

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 illuminated objects stand out.

Annual Volume

1937

STUDIES IN THE
SCRIPTURES

ARTHUR W. PINK

Studies in the Scriptures

Annual Volume 1937

Vol. XVII

by Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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January

THE SPIRIT TRANSFORMING

For the benefit of new readers, we will give a brief digest of our previous exposition of 2 Corinthians 3:18, which is a verse that supplies a comprehensive summary of the Spirit's work in the believer. The "we all" are those that are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The "with open face" signifies with minds from which their enmity against God has been removed, with hearts that are reconciled to Him. "Beholding" is a *repeated* act of the soul, which is the effect of its having been supernaturally enlightened. "As in a glass" refers to the revelation which God has made of Himself in the law and in the Gospel. The "glory of the Lord" connotes His character or moral perfections. "Are changed into the same image" tells of the transformation which is effected in the believer by the Spirit. The "from glory to glory" announces that this great change of the heart's reformation and conformation to the image of God is produced gradually.

When the Spirit deals with an elect soul, He first brings him face to face with God's law, for "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20). He reveals to him the perfections of the law—its spirituality, its immutability, its righteousness. He makes him realise that the law is "holy, and just, and good" (Rom 7:12) even though it condemns and curses him. He shows that the law requires that we should love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and our neighbours as ourselves, that it demands perfect and perpetual obedience in thought, word, and deed. He convinces the soul of the righteousness of such a demand. In a word, the one with whom the Spirit is dealing beholds "the glory of the Lord"—His majesty, His holiness, His justice—in the glass of the law. Only thus is the soul prepared and fitted to behold and appreciate the second great revelation which God has made of His moral perfections.

Next, the Spirit brings before the soul the precious Gospel. He shows him that therein a marvelous and most blessed display is made of the love, the grace, the mercy, and the wisdom of God. He gives him to see that in His eternal purpose God designed to save a people from the curse of the law, and that, without flouting its authority or setting aside its righteous claims. Yea, in such a way that the law is "magnified and made honourable" (see Isa 42:21) through its demands being perfectly met by the believing sinner's Surety. He unveils to his wondering gaze the infinite condescension of the Father's Beloved, who willingly took upon Him the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And the Spirit *so* works in his heart that, though the cross be a stumbling block to the Jew and foolishness unto the Greek, it appears to him to be the most wondrous, blessed, and glorious object in the universe, and by faith he thankfully rests the entire interests of his soul for time and eternity upon the atoning sacrifice which Christ offered thereon unto God.

Not only does the Spirit give that soul to behold "the glory of the Lord" as it shines first in the "glass" of the law, and second in the "glass" of the Gospel, but He also causes him to be "*changed*"

into the same image,” that is, He begets within him corresponding principles and affections, to the one and to the other (2Co 3:18). In other words, He brings his heart to a *conformity* to the law and to a *compliance* with the Gospel. He causes the believer to “set to his seal” (Joh 3:33) to the whole truth of God. He brings him to a full acquiescence with the law, consenting to its righteous claims upon him, and working in him a desire and determination to adopt the law as his rule of life or standard of conduct. So too the Spirit causes him to gladly embrace the Gospel, admiring the consummate wisdom of God therein, whereby the perfect harmony of His justice and mercy are blessedly exhibited. He brings him to renounce all his own works and rest alone on the merits of Christ for his acceptance with God.

“Beholding as in a glass” is literally “in a mirror” (2Co 3:18). Now the mirrors to the ancients, unlike ours, were not made of glass, but of highly burnished metal, which reflected images with great brilliancy and distinctness, corresponding to the metal. If the mirror was of silver, a white light would be the result, if of gold, a yellow glow would be suffused. Thus an opaque object reflected the rays of the sun and so became in a measure luminous. Here the apostle makes use of this as a figure of the Spirit’s transforming the believer. The law and the Gospel display various aspects of “the glory of the Lord,” that is, of God Himself, and as anointed eyes behold the same, the soul is irradiated thereby and an answerable change is wrought in it.

As the soul by faith, with *broken* heart (and not otherwise), beholds the glory of the Lord, in the mirror of the *two* Testaments (and not in the New without the Old), he is by the continual operations of the Spirit in him (Phi 1:6) “changed into the same image.” The views thus obtained of the divine character excite answerable affections in the beholder. Rational argument may convince a man that God is holy, yet that is a vastly different thing from his heart being brought to *love* divine holiness. But when the Spirit removes the veil of enmity and prejudice from the mind and enables the understanding to see light in God’s light, there is a genuine esteem of and delight in God’s character. The heart is won with the excellency of His moral perfections, and he perceives the rightness and beauty of a life wholly devoted to His glory. Thus there is a radical change in his judgment, disposition, and conduct.

In the glass of the law, there shines the glory of God’s holiness and righteousness, and in the glass of the Gospel, the glory of His grace and mercy, and as by the Spirit’s enablement the believer is beholding them, there is wrought in him a love for the same, there is given to him an answerable frame of heart. He cordially owns God as righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works. He acknowledges that God is just in condemning him and equally just in pardoning him. He freely confesses that he is as evil as the law pronounces him to be and that his only hope lies in the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb. Christ is now “The fairest of ten thousand” (see Song 5:10) to his soul. He desires and endeavours to *exercise* righteousness and truth, grace and mercy, in all his dealings with his fellows. Thus a personal experience of the transforming power of the law and the Gospel brings its subject into a conformity to their temper and tendency.

This being “changed into the same image” (2Co 3:18) of the glory of the Lord, is but another way of saying that the law of God is now written on the heart (Heb 8:10), for as we have said previously, the law is a transcript of the divine nature, the very image of God. As the law was written in indelible characters on the tables of stone by the very finger of God, so at regeneration and throughout the entire process of sanctification, views and dispositions in accord with the nature of the law become habitual in the heart, through the operations of the Holy Spirit, according to the measure of grace which He supplies. The genuine language of the soul now becomes, “How reasonable it is that I should love with all my heart such an infinitely glorious being as God, that I should be utterly

captivated by His supernal excellency. How fitting that I should be entirely for Him and completely at the disposal of Him who is Lord of all, whose rectitude is perfect, whose goodness and wisdom are infinite, and who gave His Son to die for me!”

This, being “changed into the same image” of the glory of the Lord, is also the same as Christ being “formed” in the soul (Gal 4:19). It is having in kind, though not in degree, the same mind that was in the Lord Jesus. It is being imbued with His Spirit, being brought into accordance with the design of His mediatorial work, which was to honour and glorify God. In a word, it is being at heart the very disciples of Christ. This, being “changed into the same image” of the glory of the Lord, is to be “*reconciled* to God” (2Co 5:20). Previously, we were at enmity against Him, hating His sovereignty, His strictness, His severity, but now we perceive the surpassing beauty of His every attribute and are in love with His whole person and character. No greater change than this can be conceived of, “Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord” (Eph 5:8). This great change is to “come unto” God (Heb 7:25), causing us to diligently seek daily supplies of grace from Him.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

109. Covetousness (13:5)

In this thirteenth chapter of Hebrews, the apostle makes a practical application of the theme of the epistle. Having set forth at length the amazing grace of God toward His believing people by the provision He has made for them in the Mediator and Surety of the covenant, having shown that they now have in Christ the substance of all that was shadowed forth in the ceremonial law, a tabernacle, and the priesthood of Israel, we now have pressed upon us the responsibilities and obligations which devolve upon those who are the favoured recipients of those spiritual blessings. First, that which is fundamental to the discharge of all Christian duties is exhorted unto—the continuance of brotherly love (Heb 13:1). Second, instances are given in which this chief spiritual grace is to be exemplified—in Christian hospitality (v. 2) and in compassion for the afflicted (v. 3). Third, prohibitions are made against the two most radical lusts of fallen nature—moral uncleanness (v. 4) and covetousness (v. 5), for the indulgence of these is fatal to the exercise of brotherly love.

Having in last month’s article dealt at length with the merciful provision which God has made for the avoidance of moral uncleanness—the ordinance of marriage—we now turn to the second great sin which is here dehorted against, namely, covetousness. “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have” (Heb 13: 5). Here is an evil and its remedy set before us side by side, as was the case in the previous verse, though there the remedy is given before that which it counteracts. We will follow the order of our present text and consider first the vice which is here forbidden, before we contemplate the virtue which is enjoined, yet it will be helpful to keep them both in mind, for the latter casts light upon the former, enabling us to determine its exact nature as nothing else will.

“Let your conversation be without covetousness” (Heb 13:5). The Greek word which is here rendered “covetousness” is literally “lover of silver,” and the Revised Version renders our text, “Be ye free from the love of money.” Now while it be true that the love of money or worldly possessions is

one of the principal forms of covetousness, yet we are satisfied that the translation of the Authorized Version is to be preferred here. The scope of the Greek verb is much wider than a lusting after material riches. This appears from the only other verse in the New Testament where this word occurs, namely, 1 Timothy 3:3, in a passage which describes the qualifications of a bishop, “Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous.” The very fact that a previous clause specifies “not greedy of filthy lucre” makes it clear that “not covetous” includes more than “not a lover of money.”

A comment or two also requires to be made upon the term “conversation.” This word is limited today unto our speech with one another, but 300 years ago, when the Authorized Version was made, it had a much more comprehensive meaning. Its latitude can be gathered from its employment in the Scriptures. For example, in 1 Peter 3:2, we read, “While they behold your chaste conversation”—note “behold” and *not* “hear”! The term then has reference to behaviour or deportment, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1Pe 1:15). It is not to be restricted to that which is external, but includes both character and conduct. The Syriac renders our word “mind,” probably because both covetousness and contentment are mental states. “Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ” (Phi 1:27). This obviously means, Let your affections and actions correspond to the revelation of divine grace you have received. Conduct yourselves in such a manner that those around you will be impressed by the principles, motives, and sentiments which govern you.

So it is here in our text. Let not covetousness rule your heart nor regulate your life. But exactly what is “covetousness”? It is the opposite of contentment, a being dissatisfied with our present lot and portion. It is an over-eager desire for the things of this world. It is a lusting after what God has forbidden or withheld from us, for we may crave, wrongly, after things which are not evil or injurious in themselves. All abnormal and irregular desires, all unholy and inordinate thoughts and affections, are comprehended by this term. To covet is to think upon and hanker after anything which my acquirement of would result in injury to my neighbour. “We *may* desire that part of a man’s property which he is inclined to dispose of, if we mean to obtain it on equitable terms, but when he chooses to keep, we must not covet. The poor man may desire moderate relief from the rich, but he must not covet his affluence, or repine even though he does not relieve him” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

Now some sins are more easily detected than others, and for the most part condemned by those professing godliness. But covetousness is only too often winked at, and some covetous persons are regarded as very respectable people. Many professing Christians look upon covetousness as quite a trifling matter, while the world applauds it as legitimate ambition, as business shrewdness, as prudence, etc. All sorts of excuses are made for this sin and plausible pretences argued in its favour. It is indeed a very subtle sin, which few are conscious of. In one of his sermons, Spurgeon mentions a prominent man who had a great many people come to him to make confession, and this man observed that while different ones acknowledged all sorts of outrageous crimes, he never had one who confessed to covetousness. Few sought that this is one of the prevailing iniquities of their hearts, rather are they inclined to regard this vice as a virtue.

But the Holy Scriptures are very explicit on this subject. The divine law expressly declares, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s” (Exo 20:17). “The covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth” (Psa 10:3). To His disciples Christ said, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luk 12:15). The votaries of mammon are linked with “drunkards and adulterers,” and

such are excluded from the kingdom of God (1Co 6:9-10). The covetous are branded with the most detestable character of idolaters (Col 3:5)—no doubt this is because they who are ruled by this lust *adore* their gold and put their *trust* in it, making a god of it. How we need to pray, “Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness” (Psa 119:36).

God’s Word also sets before us some fearfully solemn examples of the judgments which fell upon covetous souls. The fall of our first parents originated in covetousness, lusting after that which God had forbidden. Thus the very frontispiece of Holy Writ exhibits the frightfulness of this sin. See what covetousness did for Balaam, he “loved the wages of unrighteousness” (2Pe 2:15)—the honours and wealth which Balak promised were too attractive for him to resist. See what covetousness did for Achan, who lusted after the forbidden silver and gold. He and his whole family were stoned to death (Jos 7). Look at Gehazi—lusting after the money his master had refused, and in consequence, he and his seed were smitten with leprosy (2Ki 5). Consider the awful case of Judas, who for thirty pieces of silver sold the Lord of Glory. Remember the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Act 5). In view of these warnings, shall we call this worst of iniquities “a little sin”? Surely it is something to be trembled at!

Covetousness is an inordinate desire of the heart after the creature—which is a fruit of man’s apostasy from the Lord. No longer finding in God the supreme object of his soul’s delight and confidence, fallen man loves and trusts in the creature (mere *things*) rather than the Creator. This takes on many forms. Men lust after honours, wealth, pleasures, knowledge, for Scripture speaks of “the desires of the flesh *and of the mind*” (Eph 2:3), and of “filthiness of the flesh *and spirit*” (2Co 7:1). It is the very nature for the depraved heart to hanker after that which God has forbidden and to crave after what is evil, though this spirit may be developed more strongly in some than in others. At any rate, a larger measure of restraining grace is granted to one than to another. These irregular desires and inordinate thoughts are the firstborn of our corrupt nature, the first risings of indwelling sin, the beginnings of all transgressions committed by us.

“Thou shalt not covet” (Exo 20:17). “The commandment requires moderation in respect of all worldly goods, submission to God, acquiescence in His will, love to His commandments, and a reliance on Him for the daily supply of all our wants as He sees good. This is right and reasonable, fit for God to command and profitable for man to obey, the very temper and felicity of heaven itself. But it is so contrary to the desires of our hearts *by nature*, and so superior to the actual attainments of the best Christians on earth, that it is very difficult to persuade them that God requires such perfection, and still more difficult to satisfy them that it is indispensable to the happiness of rational creatures, and most difficult of all to convince them that everything inconsistent with this or short of it is sin; that it deserves the wrath of God, and cannot be taken away, except by the mercy of God through the atonement of Christ” (Thomas Scott).

The most common form of this sin is, of course, the love of money, the lusting after more and more of material riches. This is evident in getting, keeping, and spending. First, *in getting*. To acquire wealth becomes the dominant passion of the soul. An insatiable greed possesses the heart. This exists in varying degrees in different persons and is demonstrated in numerous ways. That we may be quite practical let us mention one or two. Often this is manifested in a greedy and grasping effort after *unequitable profits* and by paying an *unjustly small wage* to employees, the chief design of its perpetrators being to amass fortunes for their descendants. Yet often these very men hold prominent positions in the churches and “make long prayers,” (Mar 12:40) while devouring widow’s houses and grinding the face of the poor. Alas, how the Gospel is dishonoured and the sanctuary defiled by such sanctimonious wretches.

Again. Recently we read a faithful article wherein the writer took to task the lies and deceptions practised by many shopkeepers and their assistants in palming off upon the public various forms of merchandise by misrepresenting their quality and value, the writer concluding with a solemn emphasis upon “all *liars*, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Rev 21:8). As he finished reading the same, the writer asked himself the question, And how far is a greedy grasping public to blame? Who is largely responsible for this commercial dishonesty? *Who tempt the tradesmen* to mark their wares as “great bargains,” “prices much reduced”? Is it not the covetous purchasers? How many today are possessed with an insatiable craving after “bargains,” buying things “cheap,” without any conscientious consideration of the real worth of the article—it is *that* which fosters so much fraud. Let the Christian buy only *what* he needs, and *when* he needs it, and so far as possible only from upright traders, and then he will be more willing to pay according to the value received.

Second, covetousness evidences itself *in keeping*. There is a miserliness which clings to money as a drowning man to a log. There is a hoarding up for self which is entirely reprehensible. “There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail” (Ecc 4:8). Yes, there are those who are utterly unconcerned about their eternal interests, and labour day in and day out, year after year, in order to add to what they have already accumulated, and who begrudge purchasing for themselves the bare necessities of life. They continue to amass money utterly regardless of Christ’s cause on earth or the poor and needy among their fellow-men. There are still those the language of whose actions is, “I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry” (Luk 12:18-19).

Third, covetousness also manifests itself in *spending*. If there be those who are niggardly, there are others who are wastrels. If there be those who condemn the miser for his stinginess, often they are guilty in turn of reckless prodigality. That which ought to be saved for a rainy day is used to gratify a desire which covets some unnecessary object. But let us not be misunderstood on these points. Neither the possession nor the retention of wealth is wrong in itself, providing it be acquired honestly and preserved with a justifiable motive. God is the One who “giveth thee power to get wealth” (Deu 8:18), and therefore is His goodness to be acknowledged when He is pleased to prosper us in basket and in store. Yet even then we need the exhortation, “If riches increase, set not your heart upon them” (Psa 62:10).

“Not slothful in business” (Rom 12:11) is a divine exhortation. So also there is a prudence and thrift which is legitimate, as is clear from, “There is that withholdeth *more than is meet*, but it tendeth to poverty” (Pro 11:24). So also it is a bounden duty to make provision for those who are dependent upon us, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1Ti 5:8). It is easy to swing to the opposite extreme and become fanatical, and under the guise of trusting God, *tempt* Him. To lay up for a rainy day is quite permissible, see Pro 6:6-8. Neither idleness nor extravagance are to be condoned. Those who through indolence or prodigality waste their substance and fail in business cannot be too severely censured, for they not only impoverish themselves, but injure others, becoming the pests of society and a public burden.

Yet how difficult it is to strike the happy mean—to be provident without being prodigal, to be “not slothful in business” and yet not *bury* ourselves in it, to be thrifty without being miserly, to use this

world and yet not abuse it. How appropriate is the prayer, “Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me *neither poverty nor riches*; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain” (Pro 30:8-9). Romans 7:7 shows that it is only as the Spirit applies the law in power to the conscience that we are taught to see the evil and feel the danger of covetousness—as, at the same time, it serves to check an avaricious disposition and curb inordinate fondness for the creature. That which most effectually strikes at our innate selfishness is the love of God shed abroad in the heart. A generous heart and a liberal hand should ever characterize the Christian.

A few words next upon *the heinousness* of covetousness. This evil lust blinds the understanding and corrupts the judgment, so that it regards light as darkness and darkness as light. “If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; if I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much...this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above” (Job 31:24-25, 28)—how little this is realized by the guilty one! It is an *insatiable* lust, for when covetousness rules, the heart is never satisfied, “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase” (Ecc 5:10). It is a *devouring* sin, “the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word” (Mat 13:22).

So terrible is this sin and so great is its power that, one who is governed by it will trample upon the claims of justice, as Ahab did in seizing the vineyard of Naboth (1Ki 21). He will disregard the call of charity, as David did in taking the wife of Uriah (2Sa 11). He will stoop to the most fearful lies, as did Ananias and Sapphira. He will defy the express commandment of God, as Achan did. He will sell Christ, as Judas did. This is the *mother* sin, for “the love of money is the root of *all* evil.” It is a gnawing and fatal sin, “But they that will be [are determined to be] rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition....which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1Ti 6:9-10).

It is the working of this evil lust which lies at the root of very much of the fearful Sabbath-desecration that is now so rife. It is the greed of gold which causes the railways to run special excursions on the Lord’s day, tempting people to leave the city for the countryside or the sea-beach. It is the lure of lucre which prompts thousands of shops to be open seven days in the week. It is the love of money which lies behind the Sunday editions of the newspaper. How the nations of Christendom are heaping up to themselves “wrath against the day of wrath!” God will not be mocked with impunity. Those who believe the Scriptures must perforce expect that soon a far worse war than the last is likely to be sent as a scourge from heaven upon the present Sabbath profaners.

It was the spirit of covetousness which prompted Israel of old to disregard the fourth commandment. “In those days saw I in Jerusalem some treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold in the Sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem” (Neh 13:15-16). Because of their Sabbath profanation, the sore judgment of God fell upon the nation. “Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye *bring more wrath* on Israel by profaning the sabbath” (Neh 13:17-18). “Hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God. Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my

judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them (Eze 20:20-21).

Thus, not only is covetousness a fearful sin in itself, but it is also the prolific mother of other evils. In the poor, it works envy, discontent, and fraud. In the rich, pride, luxury, and avarice. This vile lust unfits for the performing of holy duties, preventing the exercise of those graces which are necessary thereto. It exposes to manifold temptations, whereby we are rendered an easy prey to many spiritual enemies. The more we yield to this evil spirit, the more do we conduct ourselves as though we desired our portion in this world, and look no further than present things, contrary to “while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen” (2Co 4:18). It tends to cast contempt on the mercies which are ours and quenches the spirit of thanksgiving. It turns the heart away from God, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” (Mar 10:23).

Let us now go deeper and solemnly observe the comprehensiveness of God’s searching law, “Thou shalt not covet” (Exo 20:17). Light is cast upon those words by, “I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, [‘concupiscence,’ margin] except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” or “lust” (Rom 7:7)—“concupiscence” is an evil desire, an inordinate affection, a secret lusting after something. What the apostle means is, I had never discovered *my inward depravity* unless the Spirit had enlightened my understanding, convicted my conscience, and made me feel the corruptions of my heart. Man ever looks on the outward appearance—and as a Pharisee of the Pharisees, Paul’s *actions* fully conformed to the law—but when the Spirit quickens a soul, he is made to realize that God requires “truth in the *inward* parts” (Psa 51:6) and cries, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psa 51:10).

“Thou shalt not covet” (Rom 7:7). That which is here forbidden is concupiscence, or those imaginations, thoughts, and desires, which precede the consent of the will. Herein we may perceive the exalted holiness of the divine law—far transcending all human codes—requiring *inward purity*. Herein, too, we may recognize one of the fundamental errors of Romanists, who, following the Pelagians, deny that these lustings are sinful until they are yielded to, and who affirm that evil imaginations only become sinful when the mind definitely assents to them. But the holy law of God condemns that which *instigates unto* what is forbidden, condemns that which *inclines toward* what is unholy, and denounces that which inflames with cupidity. All irregular desires are forbidden. Corrupt imaginations and unlawful inclinations that *precede* the consent of the will are evil, being the seeds of all other sins.

Again we say, herein God’s law differs from and is immeasurably superior to all of man’s laws, for it takes note of and prohibits all the hidden desires and secret lustings of the heart. It is this tenth commandment which, above all others, discovers unto us our depravity and shows how very far short we come of that perfection which the law requires. There is first an evil thought in the mind causing us to think of something which is not ours. This is followed by a longing after or wishing for it. There is then an inward delight by way of anticipating the pleasure that object will give—and then, unless restraining grace intervenes, the outward act of sin is committed—see James 1:14-15. The first evil thought is involuntary, due to the mind’s being turned from good to evil, even though that evil be simply lusting after a new but unnecessary hat! The longing is caused by the heart’s being enticed by the delight promised. Then the consent of the will is gained and the mind plans how to gain the coveted object.

This concupiscence or evil lusting of the heart is called, “the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom 7:23). It is what the older theologians term “original sin,” being the fountain of evil within, corrupting all our faculties. Discontent with our lot, envy of our neighbours, yea, even the very

“*thought of foolishness is SIN*” (Pro 24:9). How high is the standard set before us, “Let none of you *imagine* evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and *love* no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD” (Zec 8:17). Does the third commandment interdict any blasphemous oath upon the lips? Then the tenth commandment prohibits any risings of the heart against God. Does the fourth commandment interdict all unnecessary work on the Sabbath? Then the tenth commandment condemns our saying, “what a weariness is it.” Does the eighth commandment interdict every act of theft? Then the tenth commandment prohibits our desiring anything which is our neighbour’s.

But it is not until after a person is regenerate that he takes notice of the *inward* motions of sin and makes conscience of the state of his *heart*. Then Satan will seek to persuade that he is not responsible for involuntary thoughts (which come unbidden), that evil desires are beyond our control—infirmities which are excusable. But God says to him, “*Keep thy heart* with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23), and makes him realize that every lusting after what He has forbidden or withheld is a species of self-will. Therefore we are accountable to *judge* the first inclination toward evil and *resist* the very earliest solicitations. The fact that we discover so much within that is contrary to God’s holy requirements should deeply humble us, and cause us to live more and more out of self and upon Christ.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

61. His Son Absalom

“And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him” (2Sa 15:1). The “after this” refers to what now followed upon David’s receiving back into his favour the son who had murdered a brother (2Sa 14:33). If a spark of gratitude had burned in his breast, Absalom would now have sought to do all in his power toward forwarding the interests of his indulgent father. But alas, so far from strengthening the hands of his royal parent, he sets to work to dethrone him. Absalom was now in the position to develop his vile plan of deposing David. The methods he followed thoroughly revealed what a godless and unscrupulous scoundrel he was. The first thing here recorded of him at once intimated his utter contempt of God and manifested his affinity with the heathen.

JEHOVAH requires His people to conduct themselves differently from the idolatrous nations surrounding them, and therefore He gave, among others, this law for the regulation of Israel’s king, “But he shall not multiply *horses* to himself” (Deu 17:16). It was in accord with this, that, when the King of kings formerly presented Himself to Israel, He appeared “meek, and sitting upon *an ass*” (Mat 21:5), so perfectly did He honour the law in every detail. But Absalom was of a totally different type—arrogant, proud, self-willed. All the other sons of David rode upon mules (2Sa 13:29), but nothing less than “chariots and horses” would satisfy this wicked aspirant to the kingdom.

The “fifty men to run before him” was a symbol of *royalty*, see 1 Samuel 8:11; 1 Kings 1:5. In acting thus, Absalom took advantage of his father’s fond attachment and basely traded upon his weakness. Unauthorised by the king, yet not forbidden by him, he prepared an imposing retinue, which gave him a commanding status before the nation. Finding himself unchecked by the king, he made the most of his position to seduce the hearts of the people. By means of underhanded methods, Absalom now sought to turn toward himself the affection of his father’s subjects. From the

employment of force (2Sa 14:30), he resorted to craftiness. As we have said before, these two are the leading characteristics of the devil—the *violence* of the “lion” and the *guile* of the “serpent,” and thus it ever is with those whom he fully possesses.

“And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel” (2Sa 15:2-6).

A few explanatory comments are required upon some of the terms in the above verses. First, the “way of the gate” was the place of judgment, that is, of judicial assistance, see Genesis 19:1; 23:10, 18; 34:20; Ruth 4:1. “Thy matters” in verse 3 signifies “thy suit or cause” as in verse 4. The obvious intention of Absalom in stationing himself at this important centre was to ingratiate himself with the people. His “thy matters are good and right” to all and sundry alike, showed his determination to win them regardless of the requirements of justice or the claims of mercy. His, “There is no one deputed of the king to hear thee” was a dastardly attempt to create prejudice and lower the sovereign in their eyes. His, “Oh that I were made judge in the land” revealed the lusting of his heart, neither pleasure nor pomp contented him—he must have *power* too. His embracing the common people (2Sa 15:5) was a display of (pretended) humility and geniality.

“So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel” (2Sa 15:6), upon which Thomas Scott well said, “He did not gain their hearts by eminent services, or by a wise and virtuous conduct. But he affected to look great, as heir to the crown, and yet to be very condescending and affable to his inferiors. He pretended a great reward to their interests, and threw out artful insinuations *against David’s administration*. He flattered everyone who had a cause to be tried, with the assurance that he had right on his side—that, if it went against him, he might be led to accuse David and the magistrates of injustice. Though Absalom knew not how to obey, and deserves to die for his atrocious crime, yet he exposed a vehement desire to be judge over all the land, and suggested that suits should not then be so tedious, expensive, and partially decided as they were. This he confirmed by rising early and by apparent application—though it was other people’s business, and not his own duty, and by such sinister arts, united with his personal attractions and address, he imposed upon multitudes all over the land to prefer so worthless a character to the wise, righteous, and pious David.”

