus” (Act 3:13), as well as openly confirmed His Son (Heb 1:4-5). That supremacy of Christ is not only an eminent, but a *universal* one: “Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1Pe 3:22). “And every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Eph 1:21), *i.e.* both on earth and in Heaven, here and hereafter. Christ has been advanced above every “excellency” and “honourable” no matter what be his rank or title. Not only has supremacy of position, but also of *Name* been conferred upon Him. His Name is accorded the worship due unto God alone, not only by the Church below, but the angels above (Heb 1:11). In His name, every knee shall yet bow (Phi 2:10). Then, what is Christ due *from us*? Our hearts, our lives, our all.

## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

### 3. A General Survey

As Moses sent forth the twelve spies to “search the land of Canaan” (Num 13:2) before Israel sought to enter into occupation of the same, so we propose to now take a bird’s eye view of that book which bears the name of Joshua, before examining it in close detail. We shall not give a chapter-by-chapter summary of its contents, but rather, essay a comprehensive sketch of those contents as a whole, by pointing out the main design of the book and some of its leading features. It has already been stated in our Introductory article, that this portion of Scripture treats of the period of Israel’s estatement as a nation in that land which Jehovah gave unto their fathers, and that it forms both the capstone of the Pentateuch and the foundation of the Historical books which follow. The design of its penman—under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit—was to describe the conquest of Canaan by the Hebrews and the apportionment of it among their twelve tribes.

It was not Joshua’s intention to give an account of his own life, nor even to undertake a description of his principal exploits and achievements; rather was it his purpose to show how the Lord had made good His promises unto the patriarchs. If that dominant fact be kept steadily in mind, it will explain fully and satisfactorily the principle of selection and the arrangement of the materials he was guided to use. We can then the better perceive why Joshua recorded what he did,

why he related certain incidents in fulness of detail and merely glanced at others, and why whole years are passed over in silence. He was writing with a *definite plan* before his mind; and therefore, he related only what was pertinent to his scheme and design, omitting everything which was not relevant thereto. The same principle of selection regulated all the sacred penmen, and it is only as we are able to discern the particular plan of each book that we can properly appreciate what is brought into the picture and what is left out.

It has been far too little realised that the historians of Scripture were much more than journalists narrating interesting events, more than mere chroniclers writing for the sake of gratifying the curiosity of those who should live in a future age, or even of detailing memorable incidents to please their contemporaries. They were *theocratic* historians (a theocracy is a government in which the chiefs of state are the immediate servants of God—there has never been but one) whose object was to trace the progress and development of the kingdom of God on earth: To mark its great epochs and record those events which were, from a *religious* standpoint, of deep importance to their own and future generations. Thus it is with the book that is now to be before us—and equally so with those that follow—for they give not merely the history of Israel, but the history of *God's kingdom in Israel*: discover its plan or theme, and the choice or rejection of certain materials becomes patent.

The book opens with the Lord's directions to Joshua, who had already been designated as the successor of Moses, to go over Jordan and take possession of the land which He had sworn to their fathers and to divide it among the people as their inheritance, with the promise that if he faithfully observed the laws given by Moses that God would be with him, and "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life" (Jos 1:5). Those opening verses supply the key to the whole book. Joshua's execution of his commission in strict obedience to the Divine directions and God's gracious fulfilment of His promised assistance are the sum of all it contains. The first twelve chapters treat of the conquest of Canaan. They do not contain a detailed account of all the marches and the battles of each campaign. Instead, only the outstanding particulars are narrated—those which marked the progress of events, those which brought out most clearly God's miraculous help, and those which demonstrated the necessity and inseparable connection between their obedience and that miraculous help.

Many other things belonging to the Conquest—such as battles, capture of cities, and even long expeditions which had nothing remarkable about them—are therefore mentioned only summarily, so as to give a general view of the whole line of operations with its ultimate success. The time occupied in the conquest was much briefer, everything considered, than might be supposed. Though we cannot calculate the exact length of it, we may its approximate duration. *After* Canaan had been subdued and upon the division of its territory, we find Caleb saying, "And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness" (Jos 14:10). From that forty-five years, we have to deduct the thirty-eight years spent in the Wilderness (Deu 2:14), so that the whole campaign lasted less than seven years.

In chapters 13-21, we have the Dividing of the Land among the several tribes, concerning which it is difficult for a commentator to write profitably at any length. In chapter 22, the two and a half tribes who had assisted their brethren in the Conquest and stood by them in the allotting of Canaan, return to their own possession across the Jordan. Then an interval of several years is passed over, during which Israel was settled in the Land—an interval which fell not within the scope for the writer to take notice of, for it furnished nothing suited to his particular theme. Finally, we come to the closing scene of Joshua's life, when he gathered around him the responsible

heads of the Nation, rehearsed what God had done for them in giving them such a goodly heritage, and engaged them to renewed pledges of obedience unto Him. Thus, the book closes with a recapitulation of Jehovah's fulfilment of the promise with which it opens and a public covenant-engagement of the people to serve the Lord who had driven out the Amorites and the other nations from before them.

After Joshua had received his orders to go up and possess the Land, he at once sent forth two spies. The experiences they met with are described with considerable detail: not because of the interest attaching to their hazardous undertaking and their remarkable escape from a perilous situation, but because what occurred vividly exemplified the promise which the Lord had given to Moses: "There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you" (Deu 11:25)—a promise, which, as we have seen, was repeated in substance to Joshua himself. Hence, we find in striking and full accord therewith, Rahab acknowledging to the spies, "I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you" (Jos 2:9). The anxious preparations of the king, his vigorous pursuit of the spies, and their language to Joshua upon the accomplishment of their mission (Jos 2:24), all served to forcibly illustrate that fact.

Next follows the passage of the Jordan. Its waters, though unusually high, were supernaturally divided, so that the people of God passed over dry shod. Let us pause and ask, "What was the design of that remarkable event?" God works no trifling miracles: He does not suspend the established order of nature without good reason, nor unless some important end is to be answered by so doing. Wherein lay the necessity for this prodigy? Israel could have crossed the Jordan by natural means, without the intervention of Omnipotence. Though the river was then too high for fording, especially for the women and children, yet boats could have been built or bridges thrown across it, for the Jordan is neither swift nor very wide, and such a delay had been but a brief one. The reason for this miracle was the same as of all others recorded in Holy Writ: The necessity for it was not physical, but moral. The object of all miracles is to reveal the power and grace of God.

The laws of nature which God established at the beginning were amply sufficient to accomplish every physical end: It is only to meet our moral and spiritual needs that they are ever interfered with. Israel might have taken Canaan without any miracle, but in such a case, there had been no glorious display unto them of God's all-mightiness, His loving-kindness, His nearness to them. The stupendous marvels—which He wrought in Egypt, at the Red sea, in the Wilderness, and now in Canaan—were designed to teach the covenant people (and the surrounding nations, too) that the gods of the heathen were no gods and could neither do good nor evil. Jehovah was the living and true God: "The Lord of all the earth" (Jos 3:11, 13)! Those miracles were intended to make them more sensible of the infinite perfections of the One with whom they had to do, and of their complete dependence upon Him. Consequently, they were brought into situations from which they could not extricate themselves in order to learn it was the Lord their God who delivered them.

In a variety of ways, Israel were made to see that it was not their own valour and strength which delivered them, but rather, Jehovah's right hand and mighty arm, which secured the victory for them. Canaan did not become theirs so much by their own prowess and conquest as by Divine gift. But there was a special reason why the Lord intervened for them in the extraordinary manner He did at the Jordan—for it was as though He then opened to them the door of that land which He had promised, and personally conducted them into it. By that memorable act, the Lord pledged to them the subjugation of the whole country. At the same time, there was in connection therewith

the public act of Joshua in his new capacity as leader of the people; and thus, it gave Divine authority and confirmation to his office in their eyes, and was—in comparison with his predecessor at the Red Sea—a striking verification of that word to Him, “As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee” (Jos 1:5).

The circumcising of the people and their celebration of the Passover comes next (chapter 5). There should be no difficulty in perceiving the relevancy and significance of these events at this stage in the book we are now reviewing. They belonged to the Conquest, inasmuch as that very conquest was conditioned upon Israel’s punctilious compliance with all that Moses had commanded. After the appearing unto Joshua of the “Captain of the LORD’S host” (Jos 5:15), there follows an account of the capture of Jericho. In connection therewith, there stand out plainly the same two features which mark the passage of the Jordan: that an unquestioning obedience to God’s orders was required from them, and that the victory was His and not theirs. In the conquest of Ai, the same lesson is taught, though in reverse: There, they were made to taste the bitter consequences which followed upon their disobedience to the Divine injunctions. But we will not now further anticipate what we hope to consider in the articles which are to follow.

At this point, a word needs to be said, perhaps, in reply to the attacks made now upon this book by the enemies of the Lord. The ethical character of the contacts of Joshua has been viciously criticised by infidels and agnostics. The Israelites have been regarded as a horde of fierce nomads, falling upon and murdering the Canaanites, and stealing the land of a peaceful people. These critics have asserted it is unworthy of the Divine character to represent Him as sanctioning such injustice and ferocity. In reply, it needs to be pointed out that, Canaan was Israel’s by Divine appointment and gift long before (Gen 15)—a promise repeated to Abraham’s immediate descendants; and it was in fulfilment thereof that they now received the land. They entered and took possession of Canaan by immediate command from God, who has an absolute right to interfere in human affairs as He pleases. Moreover, it was in the exercise of His righteousness (as well as of His sovereignty) that God now took from the Canaanites the land which they had forfeited by their sins, and by His grace, gave to Israel with the distinct understanding that they, too, would be deprived of it if they proved unfaithful and disobedient stewards.

But why should God give instructions for the utter destruction of the Canaanites? Because of their horrible depravity and gross idolatry: Let the reader turn to Leviticus 18:3, 27, 28, and then, see the verses between 3 and 27 for a description of those “abominations;” and also, remember God did not act in judgment upon them until “the iniquity of the Amorites” had come to the “full” (Gen 15:16). God now glorified His justice by destroying those who refused to glorify Him by a willing obedience. Israel acted not under the impulse of a lust of conquest, but as the executioners of Divine wrath—just as the flood, the pestilence, the earthquake are commissioned by Him to cut off those who provoke His holiness. When He is pleased to do so, He makes use of men as His instruments, rather than the elements. “The Assyrian” was the rod of God’s anger to cut off nations, though he knew not he was being so employed (Isa 10:5-7). Why, then, might He not use an elect and godly nation as the conscious instrument of His just vengeance!

Israel was manifestly under God’s guidance, and their success must be attributed to His presence and might. Miraculous power attended them and proved that the commission and commands they had received were no fanatical delusions, but the mandates of the Judge of all the earth. He opened a way for them through the Jordan, threw down the walls of Jericho, smote their enemies with hailstones, and even stayed the sun in its course. There could be no mistaking the fact that the living God was in their midst. But there was also a special reason why Israel should be the particular executioner of God’s vengeance in this instance, rather than that the land should be to-

tally depopulated by, say, pestilence. In that case, they could not have felt so sensibly their own weakness and entire dependency on the power of God. In such a case, they had soon forgotten *His* agency in giving them the land, and attributed it to secondary causes; nor would the residue of the Canaanites been left as a continual trial to test their faithfulness in the service of the Lord.

But why should only the Canaanites be singled out for this summary judgment? Were there not many other idolatrous nations?—why, then, should they be exempted? The righteous government of God extends over all nations, and each is punished when its iniquities are come to the full: not by the same means or to the same extent, but punished as God deems best. But the Canaanites were not only idolaters, but they were guilty of practices which the heathen themselves regarded with abhorrence. Let it also be remembered that this generation of Israel under Joshua was the most pious one in all their history as a nation, and that they burned with the same holy zeal against Achan as against the degenerate Canaanites; and that later, God sorely punished Israel, too, when they turned away from Him. Most important, then, are the lessons contained in this book. It shows how God intervenes in the affairs of human history. It reveals that He deals with nations, as well as individuals—deals with them in mercy or judgment, according as they honour or displease Him.

The contents of this book, and the lessons which are designed to teach us, are greatly needed by our own generation: First, in counteracting the on-sided “evangelism” of our day, which tells the sinner that all he has to do is to accept Christ as his personal Saviour, and Heaven is then his certain portion—ignoring the fact that there is a fight which must be fought and a race to be run before he can be crowned. Second, in rebutting that doleful view that the Christian should expect nothing, but frequent and well nigh constant defeat in his warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil—overlooking the truth that if he meets the required conditions, he may “do all things through Christ which strengtheneth” him (Phi 4:13). Third, in setting before us, by clear exemplifications and striking illustrations, the rules and requirements upon which success is conditioned. Here, as nowhere else in Scripture, are we shown *how* we may be “overcomers.” Fourth, in making known the blessed fact—so little apprehended by Christians today—that it is both their privilege and birthright to enter into a present possession and enjoyment of their Inheritance. O that more of us may do so.

## THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

### 8c. Its Scope

“And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col 1:20). In the final paragraphs of our last, we touched upon this aspect of our subject, pointing out that the mediatory work of Christ not only effected a reconciliation between God and the whole election of grace, but also closed the breach which existed between the celestial hosts and the Church. But our remarks thereon were all too brief for a subject so blessed, so important, so honouring to



Christ, yet so little understood. The relation which exists between the holy angels and the Church—which is the mystical body of Christ—has not received the attention that it deserves; and failure to perceive that the basis of this fellowship lies in the person and work of Christ obscures one of the distinctive honours which God has placed upon His beloved Son, and loses sight of one of His mediatorial glories. “On his head were many crowns” (Rev 19:12), and that which is now engaging our attention is by no means the least of them.

According to the principle of “the progress of doctrine”—or the orderly unfolding of the Truth (first the blade, then the ear, etc.)—in the earlier epistles of Paul (Thessalonians, Romans, Corinthians, Galatians), we see more the *individual* effects and blessings of Redemption. The truth of justification, so prominent therein, brings each person face to face with his *own* sin and salvation. In that supreme crisis of the soul, the crisis of spiritual life and death, there is consciousness of but two existences—God and self. But when we come to the prison epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, etc.), it is no longer the individual, as such, which is prominent, but rather, as he is part of a greater whole—a member of the body of Christ. True, in the earlier epistles, the Church is recognised; as in later epistles, the individual believer is never for a moment ignored, but the proportion of the two aspects is changed: What is prominent in the first becomes secondary in the other. This is the natural order in the development of Truth. The Christian unity is directly the unity of each soul with Christ, the Head—and indirectly, the unity of the various members in the one Body.

When the Gospel of salvation speaks, it must speak to the individual, but when the Saviour has been found by each soul as the Christ who “liveth in *me*” (Gal 2:20), then the question arises, “What is my relation to *other* believers?” The answer to which is: Fellow-members of the Church, fellow-members of the family of God. Accordingly, when taking up the doctrine of reconciliation, the apostle first placed the emphasis upon “be ye reconciled to God” (2Co 5:20); though even there, he indicated the basis on which the call is made. But it was reserved for his later epistles to bring out the reconciliation or unity which Christ has effected between believing Jews and Gentiles—which he shows at some length in Ephesian 2; while in Colossians, he goes still further and presents Christ as the Head of all created beings, and the new relation which He has established between the Church and the celestial hosts. It is much to their loss that so many Christians advance no further than the epistle to the Romans in their apprehension of the Truth; I must beware of being so wrapped up in what Christ has done for *me*, that I fail to glory in the *wider* results of His work.