Ere proceeding further let us pause and ask the question, What is there here for *our own souls*? This should ever be the principal concern of our minds as we read the Word of God. Its historical sections are full of important practical teaching. Many valuable lessons may be learned therefrom if only we have hearts to receive them. Ah, *that* is the point on which so much turns. There must be a readiness and willingness on my part if I am to profit spiritually from what I peruse, and for that, there must be *humility*. Only a lowly heart will perceive that *I* am likely to be attracted by the same baits which led to the downfall of others—that *I* am liable to the same temptations they met with, and that unless I guard the particular gate at which the enemy succeeded in gaining an entrance into *their* souls, he will just as surely prevail over *me*. O for grace to heed the solemn warnings which are found in every incident we ponder.

Now look again at what is recorded here. “Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel” (2Sa 15:6). Surely *that* is the sentence which should speak most loudly to us. It was not the open enemies of David that he wrought upon, but his subjects. It was not the Philistines whom he enlisted, but the people of God whom he seduced. Absalom sought to sow the seeds of discontent in their minds, to alienate their affections from David, to render them disloyal to their king. Ah, is not the lesson plain? Is there not one who is ever seeking to seduce the subjects of Christ? Tempting them to revolt from allegiance to His sceptre, endeavouring to allure them into *his* service? Learn, then, dear friend, to look beneath the surface as you read the Holy Scriptures, to see through the historical details to the underlying principles that are therein illustrated, to observe the motives which prompted to action, and then *apply the whole to yourself*.

What had *you* done had you been one of those “men of Israel” whose hearts Absalom was seeking to divorce from David? The answer to that question would have turned entirely on one thing—was your heart satisfied with David? Of this tempter we read, “But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him” (2Sa 14:25), thus there was everything about his person to appeal to “the lust of the *flesh*” (1Jo 2:16). And as we have seen, “Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him,” thus there was an appeal to “the lust of the *eyes*” (1Jo 2:16). Moreover, he promised to further the temporal interests of all who had “a controversy,” that is, of all who considered they had a grievance and were being hardly dealt with—thus there was an appeal to “*the pride of life*” (1Jo 2:16). Were those things more than sufficient to counterbalance the excellencies which David possessed?

Again we say, *Look beneath* the historical characters and discern those whom they typified! When Satan comes to tempt the subjects of the anti-typical David, he assumes his most alluring character and dangles before us that which appeals either to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life. But mark it well, dear reader, that Satan’s baits *have no attraction* for those who are in communion with and finding their joy in the Lord. And he knows that full well and therefore does he seek to stir up enmity against Him. Satan knows he cannot cause a regenerate soul to dislike the *person* of the Lord, so he endeavours to create dissatisfaction with *His government over us*. It was so in the type, “There is no man deputed of the king to hear thee” (2Sa 15:3). Ah, it is here we most need to be on our guard—to resist every effort of Satan’s to bring us to murmur at the Lord’s providences. But we must turn from the spiritual application back again to the historical.

And what of David during this time? He could hardly have been totally ignorant of the perfidy of his son—some tidings must have reached him of the treacherous plot now on foot to depose him. Yet there is no hint that he took any steps to thwart Absalom. How, then, shall we account for *his apathy*? At the close of last month’s article, we dwelt upon the strange passiveness which characterized David during this stage of his checkered career, suggesting that the explanation proffered by Alexander MacLaren (1826-1929) was a most likely one and apparently confirmed by the Scriptures, namely, that during this period the king suffered from a severe and protracted sickness. That helpful writer called attention to the fact that many of the best commentators regard the 41st and 55th Psalms as being composed by David at this time. Having already given his brief remarks upon the former, we will now reproduce those upon the latter—suggesting that Psalm 55 be read through at this point.

“The Fifty-fifth Psalm gives some very pathetic additional particulars. It is in three parts: a plaintive prayer and portraiture of the Psalmist’s mental distress (vv. 1-8); a vehement supplication against his foes, and indignant recounting of their treachery (vv. 9-16); and, finally a prophecy of the retribution that is to fall upon them (vv. 17-23). In the first and second portions, we have some points

which help to complete our picture of the man. For instance, his heart is ‘sore pained’ within him, the ‘terrors of death’ are on him, ‘fear and trembling’ are come to him and ‘horror’ has covered him (Psa 55:4). All this points, like subsequent verses, to his knowledge of the conspiracy before it came to a head.

“The state of the city, which is practically in the hands of Absalom and his tools, is described with bold imagery. Violence and strife in possession of it, spies prowling about the walls day and night, evil and trouble in its midst, and destruction, oppression, and deceit—a goodly company—flaunting in its open spaces. And the spirit, the brain of the whole, is the trusted friend whom he had made his own equal, who had shared his secretest thoughts in private, who had walked next to him in solemn processions to the temple. Seeing all this, what does the king do, who was once so fertile in resource, so decisive in counsel, so prompt in action? Nothing. His only weapon is prayer, ‘As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice’ (Psa 55:16-17).

“He lets it all grow as it list, and only longs to be out of all the weary coil of troubles. ‘Oh that I had wings, like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, I would flee far off, I would lodge in the wilderness. I would swiftly fly to my refuge from the raging wind, from the tempest’ (see Psa 55:6-8). The languor of his disease, love for his worthless son, consciousness of sin, and submission to the chastisement through ‘one of his own house,’ which Nathan had foretold, kept him quiet, though he saw the plot winding its meshes round him. And in this submission, patient confidence is not wanting, though subdued and saddened, which finds expression in the last words of this Psalm of the heavy laden, ‘Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee....I will trust in thee’ (v. 22).”

Much of what Absalom said to those whose hearts he stole had, no doubt, a measure of truth in it. The disorders and sorrows of David’s house had borne heavily on the king. His energy flagged, his health was broken, and the influence of his throne proportionately weakened. Absalom saw the defects of his father’s government, and perceived that others saw them too, and quickly and meanly he took advantage of the situation, deprecating David and extolling himself. Yet David idolized Absalom, indeed, this was one of his chief failures, and bitterly was he now made to smart for cherishing such a viper in his bosom. He knew that Absalom was exalting himself. He knew that the calling of God was not with him, but with Solomon (2Sa 7:12; 12:25). He knew that Absalom was godless, that the flesh ruled him in all his ways, and yet, knowing all this, he interfered not to restrain him.

“And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron” (2Sa 15:7). We are not sure from what point these forty years date, but certainly not from the time of David’s coronation, for in such a case we would now have arrived at the closing year of his reign, which is obviously not the case—see 2 Samuel 21:1. Possibly it is to be dated from the time of his first anointing (1Sa 16:13). At any rate, that which is most germane to our present line of meditation is Absalom considered that his wicked plot was ripe for execution, hence he now proceeded to put the finishing touches to it. Nothing less than the kingdom itself was what he determined to seize.

“For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD. And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron” (2Sa 15:8-9). Absalom’s duplicity and hypocrisy appear in all their hideousness. He cloaked his insurrection under the guise of offering sacrifice unto JEHOVAH (Deu 23:21-23) in performance of a vow which he pretended to have made. He had no love for his parent

and no fear for his God, for he dared to mock His worship with a deliberate lie. He cunningly imposed upon his poor father's hopes that at last his wayward son was becoming pious. No doubt David had often prayed for him, and now he supposed that his supplications were beginning to be answered. How delighted he would be to hear that Absalom desired to "serve the LORD," and therefore he readily gave his consent for him to go to Hebron.

"But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron" (2Sa 15:10). Let this be a warning to parents not to assume too readily that their children have experienced the new birth, but wait to see *the fruits* of the same. Instead of journeying to Hebron in order to worship JEHOVAH, Absalom's purpose was to be acclaimed monarch over Israel. "Hebron" was not only the place where he was born (2Sa 3:2-3), but it was also where David had commenced his reign (2Sa 5:1-3). These "spies" that he sent forth were either his own trusted "servants" (2Sa 14:30) or those whose hearts he had stolen from David and on whom he could now rely to further his evil scheme. Those who would hear this proclamation, "Absalom reigneth," might draw whatever conclusion they pleased—that David was dead, or that he had relinquished the reins of government, or that the nation at large preferred his attractive son.

"And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing" (2Sa 15:11). No doubt these "two hundred men" were persons of rank and prominence, being summoned to accompany the king's son to a sacred feast. Absalom's object was to awe the common people and give them the impression that David's cause was now being deserted at headquarters. Thus these men unwittingly countenanced Absalom's evil devices, for their presence signified that they supported his treason. This is a fair sample of the methods employed by unprincipled politicians to further their selfish ends, getting many to join their ranks or party under a complete misconception of the leader's real policy.

"And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom" (2Sa 15:12). The man whose aid Absalom now sought was a renowned statesman, apparently no longer on friendly terms with David. He was a fit tool for the insurrectionist, though in the end, God turned his counsel into foolishness. The sovereignty which God displays in His providences is as patent as it is awe-inspiring. As He graciously raises up those to befriend His people in the hour of their need, so He has appointed those who are ready to help the wicked in the furthering of their evil plans. As there was an Ittai loyal to David, so there was an Ahithophel to counsel Absalom.

UNION AND COMMUNION

17. Glory

It was our desire to have closed last month's article with some reflections constituting a "practical application" of the subject, but lack of space hindered us. We shall therefore introduce them at this stage, and then add a few more remarks about the future bliss of the righteous. Our desire is not only to enlighten the mind, but to affect the heart, so that our lives may be more fruitful to the praise

of the glory of divine grace. God has indeed been good in revealing so much concerning that everlasting bliss which awaits His people on high, yet the practical value of such knowledge to us is to be determined by *the effects* which it produces in our daily walk. Those who are going to behold the King in His beauty will surely strive after a closer conformity to His image in this life, and then, conscious of their deplorable lack of such conformity, will not only be filled with grief, but be kept humble in the dust before Him.

First, *a radical change of heart* is indispensable before any depraved member of Adam's fallen race can participate in the inheritance of the saints in light. Moreover, that change must take place before death, for at death each individual goes to "his *own* place" (Act 1:25)—heaven or hell, for which either holiness or sin fits him. Nor does glorification (unlike regeneration) effect any radical change. Instead, it is the *perfecting* of what has previously been wrought in a person. No one enters heaven unless heaven has first entered him. No one goes to be with Christ unless Christ has first dwelt in his heart. How could those who never had any spiritual love for Him find joy and satisfaction from spending an eternity in His immediate presence? If we have no relish for spiritual things in this life, if our hearts perceive not the supreme "beauty of holiness," then we would be completely out of our element in the dwelling place of the Holy One, and where none but holy persons are found. Therefore "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

The natural man has a settled aversion from God. The unregenerate are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph 4:18), and therefore do they deliberately choose a life that is "*without God* in the world" (Eph 2:12). True, many of them (like millions of the heathen) assume a religious garb at certain seasons and engage in a round of religious exercises, yet both in heart and practice they are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2Ti 3:4). Press upon such the claims of Christ, tell them He requires the throne of their hearts, seek to set before them the blessedness of a life of obedience to Him and the sweetness of communion with Him, and they will regard you as a fanatic and killjoy. At how great a moral distance, then, are all such souls from heavenly blessedness—either it must be changed to match their corruptions or their hearts must be changed to suit its purity.

Reader, has *your* heart been so changed that fellowship with Christ is your chiefest delight? O the deceitfulness of the human heart! O the powerful infatuation of self-love! O the fatal delusions of Satan, that so many yet "in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity" should suppose that God can be imposed upon by lip-service or by the labour of the hands. Alas, what multitudes imagine that a few drops of water sprinkled upon them during infancy secures an entrance into heaven. What multitudes suppose that "joining a church" and financially supporting the minister is sufficient to ensure everlasting bliss. And what countless other thousands persuade themselves that a head knowledge and mouth profession of the truth is all that is needed. Ah, my reader, thou canst not impose upon God, and never shall you enter *His* kingdom unless thou be born again. Then let each of us seriously and solemnly examine himself.

Second, the soul in which that great change is wrought *eagerly pursues heaven's blessedness* until it be attained. Perfect conformity to Christ, unbroken communion with Him, is now its supreme desire and quest. Let a soul be regenerated and nothing short of this can satisfy it. The deepest longing of a renewed heart is "LORD, lift thou up the light of *thy* countenance upon us" (Psa 4:6). The giddy crave worldly pleasures, the miser his gold, the ambitious earthly honours, but Christian experience is summed up in, "One thing have I *desired* of the LORD, that will I *seek after*; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple" (Psa 27:4). That which is to afford him *eternal* joy and satisfaction is the object of the

believer's *present* desire and delight—a visit from Christ, a smile from Him, a sip of His love, is what he is constantly asking for.

“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psa 17:15), which is the same as saying, I cannot be satisfied otherwise. But what does that word “satisfied” imply? Hunger is satisfied with food, thirst with water—that which was previously craved is now obtained and *contentment* follows. Thus, satisfaction of soul necessarily implies a *previous longing* of soul after that which alone can satisfy, a working of earnest desire, a tireless seeking after that which continues to so largely elude us in this life. “With my soul have I *desired* thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early” (Isa 26:9)—yes, “seek” after a conscious access to the Lord and a sight of His face, as earnestly, as diligently, as persistently, as the worldling does after carnal things. “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: 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). That word “attained” has a very small place in the theology of some who are lopsided on grace. Yet the apostle hesitated not to use it, realising that his spiritual longings called for a “following after” on his part.

Here, then, is another point at which we need to test ourselves. It is a contradiction in terms to speak of a soul being “satisfied” in the future if it had no *previous yearning*. In this life there is a restless longing and working of soul. In the life to come, the goal is reached and rest (satisfaction) is attained. Thus, if I be seriously minded, if I am concerned about the hereafter, how it behooves me to ascertain whether there be within me a supreme desire, a spiritual appetite, a soul craving which this poor world cannot satisfy, and which stirs me up to seek after Christ now. Or does the language of the spouse in the Song of Solomon, wherein she expresses her joy and bliss at the brief visits of her Beloved, and her loss and anguish at His departure, strike you as wild enthusiasm? If so, be sure that your heart has not within it that principle which finds its fruition in heaven. We may ascertain our state by the *objects of our desires*. Make no mistake—that can never be your eternal blessedness for which now you have no relish. Christ will not receive into His presence those to whom it would be a burden.

Third, the knowledge of God and conformity to His image are in their very nature *satisfying* to a renewed soul, and even now *actually do so* in the measure in which they are attained by us. Mere *things* cannot satisfy, for they perish with the using of them. He who hopes to find satisfaction by multiplying his carnal pleasures, or by heaping together material things, is on as vain a quest as if he sought to make a sum by adding together naught but cyphers. But that which shall one day fully satisfy has in itself an aptness and power to satisfy even now. Happy the soul which has been let into the secret of where real satisfaction is to be found, and knows whither to turn his eyes and direct his efforts in the pursuit thereof. Thrice happy those who can say, Give me an experimental, living, efficacious sight of God, and I have enough, “Shew us the Father, and it *sufficeth* us” (Joh 14:8).

Let the weary wandering soul turn unto *God*. He will not mock thee with shadows as the world does. “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (Joh 17:3). Apart from Christ, we cannot know God nor view Him with comfort, but the Gospel gives a lovely prospect of Him—the glory of God shines “in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6), and the more faith beholds Him there, the more does the soul move toward satisfaction. “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1Ti 6:6). A vital knowledge of God tends to holiness and holiness to contentment. Nothing is more analogous to heaven than the peace and serenity which issues from the believer's present enjoyment of God. He does not wholly conceal Himself from the saints, but favours them with an occasional glimpse of His smiling face, and the degree in which He

vouchsafes this blessing brings heaven into the soul, “They looked unto him, and were lightened” (Psa 34:5).

Fourth, but inasmuch as the soul’s complete blessedness lies in the future, then his happiness in the meantime must largely consist *in hope*. It is the divine promise that one day there shall be nothing to mar his fellowship with Christ that now supports the saint. It is the assurance that ere long his hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled (Mat 5:6), and that “no groans shall mingle with the songs that warble from immortal tongues,” which comforts the oft cast-down soul. “If we *hope* for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom 8:25). Yes, it is the exercise of hope which encourages the weary pilgrim to continue plodding on, which nerves the Christian soldier *not* to give up the good fight of faith. It was hope which moved the soul to first seek unto God for mercy, and hope will make its possessor *continue seeking* unto Him till every longing receives its fruition.

Here is yet another point by which to test ourselves. Are our expectations of satisfaction centered in present or future things? They who have received the “firstfruits of the Spirit” cannot but earnestly groan after the harvest itself—“waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:23). Have you, my reader, been the happy recipient of a bunch of the “grapes of Eschol”? If so, nothing that grows in this wilderness satisfies your palate, and your face will be eagerly turned to that fair Land of Promise of which that “bunch” was but the earnest. If you really have a “good hope through grace” (2Th 2:16) then you will, in some measure at least, live upon things future and unseen. “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit” (Rom 8:5).

Fifth, if we honestly perceive any disposition of soul toward the holy glory of heaven, any principle within which causes us to pant after God as the hunted hart does after the waterbrooks, then how diligently and zealously should we *seek after the strengthening* and developing of the same, and endeavour to bring our hearts into that temper suited thereto. If we are painfully conscious of how far short we fall of being conformed to the image of Christ, then we should stir up our souls to make more serious efforts after the same. If we are to spend an eternity in His presence, how we should strive after a growing knowledge of God, how we should seek to please and honour Him in all things. Then let us “follow on to know the LORD” (Hos 6:3), let us spend more time in the “secret place of the most High,” let us make future things the subject of our meditation. (For much in the above paragraphs we are indebted to John Howe, 1630-1705).

Is it not worth some pains to attain unto the blessedness of heaven? If athletes undergo such discipline and self-denial in order to obtain a corruptible crown, shall *we* murmur because the turning of our backs upon the world and the mortifying of the flesh are required of us if we are to attain unto an incorruptible crown? Christians are not called to lie upon flowery beds of ease, but to strive against sin, to pluck out right eyes and cut off right hands, to make the cultivation of personal holiness the great business of their present lives. Christ has left His people an example, that they should follow His steps, and His path is not a smooth one, nor did He please Himself. Christ had to “endure the cross” (see Heb 12:2) before He was rewarded by the heavenly bliss into which He has entered (Phi 2:8-9), and unless we take up our cross (that is, live a life of self-sacrifice) heaven will not be our portion and reward. “To him *that overcometh* will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Rev 3:21)—that is the plainly revealed condition of celestial blessedness.

Once more we say, Can any present sacrifice be too great in view of the future joy? Consider again what the blessedness of the righteous shall consist of—it will be a complete freedom from all that is evil and the eternal enjoyment of all that is good. When the full number of God’s elect have been

openly called by the Spirit and vitally united to Shiloh, their living Head, then will take place the solemnization of the nuptials between the heavenly Bridegroom and His Bride. “The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework” (Psa 45:13-14), which was a prophetic statement that receives its fulfillment on the resurrection morning. At that time all her spots and blemishes will be eternally obliterated, and she will shine forth immutably holy, consummately righteous, inestimably pure. Thus will she be a suitable Consort for her glorious Husband, being fully conformed to His image.

Then it is that Christ shall “present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27). This is the ultimate end of our redemption by Christ, the perfecting of our sanctification in the life to come. As Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together (Mat 1:18), so the church is contracted to Christ now, but the marriage is hereafter (Rev 19:7). He will then take us home to live with Himself and abide always in His immediate presence. “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee” (Song 4:7) will be His greeting. “My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand” (Song 5:10) will be her response. This presentation of the church to Himself is Christ’s recompense for His sufferings. It is then that “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied” (Isa 53:11).

It is to be duly noted that the church’s glory in heaven is the fruit of Christ’s death. It is not merited by us, but was purchased by Him. “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it (i.e., in a sacrificial death); that he might sanctify and cleanse it...that he might present it to himself a glorious church” (Eph 5:25-27). So again, “That by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15). The following distinctions may help. The electing grace of the Father is the original cause of our glorification. The atonement of Christ is the meritorious cause. Quickening by the Spirit is the efficacious cause. Personal holiness is what *fits* us, for it is the condition without which we cannot obtain eternal bliss (Heb 12:14).

In heaven our communion with Christ will reach its highest perfection, without any possibility of cessation or interruption. Heavenly communion will be our participation with Christ in all the benefits which flow from our union with Him. The glorified Head of the church will share with His members the high honours which God has conferred upon Him. “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom 16:20). Yes, the saints will yet be brought to participate with Christ in His complete triumph over Satan. “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” (1Co 6:3). Communion is *mutual enjoyment*, and Christ will not be satisfied till His blood-bought people be in the same condition as Himself, “That ye may eat and drink *at my table* in my kingdom” (Luk 22:30). Yea, “To him that overcometh will I grant to *sit with me* in my throne” (Rev 3:21). Then it is that He shall say, “Enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Mat 25:21)—an unalloyed and holy joy, a perfect and satisfying one.

The God-man is Lord of angels (Col 1:16; Heb 1:4), and since His saints are joint-heirs with Christ, they must *share with Him* in His dominion over the celestial hosts. This is a bold statement, yet it is fully warranted by the teaching of Holy Writ—nor let it appear absurd, though it be so wonderful. If the Son of God condescended to take human nature upon Him, is it incredible that He should raise it to the highest creature dignity? Mark carefully the discrimination of language in the following passage, “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and *in the midst of* the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain....And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels *round about* the throne and the beasts, and the elders” (Rev 5:6, 11). The redeemed are *nearer* the

Lamb and more intimately connected with Him than the others, for the angels are only in the outer circle.

Above all, we shall be eye-witnesses of the glory which belongs to Christ personally. “And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads” (Rev 22:4). Christ’s glory will be beheld by us then to an extent we cannot now conceive. Every faculty of soul and body will be refined to the highest degree, suited to the heavenly state, which will immeasurably increase our enjoyment of the beatific vision. The better the sight, the lovelier the object appears. The healthier the appetite, the more delicious the food tastes. The more musical the ear, the pleasanter the melody. So, the holier the soul, the more joyous heaven’s joys and the more glorious its glories. If the queen of Sheba had cause to say of Solomon’s glory, “Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom” (1Ki 10:8), then those who shall sit in the immediate presence of the infinitely greater than Solomon will be superlatively happy.

In heaven the Christian will have a constant and satisfying sight of the God-Man, who, as such, is the “Lord of Glory” (1Co 2:8). In Him the Incomprehensible Three will shine forth in the uttermost display of their manifestative glory before all the angels and saints. It is *that* which is the blessedness of heaven, and which each saint shall forever behold, filling them with conceptions of glory as they can never express. The wicked will see Christ in the day of judgment, but they will not have an intuitive and supernatural sight of Him. In blessed contrast, it is by a *spiritual* faculty and light that the saints will see Him. It is so now, as He is revealed in the glass of the Word. That spiritual faculty, elevated by the Holy Spirit, will so raise up the mind as to take in larger and larger views of Christ, swallowing up every thought in the contemplation and adoration of the same.

Our life in heaven will consist in an ever-expanding vision of Christ’s manifold glory, so that we shall be eternally admiring, rejoicing in it, having communion with Him over it, giving Him praise for it. The heart will be wholly absorbed in its apprehensions of all “the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” which are now “hid” in Christ (Col 2:3). We shall be completely lost to everything *but Him!* There will be such an “exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2Co 4:17) on our minds, poisoning them, as to preclude every wandering thought from Him. The heart will be eternally fixed on Christ as its centre. Thus there can be no possibility of sin ever again gaining entrance to our souls. Then will be completely realised that divine promise, “They shall be *abundantly satisfied* with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light” (Psa 36:8-9).

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

5. The Siniatic

The moral law (the Ten Commandments), which formed so prominent and distinctive a feature of the Siniatic Covenant, was accompanied by much which was of an *evangelical* nature. This consisted not so much in the announcement of what was absolutely new, as in giving greater fullness, precision, and significancy, to what had been already revealed. It is true that this was communicated largely through the medium of symbols, yet the instruction imparted by them was at once most impressive and adapted to the condition of Israel. While in Egypt, they were not in a situation which admitted of any extension of means of worship. But now they were about to take their place as an independent

nation, in a country of their own. The time had arrived for the formal appointment of those institutions and ordinances which the regulation of their religious life required. Moreover, this was rendered the more needful from the prominence of which the moral law was given, in that economy.

Designed to be subservient to the great purposes of the previous Covenant, it was requisite that the law should be counterbalanced by a more full and instructive disclosure of the grand truths which that Covenant embraced, in order that the law might not override and neutralise them. We must always bear in mind that the Abrahamic Covenant was in nowise superseded or placed in abeyance by the revelation given through Moses. It was still in unabated force. The law was, in reality, an “addition” to it and designed to more effectually secure its objects. It was therefore fitting that the grace and mercy made known to Abraham should receive such enlargement and illustration as might make the law not a hindrance, but the handmaid, to the believing reception of its truth. The *grace* of the Abrahamic Covenant and the *law* of Moses had an important mutual relation. They threw light on one another and in combination were designed to secure a common end.

It was, then, the Levitical institutions which supplied the enlarged instruction that the circumstances of the nation now rendered necessary. First and foremost was the directions given for the public manifestation of the fellowship and intercourse with God which it was the privilege of Israel to enjoy. A sanctuary was to be erected, the pattern which was revealed to Moses in the mount, and the materials for which were to be supplied by the freewill offerings of the people—intimating that all must be regulated by the divine will, but that only a free and spontaneous worship from them was acceptable. The tabernacle was at once a pledge that God dwelt in their midst, and a visible means of enjoying that communion with Him to which He had graciously admitted them. It was a perpetual memorial of it, and a help to train them to those more spiritual apprehensions of the worship of God which the Gospel alone has fully revealed and realised.

A priesthood was appointed, and one which presented a marked contrast from those which existed in other nations. Among the heathen, the priesthood was a distinct caste, a body of men standing apart from and even in antagonism to those for whom they officiated—and characterised by all the pride and tyrannical tendencies which caste distinctions engender. But the Hebrew priesthood belonged to *all* the people, representing in their divine calling. One family alone, Aaron’s, was permitted to enter the sacred precincts of the Lord’s house and officiate for them. When the high priest entered the holy of holies, he bore the names of all the tribes on his breastplate, and confessed all their transgressions. Thus the high honour of being permitted to draw nigh unto God was impressively taught the people, the sanctity of His house was emphasised, and the hindrance which sin imposed was borne testimony to.

An elaborate system of sacrifices was enjoined. These were not only incorporated with the institutions of worship, but were explanatory of their importance and design. They were appointed to expiate the guilt of offences committed, with the express declaration that “the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls” (Lev 17:11). A day was set apart annually for atonement to be formally made for the sins of the people (Lev 16), and the elaborate services of it were so arranged as to concentrate therein, in the most impressive manner, the various lessons which the sacrifices inculcated. That those sacrifices could not, in themselves, take away sins, their frequent repetition indicated, and the fact that there were certain sins for which no sacrifices were provided, still further showed their limitation. Nevertheless, they assured faith that God was gracious, furnished a ground of hope, and supplied an inducement for them to unreservedly surrender themselves to their God, who was both righteous and merciful.

We are not prolonging these articles for the mere sake of filling up space, but with the special design of seeking to help those who have been deceived by “Dispensationalists,” and others who have been misled by unwarrantable conclusions drawn from Old Testament premises. What has been pointed out above should make it evident that they are quite wrong who suppose that the Mosaic economy was a pure covenant of works which gave no hope to transgressors. God never made a promulgation of law to sinful men in order to keep them under mere law, without also setting before them the grace of the covenant of redemption, by which they might escape the wrath which the law denounced. The awful *curse* of Deuteronomy 27:26 must be magnified to the exclusion of the wondrous *blessing* of Numbers 6:24-27. The *justice* of the moral law was tempered by the *mercy* of the ceremonial law, and the “severity” of the Siniatic Covenant was modified by the “goodness” of the Abrahamic Covenant being still administered.

“The legal and evangelical dispensations have been but different dispensations of the same covenant of grace and of the blessings thereof. Though there is now a greater degree of light, consolation, and liberty, yet if Christians are now under a kingdom of grace, where there is pardon upon repentance, the Lord’s people under the Old Testament were (as to the reality and substance of things) also under a kingdom of *grace*” (James Fraser, 1700-1769). “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same *spiritual* meat; and did all drink the same *spiritual* drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them: and that rock was Christ” (1Co 10:1-4). In the light of that passage as a whole, being “baptized unto Moses” can only mean that he is there set forth as *the minister of grace*, the typical saviour who had led them out of Egypt.

The tabernacle, the priesthood, and the Levitical offerings, were really an amplification and explanation of the grace revealed in the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. The place which the moral law held in the Mosaic economy and its relation to that grace is clearly defined in, “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come” (Gal 3:19). At Sinai, God did not give the law as a message explaining how justification could be obtained by obedience thereto, for such obedience as it required was impossible to fallen man. In such a case, the law had *not* been “added” to the “promise,” but would be in direct opposition to it. The previous verse makes it clear that if the law had been set up for such an end, it had completely disannulled the promise, “For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham *by promise*” (Gal 3:18).

So far, then, from the Mosaic economy canceling the Abrahamic promises, it was “added” thereto. Had that economy been one exclusively of works (as some of our moderns imagine), then the whole of Israel had been damned the first day it was instituted. Had it been a strict regime of law, untempered by mercy, then no pardon had been available (which flatly contradicts Leviticus 26:40-46), and in such a case the Siniatic Covenant could not have been reckoned among Israel’s *blessings* (Rom 9:4). The word “added” in Galatians 3:19 proves that the dispensation of law was not established as a thing distinct by itself alone, but was an appendix to the grace of the Abrahamic Covenant. In other words, the moral law and the ceremonial law which accompanied it, were given with evangelical ends—to show sinners their *need* of Christ and to indicate *how* He would meet that need.

Again, had the law been promulgated in divine wrath, with the object of its issuing in naught but death, then it had been in the hand of an *executioner*, and not as Galatians 3:19 states “in the hand of a *mediator*,” whose office is to effect reconciliation. This it is which supplies the key to and explains

that much disputed and little understood statement in the next verse, “Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one” (Gal 3:20). “God is one” signifies that His purpose and design is *the same* in both the Abrahamic and Siniatic Covenants. In other words, the law was published with a *gracious* end in view. Therefore when the apostle proceeds to ask the definite question, “Is the law then against the promises of God” (i.e. does it clash with or annul the gracious revelation made to Abraham), the emphatic answer is, “God forbid” (Gal 3:21).

In last month’s article, we affirmed that the Siniatic Covenant was a compact promising the Israelites as a people certain material and national blessings, on the condition of their rendering to God a general obedience to His law. Let it now be pointed out that something higher was required in order to *individual communion* with the Lord. This is clear from such a passage as “LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour” (Psa 15:1-3). No loose or mechanical compliance with the requirements of the law would suffice. God’s glory is inseparably bound up with the interests of righteousness and there can be no righteousness where the heart is divorced from Him.

In like manner, we read again, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. he shall receive the blessing from the LORD” (Psa 24:3-5). Here was described the character of the true worshippers of God, as contradistinguished from hypocrites. The “ascending into the hill of the LORD, standing in his holy place, and abiding in his tabernacle,” being but figurative language to express *spiritual* fellowship with the Most High. It is striking to note that both of these searching passages were delivered at a time when the tabernacle service was about to be renewed (by Solomon) with increased splendour—plainly they were designed as a *warning* to the people that whatever regard was paid to the solemnities of public worship, it could avail them nothing, if there was not first practical righteousness in the offerer of it.

It is to be particularly observed that in the above passages it was not so much the righteousness of the law in general that the psalmist pressed for, as that establishing of *the second table*, because hypocrites and formalists have so many ways of counterfeiting the works of the first table. The same principle was pressed by the prophets again and again. “What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son” (Psa 50:16-20). And yet in their blindness and self-complacency, they had dared to talk of God’s statutes and prate about His covenant. But no *outward* adherence to the worship of JEHOVAH could be accepted while the divine commands were trampled underfoot.

Isaiah was still more severe in his denunciations. He encouraged those who feigned great respect for the temple, multiplying their offerings, treading the holy courts, keeping the feasts with much diligence, and making “many prayers,” yet he addressed them as the “rulers of Sodom” and as the “people of Gomorrah,” and affirmed that their sacrifices and religious performances were nauseating to God, that His soul “hated” such pretensions, and that He would not hearken to their prayers, because they oppressed the needy and ground down the fatherless and the widow (Isa 1:10-17). There was no sincerity in their devotions—to pose as pious in the house of the Lord while iniquity filled their own dwellings was a grievous offence. Hence, he told them that their altar-gifts were “*lying*

offerings” (so “vain oblations” of verse 13 should be rendered) and that the whole of their worship was an abomination in the sight of the Holy One.

In like manner we hear Jeremiah saying, “Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever” (Jer 7:3-7). Thus he exposed and condemned the blatant folly of those who trusted in the temple and its services for a blessing, when by their ungodliness and wicked works they had turned the temple into a resort of evil-doers. Ezekiel, too, rebuked religious hypocrites, and showed how God could be satisfied with nothing less than that reality which was evidenced by practical righteousness between man and man (chapters 18 and 33).

On the one hand, then, there was a godly remnant in Israel, who used the law “lawfully” (1Ti 1:8) by causing its spirituality and holiness to cast them back on the grace and promises of the Abrahamic Covenant, turning to God as their Redeemer and Healer. It is in such passages as Psalm 119, we find *their* experience described. There was a realisation of the excellence, the breadth, the height of the divine law—its suitability to man’s condition, the blessedness of being conformed to its requirements, and the earnest longings of the pious heart after all that properly belongs to it. Those acknowledgements and aspirations are interspersed with confessions of backsliding, prayers for divine mercy and restoring grace, and fresh resolutions are formed in dependence upon divine aid to resist and strive after higher attainments in the righteousness which the law enjoins. In many other passages we find the consciousness of sin and moral weakness driving the soul to God for deliverance and help, especially in the appropriation of the gracious provision made in the sacrifices for expiation of guilt and restoration of peace to the troubled conscience.

On the other hand, there was a far greater number of the godless in Israel who made a wrong use of the law, perverting the design of the Sinaitic constitution, divorcing it from the Abrahamic Covenant. These shut their eyes to the depths and spirituality of the law’s requirements, for they were determined to attain unto a righteousness before God on a merely legal basis, and therefore they reduced the decalogue to an outward performance of certain rules of conduct. This, of course, engendered a servile spirit, for where duties are not performed from high motives and grateful impulses, they necessarily become a burden and are discharged solely for the wages to be paid in return. Such a spirit actuated the scribes and Pharisees who were “hirelings” and not sons. Moreover, such a degradation of the law could only result in formality and hypocrisy. Finally, those who thus erred concerning the law’s place and spirit could neither look rightly for the Messiah nor welcome Him when He appeared.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

12. Its Means

One of the principal reasons why so many of the Lord’s people have such vague and faulty conceptions of what the believer’s sanctification really consists of, is because few of those who write

or preach thereon take the trouble to deal with the subject in an adequate and systematic way. Important distinctions are ignored, diverse aspects are jumbled together, terms are not explained, and because little more than superficial generalizations are presented, nothing is definitely defined in the mind of the reader or hearer—or only a single branch of the subject is understood by him. On the other hand, in our endeavour to present an orderly unfolding of this great truth, there is danger of confusing the reader's mind by the numerous divisions adopted. He is apt to conclude that the subject is too complex for him to grasp, or bewilder himself by supposing there are several different kinds of sanctification. Yet this ought not to be.

Such mistaken ideas will be avoided if our friends exercise due patience—a rare quality today!—and devote themselves to *studying* the subject with that diligence to which it is surely entitled, and with which their own peace and spiritual prosperity is so closely bound up. Any thing in this life which is of value can only be obtained by painstaking effort. That which is worth something is rarely acquired without labour, perseverance, and expense. Why, then, begrudge the putting forth of these where the securing of a better knowledge of Scripture is concerned? truth has to be bought (Pro 23:23). It is obtained only by those who are willing to pay the price. And it is for *their* help that we write, and not for those who value their souls so lightly that they are too lazy to *study*.

Now, as we have sought to show in previous articles, sanctification as a whole needs to be viewed from two chief viewpoints—the divine and human—the divine inworking and the human outworking—while we have also stressed the importance of distinguishing between its two principal aspects—the *positional* and the *practical*—the place and state into which the mysterious work of Christ has brought the believer before God, and *the response* this calls for from him, namely, the conduct which becomes him as a saint. But often the divine and human elements are so closely interwoven that, when developing certain phases of our subject, it is scarcely possible to draw a sharp line between them. Take that aspect which was last before us—the instrument of our sanctification, namely, faith. Now faith is both something which is divinely inwrought and humanly outworked. It is a divine gift, yet it has to be exercised by its recipient. Believing is *my* act, though it is through the Spirit I am *enabled* therein. In like manner, it is not always practicable to separate between positional and practical holiness when tracing out certain phases of our theme.

In taking up the *means* of sanctification, it is the *practical* holiness of the believer which is to be in view. Were we to cast this article into the form of a sermon, our text would be, “Sanctify them through thy truth” (Joh 17:17). A superficial reading of that verse would cause us to draw the inference that the apostles were not then sanctified, or why should Christ pray for them *to be* sanctified? Yet a little reflection will show that such an inference is a false one, for the eleven had separated from the world when they responded to the call of Christ, and as real believers in Him they were most certainly “sanctified by faith.” Then the question arises—Since they were already sanctified, why did their great High Priest pray the Father *to* “sanctify” them? We raise this question for the purpose of impressing the reader with the fact that sanctification *has* various phases or aspects, and that we must carefully distinguish between the same if we are either to understand the teaching of Scripture on the subject or our own experience in the light of that teaching.

What the Lord Jesus prayed for in John 17:17 was that the Spirit would *draw out* what He had already wrought in them, that He would graciously call into exercise and act the principle of holiness which He had communicated to them at their regeneration. It is quite clear from the previous verse that the apostles *were already* sanctified, and as holy persons, Christ now prayed that they might be kept in the way of holiness, preserved in the practice of it, and that the fruits thereof might abound in them. Thus, it was not for their initial sanctification that Christ supplicated the Father, nor for any

further and fresh sanctification, but for the drawing out and manifestation of what was already theirs. And in connection therewith, *means* were to be employed, “Sanctify them *through thy truth*: thy word is truth” (Joh 17:17). This, then, should make quite clear the *place* which “means” have—a subordinate one and at *what stage* they enter into our sanctification—only in connection with the drawing forth of what has already been wrought in us.

At the time that our Lord here prayed, the apostles knew and believed the truth, yet—as it is with us today—it was in a poor manner and low degree. Their apprehensions of spiritual things were very imperfect, and often quite erroneous. They were dull scholars—slow to learn, and slower still to unlearn, as the Gospel records abundantly testify. Like we, they had need to pray, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24). But they were yet to be filled with the Spirit and guided into all truth (Joh 16:13). And thus it is, in measure, with the Christian, for, “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Pro 4:18). Little by little the believer’s heart is brought increasingly under the influence of the truth, and thereby is he raised to closer experimental communion with Christ. The result of this is that he has an ever-deepening desire to keep himself unspotted from the world, be brought into complete and cheerful submission to the whole will of God, and walk before Him unto all pleasing.

It was not the sanctification of the apostles’ *persons* that Christ prayed for, nor the sanctification of their *nature*, but rather of their *walk*. As to their persons, God had set them apart in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4); as to their nature, that had been sanctified when (at the new birth) a principle of holiness had been communicated to them; and neither the one nor the other admitted of any improvement. Now in connection with the sanctification of the walk—a term which includes much more than outward conduct—the Word is the great means employed by God, working effectually with and by it on the hearts of His people. By the Scriptures, the Spirit continues to enlighten the understanding, convict the conscience, inflame the affections, and move the will. By them He conveys to us a fuller and clearer knowledge of the amazing grace of God, and love of Christ toward us, and how it becomes us to act in return. Not that our hearts then become more sanctified, but they are more influenced by divine things and exercised before God.

Many and varied are the Scriptures which treat of this particular branch of our subject. The place which the written Word has in the practical sanctification of the believer—from them we select the following, “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever” (Psa 19:7-9). “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Psa 119:9). “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Joh 8:31-32). “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (Joh 15:3). “I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Act 20:32). “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (Eph 5:25-26). “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1Pe 2:1-2). But let us enter more into detail and show *wherein* the believer is sanctified by the truth.

First, *by imparting to us a knowledge of God’s will*. That which He requires of us can be ascertained in no other way than through an acquaintance with the teachings of Holy Writ. It is for that reason God has given to us His Word, to set before us *His* standard of conduct, to make known to

us what He hates and what He loves, to expose the sophistries of Satan and the vanities of the world. In short, to provide us with a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. “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). The believer is sanctified experimentally just to the extent that he is brought under the illuminating and commanding influences of the Word of truth. personal holiness is our conformity to its requirements. Practical holiness is separation and abstention from evil, and association with and performance of that which is good, and only from the Scriptures can we fully discover what *is* evil and what *is* good.

From what has just been pointed out, it necessarily follows that all *human* rules and regulations for godly living are worthless, and the Christian must steadfastly refuse to be brought into bondage by them. Men have devised a great variety of prohibitions and observances in which *they* suppose holiness to consist, and by attending to the same have appeared to themselves and to others to have attained a very high degree of sanctity. The Pharisees were guilty of this, adding to the commandments of God their own traditions, such as the ceremonial washing of their hands and vessels in order to avoid moral defilement. The Romanists have followed in the same track, by inducing many of their deluded victims to retire entirely from the world to the “holy” (???) solitude of monasteries and convents, binding themselves to devote most of their time to the repetition of prayers and other “sacred” (?) exercises.

There has always been an element in Protestantism—those temperamentally disposed toward asceticism and mysticism—who have pursued this same will-o’-the-wisp. Supposing that the same would produce a greater deliverance from sin and secure a closer walking with God, they have submitted themselves to frequent fastings and other penances, taking upon them vows of poverty and celibacy, depriving themselves of the ordinary comforts and innocent recreations of life, and having sought to exist on the sparsest possible diet. The same principle is exemplified by the “Seventh Day Adventists” and modern “Holiness” cults who denounce all intoxicants as “evil” and the use of tobacco in any form as “filthy.” But as the Holy Spirit tells us in Colossians 2:20-23, these ordinances of “touch not; taste not; handle not” are but “the commandments and doctrines *of men*?” Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body,” but as it is added, “not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.”

The aesthetical austerities advocated in varying degrees by Keswick and other “Victorious Life” platforms, are little better than those of the poor Romanists, and we may say of the one what Luther said of the other, “They are nothing else than spiritual sorceries.” How thankful should we be, then, that God Himself has placed in our hands a perfect *and complete* revelation of His will, an unerring standard by which we may measure all the plausible theorisings of “nice” and “good” men! “As we cannot serve God by doing what He has not commanded and still less by doing what He has forbidden [bringing ourselves into bondage to modern Pharisees—A.W.P.] so it is presumptuous to expect God’s blessing upon means which, being introduced *as supplementary* to His ordinances, very plainly import that in this respect man is wiser than He is” (John Dick, 1764-1833).

We have dwelt longer upon our first division because we were most anxious the reader should clearly perceive that the written Word is the chief means used by God in the practical sanctification of His people, for *it*—and it alone—imparts to us a knowledge of His will, discovering the things to be shunned and revealing the things which are to be followed. Just so far as we, in our quest after piety, substitute for the teachings of Holy Writ the sophistical reasonings and dictatorial edicts of men, shall we forsake the substance and vainly pursue the shadows. On the other hand, just so far as we abstain

from what God has forbidden and perform what He has enjoined, are we really treading the highway of holiness. How it behooves us, then, to *test* our views and ideas by the Word of truth!

Second, *by its influential considerations*. The Word of truth not only defines our duties, but it also presents many considerations which are calculated to work powerfully upon our affections and wills. The Scriptures do more than set before us bare precepts, they exhibit them in all the loveliness of *example*, in the history of saints, and particularly in the life of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the precepts are accompanied by encouraging promises (2Co 7:1)—the value of which is realised only so far as we are conscious of our weakness. When called upon to “purify our hearts” (Jam 4:8), we are ready to exclaim, How is it possible *for me* to cleanse myself from the pollutions of indwelling sin? In this state of despondency, the Scriptures afford relief by assuring of supernatural grace, James 1:5; 4:6; 2 Corinthians 12:9. When bidden to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, we are informed “for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13).

Third, *by strengthening faith*, for the Word is its appointed food, “nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine” (1Ti 4:6). There are many of God’s dear children who long after and pray for an increase of their faith, but it is idle to do so while they continue to neglect the means provided for its nourishment. Trust in God will only be developed by feeding on His Word, “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). When the devil challenged the faith of Christ, He set His people an abiding example by replying, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mat 4:4). Faith is strengthened by clearer apprehensions of the truth. Hope brightens at the glorious prospect of life and immortality which the Gospel displays. Love grows warmer as the love of God is better known. All the graces of the Christian thrive under the beneficent influences of the truth.

Fourth, *by making us better acquainted with Christ*. The more our minds are opened to take in the truth concerning the person and work of the Redeemer, the more is the soul perfumed therewith and the more are its faculties influenced thereby. A deeper experimental knowledge of Christ enables us to rest upon Him more simply for the whole of our salvation. It is through the truth that we become more firmly persuaded of the Father’s love to us in His Son, whereby is “the heart established in grace” (see Heb 13:9). As our first believing of the Gospel had a most powerful effect upon the heart, so our continued apprehensions of other portions of the truth produce beneficial results in the soul. It is because we shall have a perfect knowledge of Christ in heaven that there we shall be perfectly holy.

Fifth, *by its sacred awe upon the soul*. “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor [critic] of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb 4:12). There is a pungency to the Holy Scriptures possessed by no other writings. Often the wicked are conscious of this and therefore refuse to read them. But far more are the regenerate aware of it. To them their utterances are the voice of God Himself and they “*tremble at His Word*” (see Isa 66:2). Its denunciations of sin, the exposure of its infinite enormity, the announcement of its eternal punishment, the exhibition which the Scriptures give of the Son of God dying upon the cross in order to make an atonement for it, cause the believer to walk more and more softly before God. While the character of God as revealed in His Word—His majesty, His power, His holiness, His wrath—exerts both a restraining and constraining influence upon its readers.

It is this very quality of the Scriptures—to sanctify—which supplies the Christian with the surest witness of their divine origin. “When ye received the word of God...which *effectually worketh also in you that believe*” (1Th 2:13). Ah, it is not “the testimony of the church” nor the witness of Christians, but *a personal acquaintance with their sanctifying power* which conveys certainty to the soul. It is

well to heed the testimony of the Lord's people first, just as we take a medicine on the recommendation of others who have found it helpful, but we must not rest there. "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (1Th 1:5). This is what supplies convincing proof—as it was with the Samaritans who came to Christ because of the testimony of the woman at the well, saying to her, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him *ourselves*" (Joh 4:42).

Alas, the great majority in Christendom receive the Scriptures on no better ground than the Turks believe the Alcoran—because it is the tradition of their fathers. O labour, my reader, for something better than that, and "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you *a reason* of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1Pe 3:15). In order for that the Scriptures must be read, "searched," *studied*, meditated upon, and, above all, received *by faith*. Note how "through sanctification of the Spirit *and* belief of the truth" (2Th 2:13) are linked together. The truth has no power on us further than it is *believed* by us. The Word worketh not without an act on our part, as well as God's. Solemn is that warning, "The word preached did not profit them, *not being mixed with faith* in them that heard it" (Heb 4:2). Where faith is active the precepts awe and the promises cheer. When tempted to evil, faith says, Shall I thus requite Christ for dying in my stead.

It is at this very point that we may perceive the great and vital difference which exists between social respectability and real piety or practical sanctification. The one is produced by moral education, according to *natural* principles, without any spiritual knowledge or heart desire to please God. Many are upright, truthful, honest in commercial transactions, obedient to civil laws, and restrained from outward wickedness, who yet have no true grace. But all real practical sanctification is inclined and regulated by the Scriptures. Only that is personal holiness when we submit and conform ourselves in heart and life to the will of God as it is revealed in His Word. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (Joh 3:21). He tests himself by *this* rule and measures his conduct by *this* standard.

A MORNING PRAYER

O Lord, it is declared in Your Word, that man is like a thing of nought, his time passeth away like a shadow. We have to set our seal to this truth. For the night is past with us, and the morning come, and it is wholly owing to Thy will we remain in existence in a time state. We are in a measure made sensible of this, as we are admitted to live one day after another. We are more and more made sensible we have no existence in ourselves. It is wholly in Thee we have life, being, and existence. O that Thou wouldest make us more sensible of it. O that Thou wouldest deeply affect our minds herewith. Lord, grant us such a view hereof, as may lead us to entreat Thee so to teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

We do again draw nigh unto Thee, O Lord our God, beseeching Thee to grant us audience with Thy divine majesty. Help us to appear before Thee in the name and person, righteousness and sacrifice, intercession and advocacy of Thine Anointed, the holy and immaculate Lamb. O Lord, we have nothing in ourselves but sin. We are all impurity, we can come before Thee no otherwise than we are. To us belong shame and confusion of face. We are, in the uttermost sense of the expression, lost, undone, sinful, guilty, and vile. It is that alone which sustains us, that it is declared in Thy Word concerning Thee, that "Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of

great kindness” (Neh 9:17). It is the knowledge and belief of this which encourages us to come before Thee.

At Thy throne of grace, as the monuments of Thy sacred mercy, we desire to extol and praise Thy most holy name, that it hath pleased Thee to spare us the night past. We praise Thee for admitting us to continue in a time state to the present moment. O give us a real sense of the blessing and benefit of Thy preserving care and providence. It hath pleased Thee to exercise the same toward us to the present moment. We would lift up our hearts unto Thee, O Lord, in praise and thanksgiving for the same. Lord God, we find ourselves just as sinful and helpless in our selves as ever. Blessed be Thy name, Thou art the Lord our God, and Thy compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great, O Lord, is thy faithfulness. We would pray for such a sense of it on each of our minds, as might draw forth all our spiritual faculties to bless and magnify Thy holy name.

Thou art a covenant-keeping and covenant-performing God. Thou art always mindful of Thy covenant. O look on us, before Thee, as those who are interested in Thy covenant. O look upon us as fit objects and subjects for Thy majesty to exercise the tender mercies of Thy covenant on. We most certainly are, in ourselves, in our cases and circumstances, just exactly such as need the grace, mercy, and compassion, life, and salvation which is contained in the declaration of grace, in the promises of pardon, made known by it. We therefore cry out before Thee, O Lord, our God. We entreat Thee to behold us in Christ Jesus. O view us in Him. Lord, shine forth on us. Give us a sense of Thy covenant mercy. Grant us an enjoyment of Thy covenant salvation. Bless us in Christ Jesus. Warm our hearts. Raise up our minds. Fill us with the gifts, graces, and consolations of the Holy Spirit.

O let our souls be under the mighty, all-constraining, all-conquering influence of Thine everlasting love this day. We would pray Thee to keep us this day from sinning against Thee. Lord, we are in ourselves, and when left to ourselves, like water which runneth apace. O succour us. O defend us. O be Thou near unto us this day, and uphold us with the right hand of Thy righteousness. Blessed God and Father, do Thou most graciously compassionate us. Let us have an evidence of it, by Thy taking each of our cases under Thine own particular notice and regard. O that we may be under the influence of the Holy Spirit this day. Lord Jesus Christ, be with our spirits. Lord Jesus, do Thou guide us with Thine eye. O keep us near Thyself. Suffer no iniquity to have dominion over us—save us from ourselves.

Save us, O Lord, from our constitutional sins, tempers, and corruptions. O let them be kept under and subdued by the omnipotent power of Thy grace. Let us experience the power of Thy life and death in our mortal flesh, to the intent that we may live no longer to the lust of the flesh, but to the will of God. We beseech Thee, O Holy Spirit, to bring our minds and hearts under the mighty power of all-conquering grace. O Lord, let not sin, nor Satan, prevail against us. We would pray Thee to bless us in our bodies and souls, and grant that every blessing we shall enjoy this day, may savour of heaven, and be received as so many pledges of Thy good-will and regard unto us. We pray Thee to sanctify all our blessings, and us to the use of them, to Thy praise and glory. So we request Thou wouldest keep us entirely dependent on Thee for the continuance of them. We leave ourselves with Thee, Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, to whom be glory forever. Amen.—S. E. Pierce, 1820.



February

THE SPIRIT TRANSFORMING

“Mine eye affecteth mine heart” (Lam 3:51). We are influenced by the objects we contemplate, we become ostensibly assimilated to those with whom we have much intercourse, we are molded by the books we read. This same law or principle operates in the spiritual realm, “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” (2Cor 3:18)—beholding, we are changed. Here, then, is our responsibility—to *use* the means which God has appointed for our growth in grace, to be daily occupied with spiritual objects and heavenly things. Yet *our* study and contemplation of the truth will not, by itself, produce any transformation. There must be a *divine application* of the truth to the heart. Apart from the divine agency and blessing, all our efforts and use of the means amount to nothing, and therefore is it added, “We are changed...*by the Spirit.*”

Just as surely as Christ’s all-mighty power will, on the resurrection morning, transform the bodies of His people from mortality to life and from dishonour to glory, so also does the Holy Spirit now exert a supernatural power in morality transforming the characters of those whom He indwells. The great difference between these two—the future work of Christ upon the bodies of the saints and the present work of the Spirit upon their souls—is that the one will be accomplished instantaneously, whereas the other is effected slowly and gradually—the one we shall be fully conscious of, the other we are largely unconscious of. This being “*changed* into the same image” of the glory of the Lord is a progressive experience, as the “from glory to glory” plainly intimates—from one degree of it to another. It is begun at regeneration, is continued throughout our sanctification, and will be perfected at our glorification.

Now that which deeply exercises and so often keenly distresses the sincere Christian is, that as he seeks to honestly examine himself, he discovers so very little evidence that he IS being “changed into” the image of the Lord. He dare not take anything for granted, but desires to “prove” himself (2Cor 13:5). The moral transformation of which we have been treating is that which supplies proof of spiritual illumination, and without at least a measure of it, all supposed saving knowledge of the truth is but a delusion. We shall therefore endeavour now to point out some of the leading features by which this transformation may be identified, asking the reader to carefully compare himself with each one.

First, where the Spirit has begun to transform a soul *the divine law is cordially received as a rule of life* and the heart begins to echo to the language of Psalm 119 in its commendation. Nothing more plainly distinguishes a true conversion from a counterfeit than this—that one who used to be an enemy to God’s law is brought understandingly and heartily to love it and seek to walk according to its requirements. “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1Joh 2:3).

He who has been born again has a new palate, so that he now relishes what he formerly disliked. He now begins to prove that it is not only the fittest, but the happiest thing in the world, to aspire to be holy as God is holy, to love Him supremely, and live to Him entirely.