There was a particular reason why this reference to the larger scope of reconciliation was made in the epistle to the Colossians (rather than in Ephesians or Philippians), for as the Judaisers were corrupting the Galatians, so the Gnostics were seeking to seduce the saints at Colosse. The word “Gnostic” means “one who knows” (the opposite of “agnostic”), and that which characterized this sect (which, to a considerable extent, exerted a powerful and pernicious influence upon early Christianity) was an Orientalized form of Grecian philosophy—a modern, though more Buddhistic, species of which is “Theosophy.” Gnosticism was an attempt of carnal reason to show the relation between the Infinite and the finite, the Absolute and the phenomenal, the “first Cause” and the universe. They argued that the gulf could only be bridged by a series of creatures rising in the scale of being—the highest of them being semi-personal emanations, of which Christ was the first (yet only a creature), and then many orders of angels which intervened between God and men.

Hence, it was that in the Colossian epistle the apostle insisted that by Christ “were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or



dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Col 1:16-17), that he bids the saints there, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit” (Col 2:8). Hence, too, he insisted that “in him [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” (Col 2:9), and again warned them: “Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind” (Col 2:18). Having stated in Colossians 1:16 that the angels were created by Christ, he then went on to show how they were also the gainers by the blood of His cross, for that blood had “made peace” not only with God, but it had also restored to amicable relationship the two great branches of His family—the angelic hosts and the Church.

There was originally a union between the holy angels and unfallen men, for they existed as fellow-citizens in the kingdom of God, but upon Adam’s apostasy, that union was broken. Sin is rebellion, and the holy angels could have no fellowship with rebels against their God. “Things in earth” and “things in heaven” (Col 1:20) became at variance through sin. When men became the enemies of God, they became at the same time, the enemies of all His faithful subjects. Take this analogy on a lower plane. Suppose that one county in England should cast off allegiance to King George and disown his government at Westminster—then all lawful communion between the inhabitants of that county, and the loyal subjects of the crown in all other parts of the country, would be at an end. A line of moral and patriotic separation would at once be drawn between the two companies, and all friendly intercourse would be forbidden. Nor would it less accord with their inclination that the duty of all the friends of the throne to withdraw their communion and connection from those who were in revolt against the supreme authority and the general good.

But now, suppose one possessing the necessary dignity and qualifications—say, a member of the royal house—should voluntarily undertake to make adequate reparation unto his majesty for the injury done him by the rebellious county, and that he was pleased to acknowledge that reparation as a full satisfaction to his honour. And suppose that his plenipotentiary succeeded in removing all enmity against their king from the members of that county, so that they sincerely repented of their insubordination and threw down the weapons of their hostility against the throne and government; as soon as it became generally known that company had been restored to fealty, would not the remainder of the country rejoice and all the loyal subjects of the crown be ready to resume fellowship with them again? That is as close a parallel as we can think of. Having made peace between God and the Church by the blood of His cross, Christ has also united the Church unto all who love God throughout the whole extent of creation: Things or creatures on earth have been reconciled to things or creatures in Heaven.

Ephesians 1:9-10 makes known to us the entire range of God’s eternal purpose of grace. It was to gather together in Christ not only the elect from the sons of men on earth, but also the elect from among the angels in Heaven, uniting all into one harmonious whole; and this with the grand design of making more manifest the glory of the God-man Mediator. Under His eternal foreview of the entrance of sin, God purposed the reunion of the two great portions of the moral universe, bringing them into one holy and happy commonwealth under Christ as their glorious Sovereign. If it be asked, “Why are the persons of angels and men referred to as ‘things’?” The answer is, “This is the Scriptural form of expressing them: As when the apostle said, ‘Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas’ (1Co 3:21-22), or, ‘the scripture hath concluded [shut up] all under sin’ (Gal 3:22), which is explained by ‘God hath shut them all up in unbelief’ (Rom 11:32).” As the “all men” of 1 Timothy 2:1-2 signifies men of

all stations, so the “all things in heaven” of Ephesians 1:10 means angels of all ranks—“thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers,” etc. (Col 1:16).

The word for “dispensation” (*oikonomia*) contains no time element and has no reference to an age or era. Literally, it means “the arrangement of a house” (Young’s Concordance)—or as we should say today, “the administration or management of a household.” Its force may be clearly ascertained from its first occurrence in the New Testament: “Give an account of thy stewardship” (Luk 16:2), *i.e.* of thy administration of my household—the same Greek word is again translated “stewardship” in the next two verses. Thus, the “Dispensationalists” have no warrant whatever for their arbitrary partitioning of the Scriptures. When Paul said, “a dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto me” (1Co 9:17), obviously, he is to be understood as meaning that an administration or dispensing of the Gospel is entrusted to me in my apostolic labours. The “fulness of times” (Eph 1:10) (compare “the fulness of the Gentiles” Rom 11:25) signifies the termination of the times or “seasons”—namely, this *final* Christian season, which is the culmination and termination of all preceding ones—as Hebrews 1:1-2, 1 John 2:18 make evident.

The “gathering together in one” is a single (compound) word in the Greek occurring nowhere else in the New Testament except Romans 13:9, where it is rendered “briefly comprehended.” There, after quoting several of the Commandments—“Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, etc., etc.—the apostle added “and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” *i.e.*, all these precepts of the second table are summed up in that single injunction. It is an arithmetical term, where many items are added together in one total sum. It is also a rhetorical term, to *recapitulate*, as an orator does at the close of his discourse. Thus, it contains (in its prefix) the idea of repetition: as “gathering together” implies an original unity, and then a scattering before the unity is restored. In Christ, God has re-gathered and re-established in a new condition of stability and blessedness the previously disrupted elements, forming them into one kingdom, under one Head, having restored to harmony and mutual love the alienated portions of His empire.

Christ is not only “the head of the church” (Eph 5:23), but He is also “the head of all principality and power” (Col 2:10), “angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1Pe 3:22)—thus, He is “the head over *all*” (Eph 1:22). Christ is the gathering Centre of all holy creatures—they being united into one great commonwealth under His sovereignty. Elect angels and elect men make up one household. This is clearly brought out in, “I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom *the whole family* in heaven and earth is named” (Eph 3:14-15). Since Christ is the Head of all (Eph 1:22), the whole family receives its name from Him: They all own Him, and He owns them all. So too, together they make up *one City*, the new Jerusalem, of which Christ is the Governor and King. “Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...” (Heb 12:22): There is the general description, but who are the inhabitants? The same verse goes on to tell us, “...and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn” (Heb 12:22-23). They all make up one united company of worshippers, for the angels worship Christ as the redeemed do.

As Thomas Goodwin showed at length in his masterly exposition of Ephesians 1:10, this honour was *due Christ*. First as the God-man and “heir of all things” (Heb 1:2), it was meet that He should be the Head over the highest of God’s creatures—of the celestial hosts as well as the Church. Second, this unity of the holy angels with the redeemed into one family and commonwealth is greatly to the honour and splendour of the Church. Third, angels and men are capable of being thus knit together under one Head—for they each have an understanding, affection, will,

and spiritual nature, and therefore, are suited to the same happiness, dwelling together in the same place: As Matthew 22:30 tells us, “In the resurrection they...are as the angels of God in heaven”! Fourth, by this arrangement, there is constituted a complete parallel in opposition to Satan, who is the head both of wicked men and demons. The Devil is the head of the evil angels (Rev 12:7), called “the prince of the devils” (Mat 12:24), and he is the head of the wicked (1Jo 5:19) and termed, “the prince of this world” (Joh 12:31). Answerably to this, God has made Christ the Head of the Church and of angels.

“Ye are *come unto*...an innumerable company of angels” (Heb 12:22). We are come to them as our fellow-citizens, in consequence of our faith in Christ. Our access to them is spiritual. We come to them now, while we are on earth, and they, in Heaven. But we come to them not with our prayers, which is the doting superstition of Rome and utterly destructive of the communion here asserted. For although there be a difference and distinction between their persons and ours as to dignity and power, yet as to this fellowship, we are equal in it with them; as one of them expressly declared to the apostle John, “I am thy fellowservant, and *of thy brethren* that have the testimony of Jesus” (Rev 19:10). Upon which John Owen said, “Nothing could be more groundless than that fellow-servants should worship one another”—nor absurd. We have access to all of them, not simply to this or that tutelary angel, but to the whole company of them. We are come to them by virtue of the recapitulation of them and us in Christ—they and we being members of the same heavenly family and associated together in a common worship.

“What was the reason that the tabernacle was so full of ‘cherubim’? Read Exodus 25:19 and observe there were two of them over the mercy-seat in the holy of holies. Read Exodus 26:1 and mark how all the curtains of the tabernacle had cherubim wrought on them. Cherubim are angels (1Pe 1:12). Go from thence to the temple of Solomon: There you have the cherubim again—on the mercy-seat, all the walls of the house, and its very doors (1Ki 6:23, 29, 32). All this betokened that angels still fill the temple, as well as men. Little do we think it, but the angels—as well as human beings—fill our churches and are present in our assemblies. Therefore, are the women bidden to be modest and have their heads covered—the sign of their subordination—not only because of men, but because of the angels (1Co 11:10), for surely that is the meaning of it. Because we are to be with them hereafter and to worship God together, therefore they come down and are present at the worship of God here with us” (T. Goodwin—slightly changed).

In Revelation 5, under the representative emblem of “the four and twenty elders,” we behold the Church worshipping, singing a new song: “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” Immediately after which the apostle tells us, “And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many *angels* round about the throne and the beasts and the elders...saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev 5:9-12). The ascription of praise from the angels is mingled with the praise of the Church, so as to comprise one entire worship. Thus, the “gather together in one” of Ephesians 1:10 also includes one great *Choir* or company of worshippers.

The holy angels are the adversaries of the wicked, for since such are the enemies of God, they are their enemies too. Thus, we read of the angel of the Lord standing in the way of perverse Balaam as “an adversary against him” (Num 22:22). They were sent to destroy wicked Sodom (Gen 19:1, 13). One of them smote the camp of the Assyrians and slew nearly two hundred thousand of them in a night (2Ki 19:35). Another slew the blasphemous Herod (Act 12:23) in New Testament

times. Observe how prominently they figure in the Apocalypse as the agents of God's judgments and the executioners of His vengeance: See Revelation 8:7-13; 15:1; 16:1-12. So also at the day of judgment, "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire" (Mat 13:41-42).

How blessed the contrast to behold the ministrations of the angels unto the saints! "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Psa 91:11)—a promise not only to Christ personally, but also to all the members of His mystical body. When the beggar died, his soul was "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luk 16:22). An angel delivered Peter from prison (Act 12:7-10). In the Day to come, Christ "shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds" (Mat 24:31). In an earlier paragraph, we called attention to the cherubim with the flaming sword barring our first parents from "the tree of life" (Gen 3:24). But, in consequence of Colossians 1:20 and Ephesians 1:10, they now stand at the entrance of Paradise to *admit* the redeemed into it! The holy Jerusalem has "twelve gates, and at the gates twelve *angels*" (Rev 21:12), and in that city is "the tree of life" (Rev 22:2).

"And behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it" (Gen 28:12). "Hereafter ye shall see [with the eyes of faith—enlightened from the Scriptures] heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (Joh 1:51). Here, we are shown plainly the grand Medium for uniting Heaven and earth, the Foundation on which rests the intercourse between the angels and the redeemed. "The Son of man" views Christ as the last Adam, and is the Mediator's title of humiliation, while bearing sin. It is brought in here to emphasise the fact that it is His atonement, "the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20) which is the meritorious ground of the restoration of the long-forfeited fellowship between the two branches of the one family in Christ. "If the partition wall between Jews and Gentiles is removed by the cross, and the enmity slain thereby, the same thing holds true in reference to angels and men" (George Smeaton, 1814-1889).

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

### 10b. Its Decline

In our last, we pointed out the deep importance of ascertaining the causes from which spiritual decays proceed, in order to a due compliance with the injunctions of Revelation 2:5. We cannot turn from that which is injurious and avail ourselves of the remedy until we are conscious of and sensibly affected by those things which have robbed of spiritual health. But let not the young Christian assume a defeatist attitude and conclude that ere long, he, too, will suffer a decline. Pre-

vention is better than cure. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Let, then, our articles on this aspect of the theme serve a dual purpose: A warning against such a calamity, and as furnishing instruction for those whose graces have already begun to languish. Thus far, we have dwelt only on what will be the inevitable consequences if the believer fails to make a diligent and full use of the chief aids to spiritual growth, mentioned in our division of "Its Means." Now, we proceed to point out other things which are among the causes of decline.

*A slackening in the prayer life* will soon lower the level of one's spiritual health. This is so generally recognised among Christians that there is the less need for us to say much thereon. Prayer is an ordinance of Divine appointment, being instituted both for God's glory and our good. It is an owning of His supremacy and an acknowledgement of our dependency. On the one hand, the Lord requires to be waited on, to be asked for those things which will minister unto our well-being; and on the other hand, it is by means of prayer that our hearts are prepared to receive or be denied those things which we desire—for it is essentially a holy exercise in which our wills are brought into harmony with the Divine. A considerable part of our religious life consists in praying—either in public or in private, either orally or mentally; and our spiritual prosperity ever bears a close proportion to the degree of fervour and constancy with which this important duty is attended to. Prayer has been rightly termed, "the breath of the new creature," and if our breathing be impeded, then the whole system suffers—true alike spiritually and naturally.

But prayer is more than a duty: It is also one of the two principal means of grace—and without it, the other (the Word) profits us little or nothing. Since prayer be the breath of the new creature, we need to live in its own element—the atmosphere of Heaven. In order thereto a new and living way has been opened unto the throne of grace, whither we may come with boldness and confidence, and there, find help. Help for what? For everything needed in the Christian life—more particularly, for enablement to comply with the Divine precepts. That which God requires from us may be summed up in one word: *obedience*; and it is only through prayer we obtain strength for the performance thereof. That is partly the meaning of "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (Joh 1:17). The law reveals man's duty, but it conveys no power for the discharge of it. But *grace* (as well as truth) comes to us by Jesus Christ—as the previous verse tells us—yet there is no other way of receiving out of His fulness except by the prayer of faith.

Prayer is even more than a means of grace: It is a holy privilege, an unspeakable boon, and inestimable favour, and it should be the most delightful of all spiritual exercises. It is by prayer we have access to God and converse with Him, whereby He becomes more and more a living Reality unto the soul. It is then that we draw near to Him and He draws near to us, and there is a sacred converse the one with the other. Thereby, we commune with and delight ourselves in Him. It is while we are thus engaged that the Spirit graciously fulfills His office work as "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father"! (Rom 8:15). We then find He is more ready to hear than we are to speak. Pleading the merits of Christ, we enjoy most blessed fellowship with Him and obtain fresh foretastes of the everlasting bliss awaiting us on high. It is to a reconciled Father we come, and as "His dear children." If we approach in the spirit of the prodigal son, the same welcome awaits us and the same tokens of love are received by us. It is then we are made to exclaim, "thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over" (Psa 23:5), and that we pour out our hearts before Him in praise and adoration.