Second, *a life of self-loathing*. The regenerated soul perceives that complete and constant subjection to God is His due, and that the gift of His beloved Son has laid him under lasting obligations to serve, please, and glorify Him. But the best of God's people are only sanctified in part in this life, and realizing the law requires, and that God is entitled to sinless perfection from us, what but a life of self-aborrence must ensue? Once we are supernaturally enlightened to see that "the law is *spiritual*," the inevitable consequence *must be* for me to see and feel that "I am *carnal*, sold under sin" (Rom 7:14). And therefore there must be a continued sense of infinite blame, of self-loathing, of godly sorrow, of broken-heartedness, of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, of watching, praying, striving, or mourning because of frequent defeat.

Third, *genuine humility*. In view of what has just been pointed out, it is easy to see why humility is represented all through Scripture as a dominant feature of those who are quickened by the Spirit. An hypocrite, being experimentally ignorant of divine law—never having been slain by it (Rom 7:9, 11)—then, the more religious he is, the more proud and conceited will he be. But with a true saint it is just the opposite. For if the law be his rule of duty, and his obligations to conform thereto are infinite, and his blame for every defect is proportionately great, if the fault lie entirely in himself, and his lack of perfect love and obedience to God be wholly culpable, then he must be filled with low and mean thoughts of himself and have an answerable lowliness of heart.

There is no greater proof that a man is ignorant of the truth savingly, and a stranger to Christ experimentally, than for spiritual pride to reign in his heart. "Behold, his soul which is *lifted up* is *not upright* in him" (Hab 2:4). The graceless Pharisee, blind to the real character and purport of the law, was ready to say, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men" (Luk 18:11), while the penitent Publican, seeing himself in the light of God, dared not lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast (the seat of his spiritual leprosy) and cried, "God *be merciful* to me, the sinner" (Luk 18:13). The proud religionists of Christ's day exclaimed, Behold, "we see" (Joh 9:41), but the holy psalmist prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, *that I may* behold wondrous things out of thy law." Thousands of deluded people who profess to be Christians prate about their consecration, victories, and attainments, but the apostle Paul said, "I count not myself to have apprehended" (Phi 3:13).

Fourth, *a growing apprehension of the divine goodness*. The more a quickened soul sees himself in the light of God, the more he discovers how much there still is in him which is opposed to His law and in how many respects he daily offends. The more clearly he perceives how very far he comes short of the glory of God, and how unlike Christ he is in character and conduct, the deeper becomes his appreciation of the grace of God through the Mediator. The man who is of a humble, broken, and contrite heart, finds the promises of the Gospel just fitted to his case. None but One who is "*mighty* to save" (Isa 63:1) can redeem such a wretch as he knows himself to be. None but the "God of *all* grace" (1Pe 5:10) would show favour to one so vile and worthless. "Worthy is the Lamb" is now his song. "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake" (Psa 115:1) is his hearty acknowledgement. It is the Spirit's continued application of the law to the believer's conscience which prepares him to receive the comforts and consolations of the Gospel.

When the mind is thoroughly convinced that God can, consistently with His honour, willingly receive to favour the most naked, forlorn, wretched, guilty, hell-deserving of the human race, and become a Father and Friend to him, he is happier than if all the world was his own. When God is his sensible portion, everything else fades into utter insignificance. The fig tree may not blossom, nor any

fruits be in the vine, yet he will “joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab 3:18). The apostle Paul, although a prisoner at Rome, not in the least dejected, cries “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phi 4:4). When God is chosen as our supreme good, all earthly idols are rejected, and our treasure is laid up in heaven. In proportion as grace flourishes in the heart, our comforts will remain, let outward things go as they will, yea, it will be found that it is “*good* to be afflicted” (see Psa 119:71).

Here, then, are some of the principal effects produced by our being “changed,” or reformed, conformed, and transformed by the Spirit of God. There is a growing realization of the ineffable holiness of God, and of the righteousness and spirituality of the law, and the extent of its requirements. There is a deepening sense of our utter sinfulness, failure, and blameworthiness, and the daily loathing of ourselves for our hard-heartedness, our base ingratitude, and the ill returns we make to God for His infinite goodness to us. There is a corresponding self-abasement, taking our place in the dust before God, and frankly owning that we are not worthy of the least of His mercies (Gen 32:10). There is an increasing appreciation of the grace of God and of the provision He has made for us in Christ, with a corresponding longing to be done with this body of death and conformed fully to the lovely image of the Lord—which longings will be completely realized at our glorification.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

110. Contentment (13:5-6)

Discontent, though few realize it, is *sinful*, a grievous offence against the Most High. It is an impugning of His wisdom, a denial of His goodness, a rising up of my will against His. To murmur at our lot is to take issue with God’s sovereignty, quarreling as it does with His providence, and therefore, is a being guilty of high treason against the King of the universe. Since God orders all the circumstances of human life, then every person ought to be entirely satisfied with the state and situation in which he is placed. One has no more excuse to grumble at his lot than has another. This truth Paul instructed Timothy to press upon others, “Let as many *servants* as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, *that* the name of God and his doctrine *be not blasphemed*” (1Ti 6:1).

“The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it *cannot rest*, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isa 57:20-21). The ungodly are total strangers to real contentment. No matter how much they have, they are ever lusting after more. But God exhorts His people, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have” (Heb 13:5). As it is their bounden duty to avoid the vice of covetousness, so it is their personal responsibility to cultivate the virtue of contentment, and failure at either point is culpable. The contentment here exhorted unto is something other than a fatalistic indifference. It is a holy composure of mind, a resting in the Lord, a being pleased with what pleases Him—satisfied with the portion He has allotted. Anything short of this is evil.

Discontent *is contrary to our prayers* and therefore must be most reprehensible. When we truly pray, we desire God to give or withhold, to bestow or take away, according as will be most for His glory and our highest good. Realizing that we know not what is best, we leave it with God. In real prayer we submit our understandings to the divine wisdom, our wills to His good pleasure. But to be

dissatisfied with our lot and complain at our portion is to exercise the very opposite spirit, indicating an unwillingness to be at God's disposal, and leaning to our own understanding, as though we knew better than He what was most conducive to our present and future well-being. This is a tempting of God and a grieving of His Holy Spirit, and has a strong tendency to provoke Him to fight against us, Isaiah 63:10.

When God *does* fight against us because of this sin, he often gives us what were discontented for the want of, but accompanies the same with some sore affliction. For example, Rachel was in a most discontented frame when she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die" (Gen 30:1). The sequel is very solemn. She *had* children and died in childbirth, see Genesis 35:16-18. Again, we are told that Israel "lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And he gave them their request; but *sent* leanness into their soul" (Psa 106:14-15). These cases need to be taken to heart by us, for they are recorded for our learning and warning. God takes note of the discontent of our hearts as well as the murmuring of our lips. "Giving thanks *always* for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 5:20) is the standard which He has set before us.

Not only is discontent grievous sin against God, but it *unfits* the Christian for the discharge of holy duties, preventing the exercise of those graces which are necessary in order thereunto. It silences the lips of supplication, for how can a murmurer *pray*? It destroys the spirit of submission, for complaining is a "fretting against the LORD" (see Pro 19:3). It quenches faith, hope, and love. Discontent is the very essence of ingratitude and therefore it stifles the voice of thanksgiving. There cannot be any rest of soul until we quietly resign our persons and portions to God's good pleasure. Discontent corrodes the strings of the heart, and therefore it arrests all happy endeavour.

Discontent is usually over temporal matters and this is a sad intimation that material things are sought after more eagerly than are spiritual things. It argues a lack of confidence in the care of our heavenly Father to provide for us the things which are needed. "Christian, let me ask thee this question, Didst thou give thyself to Christ for temporal or for eternal comforts? Didst thou enter upon religion to save thine estate or thy soul? Oh, why then shouldst thou be so sad, when thine eternal happiness is so safe? For shame, live like a child of God, an heir of heaven, and let the world know that thy hopes and happiness are in a *better* world; that thou art denied those acorns which thy Father giveth to His hogs, yet *thou* hast the children's bread, and expectest thine inheritance when thou comest to age" (G. Swinnock, 1650). What cause have we all to be deeply humbled over our sinful repinings, to hang our heads with shame, and penitently confess the same unto God!

Yet notwithstanding both the sinfulness and injuriousness of discontent, many raise various objections *to excuse* the same. Some will plead their personal temperament is self-vindication—alleging that their natural temper makes them uneasy and anxious, so that they are quite unable to submit themselves unto the disposing providence of God. But my dear reader, the corruption of our nature and its proneness to sin is no excuse for, but rather an aggravation of it, showing how much our hearts are opposed unto God. The more we yield to our natural inclinations, the more power they obtain over us. In such a case as the above we ought rather to be the more importunate with God, begging Him for His grace to restrain the inordinancy of our affections, to subdue our fears, and work in us willingness to acquiesce to His sovereign pleasure.

Others attempt to justify their discontent and uneasy frame of spirit by alleging that the injuries which others have done them ought to be resented, and that not to manifest discontent under them would be to encourage such people unto further insults and trampling upon them. To this it may be replied that while we complain of injuries done to us by men and are prone to meditate revenge against them, we do not consider the great dishonour that we bring to God and how much we provoke

Him. It is written, “But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Mat 6:15). Remember that, “What glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again” (1Pe 2:20-23).

Others seek to excuse their discontent by dwelling upon the *magnitude* of their trials, saying that their burden is insupportable, so that they are pressed out of measure, above their strength. Even so, none of our afflictions are as great as our sins, and the more we complain, the heavier do we make our burden. Others point out to the altogether *unexpectedness* of their trouble, that it came upon them when they were quite unprepared, and that it is therefore more than flesh and blood can endure. But the Christian should daily expect afflictions in this world, at least so far as not to be unprovided for or think it strange he should be exercised by them, 1 Peter 4:12. With some, the *drastic change* from affluence to poverty is so great they argue that it is impossible to bear up under it. But does not God say, “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2Co 12:9)?

Yet no excuses are to be allowed to set aside or modify this divine injunction, “Be content with such things as ye have” (Heb 13:5). But before proceeding further, let it be pointed out that contentment is not incompatible with honest effort to enlarge the provision of earthly things for ourselves and those dependent upon us, for God has give us six days out of seven to be industrious. Idleness must not be allowed to cloak itself under the guise of this grace—contentment and indolence are two vastly different things. “This contentment does not consist in a slothful neglect of the business of life, nor of a real nor pretended apathy to worldly interests. It is substantially a satisfaction with God as our portion and with what He is pleased to appoint for us. It is opposed to covetousness or the inordinate desire of wealth, and to unbelieving anxiety—dissatisfaction with what is present, distrust as to what is future” (John Brown, 1784-1858).

Contentment is a tranquility of soul, a being satisfied with what God has apportioned. It is the opposite of a grasping spirit which is never appeased, with distrustful anxiety, with petulant murmurings. “It is a gracious disposedness of mind, arising solely from trust in and satisfaction with God alone, against all other things whatever that appear to be evil” (John Owen, 1616-1683). It is our duty to have the scales of our heart so equally poised in all God’s dealings with us that they rise not in prosperity, nor sink in adversity. As the tree bendeth this way or that way with the wind, yet still keeps its place, so we should yield, bending to the gales of divine providence, yet still remaining steadfast and retaining our piety. The more composure of mind we preserve, the more shall we, on the one hand, “rejoice with trembling” (Psa 2:11), and on the other, “faint not” (Gal 3:13) when the chastening rod falls upon us.

As this spiritual grace of contentment is so glorifying to God, and so beneficial to ourselves, we will endeavour to mention some of the chief *aids* thereto. First, *a realization of God’s goodness*. A deep and fixed sense of His benevolence greatly tends to quieten the heart when outward circumstances are trying to us. If I have formed the habit of mediating daily upon God’s fatherly care—and surely I am constantly surrounded by proofs and tokens thereof—then I shall be less apt to chafe and fret when His providences cross my will. Has He not assured me that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28)? What more can I ask? O to rest in His love. Surely He is entitled to my confidence in His paternal solicitude. Remember that each murmur implies unthankfulness. Complaining is the basest of

ingratitude. If the Lord provides for the ravens, will He overlook the needs of any of His children? O ye of little faith!

Second, *a steady realization of God's omniscience*. A deep and fixed sense of His unsearchable wisdom is well calculated to allay our fears and compose our minds when everything appears to be going wrong with our circumstances. Settle it in your mind once for all, dear friend, that "the high and lofty One" (Isa 57:15). makes no mistakes. His understanding is infinite, and His resources are without measure. He knows far better than we do what is for our well-being and what will best promote our *ultimate* interests. Then let me not be found pitting my puny reason against the ways of the all-wise JEHOVAH. It is nought but pride and self-will which complains at His dealings with me. As another has said, "Now if one creature can and ought to be governed by another that is more wise than himself—as the client by his learned counsel, the patient by his skillful physician—much more should we be satisfied with the unerring dispositions of God." Remember that complaining never relieves a single woe or lightens a single burden—it is therefore most irrational.

Third, *a steady realization of God's supremacy*. A deep and fixed sense of His absolute sovereignty, His indisputable right to do as He pleases in the ordering of all our affairs, should do much to subdue the spirit of rebellion and silence our foolish and wicked murmurings. It is not the Almighty's pleasure to give unto all alike, but rather that some should have more and others less, "The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes" (1Sa 2:7-8). Then quarrel not with the Most High because He distributes His gifts and favours unequally, but rather seek grace that thy will may be brought into subjection to His. It is written, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isa 26:3). Consider how many lack some of the good things which thou enjoyest. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!...Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?" (Isa 45:9).

Fourth, *a steady realization of our ill-deserts*. A deep and fixed sense of our utter unworthiness must do much to still our repinings when we are tempted to complain of the absence of those things our hearts covet. If we live under an habitual sense of our unworthiness, it will greatly reconcile us to deprivations. If we daily remind ourselves that we have forfeited all good and deserve all ill at the hands of God, then we shall heartily acknowledge, "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed" (Lam 3:22). Nothing will more quickly compose the mind in the face of adversity, and nothing will so prevent the heart being puffed up by prosperity, than the realization that, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies" (Gen 32:10) of God. Just so far as we really preserve a sense of our ill-deserts will we meekly submit to the allotments of divine providence. Every Christian cordially assents to the truth, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (Psa 103:10), then why complain if God withholds from us what He grants to others?

Fifth, *weanedness from the world*. The more dead we are to the things of time and sense, the less our hearts will crave them, and the smaller will be our disappointment when we do not have them. This world is the great impediment to the heavenly life, being the bait of the flesh and the snare of Satan by which he turns souls from God. The lighter we hold the world's attractions, the more indifferent we are to either poverty or wealth, the greater will be our contentment. God has promised to supply all our needs, therefore "having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1Ti 6:8). Superfluities are hindrances and not helps. "Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith" (Pro 15:16). Remember that the contented man is the only one who *enjoys* what he has. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col 3:2).

Sixth, *fellowship with God*. The more we cultivate communion with Him and are occupied with His perfections, the less shall we lust after the baubles which have such a hold upon the ungodly. Walking with God produces a peace and joy such as this poor world can neither give nor take away. “There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of *thy* countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, *more* than in the time that *their* corn and their wine increased” (Psa 4:6, 7). Walking in the way of God’s commands is a real antidote to discontent, “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Psa 119:165). Seventh, *remembrance of what Christ suffered*. “For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Heb 12:3). When tempted to complain at your lot, meditate upon Him who when here had not where to lay His head, who was constantly misunderstood by friends and hated by innumerable enemies. Contemplation of the cross of Christ is a wonderful composer of an agitated mind and a querulous spirit.

“Be content with such things as ye have; *for* he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5). Here is an enforcement of what has just gone before, a reason for the duties enjoined, a motive supplied for the performance of them. One of the divine promises is quoted, which if it be duly appropriated by us, we shall be dissuaded from covetousness and persuaded to contentment. Resting on this divine assurance will both moderate our desires and alleviate our fears. “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee” is a guarantee of God’s continual provision and protection, and this rebukes all inordinate desires and condemns all anxious fears. The evils are closely connected, for in most instances covetousness, in the Christian, is rooted in a fear of want, while discontent generally arises from a suspicion that our present portion will prove to be inadequate for the supply of our needs. Each such disquietude is equally irrational and God-dishonouring.

Both covetousness and discontent proceed from unbelief. If I really trust God, will I have any qualms about the future or tremble at the prospect of starvation? Certainly not—the two things are incompatible, opposites—“I will trust, and not be afraid” (Isa 12:2). Thus the apostle’s argument is clear and convincing. “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: *for* he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5). The “*for he hath said*” is more forcible than “*for God hath said*”—it is the *character* of the One with whom we have to do that is here held up to our view. “He has said”—*who* has? Why, One whose power is omnipotent, whose wisdom is infinite, whose faithfulness is inviolable, whose love is unchanging. “All the efficacy, power and comfort of divine promises arise from and are resolved into the excellencies of the divine nature. He hath said it who is *truth*, and cannot deceive” (John Owen).

And *what is it* that He has said, which, if faith truly lays hold of, will subdue covetousness and work contentment? *This*, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5). God’s presence, God’s providence, God’s protection, are here assured us. If due regard be paid to these inestimable blessings, the heart will be kept in peace. What more would we have? Save a conscious realization of the same. O for a felt sense of His presence, for a gracious manifestation thereof to the soul. What were all the wealth, honors, pleasures of the world worth, if He should totally and finally desert us! The comfort of our soul does not depend upon outward provisions, so much as on our appropriation and enjoyment of what is contained in the divine promises. If we rested more on them, we would crave less of this world’s goods. What possible cause or ground for fear remains when God has pledged us *His* continual presence and assistance?

“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5). It is almost impossible to reproduce in English the emphasis of the original, in which no less than five negatives are used to increase the strength of the negation, according to the Greek idiom. Perhaps the nearest approximation is to render

it, “I will never, no, never, leave thee, nor ever forsake thee.” In view of such assurance, we should feel no want, dread no distress, nor have any trepidation about the future. At no time, under any circumstances conceivable or unconceivable, for any possible cause, will God utterly and finally forsake one of His own. Then how *safe* they are! How impossible for one of them to eternally perish! God has here graciously condescended to give the utmost security to the faith of believers in all their difficulties and trials. The continued presence of God with us ensures the continued supply of every need.

“For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5). These words were first spoken by JEHOVAH to the successor of Moses (Jos 1:5), whose task it was to dispossess Canaan of all the heathen nations then inhabiting it. The fact that the Holy Spirit moved the apostle to apply unto Christians this promise made to Joshua, supplies the clear proof that our modern dispensations *wrongly divide* the Word of truth. Their practice of partitioning the Scriptures and their contention that what God said under one dispensation does not apply to those living in another, is here exposed as nothing less than an effort of Satan’s to rob God’s people of a part of their rightful and needful portion. This precious promise of God belongs as truly to me now as it did to Joshua of old. Let, then, this principle be tenaciously held by us—the divine promises which were made upon special occasions to particular individuals are of *general* use for *all* the members of the household of faith.

What has just been affirmed is so obvious that it should require no further proof or illustration; but inasmuch as it is being repudiated in some influential quarters today, we will labour the point a little. Are not the needs of believers the same in one age as another? Is not God affected alike unto all His children?—does He not bear them the same love? If, then, He would not desert Joshua, then He will not any of us. Are not Christians now under the same everlasting covenant of grace as were the Old Testament saints? Then they have a common charter—“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to *all* that are afar off” (Act 2:39). Let us not forget that, “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).

“So *that* we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb 13:6). An inference is here drawn from the promise just quoted—a double conclusion is reached—confidence in God and courage against man. This intimates we should make a varied and manifold use of the divine promises. This twofold conclusion is based upon *the character* of the Promiser, because He is infinitely good, wise, faithful, powerful, and because He changes not, we may boldly or confidently declare with Abraham, “God will provide” (Gen 22:8), with Jonathan, “there is no restraint to the LORD” (1Sa 14:6), with Jehoshaphat, “None is able to withstand thee” (2Chr 20:6), with Paul, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31).

“So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb 13:6). Once more the apostle confirms his argument by a divine testimony, for he quotes from Psalm 118:6. In this citing of David’s language, Christians are again taught the suitability of Old Testament language unto their own case and the permissibility of appropriating the same unto themselves, “*We* may boldly say” just what the Psalmist did! It was in a time of sore distress that David expressed his confidence in the Lord, at a time when it appeared that his enemies were ready to swallow him up, but contrasting the omnipotency of JEHOVAH from the feebleness of the creature, his heart was emboldened. The believer is weak and unstable in himself, and constantly in need of assistance, but the Lord is ever ready to take his part and render all needed aid.

“The Lord is my helper” (Heb 13:6) implies, as William Gouge (1575-1653) pointed out, “a willing readiness and a ready willingness to afford us all needed succour.” Those whom He forsakes

not, He *helps*—both inwardly and outwardly. Note carefully the change from, “*We* may boldly say” to “the Lord is *my* helper”—general privileges are to be appropriated by us in particular. “Man can do much; he can fine, imprison, banish, reduce to a morsel of bread, yea, torture and put to death; yet as long as God is with us and standeth for us, we may boldly say, ‘I will not fear what man can do.’ Why? God will not see thee utterly perish. He can give joy in sorrow, life in death” (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677).

May the Lord graciously grant both writer and reader more faith in Himself, more reliance upon His promises, more consciousness of His presence, more assurance of His help, and then we shall enjoy more deliverance from covetousness, discontent, and the fear of man.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

62. *His Flight*

There are few incidents in the checkered life of David more pathetic than the one which is now to engage our attention, illustrating as it does the providential ups and downs and the alternating spiritual prosperity and adversity which is the lot of God’s people on this earth. All is not unclouded sunshine with them, nor is it unrelieved gloom and storm. There is a mingling of both—joys and sorrows, victories and defeats, assistance from friends and injuries from foes, smiles from the Lord’s countenance and the hiding of His face. By such changes opportunities are afforded for the development and exercise of *different* graces, so that we may, in our measure, “know how to be abased, and how to abound...both to be full and to be hungry” (Phi 4:12). But above all, that we may, amid varying circumstances, prove the unchanging faithfulness of God and His sufficiency to supply our every need.

David was called to leave the lowly plains of Bethlehem to participate in the honours of Saul’s palace. From tending the flock, he became the conqueror of Goliath and the popular hero of Israel. But soon Saul’s friendship was changed to enmity and David had to flee for his life, and for many weary months he was hunted as a partridge on the mountains. Subsequently his fortunes were again greatly altered and from being an outcast he was crowned king of Israel. Then he was enabled to capture Jerusalem, the stronghold of Zion, which became “the city of David” (2Sa 5:7). There he established his court and there he “brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet” (2Sa 6:15). But now we are to behold him fleeing from Jerusalem and being separated from the holy ark—a fugitive once more, in humiliation and deep anguish.

Ah, my reader, if you be one of God’s elect, expect not a smooth and easy path down here, but be prepared for varying circumstances and drastic changes. The Christian’s resting place is not in this world, for “here have we no continuing city” (Heb 13:14). The Christian is a “pilgrim,” on a journey. He is a “soldier,” called on to fight the good fight of faith. The more this be realized, the less keen will be the disappointment when our ease is disturbed and our outward peace rudely broken in upon. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous” (Psa 34:19), and if they come not to us in one form, they most certainly will in another. If we really “appropriate” *this promise(!)* then we shall not be so staggered when those afflictions come upon us. It is written that “we must through *much* tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22), and therefore we should make up our minds *to expect* the

same, and to “think it not strange” (1Pe 4:12) when we are called upon to pass through “the fiery trial.”

Affliction, tribulation, and fiery trial were now David’s portion. “And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom” (2Sa 15:13). Visualize the sad scene—the dark clouds of a threatened revolt had been steadily gathering and now the storm bursts on the king’s head. By this time, David was some sixty years of age, with health and strength greatly impaired. Ahithophel, his trusted counsellor, had deserted him. Absalom, his favourite son, was now risen in rebellion against him. Not only his throne, but his very life was in danger, together with the lives of his wives and their little ones—Solomon was scarcely ten years old at this time. What, then, does the king do? Nothing! There was no calling of a counsel, no effort made to provision Jerusalem for the withstanding of a siege, no determination to stand his rightful ground and resist his lawless son.

“And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword” (2Sa 15:14). Now that at last the blow falls, David passively acquiesces in what he evidently felt to be God’s righteous chastisement upon him. When the awful news arrives that Absalom had set up the standard of revolt at Hebron, David’s only thought was immediate flight. The intrepid warrior was now almost cowardly in his eagerness to escape and was prepared to give up everything without a blow. It seemed as though only a touch was needed to overthrow his throne. He hurries on the preparations for flight with nervous haste. He forms no plans beyond those of his earlier wish to fly away and be at rest.

That David had good reason to conclude the situation which now confronted him was *a just retribution* upon his own crimes is quite evident. First, the Lord had declared, “I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house” (2Sa 12:11), fulfilled here in the insurrection of his favourite son. Other evidences thereof will come before us later, but at this point we will consider, second, Ahithophel’s joining hands with the rebel. No sooner had Absalom determined to execute his daring plan than he looked to Ahithophel. He appears, for some reason not specifically mentioned, to have confidently counted upon his cooperation, nor was he disappointed. “And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh” (2Sa 15:12). It is to be carefully noted that immediately after Ahithophel’s coming to Absalom, we are informed, “And the conspiracy was strong; for the people *increased* continually with Absalom” (v. 12)—intimating that Ahithophel was a host in himself.

“And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God; so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom” (2Sa 16:23). In view of this statement, we need not be surprised that his joining heart and hand with Absalom so greatly strengthened his cause. There is no doubt that *he* was the chief instrument in this conspiracy and the prime reason why so many in Israel turned from the king to his traitorous son. His official status and the great influence which he possessed over the people made Absalom glad to avail himself of his help, both to sink the spirits of David’s party and to inspire his own with confidence, for Ahithophel was commonly regarded as a prophet. But *what was it* that made Ahithophel to respond so readily to Absalom’s invitation, and cause him to find still greater favour in the eyes of the people, as one who had been grievously wronged and deserved to be avenged of his adversity?

To answer this question the Scriptures must be searched and passage carefully compared with passage. In the second half of 2 Samuel 23, the names are given of the thirty-seven men who formed the special body “guard” (v. 23) of David. Among them we find “Eliam the son of Ahithophel *the*

Gilonite” (v. 34) and “Uriah the Hittite” (v. 39). Thus Eliam and Uriah were fellow-officers and would be much thrown together. Hence, we need not be surprised to learn that Uriah married the daughter of Eliam (see 2 Samuel 11:3). Thus Bathsheba, whom David so grievously wronged, was *the granddaughter of Ahithophel*, and Uriah, whom he so cruelly murdered, was his grandson by marriage! Does not *this* fact explain why David’s “familiar friend” (Psa 41:9) become his deadly foe, and account for this readiness to aid Absalom—thus seeking to avenge the dishonour brought upon his house?

Some years had passed since this dishonour had come upon the family of Ahithophel, and during that interval it appears that he had turned his back upon David and the court, and had quietly retired to his birthplace (2Sa 15:12). Brooding over the grievous wrongs which David had done to his family, the spirit of revenge would rankle in his heart. It seems that Absalom was well aware of this, and perceived that Ahithophel was only waiting for a suitable opportunity to give vent to his feelings and execute his meditated wrath upon the head of David. Does not this explain why Absalom approached him *with confidence*, made known to him his treason, and counted on him welcoming the news and becoming his fellow-worker? Does not this also account for so many of the people transferring their allegiance from a throne, which they knew to be defiled with adultery and murder, to the rebellious son?

Not only does Ahithophel’s blood-relationship to Bathsheba explain his readiness to take sides with Absalom against the king, and account for the common peoples’ transference of loyalty, but it also supplies the key to David’s own attitude and conduct at this time. It was additional evidence to him that *God* was now dealing with him for his sins—other proofs of this will come before us later, but we must not anticipate. And most blessed is it to observe him bowing so meekly to the divine rod. David felt that to withstand Absalom would be to resist the Lord Himself. Therefore, instead of strengthening his forces in Jerusalem and maintaining his ground, he flees. We cannot but admire the lovely fruit brought forth by the Spirit at this time in David’s heart, for *to Him*, and not to mere nature, must be attributed that which is here presented to our view.

Long before this, we had occasion to admire the beautiful spirit evidenced by David when suffering *for righteousness*—now we behold it again when he was suffering *for transgressions*. Then we saw him as *the martyr* in the days of Saul, bringing forth the fruits of meekness, patience, and confidence in God, willing to be hounded by Saul day after day, and refusing to take vengeance into his own hands and smite the Lord’s anointed. But here we see David as *the penitent*—his sin has found him out, brought into remembrance before God, and he submissively bows his head and accepts the consequences of his wrong-doing. This is very beautiful, manifesting again the workmanship of the Spirit of God in David. He alone can quieten the turbulent heart, subdue the rebellious will, and mortify that innate desire to take matters into our own hands—as He alone can bring us to humble ourselves beneath the mighty hand of God and hold our peace when He visits our iniquity “with stripes” (Psa 89:32).

Yes, it is, as we said in our opening paragraph, *changing circumstances* that afford opportunity for the development and exercise of *different* graces. Some graces are of the active and aggressive kind, while others are of a passive order, requiring quite another setting for their display. Some of the traits which mark the soldier on a battlefield would be altogether out of place were he languishing on a bed of sickness. Spiritual joy and godly sorrow is equally beautiful in its season. It would be most incongruous to mourn while the Bridegroom was present, but it is fitting for the children of the Bridechamber to fast when He is absent. As there are certain vegetables, fruits, and flowers which

cannot be grown in lands which are unvisited by nipping winds and biting frosts, so there are some fruits of the Spirit which are only produced in the soil of severe trials, troubles, and tribulations.

“And the king’s servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint” (2Sa 15:15). What we have just said above is equally pertinent to this verse. The sad situation confronting David revealed plainly the state of heart of those in his immediate employ. The revolt of Absalom and his stealing the hearts of so many of the people afforded an opportunity for these servants of David to manifest *their* unswerving loyalty and deep devotion to their master. Very blessed is this, supplying as it does the sequel to what was before us in verse six. There we saw that Absalom was a man well-calculated to captivate the multitude. But let it be duly noted that he possessed no attractions for those who were nearest to David. That illustrates an important principle—while we maintain communion with Christ, the antitypical David, the baits of Satan will have no influence over us!

Let us observe, too, that changing circumstances are necessary in order to test the loyalty of those who are on intimate terms with us. Not only did this revolt of Absalom’s provide an occasion for the manifestation of David’s subjection to the will of God, but it also served to make unmistakably evident who were for and who were against David. Prosperity is often a mixed blessing and adversity is far from being an unmixed calamity. When the sunshine of Providence smiles upon a person, he is soon surrounded by those who profess great attachment to him. But when the dark clouds of Providence cover his horizon, most of those fawning flatterers will quickly take their departure. Ah, my reader, it is worth something to discover who really *are* our friends, and therefore we should not murmur if it takes the shaking of our nest and the disrupting of our peace to make this plainly evident to us. Adversities are a gain when they expose to us the hypocrisy of an Ahithophel, and still more so when they prove the loyalty and love of the few who stand by us in the storm.

“And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, which were concubines, to keep the house” (2Sa 15:16). The writer feels his heart awed as he reads the second half of this verse—a very prosaic statement, yet one possessing depths which no human mind can fathom. Apparently David acted quite freely when he made this simple domestic arrangement, yet really he could do no otherwise, for he was being *directed* by the unerring and invincible hand of God, unto the outworking of His own counsels. *David’s* object in leaving behind the ten concubines was “to keep the house,” that is, to maintain the palace in some order and cleanliness, but *God’s* design was to make good His own Word.

A part of the punishment which the Lord had announced should fall upon David for his evildoing was, “I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel” (2Sa 12:11-12). The execution of that threat is recorded in, “So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel” (2 Sa 16:22). The connecting link between the two is seen here in our present passage, “And the king left ten women, which were concubines, to keep the house” (2Sa 15:16). Again, we say David’s object in leaving them behind was that they should “keep the house,” but *God’s* purpose was that they should be publicly insulted, raped by Absalom. Unspeakably solemn is this fact—*God directs* those actions which eventuate in evil as truly as He does those which terminate in good. Not only all events, but all persons, and their every action, are under the immediate control of the Most High.

“For of him, and through him, and to him, are *all* things: to whom be glory for ever” (Rom 11:36). Yet this neither makes God the “author of sin” nor man an irresponsible creature. God is holy in all His ways and man is accountable for all his actions. Whether or not we perceive the “consistency” of

them, each of these basic truths must be held fast by us—nor must one be so maintained that the other is virtually negated. Some will argue, if God has foreordained our every action, then we are no better than machines. Others insist, if man is a free agent, his actions cannot be directed by God. But Holy Writ exposes the vanity of such reasonings. So far as David knew it was a voluntary act on his part when he decided to leave ten of his concubines in the house, nevertheless he was divinely “constrained” in it for the accomplishment of God’s purpose.

“And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off. And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king” (2Sa 15:17-18). No, “fair weather friends” were these. They had enjoyed with him the calm, they would not desert him in the storm. They had shared the privileges of Jerusalem, they would not abandon him now that he had become a fugitive and outcast. It is striking to note that while Absalom “stole the hearts of the men of Israel,” *all* the Cherethites, Pelethites, and Gittites remained steadfast to David—a foreshadowment of Christ, for whereas the Jewish nation despised and rejected Him, yet God’s elect among the Gentiles have not been ashamed to be His followers.

UNION AND COMMUNION

Conclusion

We have now completed the gamut of our subject. Starting with the *divine* union that exists between the three persons in the Godhead, which issues in a perfect communion between them, we endeavoured to show how that made possible the *Mediatorial* union, namely, by the second person taking into conjunction with Himself the Man Christ Jesus. That is a profound mystery, yet it is food for faith so far as it is revealed in Holy Writ. Then we saw how that the divine counsels respecting the Mediatorial union laid a foundation for the church’s oneness with Christ. Tracing out the connection between the church and its Head, we have seen that it originated in a *mystical* union before the foundation of the world, when the eternal love of the Triune God chose its members in Christ, and gave it a covenant standing and super-creation subsistence, so that we read of the “grace, which *was given us* in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2Ti 1:9). Thus from all eternity the church stood in Christ as His mystical Body and Bride.

Now what has just been said above has reference to God’s eternal *decree* concerning the same. Descending, then, to the actual *outworking* of that decree, we have seen that the divine purpose was realised by two things—the Son uniting Himself to us, we being joined to Him by the Spirit. First, in order for the Son to enter this world as the Representative and Surety of His people, it was necessary for Him to become flesh, and by so doing a *federal* union was established, Christ thereby assuming and discharging all the legal obligations of His people, “both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are *all of one*” (Heb 2:11). This federal union laid the foundation for the sins of His people to be imputed to Christ and His righteousness to them. Second, the Holy Spirit effects the *vital* union, each of God’s elect being livingly “joined to the Lord” so that they become “one spirit,” this being essential if they are to partake of the benefits which Christ purchased for them. The same Spirit which indwells Christ in His fullness, now takes up His abode within them.

It is at regeneration the Spirit accomplishes our vital union with Christ, making us living branches of the true Vine, and it is this which makes possible a *saving union* with Him. We are not “saved” until we personally “*believe on*” the Lord Jesus Christ, but as saving faith is a spiritual act, one who is spiritually dead cannot perform it. The Spirit supernaturally quickens the soul in order to capacitate it unto a saving faith in Christ. It is the Spirit’s quickening of us into newness of life which lays the foundation for feeling our deep need of Christ and casting ourselves upon Him. Until a man be born again, he cannot see either his desperate condition or where the remedy is to be found. God must begin a good work in the soul (Phi 1:6) before he will have any heart for Christ. Until we are brought from death unto life, the Gospel falls upon deaf ears. When the Saviour is embraced by faith, all our sins are blotted out and Christ is “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1Co 1:30).

At this stage a difficulty presents itself. A vital union with Christ has been effected by the Spirit’s quickening operation and a saving union with Christ by our exercise of faith. But the favoured one is left in this world, and a sinful nature indwells him—how, then, is *communion* to be maintained between him and a holy Christ? For that, there must be a *practical union*, for “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amo 3:3). That “agreement” is accomplished just so far as our wills are brought into subjection to Christ’s, just so far as we yield to His Lordship or authority over us. “Take my yoke upon you” (Mat 11:29) is His call to us and a “yoke” is what *unites together* in a practical way. There can be no communion with Christ outside the path of obedience and the obedience He requires is that which flows from love and gratitude.

Now there are two chief means divinely appointed for the *maintenance* of our practical union with Christ, namely, His precepts and His promises. In the one we learn His will, in the other we see His heart. In the one are directions concerning our duty, in the other is comfort and cheer. Whatever be our circumstances, there are precepts to counsel us and promises to sustain. Yet let it be pointed out that no matter how plainly our duties are set forth in the Scriptures, nor how well-suited the promises be to our varied cases in this world, and no matter how diligently we apply ourselves to the one or the other, they will yield us no relief from the incubus of the flesh until by faith we draw enabling grace from the “fullness” which is in Christ for us (Joh 1:16). “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)—faith in His person, in His mediatorial office, in His compassion, in His power.

Having been brought into vital union with Christ, our privilege is to continue in communion with Him—having “come unto” Him, our duty is now to “abide in” Him. Yes, says the reader, that would be very simple if I no longer had any indwelling corruptions to plague me, but alas, it is but hypocrisy for *me* to talk about enjoying present communion with a holy Christ. Be careful, dear friend, lest you be found arraigning the wisdom and goodness of God. Has not *He* left the “flesh” within you?—had He deemed it most for His glory and your good, He would certainly have eradicated it. Has He made no provision for His failing people to have fellowship with His blessed Son while they groan because of their sinful nature and its ceaseless activities? Weigh well that question and go slow in saying that present communion with the eternal Lover of your soul is not for you.

The above difficulty finds its solution in *experimental union* with Christ. This we entered into at considerable length, because it is at this point that Christians experience so much difficulty. It is hard for them to realise that “there is a friend which sticketh closer than a brother” (Pro 18:24), whose love for us never wavers, and whose ear is ever open to our most distressful cry. But experimental communion with Christ must be “in the light” (1Jo 1:5-7). There must be perfect openness and reality in all our approaches to and dealings with Christ. If we come to Him as impoverished beggars, He will

not turn us away. If we come as conscious and confessed lepers, He will not scorn us, but if we give way to a Laodicean spirit and pretend to be what we are not, He will ignore us.

Experimental communion with Christ consists in basking in the sunshine of His conscious presence, sitting at His feet and receiving from Him as Mary did (Luk 10:39), leaning upon His bosom as John did (Joh 13:23)—and *they* were of “like passions” as we! The more we are engaged in contemplating and resting in Christ’s wondrous and unchanging love, the more will our poor hearts be warmed and our affections drawn out unto Him. Yes, but when I have neglected this privilege, and my heart has grown cold, and I have wandered far from Him, then what am I to do? Do exactly as you did at first—come to Him as the “friend of publicans and sinners” (Mat 11:19), cast yourself anew upon His mercy, acknowledge to Him your vileness, ask Him to wash away the filth of your iniquities, plead before Him the promises found in Jeremiah 3:12 and Hosea 14:4, and count upon His faithfulness to do as He has said. Remember that the precious blood of the Lamb is the only sufficient antidote for a wounded conscience. It is by new acts of faith in that blood we experience afresh its virtue.

The cessation of our strivings against sin, the toleration of temptations to sin, allowed indulgence in any sin, snaps this sensitive experimental communion. The loss of our fellowship with Christ is to the believer’s soul what the extinction of sight or the absence of light would be to the body. The body might in such a case continue to discharge some of its functions, yet nothing could compensate for the loss of vision. So the soul, deprived of conscious communion with Christ, may, in a measure, perform some spiritual functions, but it will go mourning after its lost treasure. The joy of the Lord is the believer’s strength (Neh 8:10), and his joy is commensurate with his fellowship with Christ (1Jo 1:3-4). If, then, fellowship with Him be broken, the joy of salvation is lost (Psa 51:12), as poor David discovered, nor can that joy be regained, till things are put right with the Lord, as the Psalmist also proved.

The only thing which closes our way against renewed communion with Christ is unrepented and unconfessed sins. They are to be *renounced* by godly sorrow, by contrite acknowledgment, by a return to the path of obedience. “They looked unto him, and were lightened” (Psa 34:5). “Looked” in faith and were “lightened” by the removal of their load of conscious guilt. Yet let it be pointed out that there must be real diligence and earnestness of soul when seeking restoration of experimental fellowship, for no slothful and formal effort will suffice. “By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not” (Song 3:1). Then is the soul to give way to despair? No, “I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not” (Song 3:2). Ah, the Lord *tests* us! “The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I *found him* whom my soul loveth: I beheld him, and would not let him go” (Song. 3:3-4)—that was perseverance rewarded. “O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee: let my prayer come before thee, incline thine ear unto my cry” (Psa 88:1-2). Yes “day and night” *there* was intensity and importunity!

Finally, remember that the Lord Jesus is the great Physician, divinely qualified for every wound, malady, want, which sin has wrought in us. Who needs Christ more than *yourself*, when you feel such a vile wretch? Who is there that Christ can get more glory from than by bearing with and cleansing such a one as *you*! The Holy Spirit makes the saint feel sin continually, that he may go continually to the Saviour. The wound is opened afresh to your view, that you may remember afresh it is by *His* “stripes” (Isa 53:5) you are healed. It is the special office-work of the Spirit to continually convict us

of sin, and make us inwardly acquainted with it, to the intent that we make more and more *use* of Christ, who is the alone remedy for every part of our spiritual disease.

Many suppose they cannot grow in grace and thrive spiritually unless they are full of comfort, peace, and joy. But that is a great mistake. Growth in grace is a growing *in humility*, and thriving spiritually is to decrease in self-love and self-complacency. It is the great work of the blessed Spirit to humble our proud hearts, and this He does by showing us more and more of our nothingness, our utter unworthiness, our rottenness, and this in order to pave the way for exalting Christ, by showing how perfectly suited He is for our every case—for He has mercy on the *leper* who *comes to Him*! The Spirit makes us acquainted with our unutterable depravity and misery, that He may show us Christ's love and mercy. He brings to light our foulness, that He may proclaim the everlasting virtue of Christ's blood. He shows us our emptiness, to make us long after Christ's fullness.

Let it be duly borne in mind that *now* is the season of the church's *humiliation*, and that those of its members still upon earth have not yet entered into their glorified state. It is very striking to observe that in this too the church is conformed to the experiences of her Head. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Pro 4:18), which is true alike of both the Redeemer and the redeemed. By the sovereign grace of God, His elect have been brought into the place of unchanging blessing, yet the manifestation of this and their actual enjoyment of it, is experienced *gradually*, little by little. Then let not the tried and troubled Christian be unduly discouraged because, at present, his waterpot contains only water, and that oftentimes a filthy scum rises to the surface of it. It shall not ever be thus.

Christ is our *Pattern* in all things, as well as the Forerunner. The servant is not above his Master, but must follow His steps. Now a careful study of Christ's history reveals four distinct stages concerning His glory. First, there was *His primo-primitive glory* as the God-man, in the predestinating purpose of God. Not only did God behold in the glass of His decrees the Man taken into union by His Son, so that He could say, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him" (Isa 42:1)—this was in eternity past. "He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles" was to occur in the time state, but Christ, as God-man, had a covenant subsistence and was endowed with a glory which far excelled that of the angels. It was to *that* Christ had reference when He prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self *with the glory* which I had with thee before the world was" (Joh 17:5).

That "glory" was His mediatorial glory, for He never relinquished His essential glory as the second person of the Trinity. He could not do so without ceasing to be God. Thus, the first and original state of Christ was one of celestial glory. So it was with the church, for the correspondence is perfect at every point, "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). That too was "before the world began" (2Ti 1:9), for the next verse goes on to state, "according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him" (Eph 1:4)! And again we read, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2Ti 1:9).

Second, there was *His humiliation state*, when He, who was rich, for our sakes became poor. The Lord of angels took upon Him the form of a servant. His glory was so veiled, the degradation into which He descended was so deep, that when here He had "not where to lay his head" (Mat 8:20). The state into which He had entered was such that He became, "A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa 53:5). So it is with His church collectively and with its members individually. It is "through

much tribulation” that we “enter into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22). Sorrow and grief are our present portion—answerable, in our measure, to that through which the Head passed.

Third, there is *His state of exaltation*. This He entered into upon His ascension, when He was “received up into glory” (1Ti 3:16). He has been crowned “with honour and glory” and set “over the creation of God” (see Heb 2:7). Yet, as that passage goes on to say, “But now we see not yet all things put under him” (Heb 2:8). No, at present He is “From henceforth expecting *till* his enemies be made his footstool” (Heb 10:13). Moreover, Christ still lacks the completed and glorified church, which is His “fullness” (Eph 1:23). Agreeably to this, when we leave this world, we go to be with Christ which is “far better” (Phi 1:23), nevertheless, we still lack our glorified bodies—the perfect state is yet future.

Fourth, there is *the ultimate and eternal glory of Christ*, but He will not enter into *that* apart from His church. The final glorification of both shall occur at the same time. God considers nothing too good or too much for the Bride of His Son, and He will yet endow and enrich her with every spiritual blessing, not only in order to fit her as a suitable Spouse, but elevating her to a state of holiness and happiness, honour and glory, beyond all human and angelic thought, so as to satisfy His own heart as well, and display to all eternity the exceeding riches of His wisdom and grace, and the height and depth, breadth and length of His love toward her. Then shall the glorified Head be glorified in His Body and admired by all them that believe. Then will be fully manifested the original super-creation glory of God’s elect.

The future glory of the righteous in heaven is of such a character that they will be so united unto God Himself, through Christ the God-man as the Medium of it, as for Him to make such a communication of blessedness through our Head, that in the issue of it we shall be “filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 3:19). It scarcely needs pointing out that those prayers of the apostle which are recorded in Scripture were indicted by the Holy Spirit, and therefore their several petitions are to be regarded by us as so many divine promises, which, though realised by us in some measure now, will receive their perfect fulfillment in the future. Thus it will be with this most remarkable expression, in the eternal state the elect shall be granted such communion with the Blessed Three that they will be filled with the life, the light, the love of God.

It is through Christ, yet it is *by the Spirit*, that we have all our knowledge of God. “The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1Co 2:10-11). The Spirit dwells in the hearts of believers now on earth, and He will dwell in them in heaven to all eternity. Therefore is He denominated, “The spirit of glory” (1Pe 4:14), for that title *looks forward* to His special relation to us in the unending future. Each person in the Godhead will therefore have a distinctive part and place in connection with the everlasting bliss of the church. We shall behold the Father’s face (i.e., His revealed perfections), and Christ will be the Medium through which He shines, yet it is by the Spirit we shall be “filled with all the fullness of God.” That will be the climax of grace, the consummation of our salvation, and the very zenith of joyous privilege and bliss.

How incapable we are of forming any adequate conception of what it will mean for a soul to be “filled with all the fullness of God!” Not that the finite will ever contain or encompass the Infinite, yet the holy and glorious One shall completely possess and abundantly satisfy our entire beings, spirit and soul and body. The renowned Puritan, Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) illustrated this by the following simile, “So fill you, as the fire of a hot furnace doth a small piece of iron cast into it, when not dissolving it, or converting it into fire itself, yet you see not nor discern the iron, but it appears to be

all fire. So the ever-blessed Three will be *all in all* to saints in heaven, as to fill, penetrate, and so thoroughly possess their understandings, as for them not to mind or think of themselves or of the glory they are possessed of, through their being swallowed up in the thoughts and enjoyment of the glory of the co-equal Three shining on and in and through them.”

Christ will everlastingly delight in the church, and the church will everlastingly delight in Him. There will be mutual intercourse, an unrestrained opening of heart one to another. In communion *communications* are made by *both* parties. One party bestows favour upon another, and the recipient reciprocates by giving back to the donor, according to the benefit received, grateful acknowledgment: those communications, from both sides, flowing from love and union. Thus we read, “Now ye Philippians know also, that...no church *communicated* with me as concerning giving *and* receiving, but ye only” (Phi 4:15). Paul and the Philippian saints were united in heart and had spiritual fellowship together in the Gospel (Phi 1:5). Out of love to him, they communicated in a temporal way, they being the active givers, he the passive receiver. Then, in return for their kindness, the apostle communicated by acknowledging their beneficence, thanking them for it. This may help us a little to form some idea of what our communion with Christ in heaven will be like. As the vine conveys sap to the branch, so the branch *responds* by bearing leaves and fruit. Christ will continue to be *the Giver*, and we be the receivers, yet this will issue in the overflowing of our love, and *in return* we shall pour out praise and thanksgiving, adoration and worship.

“He and I in one bright glory
Endless bliss shall share:
Mine, to be forever with Him;
His, that I am there.”

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

5. *The Siniatic*

As we have seen, that which pre-eminently characterised the Mosaic dispensation was the prominent and dominant position accorded to *the law*. Not only was that dispensation formally inaugurated by JEHOVAH Himself proclaiming the Decalogue from Sinai—the exodus from Egypt and the journey across the wilderness being but introductory thereto—but those Ten Words were given the place of supreme honour. The tables of stone upon which they had been inscribed were assigned to the tabernacle. Now the most sacred vessel in the tabernacle, and that which formed the very centre of all the services connected with it, was *the ark*. It was the special symbol of the Lord’s covenant presence and faithfulness, for upon its cover was the throne on which He sat as King in Israel. Yet that ark was made on purpose to house the two tables of the law, and was called “the ark of the covenant” simply because it contained the agreed-upon articles of the covenant. Thus those Ten Words were plainly recognized as containing in themselves the sum and substance of that righteousness which the covenant strictly required.

The very position, then, which the two tables of stone occupied, intimated most plainly that *the observance of the law* was God’s great end in the establishment of Judaism. The law, perfect in its character and perpetual in its obligation, formed the foundation of all the symbolical institutions of

worship which was afterwards imposed. As the centre of Judaism was the tabernacle, so the centre of the tabernacle was *the law*, for the sacred ark, which was enshrined in the holy of holies and had been built specially for the housing of it. Thus the thoughtful worshipper could scarcely fail to perceive that *obedience to the law* was the pre-eminent reason for which the Levitical economy was appointed. Every strictly religious rite and institution ordained by God through Moses was intended as a means to enforce the principles and precepts of the law, or as remedies to provide against the evils which inevitably arose from its neglect and violation.

The *real relation* which existed between the ceremonial and the moral law has not been sufficiently recognized, and therefore we will now consider at more length the true design and spiritual purpose of the Levitical code. The Decalogue itself was *the foundation* of the tabernacle service, all its symbolical ceremonies pointing to it as their common ground and centre. In other words, the ceremonial institutions were *entirely subservient* to the righteousness which the law required. Let it be remembered that it was not until *after* the Siniatic Covenant had been formally ratified that the ritual of the Levitical system was given. Thus its very place in the history denotes that the ceremonial law is to be regarded not as of primary, but only of *secondary* moment in the constitution of God's kingdom in Israel. God had called Israel to occupy a place of peculiar nearness to Himself, so He first made known to them the great principles of truth and righteousness which were to regulate their lives, and then that there should be a visible bond of fellowship, by placing in their midst a dwelling place for Himself—appointing everything in connection therewith in such a manner as to impress them with the character of their King and of what became them as His subjects.

Most strikingly was *the subserviency* of the ceremonial to the moral law signified in connection with the divine appointments concerning the tabernacle. All was to be ordered according to the pattern shown to Moses in the mount, while the people were to signify their readiness to submit to God's will by contributing the required materials (Exo 25:2-9). Now the *first* thing to be made was not the framework (walls) of the tabernacle itself, nor that which belonged to the outer court, but instead *the ark of the covenant* (Exo 25:20-22), which was the repository of the Decalogue! The ark was given the precedence of everything else—altar, laver, lamp stand, and table of showbread! Thus it was plainly intimated that *the ark* was the most sacred piece of furniture pertaining to the house of God—the centre from which all spiritual fellowship with the Lord was to proceed and derive its essential character. Thus an unmistakable link of connection between the ceremonial and the moral law, and the subordination of the one to the other, was impressed from the first on the very constitution of the tabernacle.

Now the chief lesson inculcated by the ceremonial law, proclaimed by numerous rites and ordinances, was, that the holy and righteous have access to God's fellowship and blessing—whereas the unclean and wicked are excluded. But *who constituted* the one class and who the other? Not simply those who observed, or refused to observe, the mere letter of the ceremonial law, but rather those who possessed in reality that which was therein symbolized, and *that* was ascertained only in the light of God Himself. He had revealed His character in that law of moral duty which He took for the foundation of His throne and the centre of His government in Israel. There the “line and plummet” of right and wrong, of holy and unholy in God's sight, was set up, and the Levitical code itself *implied* that very “line and plummet,” and called men's attention to it by its manifold prescriptions concerning clean and unclean, defilement and purification.

The “divers washing” (Heb 9:10) of the ceremonial law and its ever-recurring atonements by blood pointed to existing impurities, but what many have failed to recognize is, that those very impurities *were such* because *at variance with* the law of righteousness. “The Decalogue had pointed,

by the predominantly negative form of its precepts, to the prevailing tendency in human nature to sin; and in like manner the Levitical code, by making everything that directly bore on generation and birth a source of uncleanness, perpetually reiterated in men's ears the lesson that corruption cleaved to them, that they were conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity. The very institution of a separate order for immediate approach to God, and performing, in behalf of the community, the most sacred offices of religion, was a visible sign of actual short-comings and transgressions among the people: it was a standing testimony that they were *not holy* after the lofty pattern of holiness exhibited in the law of JEHOVAH's throne.

"The distinction, also, between clean and unclean *in food*, while it deprived them of nothing that was required either to gratify the taste or minister nourishment to the bodily life—granted them, indeed, what was best adapted for both—yet served as a daily monitor in respect to the spiritual dangers that encompassed them and of the necessity of exercising themselves to a careful choosing between one class of things and another; reminded them of a good that was to be followed and of an evil to be shunned. And then there is a whole series of defilements springing from contact with what is emphatically the wages of sin—*death*, or death's livid image, the leprosy, which, wherever it alighted, struck a fatal blight into the organism of nature, and rendered it a certain prey to corruption:—things, the very sight and touch of which formed a call to humiliation, because carrying with them the mournful evidence, that, while sojourners with God, men still found themselves in the region of corruption and death" (The Revelation of Law in Scripture by Patrick Fairbairn, 1869, to whom we are also indebted for other thoughts in this article).

In the light of what has been said above, it will be seen that "the law of carnal ordinances" contained *most important instruction* for the people—that is, not when considered by itself, but when regarded (according to its proper design) as an auxiliary to the Ten Commandments. But if the ceremonial law be isolated from them, and be regarded as possessing an independent use and value, then its message had flatly repudiated the truth, for in such case it had encouraged men to rely upon mere outward distinction and rest in corporeal observances. But *that* had been contradictory rather than complementary of the Decalogue, for *it* throws all the emphasis upon the moral element, both in the divine character and the obedience which He requires from His people. Kept, however, in its proper place, of subordination to the moral law, the Levitical code furnished most important instruction for Israel, keeping steadily before them the fact that *sin* brought defilement and shut out from fellowship with the Holy One.