Now contemplate a slackening of the prayer life in the light of the three things pointed out above, and what must be the inevitable consequences! How can I prosper if I shirk my duty? How can the blessing of God rest upon me if I largely refuse that which He requires from me? If prayer

also be one of the chief means of grace, and I neglect it, am I not “forsaking my own mercies”? If it be the alone channel through which I obtain fresh supplies of grace from Christ, shall I not necessarily be feeble and sickly? If my strength be not renewed, how can I successfully resist my spiritual foes? If no power from on high be received, how shall I be able to tread the path of obedience? And if prayer be the principal channel of communion and converse with God, and that holy privilege be lightly esteemed, will not God soon become less real, my heart grow cold, my faith languish and my joy vanish? Yes, a slackening in the prayer life most certainly entails spiritual decline, with all that accompanies the same.

*Sitting under an unedifying ministry.* God has appointed and equipped certain men to act as His shepherds to feed His sheep. He speaks of them as “pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding” (Jer 3:15). In the ordinary course of events, it is His method to employ human instrumentality; and therefore, He has provided gifted servants “for the perfecting of the saints” (Eph 4:11-12). Satan knows that; and hence, he raises up false prophets to deceive and destroy. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 warns us that “for such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.” Nor should we be surprised at this—“for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness.” Those ministers of his have long held most of the professors’ chairs in the seminaries, thousands have occupied the pulpits of almost every denomination, and the great majority of those who sat under them were corrupted and fatally deluded by a specious mixture of truth and lies; and real Christians who attended, injuriously affected.

It is because of the presence of these disguised ministers of Satan that God bids His people: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the [professing] world” (1Jo 4:1). “Try” them by the unerring standard of Holy Writ: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa 8:20). God holds you responsible to “prove all things” (1Th 5:21) and *commends* those who *have* “tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars” (Rev 2:2). His urgent command unto each of His children is, “*Cease*, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge” (Pro 19:27). That is not optional, but obligatory; and we disregard it at our peril. Listening to false doctrine is highly injurious, for it causes to err from right beliefs and right practices. The ministry we sit under affects us for good or evil; and therefore, our Master enjoins us, “Take heed what ye hear” (Mar 4:24).

It is of far greater moment than young Christians realise that they *heed* what has just been pointed out. The reading matter we peruse, and the religious instruction we imbibe, has as real an influence and effect upon the mind and the soul as what we eat and drink does on the body: If it be corrupt and poisonous, its effects will be identical in each case. Proof of that is found in the history of the Galatians. To them, the apostle said, “Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?” (Gal 5:7); and the answer was heretics, Judaizers, who perverted the Gospel. And the saint today is hindered (“driven back,” margin) if he attends the preaching of error. Therefore, “*shun* profane *and* vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker” (2Ti 2:16-17). The teaching of heretics diffuses a noisome influence, till it eats away the life and power of piety, as a gangrene spreads through a limb.

But one may sit under what is termed a “sound” ministry and—through no fault of his own—derive no benefit from the same. There is a “dead orthodoxy” now widely prevalent, where the Truth is preached, yet in an unctionless manner; and if there be no life in the pulpit, there is

not likely to be much in the pew. Unless the message comes fresh from God, issues warmly and earnestly from the preacher's heart, and be delivered in the power of the Holy Spirit, it will neither reach the heart of the hearer, nor minister that which will cause him to grow in grace. There is many a place in Christendom where a living, refreshing, soul-edifying ministry once obtained, but the Spirit of God was grieved and quenched, and a visit there is like entering a morgue—everything is cold, cheerless, lifeless. The officers and members seem petrified, and to attend such services is to be chilled and become partaker of that deadening influence. A ministry which does not lift the soul Godwards, produce joy in the Lord, and stimulate to grateful obedience, casts the soul down and soon brings it into the slough of despond.

Only the Day to come will reveal how many a babe in Christ had his growth arrested through sitting under a ministry which supplied him not with the sincere milk of the Word. Only that Day will show how many a young believer—in the warmth and glow of his first love—was discouraged and dismayed by the coldness and deadness of the place where he went to worship. No wonder that God so rarely regenerates any under such a ministry—those places would not prove at all suitable as nurseries for His little ones. Many a spiritual decline is to be attributed to this very cause. Then take heed, young Christian, where you attend. If you cannot find a place where Christ is magnified, where His presence is felt, where the Word is ministered in the power of the Spirit, where your soul is actually fed, but where you come away as empty as when you went—then far better to remain at home and spend the time on your knees, feeding directly from God's Word, and reading that which you *do* find helpful unto your spiritual life.

*Companionship with unbelievers.* “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men” (Pro 4:14). “I have written unto you not to keep company” (1Co 5:10-11)—with the world. The word for “company” there means “*to mingle*”: We cannot avoid contact with the unregenerate, but we must see to it that our hearts become not attracted to them. The Christian is indeed to have good will toward all he encounters, seeking their best interests (Gal 6:10); but he is to have no pleasure in our complacency toward those who despise his Master. It is forbidden to walk with the profane in a way of friendship. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2Co 6:14), for familiarity with them will speedily dull the edge of your spirituality. “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1Co 15:33). We cannot disregard these Divine precepts with impunity. “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?” (Jam 4:4). “A companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Pro 13:20).

But it is not only the *openly* profane and lawless who are to be shunned by the saint—he needs especially to avoid *empty professors*. By which we mean, those who claim to be Christians, but who do not *live* the Christian life; those who are “church members” or “in fellowship” with some assembly, but whose conduct is careless and carnal; those who attend service on Sunday, but who may be found at the football match, the movies, the dance-hall during the week. The empty professor is far more dangerous as a close acquaintance than one who makes no profession: The Christian is less on his guard with the former, and having some confidence in him is more easily influenced by him. Beware of those who say one thing, but do another; whose talk is pious, but whose walk is worldly. The Word of God is plain and positive on this point: “Having a form of godliness [in action], but denying the power [reality] thereof: *from such turn away*” (2Ti 3:5). If you do not, they will soon drag you down with themselves into the mire.

O young Christian, your “companions”—those with whom you most closely associate—exert a powerful influence upon you for either good or evil. Far better that you should tread a lonely path with Christ, than that you offend Him by cultivating friendship with religious worldlings. “He that liveth in a mill, the flour will stick upon his clothes. Man receiveth an insensible taint

from the company he keepeth. He that liveth in a shop of perfumes and is often handling of them carrieth away some of their fragrancy: so by converse with the godly we are made like them” (A Puritan). “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise” (Pro 13:20). In selecting your closest friend, let not a pleasing personality allure: There are many wolves in sheep’s clothing (Mat 7:15). Be most careful in seeing to it that what draws you to and makes you desire the Christian companionship of another is his or her love and likeness to Christ, and not his love and likeness to yourself.

“I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts” (Psa 119:63) should be the aim and endeavour of the child of God—though such characters indeed are very scarce these evil days. They are the only companions worth having, for they alone will encourage you to press forward along the “narrow way.” It is not those who profess to “believe in the Lord,” but those who give evidence they *revere* Him; not those who merely profess to “stand for” His precepts, but who actually perform them, that you need to seek unto. So far from sneering at your “strictness,” they will strengthen you therein, give salutary counsel, be fellow-helpers in prayer and piety: The godly will quicken you unto more godliness. Their converse is on sacred topics, and that will draw out your affection unto things above. If you be unable to locate any of these characters, then make it your earnest prayer: “Let those that fear thee *turn unto me*, and those that have known thy testimonies” (Psa 119:79).

*An undue absorption with worldly things.* “Worldly” is a term that means very different things in the minds and mouths of different people. Some Christians complain that their minds are “worldly” when they simply mean that, for the time being (and often rightly so), their thoughts are entirely occupied with temporal matters. We do not propose to enter into a close defining of the term, but would point out that the performing of those duties which God has assigned us in the world—or the availing ourselves of its conveniences (such as trains, the telegraph, the printing press), or even enjoying the comforts which it provides (food, clothing, housing)—are certainly not “worldly” in any evil sense. That which *is* injurious to the spiritual life is time wasted in worldly pleasures, the heart absorbed in worldly pursuits, the mind oppressed by worldly cares. It is the *love of the world* and its things which is forbidden, and very close watch needs to be kept upon the heart; otherwise, it will glide insensibly into this snare.

The case of Lot supplies a most solemn warning against this evil. He yielded to a spirit of covetousness and so consulted temporal advantages that the spiritual welfare of his family was disregarded. When Abraham invited him to make choice of a portion of Canaan for himself and his herds, instead of remaining in the vicinity of his uncle, upon whom the blessing of the Most High rested, he “lifted up his eyes [acting by sight rather than by faith], and beheld all the plain of Jordan that it was well watered every where...then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan and Lot journeyed east” (Gen 13:8-11). Thus, he even went outside the land itself, for we are told Abraham dwelt in the land of Canaan and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent toward Sodom (Gen 13:12). Nor did that content him: He became an alderman in Sodom (Gen 19:1) and discarded the pilgrim’s “tent” for a “house” (Gen 19:3). How disastrous the sequel was both to himself and his family is well known.

One form of worldliness which has spoilt the life and testimony of many a Christian is *politics*. We will not now discuss the question whether or not the saint ought to take *any* interest in politics, but simply point out what should be evident to all with spiritual discernment—namely, that to take an eager and deep concern in politics must remove the edge from any spiritual appetite. Clearly, politics are concerned only with the affairs of *this* world; and therefore, to become deeply absorbed in them, and have the heart engaged in the pursuit thereof, will inevitably turn



attention away from eternal things. Any worldly matter—no matter how lawful in itself—which engages our attention inordinately becomes a snare and saps our spiritual vitality. We greatly fear that those saints who spent several hours a day in listening to the speeches of candidates, reading the newspapers upon them, and discussing party politics with their fellows during the recent election, lost—to a considerable extent—their relish for the Bread of Life.

## SPIRITUAL UPS AND DOWNS

By Isaac Watts (1674-1748),  
written in 1726 to a distressed soul.

It is at the request of your excellent brother that I take the freedom to offer my sentiments in order to restore that comfort to your soul which you have many years enjoyed, and which has been of late a little interrupted. To this end, I entreat you to take these few inquiries into your own heart.

1. Have you seen yourself a sinful, guilty creature before the great God? Have you not acknowledged this guilt before the throne of grace and humbly sought to be restored to His favour, and to partake of pardoning love?
2. Are you not willing to have your sinful nature made holy? Have you not found the workings of sin a burden and grief to you? And cannot you join with the apostle in complaining of the flesh and the workings of indwelling sin? (Rom 7:16, 25). Are you not desirous to love God with fervency, and to serve Him with zeal? Is it not your highest ambition to please God in all things?—to be much with God on earth, and to be forever with Him in Heaven? Be assured no power but that of God could raise such desires, and He will satisfy them.
3. Have you not seen Christ as an all-sufficient Mediator, who has died to provide pardon for guilty creatures, and who lives in Heaven to intercede for sinners on earth? Have you not committed your soul into His hand, that you might be introduced into the favour of God?—that you might be pardoned for the sake of His sufferings and death?—that you might be accepted in His name? (Act 4:12, Joh 14:6). Are you not persuaded He is the true and living way, and that He is able to keep what you have committed to Him, till He present you before the Father's and His own glory? (1Ti 1:12, Eph 5:26-27). And have you not given up yourself to His conduct, to be influenced and assisted by His Spirit, to carry you on your way Heavenward? This is a full and large account of faith in Christ; and if you have found these things in your heart and life, you may assuredly pronounce yourself a believer in Jesus, to all the ends and purposes of salvation.
4. Have you not experienced the blessed fruits of faith, in having your love drawn out to Christ, in being enabled to mortify corrupt affections? And has not the love of God

wrought in your love to man for God's sake? I would not multiply inquiries of this kind, as I have reason to believe you will find most of these characters and principles in your soul. I persuade myself you will apply the following words of Gospel consolation to yourself, and rejoice in them through the aid of the comforting Spirit: 1 John 1:7, John 6:37, Matthew 11:28-29. Can you ever believe God will reject your soul, and abandon you in age and death? Can you entertain such dishonourable thoughts of Christ? Surely the Divine Shepherd has more compassion for His sheep. But there are three things which have been the occasion of grief and darkness to many pious souls, and I would caution you against them:

- a. Let not your expectations of holiness be too high. The Law of God requires a perfect obedience, but never anyone obeyed it in perfection, but the God-man, Christ Jesus. There will be sins working in the heart, wishes of corrupt nature, defects in our best duties, too much indifferency in our love to God, too much earthly-mindedness, too many wanderings of heart from God, and this flesh will be often leading us astray. These things should be matter of complaint and humiliation before God, but should not discourage our faith and hope. A pain at the heart under a sense of sin, a delight in the law of the Lord after the inner man, and a diligent labour after complete holiness, are the highest degrees of perfection attainable in this life.
- b. Be not fond of extraordinary witnesses of the Spirit: God feeds very few of His people with extraordinary ecstasies and Divine transports of soul.
- c. Let not your hopes be so inconstant and fickle as the temperature of your blood may be, but rather rejoice with David in the language of faith: "For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD: thou art my trust from my youth" (Psa 71:5); "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth" (Psa 71:9); "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" (Psa 23:4).

May the Spirit of God seal these comfortable truths upon your heart, and give you peace and joy in believing. ❧

# December

## THE FRIENDSHIP OF CHRIST

We wonder how many of our readers have ever heard a sermon or read an article on this precious subject. We wonder how many of His people are accustomed to think of Christ in this blessed relationship. If the answer be, “Few,” that is indeed pathetic and tragic. Christ is the best *Friend* that the Christian has, and it is both his unspeakable privilege and bounden duty to regard Him as such and to treat Him accordingly. Our Scriptural support for those statements is found in the following passages, among others. “There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (Pro 18:24). That can refer to none other than the Lord Jesus, the Lover of our souls. “This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem” (Song 5:16). That is the language of His Spouse, the testimony of the Church, avowing this most intimate and blissful relationship. Add to these the witness of the New Testament when in the days of His flesh, Christ was termed “a friend of publicans and sinners!” (Luk 7:34), and our warrant is clearly established.

There are many and varied relations in which Christ stands to a believer, and he is greatly the loser if He be ignored in any of them. Christ is the God, Lord, Head, Saviour of the Church. Officially, He is our Prophet, Priest, and King. Personally, He is our Kinsman-Redeemer, our Intercessor, our “Friend.” That title expresses the *near union* there is between the Lord Jesus and believers: They are as if but one soul actuated them—indeed, one and the same spirit does, for “he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1Co 6:17). “Christ stands in a nearer relation than a brother to the Church: He is her Husband, her Bosom-friend” (John Gill, 1697-1771). “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Eph 5:30). But even those relations fall short of fully expressing the nearness, spiritual oneness, and indissolubleness of the union which exists between Christ and His people. There should, then, be the freest approaches unto Him and the most intimate fellowship with Him. To deny Christ, *that* is to ignore the fact that He *is* our best “Friend.”

“There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (Pro 18:24). That endearing title not only expresses the near relation there is between Him and His redeemed, but the *affection* which He ever bears them. Nothing has, does, or can, dampen—much less quench—the outflow of the same: “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (Joh 13:1). That blessed title of Christ’s tells of the *sympathy* He bears to His people in all their sufferings and sorrows, their temptations and infirmities. “In all their affliction he was afflicted...in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old” (Isa

63:9)—what demonstrations of His friendship are those! That blessed title also tells of His deep *concern* in our cause and interests. He has our highest welfare at heart, and accordingly, He has promised, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good” (Jer 32:40).

Let us consider more definitely the excellencies of our best Friend. Christ is an *ancient* Friend. Old friends are prized most highly. The Lord Jesus was our Friend when we were His enemies! We fell in Adam, but He ceased not to love us; nay, He became the last Adam to redeem us and laid down “his life for his friends” (Joh 15:13). He sent His servants to preach the Gospel unto us, but we despised it. Even when we were wandering in the ways of folly, He determined to save us, and watched over us. In the midst of our sinning and sporting with death, He arrested us by His grace; and by His love and power, overcame our enmity and won our hearts unto Himself.

Christ is a *constant* Friend, One that “loveth at all times” (Pro 17:17). He continues to be our Friend through all the vicissitudes of life. No “fair-weather friend” is He, who fails us when we most need him. He is our Friend in the day of adversity, equally as much as in the day of prosperity. Was He not so to poor Peter! He is “a very present help in trouble” (Psa 46:1), and evidences it by His supporting and sustaining grace. Nor do our iniquities and transgressions turn away His compassion from us: even then He acts the part of a friend toward us—“if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1Jo 2:1).

Christ is a *faithful* Friend. His grace is not shown at the expense of righteousness, nor do His mercies ignore the requirements of holiness. Christ ever has in view both the glory of God and the highest good of His people. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Pro 27:6). A real friend loyally performs his duty in pointing out to me my faults. In this respect, too, does Christ “shew himself friendly” (Pro 18:24). Often has He occasion to say unto each of us, “I have a few things against thee” (Rev 2:14); and then it is by that, He rebukes by His Word, convicts our conscience by His Spirit, and chastens us by His providences: “That we might be partakers of his holiness” (Heb 12:10).

Christ is a *powerful* Friend. He is not only willing, but able to help us. Some of our earthly friends have the desire to assist us in the hour of need, but lack the necessary wherewithal. Not so our heavenly Friend: Not only has He the heart to assist us, but also the power. He is the Possessor of “unsearchable riches” and all that He has is at our disposal: “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them” (Joh 17:22). We have a Friend at Court, for Christ uses His meritorious influence with the Father on our behalf: “He ever liveth to make intercession” for us (Heb 7:25). No situation can possibly arise with us, which would be beyond the resources of Christ.

Christ is an *everlasting* Friend. He deserts us not in the hour of our supreme crisis: “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me” (Psa 23:4). Nor does death itself sever us from this Friend who “sticketh closer than a brother”—for so far from calling upon us to sojourn in a papish purgatory, we are with Him that very day in Paradise. Death will have separated us from those on earth, but “absent from the body” we shall be “present with the Lord” in Heaven (2Co 5:8). And in the future Day of judgment, Christ will manifest Himself as our Friend, saying, “Enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Mat 25:21, 23).

# THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

## 24. Ephesians 1:15-23

### *Part 10*

That which is set before us in the closing verses of Ephesians 1 is purely a matter of Divine revelation, and therefore, can be received and enjoyed only by a God-given faith. What is there made known to us by the Holy Spirit is wholly beyond the reach of physical observation and completely transcends the realm of Christian “experience.” That God has seated Christ at His own right hand is plainly affirmed in the Word of Truth: Though it lies far above the present verification of our senses; nevertheless, it is a glorious fact which faith unhesitatingly receives upon Divine authority. The same is equally true of the other things here mentioned. Christ’s exaltation over the celestial hosts, all things being put under His feet, the use He is now making of His mighty power, and the relations which the Church sustains to Him, transcend the sphere of our senses—they are things which can neither be seen nor felt by us, yet they are real and glorious to faith. Unless *that* be firmly grasped by the expositor, he is bound to err in his interpretation of the details.

The exaltation of Christ is exhibited to us under the double metaphor of God’s *seating* Him at His own *right hand*, which signifies (in brief) the investing of the Mediator with that supreme governmental authority, which hitherto had been exercised by God alone: The scepter of the universe is now wielded by the God-man, Christ Jesus. What follows is an account of the distinctive honours, which have been conferred upon Him. First, He has been advanced “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Eph 1:21)—all intelligences being reduced to one common level is certainly not the law or principle which obtains in Heaven! Nor are they in the kingdom over which Satan now presides, as Ephesians 6:12 makes clear. The glory of a king lies not only in his having subjects, but in his having a “court” or subjects of varying ranks: Commoners, knights, nobles—dukes, marquises, earls, etc. Such is the glorious court of the King of kings.

Second, all creatures are *set in subjection* to Christ, for that is the meaning of “And hath put all things under his feet” (Eph 1:22)—an expression importing the highest sovereignty and power. Christ is not only elevated above all creatures, but He has dominion over them: They are subordinated to Him and governed by Him. Jesus Christ has been “made...Lord” (Act 2:36), “he is Lord of all” (Act 10:36), He is “Lord over all” (Rom 10:12), He is “Lord both of the dead and living” (Rom 14:9). The One who died at Calvary is now the Ruler of the universe. This very day He holds in His hand, “the keys of hell and of death” (Rev 1:18). Since the hour of His ascension He

has been “upholding all things by the word of his power” (Heb 1:3). At this moment He is ruling “in the midst of thine enemies” (Psa 110:2). “And hath put all things under his feet” (Eph 1:22) is an accomplished fact and not a future prospect, though He still awaits the final subjugation of His foes. Christ is Lord over all, little as the profane world realises and owns it. It is a present reality, though the full results of it “doth not yet appear” (1Jo 3:2)—to our senses.

This investing of the Mediator with universal dominion was the subject of Old Testament prophecy. “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with [or “in”] the clouds of heaven [*i.e.*, in manifested majesty], and came to [*not* “from”!] the Ancient of days, and they [His celestial attendants] brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Dan 7:13-14). The words, “one *like* the Son of man” (compare Rev 1:13; 14:14) need occasion no difficulty: It is the selfsame Person who is so frequently designated “the Son of man” in the first three Gospels but in an altered state—then in abasement and humiliation, now exalted and glorified. “The Ancient of days” signifies the Father: From Him Christ came to this earth (Joh 16:28), to Him He returned (Joh 20:17), by Him He was then rewarded and enthroned. The verb “*hath put* all things under his feet,” assures us that this prediction has been fulfilled.

“And hath put all things under his feet” (Eph 1:22) is another metaphor, but its meaning is plain—namely, that God hath exalted Christ to such dignity and dominion that everything is under His power, *in subjection to Him*. This is clear from the first passage in which the expression occurs: “Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet” (Psa 8:6)—the one clause defining the other. The scope of that “all things” is amplified in the words that follow: “All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas” (Psa 8:7-8). As Hebrews 2:8 still further points out: “For in that he put [*not* “will put” in some future era] all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him:...”—nothing visible or invisible, in heaven or earth, friend or foe—“...But now we see not [with our natural eyes] yet all things put under him”—though we shall one day behold that too. Meanwhile, “we see Jesus [with the eyes of faith]...crowned with glory and honour” (Heb 2:9), as exhibited in the closing verses of Ephesians 1.

“And hath put all things under his feet” (Eph 1:22). As is so often the case, many of the commentators have unwarrantably restricted the scope of these words, limiting them unto the subjugation of His *enemies*. Undoubtedly, that is part of their meaning, yet their primary significance and extent is the subjection of all—friends and foes alike. “All the people that follow thee”—Pharaoh (Exo 11:8) and “all the people that follow me”—Benhadad (1Ki 20:10) is rightly rendered in the margin, “are at thy feet” and “at my feet,” so that it is all one to say: All the people that are thy subjects (who own thy scepter) or “at thy feet.” As we have seen, “Thou hast put all things under his feet” (Psa 8:6) is interpreted in “Thou hast put all things *in subjection* under his feet” and that “nothing” is excepted (Heb 2:8). “To bow the head to another is a token of reverence, but to fall down at his feet is to express the utmost subjection” (Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680).

There should be no difficulty in perceiving this expression is applicable and appropriate to the holy angels: Their subjection to Christ is a voluntary and joyous one; nor to the Church, for He is its Head, and each of its members is made “willing in the day of thy [His] power” (Psa 110:3) to submit to His rule. That is exactly what is meant by “take my yoke upon you” (Mat 11:29):

“Yield to My Lordship, give Me the throne of your hearts, surrender your will to My governance.” When the Church is spoken of as the Body of Christ, that sets forth her dignity, yet He being the “*head of the church*” (Eph 5:23) expresses His superior dignity. The king’s consort sustains a *double* relation to him: As the monarch, she is a subject, but as his wife, she is a queen. Hence, while in Psalm 45:9, it is said of Christ, “upon thy right hand did stand the queen,” and it is added, “So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty;” yet she is at once told, “he is thy Lord; and worship thou him” (Psa 45:11)—be subject to and adore Him.

But the expression also refers to Christ’s triumph over His enemies. After Joshua had gained that remarkable victory over the combined armies of the Canaanites, he said, “Open the mouth of the cave [into which they had fled] and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave. And they did so” (Jos 10:22-23). And he said to his captains, “Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings” (Jos 10:24), and they did so. “And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies” (Jos 10:25). “But I will put it [the cup of God’s fury] into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over,” etc., (Isa 51:22-23). It is to such passages as Psalm 110:1 alludes: “Until I make thine enemies thy footstool”—*i.e.*, to be crushed and destroyed. The Church is under Christ’s feet by way of subjection, but she is not His “footstool” by way of subjugation and degradation.

Yet we believe that “hath put all things under his feet” (Eph 1:22) includes even more than what T. Goodwin brought out: Not only all friends by way of voluntary submission and all foes by forced subjugation, but *all events* by way of His immediate operation. It is not simply “all creatures,” but “all things.” Providence itself is now directed by the Mediator: All history is shaped by His imperial hand. Every movement, every occurrence—both in heaven and in earth—is ordered by the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is clothed with all authority and invested with universal dominion, and He is now actually engaged in exercising the same. But let it not be overlooked that the exaltation and sovereignty of Christ is revealed in Scripture as something more than a historical reality: The very fact it is here brought in at the close of the apostle’s prayer intimates it is a grand truth which ought to affect our hearts and lives. Do we conduct ourselves as those in complete subjection to Him? As we view those who oppose us, do we realise the force of His “Fear not, little flock” (Luk 12:32)? As we contemplate the troubled waters of this world, do we recognise that our mighty Captain is at the helm?

“And gave him to be the head over all things to the church,” (Eph 1:22). That means far more than that Christ is the Church’s Head, which is how T. Goodwin strangely limited it. In those words and the ones which follow the Holy Spirit reveals some of the distinctive blessings which accrue unto the redeemed as the result of the exaltation of the Redeemer. It was not only for the sake of His Son that God placed Him upon the throne, but it was also for the benefit of the Church. “Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that [in order that] he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him” (Joh 17:2) is a parallel statement—though not quite as broad in its terms. Christ has been given universal and absolute rule over the whole of creation; and this, that He might bestow eternal life upon the elect. It is the fact that “All power is given unto me [Christ] in heaven and in earth,” which gives force to the “Go ye *therefore*, and teach all nations” (Mat 28:18-19)—no weapon formed against His servants shall or can prosper.

Absolute Lordship has been conferred upon the Mediator with the particular design of advantage to His blood-bought people. Christ’s universal Headship and power is being employed in the service of His beloved. “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour...”—with what design?—“...to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins (Act 5:31):

Christ has been elevated so high that He may disburse the gifts of salvation unto those who belong to the spiritual Israel—"the Israel of God" (Gal 6:16). He has not only gone into heaven to "prepare a place" for His own (Joh 14:2), but He is also active on their behalf while they are upon earth. Upon His ascension, we are told that "they [His ambassadors] went forth, and preached every where, the Lord *working* with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mar 16:20). And so completely is He ordering all the affairs of providence on behalf of His saints, so thoroughly are their enemies beneath His control, it is said, "all things are for your sakes" (2Co 4:15).

It is great importance that we should consider and apprehend God's object in subjecting all things unto the Redeemer: Not only as illustrating the principles of His moral government—"he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luk 14:11), "them that honour me I will honour" (1Sa 2:30), and the good which results to us therefrom—but also the bearing which it should have upon our character and conduct. The salvation of the Church was the direct design of the whole of Christ's mediation. It was for her He voluntarily suffered humiliation and death, and it was for the promotion of her interests God exalted Christ and that He now employs for her benefit the powers which have been bestowed upon Him. Though raised so high, He has neither lost His love for His sheep, nor relinquished His purpose concerning them. All hearts are now in His hand: by Him "kings reign, and princes decree justice" (Pro 8:15), yet He is exercising His dominion in subser-viency to His purpose of grace, disposing all the affairs of the universe for the good of His Church: to the accomplishment of *that* the whole series of events which forms the history of individuals and nations is directed and subordinated.

Yet how faintly is that realised by any of us—that Christ is over men and angels, demons and Satan himself. This world is under the control of the One whose hands were nailed to the cross. Christ rules and overrules for the good of His Church the deliberations of the senate, the conflict of armies, the history of the nations. The Nero's, the Charlmagne's, the Napoleon's, the Hitler's—who, for a brief season, proudly strut upon the stage of this world's drama—are but puppets in the hand of the enthroned Christ and are made to accomplish His purpose and serve the highest and ultimate interests of His people. Even when the nations are convulsed like the angry sea, and it appears to carnal sight and reason that things have got quite out of control, "The LORD hath *his way* in the whirlwind and in the storm" (Nah 1:3). Then there is nothing for us to be alarmed at: The ark of the covenant is in no danger!

"And gave him to be the head over all things to the church" (Eph 1:22). To the angels, Christ is a "head" by virtue of sovereignty and power (Col 2:10), but He is the Church's "head" by mystical union as well: They are but His servants, the Church is His Spouse. He is the Church's "head" first by way of *distinction*, as her King and Lord, "for in all *things* he might have the preeminence" (Col 1:18). Second, by way of *authority*: "The church is subject unto Christ" (Eph 5:24), so that in all spiritual matters, she refuses domination or direction by either state or people. Third, in a way of *influence*: Receiving her life, strength, and grace from Him—"from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered" (Col 2:19 and compare Eph 4:16). All her springs are in Him: from His fulness she receives. Christ is not only a commanding but a compassionate Head, and therefore, is touched with the feeling of her infirmities.

"The church which is his body." Christ has a natural body, by virtue of His incarnation. He has a sacramental body, which is seen in "The Lord's supper." He has a ministerial body, the local assembly (1Co 12:27) where His ordinances are administered and His truth proclaimed. He has also a *mystical Body*, so designated because the mysterious union of its members with one another and with their Head is altogether beyond the purview of our physical senses. It is this, we



believe, which is here meant: As in Ephesians 4:12-13 (which has never been realised by any church on earth); the Church for which Christ gave himself (Eph 5:25)—which cannot be restricted to any local assembly; “To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven” (Heb 12:23), which is the sum total of all God’s elect. That mystical Body has been in process of formation since the days of Abel and will not be completed until the end of human history.

View this controversial expression in the light of what precedes. Christ’s being seated at God’s right hand is perceptible to faith alone. All things being put under His feet is not cognisable by our senses: “Now we *see not* yet all things put under him” (Heb 2:8), neither do we yet see “the Church which is His body.” Contemplate it in the light of what follows: The Church is not only the Body of Christ, but also “*the fulness* of him that filleth all in all” (Eph 1:23), which could never be said of any local assembly, nor even any denomination. The Church is the Mediatorial “fulness” of Christ: There cannot be a Redeemer without redeemed, a Shepherd without sheep, a Bridegroom without a Bride, a living Head without a living Body. He is *her* “fulness” (Joh 1:16) as the Lord of life and grace; she is *His* fulness as it is by means of the glory He has put upon her that He will hereafter be magnified (1Th 1:10).