That the Levitical ordinances had merely a *subsidiary value*, and that they derived all their importance from the connection in which they stood with the moral precepts of the law, is evident from other considerations. It is clearly demonstrated by the fact that when the special judgments of heaven were denounced against the covenant people, it never was for neglect of the ceremonial observances, but always for flagrant violations of the Ten Commandments—let the reader carefully ponder the following passages in proof: Jeremiah 7:22-31; Ezekiel 8 and 18:1-3; Hosea 4:1-3; Amos 3:4-9; Micah 5 and 6. It is evident again from the fact that whenever the indispensable conditions of entrance to God's house and of abiding fellowship with Him are set forth, they are seen to be in conformity to the moral precepts, and not to the ceremonial observances: Psalms 15 and 24. Finally, it is evident from the fact that when the people exalted ceremonialism above practical obedience, the procedure was denounced as idolatry and the service rejected as a mockery: see 1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 45:7; Isaiah 1:2; Micah 6:8.

Having dwelt upon the relation which existed between the ceremonial and the moral law—the one being strictly subservient to the other, the one reiterating the testimony of the other concerning

holiness and sin—let us now consider another and quite different aspect of it. The Decalogue itself proclaimed the righteous requirements of the Lord, and therefore it made no allowance for disobedience and no provision for the disobedient—all it did was to threaten condemnation and the awful penalty it announced could inspire nought but terror. But with the Levitical code it was quite otherwise. *There* was a mediatorial priesthood, *there* were sacrifices for obtaining forgiveness, *there* were ordinances for cleansing, and the design of these was to secure restoration of fellowship with God for those whose sins excluded them from His holy presence. Thus, while these ordinances were far from making light of sin, for those who repented and humbled themselves, they mercifully procured reconciliation to the lawgiver.

It should, however, be carefully noted that God impressed very definite limits to *the scope of* the expiatory sacrifices. And necessarily so—had there been no restrictions, had the way been open, at all times, for any one and every one, to obtain remission and cleansing, then the Levitical code had granted a corrupt and fatal license, for in that case, men could have gone on in a deliberate course of evil, assured that further sacrifices would expiate their guilt. Therefore we see divine holiness tempering divine mercy, by appointing sacrifices for the sins of ignorance only, or for those defilements which were contracted unwittingly or unavoidably—whereas for flagrant and willful transgressors of the Ten Commandments, there remained nought but summary judgment. Thereby a gracious provision was made for what we may term sins of infirmity, while justice was meted out to the lawless and defiant.

The distinction to which we have just called attention, or the limitation made in the Levitical code for the obtaining of pardon, is clearly expressed in, “If any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul *that sinneth ignorantly*, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them. But the soul that *doeth ought presumptuously* [with a high hand]), whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall *utterly be cut off*; his iniquity shall be upon him” (Num 15:27-31).

But while there *was this* great difference between the ceremonial and the moral law—a merciful provision made for certain transgressors of it—yet we may clearly perceive how divine wisdom protected the Decalogue from dishonour, yea, by the very limitations of that provision upheld its righteous demands. “So that here, again, the Levitical code of ordinances *lent on* the fundamental law of the Decalogue, and did obeisance to its supreme authority. Only they who devoutly recognised this law, and in their conscience strove to walk according to its precepts, had any title to and interest in the provisions sanctioned for the blotting out of transgression. Then, as now, ‘to walk in darkness’ or persistently adhere to the practice of iniquity, was utterly incompatible with having fellowship with God—1 John 1:6” (Patrick Fairbairn).

Yet, let it be pointed out, on the other hand, that God is *sovereign*, high above all law, and by no means tied to the restrictions which He has placed on His creatures. This grand truth ever needs to be clearly and boldly proclaimed, never more so than in our day, when such low and dishonouring views of God so widely prevail. When JEHOVAH made known Himself to Moses, He said, “The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children” (Exo 34:6-7). That precious word was ever

available *to faith*, as Numbers 14:17-20 and other passages blessedly show. True, even in this passage there is a solemn warning that justice will not forgo its claims, that obstinate rebels should meet their deserts. Yet *that* is given the second place, while *grace* occupies the foreground.

It was *that* which inspired relief in humble and penitent hearts—*God is gracious*. Thus, though at every point the Israelite was taught that sin is a most solemn and serious matter, and that neither the moral nor the ceremonial law made any provision of mercy where certain offences were committed, yet that did not prevent the Lord dealing with them on a footing of pure grace. The revealed character of God opened a door of hope unto contrite souls, even when their case appeared utterly hopeless. A striking illustration of this is found in the 51st Psalm. There we see David, after the commission of sins for which the law demanded the death penalty, and for which no Levitical sacrifice was of any avail (v. 16), acknowledging with a broken heart his heinous transgressions, casting himself on God's *unconditional* forgiveness (v. 1), and obtaining pardon from Him.

To give completeness to our present line of study one other feature respecting Levitical institutions requires to be noticed. Considered from one viewpoint, the ceremonial oblations and ablutions were a real *privilege* of the Israelite, but from another they *added to his obligations* of duty—illustrating the fact that increased blessings always entail increased responsibility. The Levitical institutions were as truly legal enactments as were the Ten Commandments, and willful violators of them were as much subject to punishment as those who profaned the Sabbath or committed murder, see Leviticus 7:20; 17:4, 14; Numbers 9:13.

The reason why those who transgressed the Levitical ordinances were subject to judgment was because the ceremonial statutes were invested with the same authority as were those Commandments which pertained strictly to the moral sphere, and therefore to set them as nought was to dishonour the divine Legislator Himself. Moreover, it was to despise the means which He had graciously appointed—the only available means—for having guilt remitted and defilement removed, and which therefore remained unforgiven, yea, aggravated, by the despite that was done to the riches of God's mercy. Therein we may perceive a clear foreshadowing of that which pertains to the Gospel, but our consideration of that must be deferred.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

12. Its Means

Because truth exerts a sanctifying influence upon the soul, it necessarily follows that *error corrupts*. This is not so clearly recognised as it ought to be, or God's children would exercise more caution and care whom they heard and what they read. It is not more true that God's Word cleanses than that Satan's lies defile. False teachers are represented as "evil men and seducers" (2Ti 3:13), as "filthy dreamers [who] defile the flesh" (Jude 8), as "the servants of corruption" (2Pe 2:19). Idolatry is expressed in Scripture as "whoredom" (Hos 4:12-13). It is a most serious thing to sit under error, for the more the mind is deceived by falsehood, the less will the awe of God be upon the heart. False doctrine has the same effect upon the soul as poison does upon the body, and unless God mercifully intervenes, the result is fatal.

We feel it a bounden duty to once more sound an alarm and warn our readers against disregarding that exhortation of the Lord's. "*Take heed what ye hear*" (Mar 4:24). No matter what may be your

motive, nor how well you personally be established in the faith, it is at your peril that you disregard such a word. “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1Co 15:33). It is the chief aim of Satan *to* deceive, and often his agents are sent forth in the garb of orthodoxy. There is many a pulpit today which “stands for” the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Christ, and salvation by grace, which is, nevertheless, retailing that which is erroneous and corrupting. Yet because of its seeming orthodoxy and “fundamentalism,” thousands are being deluded to their eternal undoing. It is therefore the duty of the watchmen on Zion’s walls to warn the unwary.

We are divinely commanded to “Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jer 6:16). Yes, the “*old* paths” and not the new ones of the “dispensationalists.” But let us be more specific. Does the insisting upon the vital necessity of practical sanctification occupy a prominent place in the preaching you hear? Is *personal holiness* emphasised as freely and frequently as divine grace? Is your responsibility stressed as much as your inability? What effect do the sermons have upon you? Do they produce self-pity or self-loathing? Is your conscience pierced or is there nothing more than intellectual information? My reader, you had far, far better stay at home and read God’s Word and go nowhere, than sit under preaching which does not search, strip, and humble you—preaching which makes you feel your utter sinfulness and cry out for sanctifying grace.

Supplementary to our previous remarks on the believer being sanctified practically through the Word, it needs to be pointed out that he is so only as the truth is accomplished and applied to him *by the Spirit*. The Bible is not a magical charm which mechanically produces spiritual effects. It is a divinely provided means which has to be *used* by us, yet the blessing we derive therefrom is dependent upon the gracious operations of its Author. The One who inspired the Scriptures must open our hearts to receive them and incline our wills to respond thereto. Even the apostles knew not the truth so much by receiving it from the lips of Christ as by the inward illumination of the Spirit. The Lord Jesus had brought the Gospel to them from the bosom of the Father, and had taught them by an external ministry, but the Comforter was to bring it into their hearts and guide them into all truth (Joh 16:13).

Looked at apart, the Scriptures instruct intellectually, but they purge not effectually. They impart a notional knowledge, but they give no experimental acquaintance with their contents. They make an impression, yet it is a weak one, that moves not the will. There is a vast difference between seeing things by the light of reason, and discerning them in the light of the Spirit—by the latter we perceive in Christ another manner of beauty than we saw before, and become conscious of the utter vanity of worldly delights in a way and degree we did not previously. Alas, the great majority of professing Christians content themselves with a superficial belief and have nothing better than human knowledge of divine things—a natural understanding of spiritual verities—and therefore their souls are not carried out to actual holiness in the exercise of godly fear, unfeigned love, and true obedience. This brings us to consider, next, *prayer* as a means of practical sanctification.

It is by means of prayer that the soul may have access unto the Holy One, and the more we cultivate communion with Him in the secret place, the more will His realized presence exert a purifying influence upon us. God alone can impart holiness to us. Ministers may exhort unto holiness, parents may pray for their children to be made holy, husbands and wives supplicate it on behalf of each other, but none of them can *communicate* holiness to their nearest and dearest relatives. God only is the Author and Giver of holiness. To bestow holiness is a work too high for angels and too hard for humans—only a holy God can infuse holiness into the soul, and thus make the desert to bloom as the

rose. God alone can melt the heart, purge the conscience, elevate the affections, move the will, and bring the life into a gracious frame and pious temper. And for this He must be earnestly *sought unto*.

It is not sufficient to search the Scriptures diligently and meditate upon them frequently, we must also beg their Author to grant us spiritual understanding and experimental acquaintance with them. “O that my ways *were directed* to keep thy statutes!....*Teach me*, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I will keep it unto the end....*Make me to go* in the path of thy commandments....*Incline* my heart unto thy testimonies” (Psa 119:5, 33, 35, 36). “*Teach me to do thy will*; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good, *lead me* into the land of uprightness. *Quicken me*, O LORD, for thy name’s sake” (Psa. 143:10-11). “The Lord *direct your hearts into* the love of God” (2Th 3:5). What those souls longed for was not information, but spiritual quickening, not instructions to their duty, but an effectual moving of them to the performance of the same. Ah, my reader, it is not those who have the most light in their heads who are the holiest, but those who have God’s laws most written on their hearts. It is not those who can quote Scriptures so readily and glibly who are the most pious, but those whose characters are molded and conduct regulated by the divine precepts, and for *that* God requires to be sought unto!

Private prayer is absolutely essential unto practical sanctification. In addition to its indirect tendency to impress the soul with an awesome sense of divine things, to deepen our reverence and esteem of God, to increase our desires for the blessings sought, and to deepen our abhorrence of the things from which we implore deliverance, prayer has for its *direct* object *the obtaining* of supplies of supernatural grace. True prayer is the approach to God of a sinful creature, conscious of deep needs, pouring out its heart before Him, applying to One who is all powerful and infinitely merciful. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and *find grace* to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). “Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD *shall renew* their strength” (Isa. 40:30-31 cf. Luke 11:13).

But those blessings are not obtained by coldly and mechanically performing a religious duty. Real prayer is fervent, definite, persistent. It calls into exercise *all* the faculties of the soul, and all the graces of the Spirit. It is the agonized cry of one who is in deep distress. It is the pantings of a soul which longs for deliverance from its deadly foes. It is the pouring forth of holy desires which seek their realization. It is the appointed channel through which faith is chiefly to exert itself to the utmost and perform its whole work. It is essentially *heart work*. Lip labour and bodily gestures are worthless unless the heart be stirred. Only when the heart is *pained* by the wounds that sin has made, do we betake ourselves to the great Physician in reality. It is distress of soul, and not flowery language, which moves the Lord to hear His children. The greater our agonies, the more earnestly should we pray, Luke 22:44!

Yet something more than a consciousness of our wretchedness and a deep sense of need is required if we are to prevail with God. Diligent effort must be made to bring the heart into a holy frame when approaching Him. There must be a real attempt to overcome the disorder of soul which is produced by a sense of guilt and fear, Psalm 55:22. There must be a sincere endeavour to work up the heart unto a godly sorrow and a holy horror of our sins, Psalm 38:18, for this is one chief part of prayer as the lamentations show. Then pleading must be added to petitions as we learn from John 17. Further, praise and thanksgiving to God for the mercies of the new covenant is not only an obligation, but an aid to the strengthening of faith and performance of duty. Finally, fail not to present your supplications to God in the name of Christ, your Mediator and Surety, urging His infinite merits, the efficacy of His blood, and the fullness which God has placed in Him for us to draw from.

Another means to be used diligently for promoting the life of faith and the progress of practical sanctification is *self-examination*. An honest scrutiny of our state and a careful measuring of our ways

by the Word is calculated to produce beneficial effects. As it is wise to take our temperature when we feel feverish, and as it is prudent for the merchant to take an inventory of his stock, so it is well for the Christian to “commune with his own heart” (see Psa 4:4) and “consider his ways” (see Hag 1:5). By so doing, we are more apt to discover *what it is* which most needs remedying, what it is we have most cause to bewail before God, and what it is we have particular occasion to thank Him for. If self-examination be properly conducted it will produce humbling, evoke prayer, and stimulate effort to increased diligence.

In prosecuting this examination, you must be willing to know the worst of yourself as well as the best, and the best as well as the worst. It is quite consistent with humility to take notice of the workings of grace—if we do not, how shall we own and give thanks for the fruit of the Spirit? But remember that inherent grace is not to be tried by its degree, but by its nature—are there *any* sparks of grace amid an ocean of corruption, *any* lustings of the spirit against the flesh? You must not deny yourself to be a babe in Christ because you find the old man is so much bigger than the new. The more the Christian perceives his defects in holiness, the more should he labour after holiness, “I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments” (Psa 119:59-60).

The actual *exercise of indwelling grace* is another help to the increase of practical sanctification. If I am to attain unto higher degrees of holiness, then I must set in motion and act out that holiness which I already have. Inactive limbs become stiff and useless; clothes laid up are devoured by moths; silver and gold that is hoarded will tarnish; and the non-exercise of holiness brings upon the soul a decay of holiness. Wells are the sweeter for the drawing and holiness is healthiest when called into action. It was for this reason that Paul called upon Timothy to “*stir up* the gift of God which is in thee” (2Ti 1:6). There is an allusion in those words to the sacred fire in the temple, which was always to be kept burning. Just as fire is reserved by blowing, so holiness is maintained by being steadily stirred up in the soul.

It is sad to find some of the Lord’s people paralyzed by a sense of their corruptions. Instead of bemoaning their lack of holiness, they need to use that holiness which they already possess. The yachtsman does not refuse to unfurl his sails because only a very little breeze is blowing, but is thankful that there is not a dead calm—no wind at all. As the frequent actings of sin is the strengthening of sin, so the frequent actings of holiness is the strengthening of the same. Holiness thrives, increases, advances, by its actings. “Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever *hath*, to him *shall be given*; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have” (Luk 8:18)—“hath” it in reality, making manifest the grace imparted to him, as faith proves itself by its works.

The dispensations of providence are another great means for accomplishing our practical sanctification. This is an important branch of the subject which has received scant attention from most of those who have written thereon—much to the loss of the saints’ comfort, for herein is to be found the key which opens to us much that is so mysterious and trying in our lives. In the government of this world and in the regulation of the affairs of His people, God has in view *their sanctification*. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous” (Psa 34:19), but why should they be? “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22), but wherein lies the needs be for it? “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2Ti 3:12), but why should they? The answer is, that their personal holiness may be promoted! Ah, my reader, how else the explanation of those crosses and curses, those trials and troubles. God has in view *the refreshing* of your soul, and therefore may you say with Job, “When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10).

“And we know that all things *work together for good* to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28). Though to outward sight many things appear to be working *against* your good, though to carnal reason much seems to be accomplishing your ill, yet, in reality, it is far otherwise. As it is the harmonization of different voices which issues in the lovely melody of a choir, as it is the combination of various ingredients which produces the health-restoring medicine, so it is the working together of diverse elements which contributes to the blessing of the believer. The various factors which enter into his life not only operate, but co-operate, acting in perfect concert. There is such a divine regulation of them that they are made to promote our spiritual interests. How wondrous the wisdom and the power of Him who renders subservient to His gracious designs things which have a tendency to evil, which *are* so in themselves, and which would *be so* to us, did not God ordain otherwise.

How we should marvel at this! What a frightful amount of evil is in continual activity in this world! What an incalculable number of opposing self-interests are at work! What a vast army of rebels daily fighting against God! What hosts of super-human creatures are opposing the Lord and seeking to destroy His people! Yet high above all is the Almighty, in undisturbed calm, complete Master of the situation, having such perfect control that none may touch a hair of our heads without His permission. But more—they are made *to serve our interests* and contribute to our good. The divine Alchemist brings good out of evil, making the power and malice of Satan tributary to His beneficent purpose. It is because of this that “*we know* that all things work together for good.” Yes, *all* the complicated occurrences of our lives, with their disappointments and sorrows, are forwarding our practical sanctification.

That afflictions *are* one of the means which God uses for the cleansing of His people is clear from Scriptures, where they are called His “furnace” and refining pot (Isa 48:10). “He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver: and he shall *purify* the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness” (Mal 3:2-3). First, by means of affliction we obtain *fresh views of the vileness of sin*. Though the divine chastenings proceed from the Father’s love, yet they have in them some tokens of His displeasure against sin, for “correction” always respects *faults*. If we are duly “exercised” by them (Heb 12:11), then we are reminded anew of our ill-deserts and should loathe ourselves and be ashamed. And *that* is the first step toward our purifying—as self-pleasing is the worst element in our pollution, so when we abhor ourselves for it we are at least near unto the remedy.

Second, afflictions *wean us from material comforts*. So prone are our hearts unto idolatry that the affections are allured by the very creatures of God, which are good in themselves, but are turned into evils when we cleave unto them inordinately. Yes, we are often guilty of abusing God’s blessings, perverting His mercies, and giving to the creature that to which the Creator alone is entitled. Then it is that God blows upon the “goodliness” of the flesh, makes to wither those flowers of this world on which we set so much store, and discovers to us their emptiness and insufficiency to give relief. When health is shattered, loved ones snatched away, or the soul bowed down by a sense of the foulness and gravity of our sins, what are the pleasures, honours, and riches of the world worth then? Alas, that suffering and sorrow are necessary to expose to us their vanity.

Third, afflictions *curb the vigour of our lusts*. There is nothing like grief of heart and pain of body to take off the edge of those affections whereby the lusts of the mind and the flesh bring about all our defilements. A wounded spirit or diseased body effectually curbs those affections which are ever ready to be pressed into the service of our lusts, and which often carry the soul into the pursuits of sin as the horse rushes into battle—with reckless abandon and fury. It is into these fond dotings that

concupiscence empties itself and overflows into numberless evils. But by affliction, God renders those affections unserviceable unto our corruptions, and thereby prepares the soul to become a partaker of His holiness.

Fourth, by afflictions *our graces are drawn forth*. The soul being no longer able to support or relieve itself, turns unto God for succour and comfort. It is then that faith, hope, patience, love, meekness, are called into exercise. “We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Rom 5:3-4). “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word” (Psa 119:67). Some medicines are not only most unpalatable, but they cause much pain—yet their ultimate effect is beneficial. So under afflictions, God designs the health of His people. Yet let it be pointed out that their efficacy arises not from their own fitness to that end, but from the gracious operation of the Spirit *blessing them to us*—apart from *that*, they occasion either rebellion or abject despair. How we need, then, to pray to the Spirit to sanctify them to us. It is only as we are duly “exercised thereby” that they yield the “peaceable fruits of righteousness” (Heb 12:11).

AN EVENING PRAYER

We come again into Thine immediate presence, and present our persons, our souls and bodies, before Thy divine Majesty, to record Thy name, and celebrate Thy praise for all the blessings Thou hast bestowed on us the past day. Thou hast fed us. Thou hast been with us. Thou hast been our helper and defence. O Thou Most High God, we praise Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee. Help us to pour out our souls before Thee in an acceptable manner. O Lord, it is with Thee to hear the desire of the humble, it is Thou who preparest the heart, it is Thou who inclinest Thine ear to hear. Surely O God, it is great condescension in Thee to look on such as we are. If one of Thine said before Thee, I am but dust and ashes, what, O Lord, can we say concerning ourselves. O that we had the same low and mean views of ourselves as is expressed in such an acknowledgement.

If another of Thine cried out, “Behold, I am vile,” how shall we order our speech before Thee by reason of our darkness? If a prophet, when favoured with a visionary sight of the ever-blessed God-man, cried out “Woe is me, for mine eyes have seen the King, LORD of hosts!” What shall we say or how shall we open our mouths? Blessed be Thy name, Thou delightest in mercy. We come as sinners into Thy presence. We present ourselves before Thy Majesty, to magnify Thy name, because Thy mercy endureth forever. O for Thy presence with our souls at this time. O for a real sense of Thy goodness on our minds. Lord, help us to pour out our hearts before Thee. We are full of sin; O lead us to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. We are in ourselves all unrighteousness. O direct our minds to Jesus as the Lord our righteousness, and help us to receive Him afresh into our minds as such. We are all emptiness in ourselves. Lord, lead us to the fullness of Jesus for the supply of all our wants.

Thou hast bestowed innumerable mercies upon us throughout the past day. Lord, help us with gratitude and praise to glorify Thee for the same. Thou hast said, he that offereth praise glorifieth Thee. Help us so to do. It being what is our duty and most reasonable service. We might each of us, under proper views of the personal mercies we have this single past day received and enjoyed from Thee, confess it wholly out of our power to praise Thee for these mercies. We thank Thee, O lord, that Thy name endureth forever and Thy memorial throughout all generations. We pray, O Lord Jesus

Christ, Thou wouldest look down most graciously on us. Lord, visit us. O Lord, refresh us. O Lord, revive us. O Lord, be Thou unto us as dew unto Israel, let us revive as the corn. Let us grow as the vine. Let us cast forth our roots as Lebanon. Let us grow as the lily. It is with Thee, O blessed Jesus, to fulfill Thy holy promise unto Thy saints.

Thou art pleased to suit Thy Word to all the cases of Thy beloved ones. Thou art pleased to view and review all their wants and circumstances, and Thine eye and Thine heart is upon them perpetually. Blessed be Thy name, Thou art ever mindful of thy covenant. Thou hast Thy people in continual remembrance. Lord, we beseech Thee, to make one with us at this time. Lord, be Thou pleased to bring home to our minds, and fulfil in us, Thy holy will and Word concerning us. Let us give up ourselves unto Thee, to be cast into the very mold of Thy Gospel. Let us renounce all which is ours by nature. Let us know ourselves for what we are in ourselves, for what we see, feel, and experience in ourselves. Do Thou, O blessed Jesus, realise in each of our minds afresh the virtue and efficacy of Thy sacrifice and most precious blood. Let us fully believe the record given concerning it. Let us rest on the everlasting perfection of Thy one offering.

Do Thou shed Thy Holy Spirit in His divine influences on us. O let us rejoice in Thee. Lord, be with us the remainder of this night. Lord, lay under us, Thine everlasting arms. O let us be found in Thee without spot and blameless. We beseech Thee, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the eternal Three in the self-existing and incomprehensible God-head, to be with us this night, to bless us this night, to defend us from all evil, and to bring us to behold and enter on the coming day in health and peace; and Thine shall be all the praise, Amen.—S. E. Pierce, 1820.

“BY ME KINGS REIGN”

(Proverbs 8:15)

How blessed to be assured of this! It is not political influence, the will of the people, nor the personal caprice of royalty (whether they shall reign or abdicate), which is the determining factor. No, the King of kings is the One who fills and empties the thrones of earth, and none can stay His hand or say unto Him what doest Thou? (Dan 4:35). It is true that He uses means and employs instruments in the executing of His will, yet they are but clay in the hands of the divine Potter. We press this point because our lot is cast in a day when men’s thoughts are so engaged with secondary causes, and their eyes so fixed on mediatory influences, that He who directs all causes and regulates all influences is largely lost sight of.

To submit to God’s sovereign dispensation and “honour the king” (1Pe 2:17), because of his office, irrespective of his character, is our bounden duty at all times—a Nero was the emperor of Rome when that precept was first set down in writing! Nevertheless, it cannot but gladden the hearts of the righteous when the Lord is pleased to give a monarch who *honours Him*, outwardly at least, and sets before his subjects an example of regal piety. For the greater part of last century, and for most of the present one, Great Britain has been blest with first a queen, and then a king, who reverently bowed the knee before the Most High. And now God has again exalted to the throne a king and his royal

consort who are not ashamed to *own Him* both in their public and private lives. This is a mercy for which we cannot be sufficiently grateful.

I believe that we voice the sentiments of all God's people in the British empire when we say there is cause for rejoicing in the people and happy issue which the Lord has granted to the recent sad crisis. There is occasion for praise that at the critical juncture we were favoured with a prime minister and cabinet who refused to compromise with evil—having in this the unanimous support of the Colonies—and who faithfully performed their duty, however painful. Though not an Anglican, the editor for one is profoundly thankful that the “Church of England” (despite its faults and failings) is still, under God, a real bulwark to the British throne, long may she continue such, if God be so pleased. It is good to know that our new king and queen have their own private family worship each day. May the Lord be very merciful, and grant them all needed grace to live before their people as becometh those who profess the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.



March

The Spirit Preserving

During recent years much has been written upon the eternal security of the saints, some of it helpful, but most of it superficial and injurious. Many Scriptures have been quoted, but few of them explained. A great deal has been said about the *fact* of Divine preservation, but comparatively little on the *method* thereof. The preservation of the believer by the Father and by the Son has been given considerable prominence, but the work of the Spirit therein was largely ignored. The general impression conveyed to the thoughtful reader has been that, the “final perseverance” of the Christian is a mechanical thing rather than a spiritual process, that it is accomplished by physical force rather than by moral suasion, that it is performed by external might rather than by internal means—something like an unconscious non-swimmer being rescued from a watery grave, or a fireman carrying a swooning person out of a burning building. Such illustrations are radically faulty, utterly misleading, and pernicious in their tendency.

It may be objected that the principal thing for us to be concerned with is the blessed fact itself, and that there is no need for us to trouble ourselves about the *modus operandi*: let us rejoice in the truth that God *does* preserve His people, and not wrack our brains over *how* He does so. As well might the objector say the same about the redemptive work of Christ: let us be thankful that He did make an atonement, and not worry ourselves over the philosophy of it. But is it of no real importance, no value to the soul, to ascertain that Christ’s atonement was a *vicarious* one, that it was a *definite* one, and not offered at random; that it is a *triumphant* one, securing the actual justification of all for whom it was made? Why, my reader, it is at this very point lies the dividing-line between vital truth and fundamental error. God has done something more than record in the Gospels the historical fact of Christ’s death: He has supplied in the Epistles an explanation of its nature and design.

So, too, God has given us far more than bald statements in His Word that none of His people shall perish: He has also revealed *how* He preserves them from destruction, and it is not only highly insulting to Him, but to our own great loss, if we ignore or refuse to ponder carefully what He has made known therein. Was it without reason Paul prayed, “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: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; *that ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who 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*” (Eph. 1:17-20). Christians are “kept by the power of God” (1 Peter 1:5), and evidently we can only know what that power is, and the greatness thereof, as we are spiritually enlightened concerning the same.

When we read that we are “kept by the power *of God* through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5), or “For it is *God* which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13), in such passages the immediate reference is always to *the Holy Spirit*—the “immediate,” though not the exclusive. In the economy of redemption all is from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit. All proceeds from the foreordination of the Father, all that comes to the believer is through Christ, that is, on account of His infinite merits: all is actually wrought by the Spirit, for He is the Executive of the Godhead, the active Agent in all the works of redemption. The believer is as truly and directly *preserved by the Spirit*, as he was quickened by Him; and only as this is duly recognised by us will we be inclined to render Him that thanks and praise which is His distinctive due.

The chief end for which God sends the Spirit to indwell His people is to deliver them from apostasy: to preserve them not only from the everlasting burnings, but from those things which would expose them thereto. Unless that be clearly stated, we justly lay ourselves open to the charge that this is a *dangerous* doctrine—making light of sin and encouraging careless living. It is not true that, if a man has once truly believed in Christ, no matter what enormities he may commit afterwards, nor what course of evil he follow, he cannot fail to reach Heaven. Not so is the teaching of Holy Writ. The Spirit does not preserve in a way of licentiousness, but only in the way of holiness. Nowhere has God promised His favour to dogs who go back to their vomit, nor to swine which return to their wallowing in the mire. The believer may indeed experience a fearful fall, yet he will not lie down content in his filth, any more than David did: “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with His hand” (Psa. 37:24).

That many Christians *have* persevered in holiness to the last moment of their lives, cannot be truthfully denied. Now their perseverance must have been obtained wholly of themselves, or partly of themselves and partly by Divine aid, or it must have been wholly dependent on the purpose and power of God. None who profess to believe the Scriptures would affirm that it was due entirely to their own efforts and faithfulness, for they clearly teach that progress in holiness is as much the work of the Spirit as is the new birth itself. To say that the perseverance of the saint is due, in part to himself, is to divide the credit, afford ground for boasting, and robs God of half His rightful glory. To declare that a life of faith and

holiness is entirely dependent upon the grace and power of God, is but to repeat what the Lord told His disciples: “without Me ye can do *nothing*” (John 15:5), and is to affirm with the Apostle “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is of God*” (2 Cor. 3:5).

Yet it needs to be pointed out that in maintaining His people in holiness, the power of God operates in quite another manner than it does in the maintenance of a river or the preservation of a tree. A river may (sometimes *does*) dry up, and a tree may be uprooted: the one is maintained by being replenished by fresh waters, the other is preserved by its being nourished and by its roots being held in the ground; but in each case, the preservation is by physical power, from without, entirely without their concurrence. In the case of the Christian’s preservation it is quite otherwise. With him, God works from within, using moral suasion, leading him to a *concurrence* of mind and will with the Holy Spirit in this work. God deals with the believer as a moral agent, draws him “with cords of a man” (Hosea 11:4), maintains his responsibility, and bids him “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12, 13).

Thus there is both preservation on God’s part and perseverance in holiness on ours, and the former is accomplished by maintaining the latter. God does not deal with His people as though they were machines, but as rational creatures. He sets before them weighty considerations and powerful motives, solemn warnings and rich rewards, and by the renewings of His grace and the revivings of His Spirit causes them *to respond* thereto. Are they made conscious of the power and pollution of indwelling sin? then they cry for help to resist its lustings and to escape its defilements. Are they shown the importance, the value, and the need of faith? then they beg the Lord for an increase of it. Are they made sensible of that obedience which is due unto God, but aware too of the hindering drag of the flesh? then they cry “Draw me, we will run after Thee.” Do they yearn to be fruitful? then they pray “Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits” (Song. 4:16).

His understanding having been savingly enlightened, the believer desires to grow in grace and the knowledge of his Lord, that he may abound in spiritual wisdom and good works. Every affection of his heart is stirred, every faculty of his soul called into action. And yet this concurrence is not such as to warrant us saying that his perseverance depends, in any degree on himself, for every spiritual stirring and act on his part is but the effect of the Spirit’s operation within him, “He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it” (Phil. 1:6). He who first enlightened, will continue to shine upon the understanding; He who originally convicted of sin, will go on searching the conscience; He who imparted faith will nourish and sustain the same; He who drew to Christ, will continue to attract the affections toward Him.—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

III. Motives to Fidelity: 13:7, 8

In seeking to ascertain the meaning and scope of the verses which now require our consideration, due notice must be taken of their setting, and that, in turn, weighed in the light of the Epistle as a whole. In the immediate context the Apostle dehorts from covetousness and discontent, reminding his readers that God had said “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” From that Divine promise he points out two conclusions which faith will draw. First, “The Lord is my Helper.” The child of God is in urgent need of an all-powerful Helper, for he has to contend with a mighty foe whose range knows no bounds. It is a great mercy when we are made conscious of our helplessness, when our conceit is so subdued as to realize that without Divine assistance defeat is certain. What peace and comfort it brings to the heart when the believer is enabled to realize that the Lord is just as truly his “Helper” when chastening him, as when delivering from trouble!

The second inference which faith makes from the Divine promise is, “I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” If the Lord will never leave nor forsake me, then He must be “a very *present help* in trouble” (Psa. 46:1). O what a difference it makes to the sorely-tried soul when he can realize that God is not far away from him, but “at hand” (Phil. 4:5). Yes, even if called upon to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he will be *with me*, and therefore will His rod and staff comfort me (Psa. 23:4). And since the believer’s Helper is none other than the Almighty, no real harm or evil can possibly befall him. Why, then, should he dread the creature? His worst enemy can do naught against him without the Lord’s permission. The abiding presence of the Lord ensures the supply of every real need: therefore contentment should fill the heart. The abiding presence of the Lord guarantees all-sufficient help and therefore alarm at man’s enemies should be removed.

Even in the more general exhortations of Hebrews 13 there is a tacit recognition of the peculiar circumstances of the Hebrews, and more plainly still is this implied in the language of verse 6. The Jewish Christians were being opposed and persecuted by their unbelieving brethren, and the temptation to apostatise was very real and pressing. “The fear of man bringeth a snare” (Prov. 29:25). It did to Abraham, when he went down to Egypt, and later on to Gerar, moving him to conceal Sarah’s real relation to him. It did to the whole nation of Israel when they hearkened to the report of the ten spies. It did to Peter, so much so that he denied his Master. It did to Pilate, for when the Jews threatened him with “If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend” (John 19:12), he unwillingly consented to Christ’s crucifixion. Fearfully solemn is that word, “But whosoever shall deny Me

before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in Heaven” (Matt. 10:33).

Now it is view of the trying situation in which the Hebrew saints were placed that we should consider our present passage. The Apostle’s design was to fortify them against temptations to apostatise, to encourage them unto steadfastness in the Faith, to *so* establish them that even though they should be called on to suffer a violent death, they would yet remain loyal to Christ. Moreover, their enemies were not only intimidating them by open oppression and threats of more dire persecution, but others under the guise of being Christian teachers, were seeking to poison their minds with errors that undermined the very foundation of the Gospel: it was to them that Paul had reference in verse 9. Hence in verses 7 and 8 the Apostle also calls upon the Hebrews to maintain their profession of the Truth in opposition to the lies of these Judaisers.

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb. 13:7, 8). A number of questions are raised by the terms of our passage. Who are the rulers here mentioned? In what sense or way are they to be “remembered.” What is signified by “following” their faith? What is denoted by the “end of their conversation”? Wherein do these exhortations furnish motives unto fidelity or steadfastness? Why affirm here the Saviour’s immutability?

First of all it should be pointed out that the A.V. rendering of the opening clause is misleading and quite out of harmony with the remainder of the verse. “Those which have the rule over you” is a single word in the Greek. It is a participle of the present tense, but is frequently used as a noun, as is obviously the case here: “your rulers.” That their *present* rulers could *not* be intended is quite apparent from several considerations. First, because the Hebrews were called upon to “remember,” rather than submit to them. Second, because they are distinctly described as they “who *have* spoken unto you the Word of God.” Third, because they were such as had already received “the *end* of their conversation” or conduct in this world. Finally, because there is a distinct precept given with respect to their attitude toward their living rulers in verse 17.

The reference is, of course, to the spiritual rulers, those who had ministered to them God’s Word. The persons intended were the officers in the Church, that is, those who guided and governed its affairs. “Overseers” or “guides” is hardly definite or strong enough to bring out the force of the original term, for while it signifies to lead or go before, it also denotes one who is over others, being the word for “governor” in Matthew 2:6 and Acts 7:10. “Your leaders” would be better, though hardly as good as the word actually used in the A.V.—your *rulers*. Those in view were the Apostles and prophets, the elders and pastors, who instructed the saints and directed the government of the churches. No doubt the Apostle was more specifically alluding to such men as Stephen, and James who

had been beheaded by Herod (Acts 12:2), men who had sealed the Truth they proclaimed by laying down their lives for it.

“Who have spoken unto you the Word of God”: *that* is the mark by which Christian leaders are to be identified—the men whom God has graciously called to ecclesiastical rule are gifted by Him to expound and enforce the Scriptures, for the function of their office is not legislative, but administrative. The Christian leader, though he possesses no arbitrary power, nevertheless is to bear rule, and that, according to Scriptures. He is not called upon to invent new laws, but simply to declare the will and apply the statutes of Zion’s King. There cannot be a properly ordered household unless *discipline* be duly maintained. Alas, if one section of those who profess to be the ministers of Christ have usurped His prerogatives, exalting themselves into ecclesiastical despots, another class have woefully failed to maintain the honour of His House, letting down the bars and inaugurating a regime of lawlessness.

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God.” By this criterion are we to *test* the ostensible “guides” and religious leaders of the day. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but *try* the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1); and never was there a time when we more urgently needed to measure men by this standard. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17). “If there come any unto you, and bring not *this doctrine*, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed” (2 John 1:10)—no matter how pleasing his personality, soothing his message, or numerous his followers. “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God” (John 3:34): true of Christ perfectly, but characteristic of all whom He calls to the sacred office of the ministry. To speak God’s Word is the grand duty of the Christian teacher—not to indulge in philosophical or theological speculation, nor to tickle the ears of men with sensational topics of the day.

The next thing singled out for mention in connection with these spiritual rulers who had preached the Word of God, is their “*faith*,” which the Hebrews were enjoined to “follow.” There is some difference of opinion among the commentators as to exactly what is here referred to. “Faith” is a term which has a varying scope in its New Testament usage, though its different meanings are closely applied, and can usually be determined by the context. First, “Faith” is the principle of *trust* whereby the heart turns to God and rests upon His word, and by which we are, instrumentally, saved: “thy faith hath made thee whole” (Matt. 9:22), “by grace are ye saved through faith” (Eph. 2:8). Second, “faith” has reference to that which is *to be believed*, the Truth of God, the Christian Creed; “exhorting them to continue in the Faith” (Acts 14:22), “The Word of Faith which we preach” (Rom. 10:8), “contend for the Faith” (Jude 3). Third, “faith” is used to designate the *fruits and works* that spring from it, because it is their root: “brought

us good tidings of your faith” (1 Thess. 3:6), “show me thy faith” (James 2:18), i.e., the effects of it.

The term “faith” is used in still another sense. Fourth, it signifies *fidelity* or faithfulness, as in the following passages; “The weightier matters of the Law, judgment, mercy, and faith” (Matt. 23:23), “the faith of God” (Rom. 3:3), “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace . . . faith” or “faithfulness” as in the R.V. (Gal. 5:22). Personally we consider this last meaning of the term to be the primary, though not exclusive, significance in our present verse. The reference is not only to the grace of faith which was in them, but to its whole exercise in all that they did and suffered. Amid much discouragement and bitter opposition those Christian leaders had not fainted, but held on their way. Despite temptations to apostatise they had persevered in their profession, remained loyal to Christ, continued to minister unto His people, and had glorified God by laying down their lives for the Gospel. Faithful to their Master, they were fruitful in His service to the end of their course.

The last thing here mentioned of these spiritual rulers is “the end of their conversation,” which is the most difficult to define with exactitude. The Greek word here for “end” is not “telos” which signifies the finish or conclusion of a thing, but “ekbasis” which literally means “a going up out of.” It is found elsewhere in the New Testament only in 1 Corinthians 10:13, where it is rendered “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make *a way to escape*, that ye may be able to bear it.” “It is not therefore merely an end that is intended; nor doth the word signify a common end, issue or event of things, but an end accompanied with a deliverance from, and so a conquest over, such difficulties and dangers as men were before exposed unto. These persons, in the whole course of their conversation, were exercised with difficulties, dangers and sufferings, all attempting to stop them in their way, or to turn them out of it. But what did it all amount to, what was the issue of their conflict? It was a blessed deliverance from all troubles, and conquest over them” (John Owen).

“The end of there conversation,” then, as reference to their egress or exit from this world of sin and sorrow. It was a deliverance from all their trials, an honourable way of escape from all their difficulties and dangers, an exodus from the land of their Enemy. Yet it seems to us that the particular term used here by the Spirit is designed to carry our thoughts beyond this present scene. What was before the mind of Paul himself as he announces that the time of his departure was at hand? First, he declared, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,” and then he added “henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4:7, 8). As we have said, “ekbasis” signified “a going up out of”: thus the “end of their conversation” also meant a being taken to be forever with the Lord, a sure though future resurrection, and an unfading diadem of glory.

Corresponding to the three things said of their spiritual leaders, a threefold exhortation is given to the Hebrews. They were required to “remember” those who had spoken to them the Word of God, they were bidden to “follow” their faith, and they were enjoined to “consider” the end of their conversation. “Remember” is another word that is given a comprehensive meaning and scope in its Scriptural usage. It signifies that *reverence and submission* which is due a superior, as in “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth” (Eccl. 12:1). It implies the *holding fast* of what has been received, whether instruction, promises, or warnings: “Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness” (Deut. 9:7). It means *to recall* that which has been forgotten: “When therefore He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said” (John 2:22). It denotes *to meditate upon*, as in “And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness” (Deut. 8:2).

Here in our text the “remember” is used comprehensively, as comprising all those duties of respect and esteem, of love and obedience, which they owed to their departed teachers. Nor was such an exhortation needless. Human nature is very fickle, and tragic it is to mark how quickly many a faithful pastor is forgotten. Such forgetfulness is a species of ingratitude, and therefore is sinful. “Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man” (Eccl. 9:15)—God taxes them with their forgetfulness! “Remember your leaders” includes thankfulness to God for them, speaking well of them, putting into practice their teaching. More specifically it means: treasure up in heart their instructions; call to mind their counsels, warnings, exhortations: gratefully meditate upon their untiring efforts to establish you in the Faith.

“Remember your rulers.” How fearfully has this precept been perverted! What terrible superstitions have been invented and perpetrated in this connection: such as religious celebrations on the anniversary of their death, the dedication of “altars” and “chapels” unto their memory, the adoration of their bones, with the ascription of miraculous cures to them; the offering of prayers for them and to them. True, they are to be esteemed very highly in love for their works’ sake (1 Thess. 5:13), both while they are with us and after God has removed them from us, but His servants are not to be “remembered” with idolatrous veneration nor to the dividing with Christ any of those honours which belong alone unto Him. Not carnally, but spiritually are they to be remembered in what they did and taught, so that we are duly affected thereby.

It is at the point last mentioned we may perceive the pertinency of this precept to the Apostle’s design. His immediate purpose was to fortify them against departure from the Faith. Hence, he bids them “remember your rulers,” for if you bear steadily in mind *their* instruction, you will at once perceive the error of the

“divers and strange doctrines” which he warns against in verse 9. “The sheep follow Him: for they know His voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers” (John 10:4, 5): *that* is the order—if we are heeding the true servants of Christ, we shall neither be attracted nor deceived by the emissaries of Satan. Again; a loving esteem of our teachers and a grateful remembrance of their devoted and laborious efforts to get us established in the Truth, will make us ashamed to go back on their instruction. Finally; to recall their steadfastness will be an encouragement to us when encountering opposition: *they* did not apostatise in the face of extreme peril—shall *we* spurn the example they left us?

And what is the clear implication of this to present-day preachers? Is there not here a searching word for heart and conscience? Is *your* ministry worthy to be stored up in the hearers minds? Are your sermons worth remembering? The humble-minded will be ready to answer No, there is little or nothing in my simple and homely discourses deserving to be treasured up. Ah, brother preacher, it is not clever analyses of difficult passages which exhibit your mental acumen, nor lofty flights of language which display your rhetorical powers, that is of lasting worth! Rather is it that which makes sin to be more hated, God to be more feared, Christ to be more highly valued, the path of duty more clearly defined, which is what we are to aim at.

“Whose faith follow.” This is the next duty we owe unto our spiritual leaders. It is closely allied to the former: we are to so “remember” them as to be effectually influenced in our own conduct. The word for “follow” signifies to imitate: it is used again in “For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you” (2 Thess. 3:7). “It is such a following as wherein we are fully conformed unto, and do lively express, that which we are said to follow. So a scholar may be said to follow his master, when, having attained all his arts and sciences, he acts them in the same manner as his master did. So are we to follow the faith of these guides” (John Owen). This is the greatest honour which we can do them, and is far more pleasing to God than erecting a marble monument to their memory or dedicating some “church” unto their name.

“Whose faith *follow*.” There are many who sit more or less regularly under the ministry of God’s servants, and they approve of their doctrine, admire their courage, speak well of them, but *they do not* carry out their principles or emulate their example. The whole force of this second exhortation is that we are to so “remember” our leaders as to be thereby influenced unto the living of a holy life. To “follow” their faith means to ponder their trust in God and pray for an increase of your own. Recall to mind their instructions, and continue thou in the profession and practice of the doctrine they inculcated. Meditate upon their lives, and so far as their works corresponded to their words, imitate their conduct. Copy their virtues, and not their eccentricities. “No mere man, not the best of men, is to be

our pattern or example absolutely, or in all things. This honour is due unto Christ alone. But they may be so, we ought to make them so, with respect unto their graces and duties” (John Owen).

“Whose faith follow.” The *appropriateness* of this exhortation to the situation in which the Hebrews were is also obvious. It is a spiritual stimulus rightly to “remember” our former leaders, for it makes them, in a sense, present again with us. The faculty to recall the past is not only a Divine gift and mercy, but it entails definite responsibilities. As we recall the testimony and toil of our ministers, their loyalty to Christ and devotedness to our interests, we are to be suitably affected thereby. When encountering opposition, we should remember the much fiercer persecution others have suffered before us. When tempted to compromise and sell the Truth, we should think upon the unswerving fidelity of our fathers in the Faith. Should we ever be under heavy pressure to apostatise, we must weigh the fact that the principles of the faith of our former leaders were adequate to sustain *their* hearts, so that they met death with holy composure, and seek grace to “hold the beginning of *our* confidence steadfast unto the end.”

Once more we would pause and notice the solemn implication of this word to those of us who are ministers of the Gospel. Next to pleasing the Lord Himself, our chief care should be to set before our flock such an example of faith and holiness, as that it will be their duty to remember and follow. This is not optional, but obligatory, for God has bidden each of His servants “be thou *an example* of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12); and again, “In all things showing thyself a *pattern* of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (Titus 2:7, 8). Alas, how many of the present-day preachers set an example which if followed by their hearers would lead them to perdition. O for grace to let our light “so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

“Considering the end of their conversation” (Heb. 13:7). Here is the third part of our duty toward those whom God has placed in spiritual authority over us. It signifies to observe diligently and thoroughly, so as to have the heart suitably affected thereby. The word for “considering” occurs again only in Acts 17:23, namely, when Paul “beheld” the gods that the Athenians worshipped, so that “his spirit was stirred in him” (v. 16)! Literally, the term signifies “looking up to.” The Hebrews were to recall the “conversation” of their deceased teachers, their manner of life, which was one of testimony and toil, fidelity to Christ and love for the souls of His people: a “conversation” of devoted service in the face of many discouragements and much opposition, sustained by trust in the living God; and the Hebrews were to ponder and take courage and comfort from the blessed end or issue of the same.

Thus the three parts of this exhortation are intimately related. The leaders were to be “remembered” in such a manner as to be effectually influenced by the example they had left; they were to be “followed” because their fidelity was Divinely rewarded with a victorious exit from this world. In the last clause the Apostle presented a powerful motive to stir up the saints to the discharge of the duty previously described. Consider their “end” that *yours* may morally resemble it; you must adhere to their doctrine and imitate their practice if you are to receive the victor’s crown. “Consider what it (their ‘end’) came to: their faith failed not, their hope did not perish, they were not disappointed, but had a blessed end of their walk and course” (John Owen). Sometimes God permits His servants today to bear witness to the sufficiency of the principles of the Gospel to support and comfort on a deathbed.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8). We will not now attempt to sermonize upon this well-known and precious verse, but rather give a brief exposition of it. The first thing to ponder is the particular book in which this declaration is made, for that throws light on its scope and meaning. Hebrews is the Epistle which treats specifically and at length with the great alteration made by God in His dealings with the Church on earth, the revolution which was introduced by the substituting of the new covenant for the old, the passing away of Judaism and the inauguration of Christianity. This had involved many changes of a radical character, a great “shaking” and “removing” (12:27) of “that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away” (8:13). It is in view of *that* our present verse is to be interpreted and enjoyed. The Temple is destroyed, the ceremonial law is gone, the Levitical priesthood is no more; but Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, the Mediator between God and His people, *abides unchanged*.—A.W.P.

The Life of David

63. His Crossing Kidron

The second half of 2 Samuel 15 displays a striking blending of lights and shadows: in David's darkest hour we not only see the shining forth of some of his own loveliest virtues, but we also behold his friends and followers at their best. It is the way of our gracious God to temper our severest crosses by mingling comforts with them. David's favourite son and his chief counselor had both turned traitors against him, but the loyalty of part of his army, the faithfulness of the Levites, the sympathy expressed by those of the common people who witnessed his distress, afforded some real consolation to his stricken heart. In times of deep distress and seasons of sore despondency we are very apt to imagine that our enemies are more numerous than is actually the case, and that we have fewer friends than is really so; but David was now to discover that a goodly number were prepared to cleave to him at all costs.

It is not so much from the natural (though even here there is much that is praiseworthy) as the spiritual viewpoint that our passage needs to be pondered. The key to it lies in the state of David's heart at this time. He is to be viewed as *the penitent soul*, as one who realised that in justice he was being afflicted. He knew that his sin had found him out, that he was being lovingly yet righteously chastised for the same. He was filled with godly sorrow and mourned before Him whose Name had been so dishonoured by him. He humbly bows to God's rod and submissively receives its stroke. In this spirit he would be *alone* in his trouble, for he alone had sinned and provoked Jehovah: therefore does he counsel the Gittites to leave him. In the same lowly spirit he sends the ark—the symbol of Jehovah's manifested presence—back to Jerusalem: it was his chief joy, and *that* he felt he was not now entitled to taste.

But we will not generalize any further upon our passage, but consider its details. "Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king [Absalom, who now usurped the throne]: for thou art a stranger, and also an exile. Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth be with thee" (2 Sam. 15:19, 20). What a lovely spirit did the king here evidence; in the midst of his own deep trouble, his thought and concern was for those about him, desiring them to escape the hardships and peril which now lay before him. What a gracious example for us to heed in this selfish age—that even in our sorest trials we must not impose upon those who are kind to us and load them with our troubles. "For every man shall bear his own burden" (Gal. 6:5).

It would appear that Ittai was the leader of the six hundred Gittites (v. 18). They had thrown in their lot with David while he sojourned in Gath of the Philistines, and followed him when he returned to the land of Israel: either because they believed that Philistia was doomed or, more likely, because they were attracted by David himself. They were now among the king's most faithful attendants, having accompanied him as he fled the royal city. They would be a most useful bodyguard for him at this time, but in his noble generosity and tender compassion David desired to spare them the inconvenience and dangers which were now his portion. How this makes us think of David's Son and Lord, who, probably, at this identical place said to those who had come to arrest Him, "If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way" (John 18:8). The *Antitype* should ever be in mind as we read the Old Testament Scriptures.

"And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be" (2 Sam. 15:21). David desired to dismiss them, but their attachment to him and his cause was much stronger than that of many of the Israelites. Most blessed and striking is this, for David had nothing to offer them now save fellowship with him in his rejection and sufferings; yet they valued his companionship so highly that they refused to leave their stricken leader. Spiritually, that love of the brethren which is the fruit of the Spirit of Christ, when it is healthy and vigorous, will not be deterred through fears of hardship or danger, but will stand by and render assistance to those in affliction. Antitypically, this verse teaches us that we should cleave faithfully to Christ no matter how low His cause in the world may be.

"And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that were with him" (v. 22). Such devotion as had been displayed by these loyal followers must have touched the king's heart, the more so as it proceeded from those who were of a heathen stock. From Ittai's words "as the Lord liveth" (v. 21), it would seem that they were influenced by David's religion as well as his person; and assuredly he would *not* have kept them so near him, or have said "mercy and truth be with thee" (v. 20), unless they had definitely renounced all idolatry. There is a seeming ambiguity in his words here "go and pass over," yet this disappears in the light of the next verse: it was the Kidron they crossed—thus they were given the place of chief honour, taking the lead and heading David's present company!

"And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over" (v. 23). Though the multitude favoured Absalom, yet there were many who sympathised with David. It must indeed have been a hard heart which remained unmoved by such an affecting sight: the aged king forsaking his palace—with but a small retinue—fleeing from his own son—now seeking shelter in the wilderness! They had been less than human if they grieved not for poor David. And let it be duly noted that the Spirit has *recorded* their weeping, for God is not unmindful of

genuine tears, either of personal repentance or pity for others. This mention of their weeping plainly teaches that *we* should feel deeply for those parents who are abused or ruined by their children.

“The king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness” (v. 23). This manifestly foreshadowed one of the most bitter episodes in our Lord’s passion. Not only is this same brook actually mentioned in John 18:1—the slight difference in spelling being due to the change from the Hebrew to Greek—but there are too many points of analogy between David’s and Christ’s crossing of it to miss the merging of the type into the antitype. But before tracing these striking resemblances, let us—as its solemn historical interest requires—make a few remarks upon the brook itself.

Significantly enough “Kidron,” or to use the more familiar spelling of John 18:1 “Cedron,” signifies “black.” It was aptly named, for it was a dark rivulet which ran through the gloomy valley of Moriah, which Josephus tells us was on the east side of Jerusalem. It lay between the bases of the temple hill and the mount of Olivet. Into this brook was continually emptied the sewage of the city, as well as the filth from the temple sacrifices for sin. This was the “unclean place without the city” (Lev. 14:40, 41), where the excrements of the offering were deposited and carried away by the waters of this brook. In a figure it was the sins and iniquities of the people which were being washed away from before God’s face—from the temple, where He dwelt in Israel’s midst.

It is interesting to note there are other references to “Kidron” in the Old Testament, and what is recorded in connection therewith is in striking and solemn harmony with what we have just pointed out above. This brook not only (later) received the filth of the city and the refuse from the temple, but into its foul waters the godly kings of Judah cast the ashes of the idols they had destroyed: see 2 Chronicles 15:16; 30:14; 2 Kings 23:4, 6. Over this unclean brook our blessed Saviour passed on His dolorous way to Gethsemane, where His holy soul loathed our iniquities put into His “cup,” represented by this filthy and nasty Cedron. That foul brook served as a suitable reminder of the deep mire (Psa. 69:2) into which Christ was about to sink. Nothing could be more repulsive and nauseating than the soil and waters of this brook, and nothing could be more loathsome to the Holy One than to be encompassed with all the guilt and filth of sin belonging to His people.