We conclude as we began. The relation of the Church unto Christ is entirely a matter of Divine revelation. Verses 21-23 bring before us that which pertains wholly unto *faith*—not fiction or fancy, nor reason nor sense. But though each of these objects is as yet unseen by the outward eye, they are none the less *real*, and shall yet be beheld by a wondering universe. It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which constitutes the Church, Christ’s mystical Body, for only those He indwells are members of *it*. The Church is Christ’s “fulness” as it completes His mystical Person: The Head and the Body form the *mystical* “Christ” of 1 Corinthians 12:12, Ephesians 4:13, and perhaps Galatians 3:16. This inestimable honour Christ placed not on angels: They are neither His “body” nor “His fulness.” He loved His mystical Body above His natural body, for He gave the one for the other.

## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

### 4. The Great Commission (Joshua 1:1-9)

“Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua” (Jos 1:1). The opening word of this verse, when rightly rendered, supplies to the spiritual mind an indication of the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. Properly translated, it would be “And,” and what uninspired writer would ever think of beginning his production with such a connective! John Urquhart in his “The Bible: Its Structure and Purpose” (vol. 1) called attention to this feature, which though a minute detail is one of considerable importance—namely, that many of the books of the Old Testament Commence with the conjunction “*ve.*” This indicates, of course, that those which open thus are so closely linked with the ones preceding that they are really *continuations* of them. But, we may say, it does more than that: The employment of

“And” at the beginning of quite a number of them signifies that they are not so many books, but chapters in the Book. In other words, this binding together of the various books by the copulative “And” gives more than a hint of their fundamental unity: that one Author composed them, that one Rule of Faith is found in them.

Genesis has no “And” at the commencement of its opening verse, for the simple reason that it is the first book or chapter, the beginning. But Exodus opens with this connective “ve”—“and”—rendered there, “Now.” So does Leviticus, and likewise, Numbers. Thereby, we are taught that those first books are inseparably united together, and form the first division of the Bible. But, as Urquhart pointed out, “It is a surprise at first glance when we find that Deuteronomy, which is regarded as the completion of the four previous books, is, as a fact, disconnected from them.” He might also have dwelt on the fact that such a variation or difference is a designed evidence of Divine superintendence. The very fact that Deuteronomy is regarded (and from one standpoint, rightly so) as the completion of the Pentateuch argues, that were the first five books of the Bible nothing more than the uninspired productions of Jews, writing in collaboration, the fifth one had been brought into accord with those which precede it.

The absence of “and” at the opening of Deuteronomy at once intimates that that book is not a supplement to what has gone before, but rather, a new beginning, or a new division of the Old Testament. It looks forward and not backward: A careful study of its contents will verify this. Joshua comes next, and it *does* open with “And”—and so does every book which follows until 1 Chronicles is reached! Thus, Joshua to the end of 2 Kings is annexed to Deuteronomy, and the whole forms the second division of the Old Testament. Having pointed out this feature, let us pause and consider its significance. Why are the first four books of the Bible coupled together? Why the next eight? And why does Deuteronomy belong to the second group rather than the first? The answer must be sought in the history of Israel, for that is the theme of the Old Testament. The first four books give us the history of Israel *outside* the *Land*, which was promised them for an inheritance; the next eight treat of their history, *in it*. Deuteronomy rehearses the past history of the Nation and restates the Law in view of their approaching possession of Canaan, informing them how they must conduct themselves therein.

“Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD” (Jos 1:1). The removal of Moses from their head was a heavy loss unto Israel. For many years, he had been their leader and legislator. It was under him they had been delivered from the cruel bondage of Egypt. It was in answer to his prayers that a way was opened for them through the Red Sea. He was the one who acted as their representative before the Lord, and as His mouthpiece unto them. It is true, there were times when they distrusted him and murmured against him; yet, on the whole, they respected and confided in him. A stage had now been reached when it seemed that Israel needed him more than ever, for with practically no fighting experience and possessing scarcely any weapons, they were about to pit themselves against the “seven nations in the land of Canaan” (Act 13:19). Yet he was no longer to be their commander: Death took him from them. That was a deep mystery to carnal reason, a most painful providence, a sore trying of their faith. That they felt it keenly is clear: “And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days” (Deu 34:8).

“Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan” (Jos 1:1-2). The work of God is in nowise hindered by the decease of His servants, no matter how eminent they be in office, nor how much used in blessing to His people. Though the workmen be removed, His work goes forward to its ordained completion. “God will change hands to show that whatever instruments He uses, He is not tied to any” (Matthew

Henry, 1662-1714). That does not mean that God will necessarily supply another pastor for a church when one has died, for His work in that particular place may be finished; or that when His time arrives for the work of this magazine to end, that He will provide another; but it *does mean* that He will continue to maintain His Cause upon earth and supply every need of His people. That is certain, and it should both comfort and inspire us with courage in these dark days in which our lot is cast.

It is to be duly noted that Joshua did not push himself forward to fill the breach made by the departure of Moses, but waited until ordered by the Lord to do so. The relation which he sustained to his predecessor is not only one of interest, but also of deep importance—not so much so from a historical standpoint as from the typical and doctrinal. This is the point at which we should amplify that statement at some length, but we are afraid to do so, lest some of our readers wonder if we are ever going to “get down to business”—for we have already written three articles without taking up the opening verses of our book. Yet others will say, “What does that matter if their contents were instructive and profitable?” We will, therefore, adopt a compromise, and defer our remarks upon that subject until a little later. Meanwhile, perhaps a few may be stimulated to ponder and supply answers for themselves to the following questions: “What was the varied relationship of Joshua unto Moses? And what important truth is illustrated and illuminated thereby?”

“Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel” (Jos 1:2). The appointed time had now arrived for Jehovah to make good the promises which He had made to Abraham and his children long centuries before. All that had been accomplished through Moses was but preliminary thereto, yet supplying a sure earnest that He would continue to show Himself strong on their behalf—so long as they adhered strictly to the covenant which He had entered into with them at Sinai. For that covenant, and the earlier one, constituted the basis of all His dealings with Israel: While they kept it, they prospered; when they broke it, they experienced His judgments. It is to be duly observed that this commission which Joshua here received from the Lord was given to him as the head of Israel. It was made not with him alone, but the nation as well: “Thou, and all this people” (Jos 1:2). This needs to be borne in mind in connection with all that follows.

“Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I *given* unto you, as I said unto Moses” (Jos 1:3). Here again (see previous verse), the Lord emphasised the fact that Canaan was a sovereign and free gift which He made unto Israel. It was not a portion to which they were in any wise entitled: Neither they, nor their ancestors, had done anything to merit such a heritage, nor would their subsequent prowess in conquering or dispossessing the Canaanites warrant the idea that they had earned it. Thus, it is with the eternal inheritance of the spiritual Israel. When they are finally gathered into it, they will, with one accord exclaim, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory” (Psa 115:1). And even now while upon earth, they frankly aver, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to *his mercy* he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour” (Titus 3:5-6). They one and all subscribe to that declaration, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8-9).

Nevertheless, though Canaan was a Divine gift unto Israel, yet they did not enter into possession of it without effort on their part: *Their* concurrence was required, and thereby, their responsibility was enforced! Unless that fact be clearly recognised, we shall be all at sea in applying the type unto ourselves, and seriously—aye fatally—pervert God’s “plan” or way of

salvation. There is not the slightest excuse for our doing so, for the teaching of Scripture on this subject—both in the type and the antitype—is as clear as a sunbeam. Canaan was first given unto Abraham, and he is “the father of all them that believe” (Rom 4:11); and therefore, his case is the norm or model after which ours is patterned. Concerning Abraham himself, all room for doubt as to *how he* obtained Canaan, is removed by Hebrews 11:8: “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place (which he should after receive for an inheritance), *obeyed*; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.” It was by faith-obedience that Canaan became his.

What has just been pointed out and our placing that clause in parenthesis is clearly confirmed by Genesis 12:1: “Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will *shew* thee.” There was no promise at that time that the land would be made over to him for a possession: It was not until years after that God said to him, “I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it” (Gen 15:7). Abraham was first required to break completely from his old life and separate from the world, to submit himself unreservedly to God, to walk by faith, to act in unquestioning obedience to His revealed will, *before* the heritage became his! Yes, my reader, the call which Abraham received from God made very real and definite demands upon him; and since he is “the father of us all” (Rom 4:16), each of his children must be conformed to the family likeness. Abraham is a figure or prototype of those who have, by grace, been made “partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb 3:1).

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Heb 11:8)—still less knowing that the land would be given to him. A saving faith is one which heeds the Divine commandments, as well as relies upon the Divine promises. Make no mistake about that, dear friends, Christ is “the Author of salvation unto all them that *obey* Him” (Heb 5:9). Abraham obeyed not only in word, but in deed: “He went out” (Heb 11:8). In that, he was in marked contrast from the prevaricating one who said, “I go, sir: and went not” (Mat 21:30). Faith and obedience can no more be severed than can the sun and the light, fire and heat. Therefore, we read of “obedience to the faith” (Rom 1:5) “Obedience is faith’s daughter. Faith hath not only to do with the grace of God, but with the duty of the creature as well. By apprehending grace, it works upon duty: ‘Faith which worketh by love’ (Gal 5:6). It fills the soul with apprehensions of God’s love, and then makes use of the sweetness of love to urge us to more work or obedience” (T. Manton).

And now the descendants of Abraham were called upon to act by a similar faith and walk by the same implicit obedience unto God which had marked their progenitor! The Jordan must be crossed, cities must be captured, battles must be fought, the Canaanites conquered, *before* Israel could enter into possession of and enjoy their inheritance. True, blessedly true, they were not required to perform such feats in their own unaided strength: The might of Omnipotence would work on their behalf. Yet also—and equally true—was it that God would show Himself strong on their behalf only while they yielded to His authority and conducted themselves according to His orders. The Land was indeed His gift—His free and sovereign gift—unto them, yet they would only obtain possession of the same by their own efforts. There is nothing inharmonious between those two things, any more than there is an inconsistency in the Gospel call. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, *buy*, and eat; yea, come, *buy* wine and milk without money and *without price*” (Isa 55:1)—alas that that repeated “buy” is totally ignored by modern “evangelism.”

“Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates,

all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast” (Jos 1:3-4). As we have pointed out in a previous paper, the contents of this book have a twofold application: an initial and a progressive, to the sinner and to the saint. That is intimated, we believe, by the very position Joshua occupies in the Sacred Canon: It sustains a *dual* relation—coming after, yet being linked to the Pentateuch, and also forming the commencement of the Historical books. That hints strongly at a twofold spiritual significance of its contents. Concerning the land of Canaan, Moses said to the Congregation, “For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you” (Deu 12:9). In contrast from the wanderings in the Wilderness, Canaan was their “rest,” but in actual experience, their entrance into the Land marked the beginning of years of hard fighting. The moment a sinner believes in Christ’s peace of conscience, rest of soul is his; nevertheless, only then begins the fierce battle between the flesh and the spirit.

That rest of soul enjoyed by the Christian when he ceases fighting against God and trusts in the Saviour is an earnest of his inheritance, a foretaste of the perfect and eternal rest awaiting him on high. The initial act of faith in Christ puts him in possession of an inalienable title to “the purchased possession” (Eph 1:14), but his actual entrance therein is yet future. But it is both his privilege and duty to “possess...[his] possessions” (Oba 1:17)—even now, to enjoy them by faith and anticipate them by hope. It is his privilege and duty to appropriate by faith and live in the present enjoyment of that rich portion which God has given him in Christ. But the flesh, the world, and the Devil will oppose, and seek to keep him out of a present enjoyment of his possession. There is nothing the Devil hates more than to see a saint glorying in God and rejoicing in Christ his Lord; and therefore, both directly and by means of indwelling sin, or the allurements and cares of this world, he is ever seeking to deprive him of his rights. But if we mortify the flesh, steadfastly resist the Devil, live a life of faith and walk obediently, we can overcome both self, Satan, and the world.

In this connection, we need to recall that word of the Lord unto Israel at an earlier date: “I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. *By little and little* I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land” (Exo 23:29-30), which shows that God does not act arbitrarily, but compassionately with respect to His people. To their short-sightedness, it might have appeared a more signal mercy had God exterminated the Canaanites in the first few months after the crossing of its boundary, but that had neither been most for His glory nor their good. There were wild beasts in the land, as well as gross idolaters, and even though the latter had been extirpated, Israel were yet too few in number to properly occupy the whole of the country—they must wait for that until they had sufficiently multiplied. Moreover, by driving out the Canaanites from before them “little by little,” Israel was kept in a state of constant dependence before the Lord. That is one of His principal designs in all His dealings with people: To wean them from self-reliance and teach them to lean more and more upon Himself.

The spiritual application to the Christian of the above is simple and informative. God has nowhere promised to give him victory over all his enemies at once; and therefore, he should not expect it. Nor would it be good for him if He did—pride and self-esteem would be the immediate outcome. “And therefore will the LORD *wait*, that he may be gracious unto you” (Isa 30:18). He has many things to say unto us, but we cannot bear them now (Joh 16:12); and He has victories to give us, but we are not yet fitted for them. As Israel were not to be discouraged by the slowness of their arms, neither must we be dismayed if victory be not ours at once—still less entertaining the thought that success will never be achieved by us. In like manner, the possessing of our posses-

sions, the present entering into and enjoyment of our heritage in Christ, is not attained all in a moment, but it is a progressive experience—"by little and little." Growth in grace is not an instantaneous thing like the new birth, but a gradual one: Patience has to have her perfect work.

Perhaps some reader may recall another word of Jehovah's spoken before the Jordan was crossed: "The LORD thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: *so* shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them *quickly*" (Deu 9:3). We need hardly say that there is no conflict between this passage and the one in Exodus 23, for there are *no* "contradictions" in the Word of God. All that is needed is a little careful attention to each passage. The "I will not drive them out from before thee in one year" of Exodus 23:29 has reference to the Hivites, Canaanites, and Hittites, as the previous verse shows; whereas the "them" of Deuteronomy 9:3 is the Anakim—see verse 2. Nor does this present any difficulty in the spiritual application: There *are* some enemies which the Christian is enabled to overcome "quickly," while there are others which continue to try him unto the end of his earthly course.

## THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

### 8d. Its Scope

It is not sufficiently realised that *sin* is the one great divisive, disrupting, and destructive agency at work in every part and stratum of our world. It was sin that separated man from God, which produced a breach between him and the holy angels, and which operates to the alienating of one man from another. Among the many and dreadful effects of the Fall (which was itself an expression of enmity against God) is the enmity between man and the man which has issued from it. That abominable thing which caused Adam to be driven out of Eden swiftly exhibited itself in the murderous hatred of Cain for Abel. Sin has not only bred a quarrel with God, but between man and man, between brother and brother, between nation and nation. Not only do the unregenerate hate the regenerate, but they live "in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another" (Titus 3:3). The whole of human history is little more than a sad record of man's enmity against man—modified (though not eradicated) only where the Gospel has taken root.

As one has truly said, "There is in every man, if his nature were let out to the full, that in him which is 'against every man' as was said of Ishmael." Self-love is the greatest monopolist and dictator in this world: "For men shall be lovers of their own selves." What immediately follows? "Covetous ... disobedient to parents...without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good" (2Ti 3:2-3). Self-love is the regulating principle in every natural man. Self-love breaks all bonds and overrides all other considerations. And self-love is but another name for sin, for so far from seeking God's glory or the good of my fellows, it selfishly considers only my own interests. Since each nation is but an aggregate of individual sinners, self-interests regulate it; and therefore, the nations are kept in a state of continual suspicion, jealousy, and enmity one against another.

Now, since Christ is the Saviour, and the only Saviour from sin, to Him was appointed the honour of healing the breaches made by sin. We have already seen how He reconciled God unto the Church and the Church unto Him, as we also dwelt at some length on His reconciliation of the Church to the celestial hosts, forming them into one holy and harmonious company. We are now to consider how He brought into the Church, welding them into one Body, two diverse peoples who had for many centuries been widely separated, and bitterly hostile to each other. That was indeed a miracle of grace, constituting as it does one of the greatest and grandest triumphs of the Atonement. We refer of course to the making of the Gentiles as “fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph 3:6) with Jews. To appreciate that marvel, let us carefully behold the awful and age-long alienation that existed between them.

We begin by contemplating that of the Jews against the Gentiles, for the quarrel originated with *them*. This is clearly intimated by “Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision” (Eph 2:11), for the word “called” there signified “dubbed.” It was the Jews who *first* began using nick-names! Out of their carnal pride, they misused the privilege bestowed upon them by God as His peculiar people, to scorn the poor Gentiles—and this, almost from the beginning. The sons of Jacob said, “To give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us” (Gen 34:14), and afterwards, the whole race of Jews, good and bad, used the term “uncircumscised” as a *stigma*—as by Samson (Jdg 15:18), by Jonathan (1Sa 14:6), David (1Sa 17:26, 36), Saul (1Sa 31:4). Yea, they regarded it as worse than death itself to “die by the hands of the uncircumcised” or have “the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph” (2Sa 1:20). When they would accurse to the most degraded death, it was, “Let him die the death of the uncircumcised.”

This enmity of the Jews was expressed in their attitude toward and dealings with the Gentiles. Not only was there no communion between them in sacred things, but they deemed it an abomination to have any social intercourse with the Gentiles. In the latter, they erred grievously, through perverting a particular precept, given upon a special ground, and making it of general application. Concerning the Ammonites and Moabites, the Lord had said, “Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever” (Deu 23:6), but as though foreseeing that the evil spirit in them would develop into a hatred of all nations and to prevent a wrong use of that precept, in the very next verse, God bade them, “Thou shalt *not* abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother: thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land” (Deu 23:7). Yet the Jews ever carried themselves toward the Gentiles as though they were the scum of the earth.

Hence, it was that when our Saviour asked water from the woman at the well, she was astonished and said, “How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans” (Joh 4:9). Yea, so intense was their animosity against the Gentiles, that the Jews would have killed Paul for no other crime than this that he “brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place” (Act 21:28, 31). Malice could not rise higher in any people against another than it did in the Jews for the Gentiles. They carried it so far that the apostle tells us, “They please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved” (1Th 2:15-16). What hope was there of such enmity being removed, and of peace, love, and concord displacing it?

How strong the Jewish prejudice was, how powerful the working of his enmity against the Gentiles, appears in him even *after* his conversion. This is forcibly illustrated in Acts 10, where we find God giving Peter a special vision in order to overcome his disinclination to carry the Gospel to those outside the pale of Judaism. When he arrived at the house of Cornelius, he frank-

ly admitted, “Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Act 10:28). When this good news reached Jerusalem that “the Gentiles had also received the word of god” (Act 11:1) and Peter returned to the brethren there, we are told that, so far from rejoicing over these new trophies of Divine grace, “they that were of the circumcision *contended* with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them” (Act 11:1-3).

Naturally, the Gentiles resented their being held in such contempt by the Jews and were not slow to retaliate, though it must be confessed they were the more moderate of the two. And this was a righteous judgment upon them from God: “And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them” (Jer 24:9). In the days of Ahasuerus, who ruled over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, amongst which the Jews were scattered; and in which they had enemies in all, it was only by special letters of appeal from the king that the Gentiles were restrained from falling on them (Est 8:9 and compare Est 9:16). They were accused of being “hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time” (Ezr 4:15). When the apostles were arrested at Philippi, the charge preferred against them was: “These men, *being Jews*, do exceedingly trouble our city” (Act 16:20).

But more. God Himself has made a distinction and difference between them, having dealt with and favoured Israel as no other nation upon earth (Amos 3:2). He had assigned them their own special land, giving them a particular code of laws—moral, civil, and religious—and set up His own exclusive worship in their midst. He had made of them a peculiar polity, having great privileges exclusive to itself, such as no other people ever enjoyed. From all of that, the Gentiles were Divinely barred. As the apostle declares, they were “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). Those consequences followed from their being “without Christ”—for He is both the substance and end of the covenants of Israel and the Revealer of God, and so of spiritual life. But in Christ, all fleshly distinctions disappear; and through His mediation, the Gentiles have been made partakers of Israel’s “spiritual things” (Rom 15:27). This is shown at length in Ephesians 2:14-22, unto which we now turn.

In approaching that passage, it needs to be borne in mind that the Spirit’s principal design therein, as in all His ministrations, is to *exalt Christ* in our esteem. The incarnate Son glorified the Father on earth as He was never glorified here before or since; and therefore, He was entitled to ask, “Father...glorify thy Son” (Joh 17:1). That request received answer not only in His exaltation on High, not only in a redeemed people being quickened and united to Him to show forth His praises, but also in the *further revelation* made of Him in the New Testament. An illustration of that is now to be before us. The Spirit’s object therein is to give us an eminent instance of the efficacy of Christ’s mediation by bringing to pass that which the united efforts of all men could never have accomplished—namely, the slaying of an age-long and inveterate enmity which existed between the two great branches of the human family, from each of which God takes a remnant to exemplify His sovereign grace. Ephesians 2 shows us how Christ abolished that which was the means or occasion of alienation between them.

“For he is our peace” (Eph 2:14) *objectively*, what He is in Himself: As He is “OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer 23:6), “our life” (Col 3:4), “our hope” (1Ti 1:1)—though there is that which is correspondent to each wrought in us. He is “our peace,” because He is Himself “the Prince of peace,” and because He is the great and glorious Peacemaker. Christ is at once the Au-



thor, the Substance, and Centre of peace. In what follows, the apostle supplies proofs or exemplifications: Christ is our peace between ourselves mutually, and He is our peace between God and us. The key to a right understanding of what follows lies in bearing in mind *that duality*. As Ephesians 2:11-13 exhibit a dual alienation—of Gentiles from Jews, of both from God—so verses 14-17 treat of a double reconciliation opposite thereto. And accordingly, in verses 18-22, we are shown the grand twofold privilege which results therefrom: Access into the favour of God (verse 18), the introduction of a new and united worship of Himself (verses 19-22).

“For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition” (Eph 2:14). He who is not only the Giver of peace, but the Peace itself, has united together believing Jews and Gentiles. Those who previously were alienated, are reconciled by Him, because He has broken down that which divided and separated them. Of old, God had “fenced” His vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-2 and compare Psalm 80:8 and Matthew 21:33-43); or as the margin reads it, “made a *wall* about it,” which had barred the Gentiles from an entrance into Israel’s spiritual things. The “middle wall of partition” (Eph 2:14) is an expression which connotes the separating cause which existed between Jew and Gentile, but which was demolished by Christ when He had—as the Representative and Surety of each alike—“made both one” in Himself. As Christ’s death rent the veil of the temple—the innermost barrier to God—so it destroyed the middle wall of partition.

“Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances” (Eph 2:15). This tells us *how* Christ broke down that which divided. The middle wall of partition is now designated “the enmity,” and that, in turn, is described as “the law of commandments,” etc. Here, too, there is a double reference: First, to the ceremonial law of Moses which excluded Gentiles from the Jews. Second, to the Covenant of works which excluded both from God. “In [or “by”] his flesh” is the same as “by the blood of Christ” (Eph 2:13) and “by the cross” (Eph 2:16): By His sacrificial and atoning death, the Law—both as a ceremonial system and as a rule of justification—was annulled. In the parallel passage (Col 2:14), the word “ordinances” is connected with “the handwriting...that was against us”—that is, to a legal bond of indictment, which Christ took out of the way, “nailing it to his cross.”

“For to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace” (Eph 2:15). In Ephesians 2:10, the believer is declared to be “his [God’s] workmanship,” but there, the glory of the creation is directly attributed to Christ, who is its Head and Life. The “twain” or “two” were the Jews and Gentiles who were separate and hostile bodies, alike the children of wrath and dead in trespasses and sins. They are created anew so as to become “one new man” (collectively); and this, by virtue of their federal union with Christ—hence the “in himself.” “So making peace”: The present participle is used because the operation is a continuous one—the work is done, but the fruit of it is progressive. The long feud in the human family is healed. In Christ, “there is neither Jew nor Greek” (Gal 3:28)—both disappearing when the “enmity” that sundered them was abolished. There is now one fold, one Shepherd.

“And [or “Moreover”] that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Eph 2:16). Here the “enmity” which Christ slew is the barrier which existed between God and men—created by sin; and not the enmity in our hearts against God, for it was slain by Christ’s death and not by the working of His *Spirit*. To “reconcile” is to effect peace and unity between parties at variance. Christ reconciled both Jews and Gentiles unto God by propitiating Him, by satisfying the demands of His Law; thereby making it possible for Him to be just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly. There is no room for any uncertainty here: It was “by the *cross*” that Christ effected the reconciliation: The proximate design of a sacrifice is to appease

God, and not to convert those for whom the offering is made. “Having slain the enmity” both amplifies and explains “by the cross”: Christ’s death removed God’s wrath or judicial enmity from sinners.

“And came and preached peace to you which were afar off [the Gentiles], and to them that were [in outward privileges] nigh” (Eph 2:17). As the “enmity” of verse 16 is the legal enmity of God, so the “peace” here is that “peace with God” (Rom 5:1) into which Christ has brought all His redeemed. His “preaching” of it is after the Cross, and therefore through His apostles (*see* 2Co 5:20). It is the proclamation to those who savingly believe the Gospel that since the Law has been satisfied, God is no longer hostile to us. Proof of that is “For through him we both [believing Jews and Gentiles] have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph 2:18)—which had been impossible unless His wrath had been removed, or His enmity slain. Christ has done something very much more than simply “open a way to God.” He has actually *brought us* to God (1Pe 3:18), and inducted us into His grace or favour (Rom 5:2).

As God determined to magnify the exceeding riches of His grace by permitting the most heinous sins in the lives of some of those whom He chose unto salvation, so for the glory of His Son, He suffered the strongest and bitterest animosity to possess the hearts of Jews and Gentiles, that the efficacy of His mediation might be displayed in constituting them one new man in Himself—blessedly exemplified when those, who formerly would not eat with one another, sit down together to partake of the Lord’s supper!

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

### 10c. Its Decline

Having dwelt at some length on the nature of spiritual decline and pointed out some of the principal causes thereof, a few words require to be said on its *insidiousness*. Sin is a spiritual disease (Psa 103:3); and like so many others, it works silently and unsuspected by us; and before we are aware of it, our health is gone. We are not sufficiently on our guard against “the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb 3:13): Unless we resist its first workings, it soon obtains an advantage over us. Hence, we are exhorted, “Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God” (Jos 23:11), for all spiritual decline may be traced back to a diminution of our love for Him. The love of God is of heav. We are not only surrounded with objects which attract our affections and Him.

In the early stages of the Christian life, love is usually fresh and fervent. The first believing views of the Gospel fill the heart with amazement and praise to the Lord, and a flow of grateful affection is the spontaneous outcome. The soul is profoundly moved, wholly absorbed with God’s unspeakable gift, and weaned from all other objects. This is what God terms, “the kindness of thy

youth, the love of thine espousals” (Jer 2:2). It is then that the one who has found such peace and joy exclaims, “I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications [for mercy], Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live” (Psa 116:1-2). At that season, the renewed soul can scarcely conceive it possible to forget Him who has done such great things for it, or to lapse back in any measure to his former loves and lords; but if after twenty years of cares and temptations have passed over him without producing this effect, it will indeed be happy. There *are* some who experience no decline, but that is far from being the case with all.

There are those who speak of the Christian’s departing from his first love as a matter of course, who regard it as something inevitable. Not a few elderly religious professors who have, themselves, become cold and carnal (if they ever had life in them), will seek to bring young and happy Christians to this doleful and God-dishonouring state of mind. With a sarcastic smile, they will tell the babe in Christ, “Though you be on the mount of enjoyment today, rest assured, it will not be long until you come down.” But this is erroneous and utterly misleading. Not so did the apostles act towards young converts. When Barnabas visited the young Christians at Antioch, he “had seen the grace of God, [and] was glad” (Act 11:23); and so far from leading them to expect a state of decline from their initial fervour, assurance, and joy, he “exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord” (Act 11:23). While the great Head of the Church informed the Ephesian saints that He had it *against* them “because thou hast left thy first love” (Rev 2:4).

There is no reason or necessity in the nature of things why there should be any abatement in the Christian’s love, zeal, or comfort. Those objects and considerations which first gave rise to them have not lost their force. There has been no change in the grace of God, the efficacy of Christ’s blood, the readiness of the Spirit to guide us into the Truth. Christ is still the “Friend of sinners,” able to save them unto the uttermost that come unto God by Him. So far from there being good or just reason why we should decline in our love, the very opposite is the case. Our first views of Christ and His Gospel were most inadequate and defective: If we follow on to know the Lord, we shall obtain a better acquaintance with Him, a clearer perception of His perfections, His suitability unto our case, His sufficiency. He should, therefore, be more highly esteemed by us. Said the apostle, “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment” (Phi 1:9). So far from himself relapsing, as he neared the end of his course, forgetting the things that were behind, he reached forth into those that were before.

To decline in our love is quite unnecessary and to be lamented, but to attempt a vindication of it is highly reprehensible. It would be tantamount to arguing that we were once too spiritually-minded, too tender in conscience, too devoted to God: That we were unduly occupied with Christ and made too much of Him, that we overdid our efforts to please Him. It is also to practically say, we did not find that satisfaction in Christ which we expected, that we obtained not the peace and pleasure in treading Wisdom’s ways that we looked for, and therefore, that we were obliged to seek happiness in returning to our former pursuits; and thereby, we confirmed the sneer of our old companions at the outset, that our zeal would soon abate, and that we should return again to them. Unto such renegades God says, “O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me” (Mic 6:3).

The fact remains, however, that many do decline from their first love, though they are seldom aware of it until some of its effects appear. They are like foolish Samson, who had trifled with temptations and displeased the Lord, and who “awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he *wist not* that the LORD was departed from him”

(Jdg 16:20). Yielding unto sin blinds the judgment, and we are unconscious that the Spirit is grieved, and that the blessing of God is no longer upon us. Our friends may perceive it and feel concerned on account of the same, but we ourselves are not aware of it. Then it is those solemn words that accurately describe our case: “Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he *knoweth not*” (Hos 7:9)! As “gray hairs” are a sign of the decay of our constitution and of approaching decrepitude, so there are some signs which tell of the spiritual decline of a Christian; but usually, he is oblivious to their presence.

We will turn now and point out some of the *symptoms* of spiritual decline. Since sin works so deceitfully and Christians are unconscious of the beginnings of retrogression, it is important that the signs thereof should be described. Once again, we find that the natural adumbrates the spiritual, and if due attention be paid thereto, much that is profitable for the soul may be learned therefrom. Constipation is either due to self-neglect or a faulty diet, and when sin clogs the soul, it is because we have neglected the work of mortification and failed to eat “the bitter herbs” (Exo 12:8). Loss of appetite, paleness of countenance, dullness of eye, absence of energy are so many evidences that all is not well with the body and that we are on the way to a serious illness, unless things soon be righted—and each of those has its spiritual counterpart. Irritability, inability to relax, and loss of sleep are the precursors of a nervous breakdown, and the spiritual equivalents are a call to “Return unto thy *rest*, O my soul” (Psa 116:7).

In cases of leprosy, real or supposed, the Lord gave orders that the individual should be carefully examined, his true state ascertained, and judgment given accordingly. And just so far as a spiritual disease is more odious and dangerous than a physical one, by so much is it necessary for us to form a true judgment concerning it. Every spot is not a leprosy! And every imperfection in a Christian does not indicate he is in a spiritual decline. Even the apostle Paul groaned over his inward corruptions, and confessed he had not yet attained—nor was he already perfect—but pressed forward to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God (Phi 3:14). Yet those honest admissions were very far from being acknowledgments that he was a backslider, or that he had given way to an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Great care has to be taken on either side, lest on the one hand, we call darkness light and excuse ourselves; or on the other, call light darkness and needlessly write bitter things against ourselves.

Undoubtedly, more are in danger of doing the former than the latter. Yet there *are* Christians—and probably not a few—who wrongly depreciate themselves, draw erroneous conclusions, and suppose their case is worse than it is. For instance, there are those who grieve because they are no longer conscious of that energetic zeal, of those fervent and tender affections, which they were sensible of in the day of their espousals. But a change in their natural constitution, from an increase of years, will account for that. Their animal spirits have waned, their natural energy has diminished, their mental faculties are duller. But though there be less tender and warm feelings, there may be more stability and depth in them. Many things relating to the present world, which in our youth would produce tears, will not have that effect as we mature, though they may lay with greater weight on our spirits. To confuse the absence of the brightness and exuberance of youth with spiritual decline and coldness is a serious mistake.

On the other hand, every departure from God must not be reckoned a mere imperfection, which is common to all the regenerate. Alas, the tendency with writer and reader alike is to flatter himself that *his* “spot” is only “the spot of his [God’s] children” (Deu 32:5), or such as the best of Christians are subject to; and therefore to conclude, there is nothing very evil or dangerous about it. Though we may not pretend or deny that we have any faults, yet are we not ready to regard them lightly and say of some sin, as Lot said of Zoar, “Is it not a little one?” (Gen 19:20). Or to

exclaim unto one we have wronged, “What have we spoken so much against thee?” (Mal 3:13). But such a self-justifying spirit evidences a most unhealthy state of heart and is to be steadfastly resisted. The apostle Paul spoke of a certain condition of soul, which he feared he should find in the Corinthians: That of having sinned, and yet *not* repented for their deeds; and where *that* be the case, spiritual decay has reached an alarming stage. Here are some of the symptoms of spiritual decline:

1. Waning of our love for Christ. If the Lord Jesus be less precious to our souls than He was formerly, in His person, office, work, grace, and benefits, whatever we may think of ourselves, we have assuredly gone back. If we have a lower esteem of the Lover of our souls, if our delight in Him has decreased, if our meditation upon His perfections be more infrequent, if we commune less with Him, then grace in us has certainly suffered a relapse. It is the nature of certain plants to turn their faces towards the light; and so it is of indwelling grace to strongly incline the heart unto heavenly objects and to take pleasure therein. But if we neglect the means of grace, are not careful to avoid sinful pleasures, or suffer ourselves to be weighted down by the concerns and cares of this life, then will our affections indeed be dampened and our minds rendered vain and carnal. As it is only by acts of faith on the glory of Christ that we are changed into His image (2Co 3:18), so a diminishing of such views of Him will cause our hearts to become chilled and lifeless.

2. Abatement of our zeal for the glory of God. As the principle of grace in the believer causes him to have assurance of Divine mercy to him through the Mediator, so it inspires concern for the Divine honour. As that principle be healthy and vigorous, it will cause us to refuse whatever displeases and dishonours God and His cause, and inspire us to practice those duties with a peculiar pleasure which are most conducive to the glory of God, and which give the clearest evidence of our subjection to the royal scepter of Christ. If the new nature be duly nourished and kept lively, it will influence us to bring forth fruit unto the praise of God; but if that new nature be starved or become sickly, our concern for God’s glory will greatly decrease. If we have become less conscientious than formerly of whether our conduct become or bring reproach upon the holy Name we bear, then that is a sure mark of our spiritual decline.

3. Loss of our spiritual appetite. Was there not a time, dear reader, when you could truly say, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jer 15:16)? If you cannot honestly affirm that today, then you have retrograded. You may indeed be a keener “Bible student” than ever before and spend more time than previously in searching the Scriptures, but that proves nothing to the point. It is not an intellectual interest, but a spiritual relish for the Bread of Life that we are now treating of. Do we really *savour* the things that be of God: The precepts, as well as the promises; the portions that search and wound, as well as comfort? Do we not merely wish to understand its prophecies and mysteries, but really “hunger and thirst after *righteousness*” (Mat 5:6)? If we prefer ashes to the heavenly manna, the “husks” which the swine feed on to the fatted calf—secular literature than sacred—then that is an evident sign of spiritual decline.

4. Sluggishness or drowsiness of mind. One is in a sad frame when exercise before God and communion with Him are supplanted by carnal ease. In spiritual torpor, it is much the same as in the natural: Our senses are no longer exercised to discern good and evil, we neither see nor hear as we ought, nor can we be impressed and affected by spiritual objects as we should be. While in such a condition, spiritual duties are neglected, or at most, performed perfunctorily and mechanically, so that we are none the better for them. If spiritual duties be attended to from custom or conscience rather than from love, they neither honour God nor profit ourselves. Though the outward exercise be gone through, the spirit of it is lacking, the heart is no longer in them. Those

who read the Bible or say their prayers as a matter of form or habit perceive no change in themselves; but those who are accustomed to *treat with God* in them, and then discover a disinclination thereto, may know that grace in them has languished. If we have no delight in them, we are in a sad case.

5. Relaxing in our watchfulness against sin. The want of alertness in guarding against all that is evil, under a quick and tender sense of its loathsome nature, is a sure sign of spiritual decline. Refusing to keep our hearts with all diligence, indifference to the working of our corruptions, trifling with temptations without, are certain evidences of the decay of personal holiness. When the new nature is healthy and vigorous, sin is exceedingly sinful to the saint, because he, then, has a clear and forcible apprehension of its malignity and contrariety to God, and that maintains in him a holy indignation against it. While the mind be engaged in considering the awful price which was paid for the remission of our sins, a detestation of evil is stirred up in the heart, and that is attended with strict watchings, for the renewed soul cannot countenance that which was the procuring cause of his Saviour's death. Such an exercise of grace has been obstructed if sin now appears less heinous, and there be less a care in maintaining a watch against it.

6. Attempting to defend our sins. There are some sins which all know are indefensible, but there are others which even professing Christians seek to justify. It is almost surprising to see what ingenuity people will exercise when seeking to find excuses where *self* is concerned. The cunning of the old serpent which appeared in the excuses of our first parents seems here to supply the place of wisdom. Those possessing little perspicuity in general matters are singularly quick-sighted in discovering every circumstance that appears to make in their favour or serves to extenuate their fault. Sin, when we have committed it, loses its sinfulness, and appears a very different thing from what it did in others. When a sin is committed by *us*, it is common to give it another name—covetousness becomes thrift, malignant contentions fidelity for the Truth, fanaticism zeal for God—and thereby, we become reconciled to it and are ready to enter on a vindication, instead of penitently confessing and forsaking it.

7. Things of the world obtaining control of us. In proportion as the objects of this scene have power to attract our hearts, to that extent is faith inoperative and ineffectual. It is the very nature of faith to occupy us with spiritual, heavenly and eternal objects; and as they become real and precious, our affections are drawn out to them, and the baubles of time and sense lose all value to us. When the soul is communing with God, delighting itself in His ineffable perfections, such trifles—as our dress, the furnishing of our homes, the glittering show made by the rich of this world—make no appeal to us. When the Christian is ravished by the excellency of Christ and the inestimable portion or heritage he has in Him, the pleasures and vanities which charm the ungodly will not only have no allurements, but will pall upon him. It, therefore, follows that when a Christian begins to thirst after the things of time and sense, and evinces a fondness for them, his grace has sadly declined. Those who find satisfaction in anything pertaining to this life have already “forsaken...the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer 2:13).

# OUR ANNUAL LETTER

We frequently receive letters from readers to say that certain articles which appeared in this magazine “cut them to pieces,” or there was much therein which “condemned them,” or that our correspondents find they are “far from being all they ought to be.” Now, it seems to the editor that this calls upon him to deviate from his general practice of maintaining silence upon his own spiritual experiences, and that honesty requires him to acknowledge that many statements appearing in these pages rebuke and humiliate himself. He was brought up by parents who taught him it was bad manners to talk about himself. In his reading of religious literature, he has come across so much where self was obtruded that he has sought to guard against that objectionable feature. Moreover, it has ever been his supreme aim, either when preaching or writing, to occupy those he ministered unto with God, His Word, and His Christ rather than with himself; and he trusts this will continue to be his prime policy.

The editor is far from wishing to convey the impression that he perfectly practises all he teaches. Alas, such is far from being the case: In “many things” he, too, “offends.” Yet he dare not lower the Standard which God has set before us in His Word and bring it down to his own experience. That Standard is one of sinless perfection, of walking even as Christ also walked (1Jo 2:6). How could the thrice Holy One require anything less? In endeavouring to present that Standard in these pages and urge conformity to it, the writer frequently insists upon that which condemns himself. He is far from keeping his heart with that diligence which he should, from mortifying his lusts as he ought, from following Christ as closely as he would. With the apostle, he has to confess, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” Yet by grace, he can also add, “but I follow after, if that I may apprehend [lay hold of] that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Phi 3:12).

It would indeed be a most deplorable thing if either writer or reader had reached the stage where he was pleased with himself and satisfied with his spiritual progress. As we pointed out in our “Spiritual Growth” articles, the growth of a saint—like that of a tree—is downward as well as upward: That is, he becomes more and more out of love with himself. The more the believer obtains spiritual apprehensions of the perfections of God’s character and the wondrous love of the Mediator, the more conscious is he of what is due the One and the Other, and the more deeply does he feel what a poor return he makes unto Them. But the truly humble person is not the one who *talks* most of his own unworthiness and frequently recounts how such and such an experience abased him into the dust, but it is he who values most highly the atoning and cleansing blood of Christ and makes most frequent use of that Fountain which was opened “for sin and for uncleanness” (Zec 13:1).

Novices, who know the least, are most apt to be puffed up. It is always the smatterer who is the most conceited—for he has not sufficient knowledge to perceive his crass ignorance. But as grace increases, so too does light, and the more light we have, the more sensible are we of our

numerous and grievous defects. None so confident as young professors, but as they become better acquainted with themselves, they realise the need of praying, “hold thou me up” (Psa 119:117). As grace increases, so does love for God, and that makes us hate sin the more. We have but a gross sense of sin at first, but in God’s light, we see light and are made painfully aware of how much we come short of that purity and holiness which the Divine Law requires, until we are made to cry, “O wretched man that I am!” (Rom 7:24).

During the last twenty years, we have probably lost many hundreds of readers, just because our endeavour to present the Standard of holiness was so unpopular and unpalatable. The great majority of professing Christians in this evil day wish to hear only “smooth things,” and resent that which searches the conscience, rebukes worldliness, and condemns carnality. They welcome that which ministers to curiosity, which adds to their store of mental knowledge, and which feeds pride; but they disapprove of that which calls for self-examination, reveals failure and exposes a worthless profession. They believe in “Once saved, always saved,” but they are not so ready to believe that God’s salvation is from *sin*—from the love, dominion, and pollution, as well as from the guilt and penalty of it. They relish articles on “the signs of the times,” but are not so eager to peruse one which requires them to look within and make sure they bear the signs or marks of regeneration and sanctification.

But in the mercy of God, there are still a few left on earth who want *the Truth*, no matter how it reproves and rebukes them; those who had rather be made to groan and shed tears of repentance now, than wail and gnash their teeth for ever in a hopeless eternity. It is for their sakes, we continue publishing, even though not a little of what we write shames ourself. Not that we restrict our pen to that line of things which is calculated to produce conviction and contrition, for we also try to present that which comforts and evokes praise. Though the “bitter herbs” be enjoined, yet it is the Lamb Himself that the believer is to feed upon. However much we fail in the realisation, it is our earnest endeavour to present a balance between the objective and subjective, the doctrinal and the practical, that which exalts the Lord and that which abases the creature, that which will cause the saint to “rejoice,” yet “with trembling” (Psa 2:11).

The year now drawing to a close has not been our easiest one, nor were we warranted in looking for it to be so. Even though the sword of war be sheathed again, everything is still in a state of chaos and far from normal in any department of life. Christians, as well as non-Christians, feel the pressure of things; and those engaged in business today will not require to be informed that one cannot publish a monthly magazine without encountering difficulties and having his patience sorely tried. Probably none of our readers are without any personal problems, things which irritate, or conditions which are much less congenial than those they formerly enjoyed. The closest walking with God exempts none from tribulation, but it *does* afford strength and peace to which unbelievers are strangers. Though there be given a thorn in the flesh, yet those in communion with the Lord experience the sufficiency of His grace; and while He may not grant immunity from trouble, yet if His smile be upon us, He will show Himself strong on our behalf.

Signally has the Lord undertaken for us in the matter of a reliable and generous printer, both in the U.S.A., in Australia, and in England. Our circulation has always been a very limited one (much smaller than most religious periodicals), and for that reason, did not present an attractive business proposition—too trivial for most printers to want to “bother with,” for there would be scarcely any profit. By far, the most expensive item is not the cost of paper, but the setting up of the type, and it costs no more to set the type for ten thousand copies than for one. In pre-war years, we had an arrangement which made our job more desirable to the printers, enabling them to make such for us at a much lower price: We sent them the manuscript seven or eight weeks early,



so that when the composers had a slack time, between more remunerative jobs, ours could be worked in at their convenience. But now that labour is so scarce, there are no longer any slack periods. They have continued to make it available for us at an exceptionally low rate; but today, it *costs us double* as much to publish a single issue as it did six years ago.

Yet though expenses have increased, so also have our receipts—as the Lord has graciously been moving His stewards to give more freely. This has enabled us to send the magazine to many who contributed less than the bare cost of it to us, and also to mail it gratis to others. Let us say once more these “Studies” are gladly sent to any of the Lord’s people who find its articles are made a blessing to them—whether they make us a donation for one pound, enclose only [some] stamps, or are unable to send more than a post-card expressing their appreciation. We had rather send to the genuinely “poor of the flock” and have their daily prayers, than to Laodiceans who forward £5. We ask no one to increase his or her subscription, for there is *no* “subscription” for this magazine: It is published solely on a free-will-offering basis; and the widow’s “mite” is just as acceptable as “the much” cast in by the rich. What we most covet is your remembrance of us at the Throne, and God’s blessing the articles to your souls so that you enjoy a closer communion with Him. Let none ask us to drop their names, because they are unable to send what they would like to.

Our articles upon “Spiritual Growth” have already exceeded the number we originally expected. As we proceeded, the subject grew; but we hope to complete the series during 1946, as also those upon “Reconciliation.” For awhile at least, those upon Joshua are likely to be more of a topical than strictly expository character. We expect to continue (D.V.) those upon the “Prayers of the Apostles.” Members of the one flock are found in many different ecclesiastical folds, and some are accustomed to hearing one side of the Truth emphasized much more than another. In seeking to minister unto the needs of such varied cases, wisdom from above is sorely needed, and sometimes we have to ask one part of our readers to patiently bear with us, while we try to help another class whose particular need is quite different from theirs. When sitting down to a table, one does not eat all that is upon it, but selects that which most appeals to him; do likewise with the fare provided here, and remember, “tastes differ.”

...We are happy to say that our circulation has again registered a slight, but steady, increase...We shall need at least 100 new readers for 1946 to replace those dropped from this year! Please do all you can to make the “Studies” known to fellow believers. Once more, we close with a credit balance: Will kind friends please *refrain* from sending any gifts for our *own* use, as our personal needs are fully provided for. By the goodness of God, we have again been preserved from any illness. Beg the Lord to make this work a blessing to a larger number of His own.

With hearty Christian greetings, Yours by Divine Mercy,

—A.W. and V.E. Pink

# APPENDICES

## About Studies in the Scriptures

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952) wrote and published his monthly 28 page expository digest, *Studies in the Scriptures*, from 1922 to 1953. He mailed it worldwide by paid subscription to whomever desired the deeper truths of God. Each issue contained continuing serialized articles on six to eight subjects. When one subject was “completed” to the author’s satisfaction, another subject series began in its place in the next issue. In total, the 380 issues comprise a treasure of immense proportions.

By God’s grace, Chapel Library republishes the *Studies* beginning with the year 1934, available for download worldwide, and mailing three issues each quarter by free subscription in North America. We also print many books and booklets gleaned from articles in the *Studies*. These may be ordered in print in North America, or downloaded from our website worldwide without charge:

Studies: [www.chapellibrary.org/studies](http://www.chapellibrary.org/studies)

Other literature: [www.chapellibrary.org/literature/title-catalog](http://www.chapellibrary.org/literature/title-catalog)

Today the various subjects are being gathered together by topic, and republished in paperbacks by several sources. *Chapel Library* offers the following at the time of this printing:

- The Sovereignty of God	176 pages
- Comfort for Christians	79 pages
- Profiting from the Word	96 pages
- Seven Sayings of the Savior	94 pages
- Spiritual Union and Communion	175 pages
- The Attributes of God	105 pages
- The Doctrine of Human Depravity	241 pages
- The Doctrine of Revelation	214 pages
- 1 John – An Exposition, Part 1	190 pages
- 1 John – An Exposition, Part 2	173 pages
- The Holy Spirit	196 pages

# Biography of A.W. Pink

*by Erroll Hulse*

Concerning Calvinism<sup>4</sup> and Arminianism<sup>5</sup> during the first half of the Twentieth Century, a most interesting case study is the experience of Arthur W. Pink. He was a preacher and writer of outstanding talent who ministered in Britain, America, and Australia. When he died in 1952 in isolation on the Island of Lewis in north eastern Scotland, he was hardly known outside a small list of subscribers to his magazine, *Studies in the Scriptures*. Yet, by the 1970s, his books were in wide demand and his name was widely known among publishers and ministers. In fact, for that period it would be difficult to find a reformed author whose books were more widely read.

The preaching ministry of A. W. Pink had been remarkably blessed in the USA, but it was in Australia that he seemed to reach the apex of his public ministry, and there in particular that his preaching ministry reached great heights. He was then faced with accreditation by the Baptist Union and was rejected on account of his Calvinistic views. He then ministered in a Baptist church of Strict Baptist pedigree. There he came unstuck since they esteemed him an Arminian! A considerable group, however, appreciated Pink, recognised his worth, and seceded from that Strict Baptist Church to form a new church of 27 members. Then suddenly, in 1934, Pink resigned and returned to Britain. It is widely held that one rejection is enough to cripple a minister for life, but two in quick succession can destroy a pastor completely. So it proved for Arthur Pink. He never again found meaningful entrance into the ministry, though he tried his utmost. He sought openings in both the UK and the USA without success. He became increasingly isolated. He ended his days as an evangelical recluse in the Island of Stornoway off the coast of Scotland. It was rumoured that not more than ten souls attended his funeral.

There is much that we can learn from the life of A. W. Pink. Firstly, we will trace out his early life in broad outline. Secondly, we will describe his experience in Australia, and trace out the adverse effects of this on his life. Thirdly, we will the impact of his writing ministry.

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<sup>4</sup> **Calvinism** – the doctrinal system developed from the teachings of the French-born Swiss Reformer John Calvin (1509-1664), holding that the Bible teaches the supreme authority of the Scriptures, the sovereignty of God, predestination, and the “doctrines of grace”; these doctrines were the response of the Synod of Dort (1618-19) to the Arminians’ remonstrance (protest) and are commonly known by the acronym TULIP.

<sup>5</sup> **Arminianism** – (from Jacobus Arminius, 1560-1609, Dutch theologian) the doctrinal system that rejects the Reformers’ understanding of predestination, teaching instead that God’s predestination of individuals was based on His foreknowledge of their accepting or rejecting Christ by their own free will.

## 1. Early Life

Arthur Pink was born in Nottingham, England, in 1886. His parents were godly. They lived by the Bible and kept the Lord's Day holy. Arthur was the first of three children brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. To the grief of their parents, all three children drifted into lives of unbelief. Worse was to come: Arthur embraced *Theosophy*, an esoteric cult that claimed powers of the occult! "Lucifer" was the name of the leading theosophy magazine. A natural feature of Arthur's character was wholeheartedness, and he entered theosophy with zeal. A leadership role was offered him, which meant that he would visit India. At the same time a friend who was an opera singer, noted that Arthur possessed a fine baritone voice; he urged him to study for a career in opera. Then suddenly on a night during 1908, Arthur was converted. His first action was to preach the Gospel to the theosophist group.

Simultaneous with Pink's conversion was a call to the Christian ministry. But the colleges were in the hands of liberals bent on the destruction of the Scriptures. Arthur, however, heard of the Moody Bible Institute, which had been founded by D. L. Moody<sup>6</sup> in 1889. In 1910, aged 24, Pink left for Chicago to begin a two-year course. His time at Moody lasted only six weeks, however. He decided that he was wasting his time, and that he should enter directly into a pastorate—and his professors agreed! He was not disgruntled, but rather frustrated, that the teaching was pitched at such a primary level that it did nothing for him.

During 1910, he began in his first pastorate in Silverton, Colorado, a mining camp in the San Juan Mountains. We possess little detail of this period, but we know that from Silverton, Pink moved to Los Angeles. He was always a hard worker, and this is illustrated by the fact that at one point in Oakland he was engaged in tent evangelism six nights a week for eighteen weeks!

From Los Angeles, he moved to Kentucky. It was here that he met and married Vera E. Russell. There could not have been a better gift from heaven. Vera was entirely committed to the Lord. She was hard working, gifted, intelligent, and persevering. She died just ten years after Arthur's decease on the island of Stornoway.

The next move was to Spartanburg, South Carolina, from 1917 to 1920. This church building consisted of a small and frail wooden structure, while he and Vera lived in a small wooden house standing on wooden columns. Heating was inadequate, and in the freezing winter it was like an ice box.

It was during this time Pink began writing books. There were two of significance: one with the title *Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, and the second *The Sovereignty of God*, the foreword of which is dated June 1918. It was this book that was later taken up by The Banner of Truth publishers. The first edition, according to I. C. Herendeen, his first publisher at that time, was only 500 copies, and it was a struggle to sell that number. When the book came to Banner, it was edited by Iain Murray and vastly improved. It became one of the most popular of The Banner of Truth paperbacks. By 1980, 92,000 copies had sold.

After about a year at Spartanburg, Pink almost came to grief. He felt a strong conviction to give up the ministry and devote himself to writing only, and at one point was disconsolate. Vera wrote to a friend saying that her husband was even thinking of leaving the ministry and going into business, to make money for the Kingdom as a better way of serving God. In 1920, Arthur re-

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<sup>6</sup> **D. L. Moody** (1837-1899) – American evangelist and publisher who founded the Moody Church, Northfield School and Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts (now the Northfield Mount Hermon School), the Moody Bible Institute, and Moody Publishers.

signed the pastorate at Spartanburg. He and Vera moved and settled at Swengel, Pennsylvania, in order to be near the publisher I. C. Herendeen.

In the middle of July, 1920, he left to take a series of meetings in California. Large crowds gathered and numbers were saved. At one point 1,200 gathered to hear the Gospel. Other crusades and conferences followed; it was evident that Pink was eminently suited to this kind of ministry. Looking back over his life, it is apparent that he experienced more blessing in the itinerant ministry than he did in a total of twelve years in pastoring churches. This had to do with his temperament; he preferred being in his study to visiting.

In 1921, Arthur and Vera were back in Pennsylvania. The monthly digest, the *Studies in the Scriptures*, first appeared in 1922. It ran continuously without interruption for 32 years, until Arthur's death in 1952. Initially, this was a 24 page magazine, with four to six articles as instalments in a series. To write expository material at a high standard at this rate every month is a tremendous testimony to his insight into the Scriptures, and to the Lord's blessing and enabling. All his articles had to be written by hand and finished for the printer at least two months before the date of publication. *Studies in the Scriptures* had about 1,000 circulation at the beginning, but for most of its existence the subscription level hovered at about 500. The financial side was always precarious, with only just enough to cover printing costs from one month to the next. Pink corresponded with some of his subscribers; eventually this formed his pastoral work. Throughout he was assisted by his very hard working wife, who acted as secretary. They never had a family, always lived very humbly, and managed always to make ends meet. This was made possible through a modest inheritance left to him by his parents and through gifts that he received from his readers.

During 1923, Arthur fell into a deep depression, which turned out to be a nervous breakdown. At this juncture a young couple that had been greatly blessed by Pink's ministry came to the rescue, and Arthur was nursed through a period of several months enforced rest, which brought him back to normal health.

In 1924, a major new direction came by way of letters of invitation from a publisher in Sydney, Australia. Before departing for Australia, no less than four months preparation had to be made for the *Studies*. On his way to Australia, Pink engaged in more Bible conference preaching in Colorado, then in Oakland, California, and also San Francisco—from where he and Vera took ship across the Pacific to Sydney.

## **2. *Pink's Experience in Australia***

The Pinks spent a total of three and half years in Australia. These times were for them the best, but also turned out to be the worst. Upon arrival Arthur had more invitations than he possibly fill. Initially his ministry in Australia was a great success. Crowds gathered; churches were filled; believers were revived; and souls were brought to the Saviour.

Attendance swelled in every place he preached. In the first year in Australia Arthur preached 250 times. He would often work until 2:00 in the morning to keep *Studies in the Scriptures* going. The Pinks truly must have felt that at last they had found the place of permanent fulfilment. There was an evident power in his ministry. One mature believer declared that he drew people "like a magnet," and that he preached the "whole counsel of God's Word," and was capable of preaching a sermon "from every word of the text."

This period proved to be one of great joy. Pink was now 40 years old. He was preaching almost daily for well over an hour. He would get home at 10:00 PM and then work until 2:00 AM. He wrote, "never before during our 16 years in the ministry, have we experienced such blessing

and joy in our souls, such liberty of utterance, and such an encouraging response as we have done in this highly favoured portion of Christ's vineyard."<sup>7</sup>

We can be sure that a thrilling and powerful soul-saving ministry will arouse the fury of Satan. And so it proved to be in this case when that old serpent, the devil, mounted a cunning counterattack. The Baptist Union leaders were fundamentally opposed to Calvinism. These leaders invited Arthur Pink to read a paper on "Human Responsibility." Sadly, Pink did not realise that this was a plot to demote him in the eyes of the public—and in his sincere earnestness he fell into the trap. Instead of declining this invitation, he presented the paper and then answered questions for over an hour. The result of this was that the BU of New South Wales published a statement that they agreed unanimously *not* to endorse his ministry. What they really meant (for they did not themselves clarify any doctrine) is that they did not agree with Pink's Reformed doctrine. They were fundamentally Arminian. The effect of all this was that invitations dried up, and Pink's wider effective ministry in Australia was drastically reduced.

It was at this juncture that one of three Strict and Particular Baptist Churches invited Pink to become its pastor. This church was known as the Belvoir Street Church. Here Pink was as busy as he had ever been in his life. He had preached 300 times in the year ending 1926. In addition to preaching three times a week at Belvoir Street, he preached in three different places in Sydney each week to an average of 200 at each meeting. He still managed to maintain *Studies in the Scriptures* by burning midnight oil.

Trouble however was in store. The early part of the Twentieth Century was a time of lack of clarity in doctrine. One of the evidences of this was confusion over Calvinism, Arminianism, and hyper-Calvinism.<sup>8</sup> Many churches polarized. The Baptist Union was Arminian, and the Strict and Particular Baptists tended to be hyper-Calvinist. This proved to be the case at Belvoir Street. Until about May 1927, the Pinks believed that they had found a permanent church home.

### 3. *Impact of Pink's Writing Ministry*

If history had progressed normally, Arthur Pink would have been forgotten. There are several leaders in each generation who are well known, but it is unlikely that their names will be remembered for very long. When Arthur Pink died, he was known to a small circle of readers—about 500—who read his monthly periodical *Studies in the Scriptures*, which he had faithfully produced with the help of his wife Vera for 31 years. Yet, after his decease, as his writings were collected and published as books, his name became very well known in the English-speaking evangelical world. During the 1960s and '70s, there was a dearth of reliable expository writing; Pink's writings filled an important need. His expositions are God-centred, theologically compelling, and reliable—as well as practical and experimental. That was precisely what was needed during a period of spiritual drought. Publishers discovered the value of his writings. The outcome was dramatic.

For instance, Baker Book House published twenty-two different titles by Pink, with a combined total sales by 1980 of 350,000. By the same date just three books (*Sovereignty of God*, *Life of Elijah*, and *Profiting from the Word*) totaled 211,000. Yet as contemporary reformed authors have multiplied, so the demand for Pink's books has lessened.

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<sup>7</sup> *The Life of Arthur W. Pink*, by Iain H. Murray, *The Banner of Truth Trust*, p 49

<sup>8</sup> **hyper-Calvinism** – the doctrinal error that holds men need not evangelize, since God will save His elect children with or without the means of preaching the Word. This represents only one side of biblical truth; the other is that God is pleased to use human instruments as means to His work, and the preaching of the Word is uniquely marked out for this purpose (2Ti 4:2; 2Ti 3:16; Mat 28:19).

We must remember that with the dawning of the twentieth century, the mainline denominations had already suffered extensive losses to higher criticism and modernism. Such was the advance of modernism in the late nineteenth century and through the first half of the twentieth century, most Bible colleges and seminaries were lost to an agenda of unbelief and anti-Christianity. Instead of producing preacher/pastors for the churches, men were sent out who emptied the churches. The most striking example is Methodism. The aggregate membership in Methodistism grew to be the highest of the non-conformist churches. Yet this denomination has been virtually annihilated by modernism.

The writings of Pink provided not only food for the spiritually hungry, but as Iain Murray asserts, “Pink has been immensely important in reviving and stimulating doctrinal reading at the popular level. The same can be said of few other authors of the twentieth century.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

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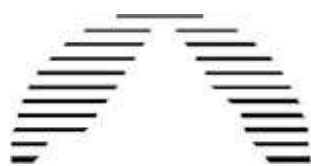
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