But let us now consider the points of resemblance between the type and antitype. First, it was at this brook the humiliating flight of David began, and the crossing of the same marked the commencement of the Saviour’s “Passion” (John 18:1). Second, it was as the despised and rejected king that David now went forth, and so it was with the Redeemer as He journeyed to Gethsemane. Third, yet David was not entirely alone: a little company of devoted followers still clung to him; thus it was with the Antitype. Fourth, Ahithophel, his familiar friend, had now joined forces with his enemies: in like manner, Judas had gone forth to betray

Christ to His foes. Fifth, though the multitude favoured Absalom, some of the common people sympathized with and “wept” for David; so, while the general cry against the Lord Jesus was “crucify Him,” nevertheless, there were those who wept and bewailed Him (Luke 23:27).

“And lo Zadok also, and all the Levites were with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city” (2 Sam. 15:24). This spoke well of David, that even the Levites, and the high priest himself, were prepared to throw in their lot with him in the day of his rejection. Notwithstanding his sad failures, the ministers of the tabernacle knew full well the affection which the sweet Psalmist of Israel had for them and their office. The policy which Absalom had followed in order to curry favour with the people had not appealed at all to these servants of the Lord, and therefore they steadfastly adhered to the king, in spite of the drastic change in his fortunes. Alas, how often has it been otherwise, when the religious leaders turned traitors at the time the ruling monarch most needed their support and ministrations.

Ministers of God should always set an example of submission and loyalty to “the powers that be” (Rom. 13:1), and more especially should they openly manifest their fealty unto those rulers who have countenanced and protected them in their pious labours, when those rulers are opposed by rebellious subjects. “Fear God. Honour the king” (1 Peter 2:17) are joined together in Holy Writ, and if the ecclesiastical leaders fail to render obedience to this Divine precept, how can we expect that those who are under their charge will do better? “They that are friends to the ark in their prosperity, shall find it a friend to them in their adversity. Formerly, David would not rest till he had found a resting place for the ark (Psa. 132); and now, if the priests may have their mind, the ark shall not rest till David returns to his resting place” (Matthew Henry).

“And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me again, and show me both it, and His habitation” (2 Sam. 15:25). This too is very impressive, bringing out as it does the better side of David’s character. The presence of the Levites, and particularly of the ark, would have considerably strengthened the king’s cause. That ark had figured prominently in Israel’s history, and the very sight of it would hardly have failed to stir the hearts of the people. Moreover, it was the recognised symbol of God’s presence, esteemed by David more highly than anything else. But the king, like Eli of old, was very solicitous for the welfare of the sacred coffer, and therefore he refused to expose it to the possible insults of Absalom and his faction. He “preferred Jerusalem”—the honour of the Lord—“above his chief joy” (Psa. 137:6). Furthermore, David knew that he was under the Divine rebuke, and so felt himself to be unworthy for the ark to accompany him, and therefore while he was being chastised for his sins, he refused to pretend that God was on his side.

“If I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me again, and show me both it, and His habitation” (2 Sam. 15:25). Clearly, David recognised that everything hinged upon *the unmerited “favour”* of the Lord. This is a point of considerable importance, for our modern dispensationalists suppose that Israel was under such a stern regime of Law that the grace of God was virtually unknown, yea that, He did *not* exercise it till Christ appeared—a view based on an entirely erroneous interpretation of John 1:17. This is a great mistake, for the Old Testament Scriptures make it unmistakably clear that God’s free grace is the foundation of all blessing: see Numbers 14:8, Deuteronomy 10:15, 1 Kings 10:9, 2 Chronicles 9:8, Acts 7:46. It is very blessed to observe David’s “If I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me back again and show me”—not “my place,” but—both “it and *His* habitation”: he valued the humble tabernacle far more highly than his own throne and honour!

“But if He thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him” (2 Sam. 15:26). Precious submission was this. The Lord was rebuking him for his sins, and he knew not what would be the outcome. He humbled himself beneath the mighty hand of God, and left the issue to His sovereign pleasure. He hoped for the best, but was prepared for the worst. He realised that he deserved to suffer the continued displeasure of the Holy One, and therefore did he commit the outcome of his cause unto God’s sovereign grace. Mark it carefully, dear reader, that David saw *God’s* disciplinary hand in this dark hour of Absalom’s revolt, and *that* preserved him, in measure at least, both from rebellion against Heaven and the fear of man. The more *we* discern the controlling hand of the Most High in all events, the better for our peace of mind.

There is much important and precious instruction for our hearts in this incident. It is a true act of *faith* when we yield ourselves to that sovereign pleasure of God wherein He is “gracious to whom He will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom He will show mercy” (Exo. 33:19); yes, just as truly so as when we appropriate one of God’s promises and plead it before Him. We conceive it was thus that David’s faith now directed him in the sore strait that he was then in. He knew not how grievously the Lord was provoked against him, nor how things were now likely to go; so he bowed before His throne and left *Him* to determine the case. Many a sorely-stricken soul has obtained relief here when all other springs of comfort have completely failed him, saying with Job “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him” (13:15).

A sin-entangled soul with guilt burdening his conscience, sees that, in himself, he is unquestionably lost: how the Lord will deal with him, he knows not. His signs and tokens are completely eclipsed; he can discern no evidence of God’s grace in him, nor of His favour unto him. What is a guilt-bowed soul to do when he is at such a stand? To definitely turn his back upon God would be madness, for “who hath hardened himself against God, and hath prospered?” (Job 9:4). Nor is there the slightest relief to be obtained for the heart except from and by *Him*, for

“who can forgive sins, but God only?” The only recourse, then, is to do as David did: bring our guilty soul into God’s presence, wait upon the sovereign pleasure of His grace, and gladly acquiesce in His decision.

“*If I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me again, and show me both it, and His habitation*” (2 Sam. 15:25). Here is an anchor for a storm-tossed soul: though it may not (at once) give rest and peace, yet it secures from the rock of abject despair. To solace the heart with a “who can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?” (Jonah 3:9), or a “Who can tell *whether* GOD will be gracious to me?” (2 Sam. 12:22), is far better than giving way to a spirit of hopelessness. “Who knoweth if He will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him” (Joel 2:14): there the soul must abide until more light from above break forth upon it.—A.W.P.

The Divine Covenants.

5. The Siniatic

The Siniatic Covenant needs to be studied from three independent viewpoints. First, the relation which it sustains to the previous revelations which had been granted by God, being a marked advance thereon in the unfolding of His eternal purpose. Second, considered with regard to the peculiar relation in which it stood to the Jewish nation, furnishing as it did a unique constitution and a complete code for their guidance. Third in its relation to the future, being admirably designed to pave the way for the advent of Christ and the dawn of Christianity. The first two of these have already engaged our attention; the third, which involves the most difficult aspects of our subject, we must now consider.

Until we had carefully contemplated the Mosaic economy as it related to the Nation of Israel, their political and temporal welfare, we were not ready to view it in its wider and ultimate significance. God’s first and immediate design in connection with the Siniatic Covenant was to furnish a “letter” fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham: to give him numerous seed, to establish them in the land of Canaan, to preserve pure the stock from which the Messiah was to spring, to continue them there until Christ actually appeared in the flesh. Thus the Mosaic economy had served its purpose when the Son of God became incarnate. But, second, God’s ultimate design under the Mosaic economy was to furnish a clear and full demonstration of the utter inability of fallen man, even under the most favourable conditions or circumstances, to meet His holy and righteous requirements; thereby making manifest the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the imperative need of an all-sufficient Saviour.

From one standpoint it certainly appears that the Siniatic Covenant completely failed to achieve its object and that the whole of the Mosaic economy was a

pathetic tragedy. In nowise did Israel as a nation conduct themselves as the beloved, called, and redeemed people of God. They rendered not to the moral law the obedience which it required, and the mercies of the ceremonial law they perverted to God's dishonour and their own spiritual undoing. Instead of the Law leading sinners to Christ, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). Yet there is no failure with the Most High, no breakdown in His plan, no thwarting of His imperial will. The very failure of Israel only served to subserve the Divine purpose, for it demonstrated the imperative need of something superior to that which Judaism, as such, supplied, and reserved *for Christ* the honour of bringing in that which is perfect.

In seeking to ascertain *wherein* the Mosaic economy paved the way for the introduction of Christianity, we shall notice, first, the imperfection or inadequacy of the provision supplied by Judaism; and second, briefly consider the typification and foreshadowment it made of the better covenant yet to be established. Though the order of things which was instituted by the Sinaitic Covenant was a great advance upon that which obtained under the Abrahamic—for it not only supplemented the covenant of promise (which pledged the Divine faithfulness to bestow every needed blessing) by the covenant of law, which bound Israel to yield that dutiful obedience to which the Lord was entitled; but it also brought the natural seed of Abraham into a relation of corporate nearness to the God of Abraham, providing in the tabernacle a visible representation that He was in their midst—yet, it belonged unto a state of comparative immaturity and the relative twilight of Divine revelation.

That which outstandingly characterised Judaism was that it concerned *the outward and objective*, rather than the inward and subjective. The Decalogue was written not upon the hearts of Israel, but upon tables of stone. It was a lord over them, demanding implicit submission, a schoolmaster to instruct them, but it supplied (as such) no power to produce obedience and no influence to move the secret springs of the heart. The same feature marked the Levitical institutions: they too were formally addressed to them from without, and pertained only to bodily exercises. The whole was an external discipline, in keeping with "a worldly sanctuary." True, what the Law required was love, yet law as such does not *elicit* love. Fear was that which predominated—the dread of suffering the wrath of an offended God, which the penalties of His law threatened on every hand.

It is true that great relief was provided by the ceremonial law, for provision was there made for obtaining forgiveness. The means for effecting this was the sacrifices—"the life-blood of an irrational creature, itself unconscious of sin, being accepted by God in His character of Redeemer for the life of the sinner. A mode of satisfaction no doubt in itself unsatisfactory, since there was no correspondence between the merely sensuous life of an unthinkable animal and the higher life of a rational and responsible being; in the strict reckoning of justice the one could form no adequate compensation for the other. Put in this respect it was not singular; it

was part of a scheme of things which bore throughout the marks of relative imperfection” (P. Fairbairn).

This same characteristic of relative imperfection appears on the tabernacle. A provisional arrangement was made whereby transgressors, otherwise excluded, might obtain the remission of their sins and enjoy again the privilege of fellowship with Jehovah; yet even here there was a conspicuous *incompleteness*, for though the reconciled were permitted to enter the outer court, yet they had no direct and personal access to the immediate presence-chamber of the Lord! How far, far below the freedom of intercourse which *all* believers may now have with God, was the entrance of a few ministering priests into the courts of the tabernacle, with access to the Holy of Holies granted to one person alone, and to him only one day in the year! While the tabernacle itself, in dimensions but a hundred cubits by fifty cubits, and in materials composed of earthly and perishable things—how inadequate a representation of the dwelling place of Him who filleth Heaven and earth!

The Law exhibited the ineffable holiness of the Divine character and bound Israel by covenant engagement to make that the standard after which they must seek to regulate all their conduct: “Ye shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” (Lev. 19:2 and cf. Exo. 19:6). But when it was enlightened and aroused by the lofty ideal of truth and duty thus presented before it, conscience would be but the more sensible of transgressions committed against the very righteousness required. The Law is addressed to the conscience, and when once searched by it men could not fail to perceive its extent and spirituality. Just in proportion as an Israelite’s mind was honestly in exercise, he would come to understand that outward acts were far from being the only things which the Law demanded, that it reached unto the thoughts and intents, affections and motives of the heart; he would find it, as the Psalmist expressed “exceeding broad” (119:96). He might indeed, have attempted to silence the deep and distressing sense of guilt thus awakened, but unless deceived, those attempts would have brought him no help.

The Law, then, was far from inculcating or encouraging a spirit of self-righteousness. Instead of being a witness to which men could appeal in proof of their having met the requirements of God, it became an accuser, testifying against them of broken vows and violated obligations. Thereby it kept perpetually alive in the conscience a sense of guilt, and served to awaken in the hearts of those who really understood its spiritual meaning a feeling of utter helplessness and a sense of deep need. Goaded by the demands of a Law which they were altogether incapable of fulfilling, their case must have seemed hopeless. Nor did the ordinances of the ceremonial Law afford them any more than a very imperfect relief. To them it must have been apparent that “the blood of calves and of goats could not take away sins.” A striking proof of this is furnished by the case of Isaiah, for upon beholding the manifested presence of Jehovah, he cried out “Woe

is me! For I am undone” (6:5)—clear evidence that his conscience was more oppressed by a sense of sin than comforted by the blessing of forgiveness.

Such a case as Isaiah’s makes it plain that where there was an exercised heart (and there *were* such in Israel at every stage of their history), the holy Law of God had produced convictions much too deep for the provisions of the ceremonial law “to make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience” (Heb. 9:9). But more emphatic still is the testimony supplied by the Psalms, which, be it remembered, were used in the *public* service of God, being designed to express the sentiments of all sincere worshippers. Not only do these Psalms extol the manifold perfections of the Law (see especially the 19th and the 119th), but they also record *the piercing accusations* which is wrought. “For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee” (38:4-9). “For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me. Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me” (40:12, 13).

Thus the Divine Law, by presenting a standard of perfect righteousness and by convicting men of their utter inability to meet its holy demands, prepared their minds for the coming Redeemer. This it is which supplies the key to such passages as we have just quoted above. Awakened souls were made to feel iniquity cleaving to them like a girdle, and inward corruption like a deadly virus poisoning their very nature, breaking out continually in unholy tempers, defiling all they did or attempted, and thus destroying all hope of justification or acceptance with God on the ground of personal conformity to His requirements. Alive to the truth of an ineffably holy and infinitely perfect God, they were also alive to painful misgivings and fears of guilt; and hence their confessions of sin, sobs of penitence, and cries for mercy.

It was because the present deliverance furnished by the ceremonial law bore on it such marks of imperfection—the inadequacy of the blood of animals to atone for offenses so heinous, and the blessing secured being only a restored entrance to the outer court of the tabernacle—that it intimated a far better provision in the future; for nothing short of perfection could satisfy the One with whom they had to do. Because the Decalogue awakened a sense of guilt and alienation from the Lord which the ordinances of the ceremonial law could not perfectly remove, wants and desires aroused which could not then be more than partially satisfied, the Mosaic economy was well fitted to raise expectations in the bosom of the worshipper of some “better thing to come,” disposing him to gladly receive the intimations of this which it was the part of prophecy to announce.

It was, then, the *spiritual* design of the Law (in addition to its *dispensational* purpose—to restrain sin, etc.) to quicken conscience, to produce a deep sense of guilt, to slay the spirit of self-righteousness, to impact a pungent sense of personal helplessness, thereby moving exercised souls to look forward in faith and hope to the promised Saviour. That there *was* the effect produced by the Law in an elect remnant, we have seen; that it *ought* to have been produced in all, cannot be fairly questioned. Thus, the Law materially contributed to the right understanding of the dispensation under which Israel was placed, and was also a wise and gracious means for disciplining their faith to look onward to the future for the proper fulfillment of what their carnal ordinances only shadowed in type, thereby confirming the expectations which their ritual encouraged, but could not, in the nature of things, satisfy.

The only course open to the awakened and exercised in Israel was to cast themselves unreservedly on the free mercy of God, in the sure hope that the future would reveal the perfect remedy and ransom when the promised Seed should appear, as the intimations of their figurative worship led them to expect, and by which all the exigencies of their case would be met. “Thus the Lord schooled them, fenced their path on every side, led them by the hand, and guided them to expect from that distant future what the present could not supply. Its convictions pointed to the relief which the Gospel alone was destined to furnish; it shut them up to the exercise of faith in the coming Redeemer” (John Kelly).

It is scarcely necessary for us to point out that God’s order in the dispensations (i.e. the Mosaic preceding the Christian and paving the way for it) is precisely the same as His order now in connection with each truly converted soul. It still remains true that “by the Law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20), and the sinner must be searched and humbled by it before he will be brought heartily to rejoice in the message of the Gospel. Not until the soul is conscious that it is under the Law’s sentence of *death* will it desire and appreciate the *life* that is to be found in Christ, and in Him alone—this the Apostle Paul testified he found to be the case in his own experience (Rom. 7:7-10). The Law is a perfect rule of righteousness, and when we measure ourselves by it our innumerable shortcomings and sins are at once made apparent. When, then, an Israelite was quickened by the Spirit, he at once perceived the Law’s true character, became deeply sensible of his guilt, and longed for something higher and better than was then provided for his true consolation.

The same fundamental principle receives plain and striking exemplification on the opening pages of the New Testament. The way of the Redeemer was prepared by one who proclaimed with trumpet voice the Law’s righteousness, evoking the terrors of its threatenings: the ministry of John the Baptist must ever precede that of Christ—there will never be a genuine revival until we get back to this basic fact and act accordingly. The Lord Jesus Himself entered upon His blessed work of evangelization by unfolding the wide extent and deep spirituality of the Law’s

requirements, for a large portion of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5) was devoted to a clear and searching exposition of the Law's righteousness, rescuing it from the false glosses of men and pressing its holy claims upon the multitudes—this is why that “Sermon” is now so much hated by our moderns!—A.W.P.

Preserving Grace

“And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the most high God? I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not. For He said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And He asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts. And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel” (Mark 5:1-20).

That the man, above recorded, was not only a *demoniac*, or man possessed with demons, but also a *maniac*, or *mad-man*, is evident from the text of verse 15, in which it is said, the people saw him “sitting, and clothed, and in his *right mind*.” And it is very evident that the expression “in his right mind” can have no reference

to the work of the Holy Spirit in him as a sanctified soul, although it may be so spiritualized; for of this secret and Divine work, the common people or unconverted Gadarenes could be no judges, nor could it be cognizable to their senses; but the plain and obvious meaning of the text is this: that the man was restored to the use of his natural faculties, that his mind was both sound and intelligent.

In the passage above cited, the Church of Christ is presented with one of the most remarkable cases in the Book of God, of the preservation of a soul under great tribulation, from the act of *self-destruction*; of the miraculous deliverance of a child of God, under derangement of mind, from the dreadful crime of SUICIDE. In this affecting narrative, the Christian world is presented with an extraordinary display of the preservation of one of God's elect (a lunatic) from the commission of suicide, though continually incited to the same, by a host or legion of devils!—of a man in whom the words of the Apostle were most truly exemplified, “preserved in Christ Jesus, and (*then*) called” (Jude 1). And, my brethren, if the soul of the “elect” be thus wondrously preserved in Christ Jesus *before* calling, or before the spiritual and saving manifestation of Christ to the soul, how much rather when that soul is sensibly and savingly sanctified by the *Presence* and *Indwelling* of God? “Know ye not (says the Apostle to the Church at Corinth) that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.”

Think for a moment, my Christian friends, of the deplorable state and condition of this poor Maniac, and yet (O amazing truth) a vessel of God's boundless and eternal mercy. Behold a man, whom no man could tame; fierce and ramping as a lion; a man isolated from his fellow-men—mad, forsaken, desolate; a miserable and terrific outcast; a man, literally *full of Devils*! Look to his habitation, among the corpses of the dead; and mark, this was not an occasional retreat, but his very *dwelling*-place; “who had his dwelling among the tombs.” Look too at the state of his body: naked, bleeding, and wounded: to the state of his mind—“crying continually”; driven about with a tempest, sometimes furiously rushing upon the mountains; at others, prowling and weeping among the tombs.

Poor man! And hadst thou no friend to pity thee, none to speak peace to thy bleeding soul? Alas, who dared approach? for he was full of devils (it is worth to note that no sooner were these spirits permitted to enter the swine, than they led them to instant destruction!) spirits of the damned bent on *destruction*, and were urging their victim continually to the commission of SUICIDE, “by cutting himself with stones.”

Poor man! And hadst thou no eye to pity thee? Blessed be God! The eternal Jehovah was thy refuge; His everlasting arms were underneath; and therefore the gates of Hell *could not* prevail. “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from Mine eyes” (Hosea 13:14). O the safety of the soul that is wrapped up in the “bundle of life,” and embosomed in the heart

of God! Many waters cannot quench the flame of heavenly love, nor can the floods of Hell extinguish it. Such an one may be persecuted of devils, but he *shall not* be forsaken; cast down of Hell, but *not* destroyed. Sooner or later the sweet music of this precious promise shall ring in his ears, and bring peace and consolation to his afflicted soul: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness” (Isa. 41:10).

O, my Christian brethren, could *we* have stood upon an eminence and beheld the ravings of this poor Maniac, how affecting had been the sight, how afflictive the contemplation! Now prowling like a wolf among the dwellings of the dead; then, furiously rushing up and down the mountains, crying, weeping, bleeding. Why does he not plunge from off the mountain’s brow and end his wild career? The arm of Omnipotence restrains him. Why not bleed to death of his wounds? An unseen hand binds them up. But how can mortality sustain such a conflict? The arms of God are underneath; and “Mercy (*in Christ*) embraceth him on every side.” Nature exhausted, he sinks upon the ground and falls insensibly to sleep. The rains drench his skin, the winds blow, (he hears them not), the tempest rages, and now the rays of the sun dart upon his defenseless head; and yet, he still survives!—a spark of heavenly, *unextinguishable* flame, tossed upon the rude ocean of turbulent and tormenting devils.

Poor and afflicted Child of Mercy! And wherefore thus grievously afflicted and tormented? That in the inscrutable decrees of Jehovah, he might become a Barnabas, a son of CONSOLATION! A pastor after God’s own heart, a feeder of the flock of Christ: “And he departed, and began to *publish* in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and *all men did marvel*” (Mark 5:20). A Preacher, not like many of the day who thrust themselves into the Ministry, the leprosy of whose presumption is stamped of God upon their foreheads, but a Minister of the Sanctuary, chosen of the Father, ordained of the Spirit, and sent forth of the Son, to testify of the remorseless tyranny of Satan, the helplessness and wretchedness of man, and the abundant and exceeding riches of the sovereign grace of God—a man of deep and heartfelt experience; a guide to the blind, and a champion for the truth; a preacher inspired of the Spirit, entrusted and empowered of God. But, poor afflicted Child of Mercy! wherefore wast thou thus grievously tried and tormented? That the power, grace, and glory of God may be transcendently manifest: that in the ages to come, the Church might behold (in this poor Maniac) a bright and living Epistle of the preservation of ALL God’s blood-bought Family FROM THE APPALLING CRIME OF SUICIDE.

O, my Brethren, how full of sweet and heavenly consolation is the deliverance of this Demoniac to all the distressed and persecuted people of God! Behold a man without human control, without the restraint of human reason, and carried away by Devils as a flood, and yet PRESERVED FROM SUICIDE. Can a stronger case be possibly conceived, or can its parallel be found? Poor and afflicted child of God!

hast thou a Legion of Devils in thy soul? Thou shalt *never* commit suicide. Art thou driven as with a tempest night and day; no house, no home? Thou shalt *never* commit suicide. Art thou deprived of reason, and is thy body naked, bleeding wounded? Thou shalt *never* commit suicide; for the Spirit of the Lord shall go forth with healing in His wings, and shall pluck thee out of many waters: He shall bear thee as an olive branch through the windows of Heaven, and place thee, as the trophy of Mercy, in the bosom of thy God. “And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isa. 35:10).

Tossed as a wreck, (with helm of reason lost) little did this Maniac dream of the mercies that awaited him on high: but no sooner has the appointed moment of deliverance arrived, than the Sun of righteousness dispels the gloom: and in His glorious beams the holy Dove descends, broods over her adopted child, and plucks Her darling from the lions. “Sing O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel” (Isa. 44:23). Poor afflicted child of God! dost thou sometimes fear the violence of temptation will lead thee to the commission of Suicide? Behold a man in whom a legion of Devils appeared to have full sway, a fierce and ramping Maniac; in a word, a man who *seemed* forsaken of God, and given up to Hell, and yet *preserved from Suicide*. Hitherto thou shalt come, Satan, but no further, and *here* (TOUCH NOT HIS LIFE) shall thy proud waves be stayed.

Let us now turn to Job, that eminent example of suffering patience and affliction. Now, my friends, in looking over the sacred records of this good man, we find him pouring out his complaint in this impassioned strain: “My soul chooseth *strangling and death* rather than *life*” (Job 7: 15). But did Job’s great afflictions lead him to the *commission of Suicide*? On the contrary, his language is most triumphant: “When He hath tried me (says Job) *I shall come forth as gold.*” As gold glittering from the furnace, shining and sparkling for the Master’s use, a vessel of honour for the temple of my God.

Now Job’s trials were not ordinary, but altogether extraordinary; for he was greatly exercised both in his property, his family, his mind, and his faith; and yet, so far was he from committing suicide, that he even triumphs in the furnace and glories in the flame. “And He (the Lord) shall purify the sons of Levi (the elect of God) and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.”

My Christian friends, did Job *long* for death, *plead* for death, *pray* for death, *seek* for death more than a man seeks for hidden treasure? then why not rush into Suicide? The arms of omnipotent Jehovah were thrown around him; (“I am thy Shield”) and when Satan came in *as a flood*, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against him. “Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel (the

Church of God); I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”

To the point in question: how consolatory to the Church is Jehovah’s charge to Satan when delivering up Job to be sifted as wheat: “Behold he is in thine hand, but save his life!” *Touch not his life!* As though the Lord had said, Satan, this is a prerogative I will yield to none, and will *never* yield to thee. This is a prerogative I will maintain inviolate with *all* my blood-bought children, lest, through the power of temptation, they fall into Suicide. And what said our Lord to Peter when under similar circumstances? “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” Now the language of our Lord to Peter is the language of Christ to His Church in all ages of the world; and if the faith of the Church fail not, how can they fall into Suicide.

But again, the Lord hath promised that “*He will keep* the feet of His saints.” Now the promise is both absolute and universal, and will therefore apply itself to the saint under *all* states and circumstances; but how can the Lord keep the feet of His saint, if He suffer them, desperately, to rush into Suicide? Is not God faithfulness and truth? Hath He promised, and shall He not perform? Did He keep the feet of Job, and this poor Maniac? So, poor, tried, and tempted soul, will He also keep *thee*, for the Lord is not a man that He should lie, nor the Son of Man that He should repent. “My covenant will I *not* break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips.”

Again, Paul testifies in the Spirit, “God will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make *a way to escape*”; but if through the power of temptation I fall into Suicide, I am *not* escaped, but *ensnared*. “Let God be true, and every man a liar.” Again, the Lord hath promised His Church, that “when the enemy (Satan) shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” Now this standard is God Himself. Shall God oppose Satan *in vain*? Again, it is said, “Blessed is the man that *endureth* temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life”: but do I *endure* temptation if I become a Suicide? Now the children of God are the “blessed of God”; and the promise is of grace that it might “*be sure to all the seed*.” It follows, therefore, that the saints will endure temptation, and *not fall* into Suicide.

Again, the Apostle propounds this question to the Church; “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” and then replies, “In ALL these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us”: but do I TRIUMPH in tribulation, if tribulation drive me to Suicide? And lastly, it is the office of the Holy Spirit to work repentance (the dying thief repented, and made a confession to the glory of God!) *for sin* in the souls of ALL His saints. But how can there be repentance of that sin which carries me as a criminal before the Judge, and presents me reeking with the blood of life? Is there repentance in the grave? The Word says, No. Where then stands my *unrepentant* soul? Thus the crime of

Suicide carries the offender beyond the pale of mercy (it carries him before God in the *very commission of his sin*), seals his awful doom, and apporions him eternally with all the sons of perdition. Like Judas and Ahithophel, that man perishes in his iniquity.

Now the Spirit testifies, that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” My Christian Brethren, have you a *single case* in the Divine Record of a saint’s falling into Suicide? I say, Have you a single case in *the whole Bible* of a saint’s having fallen into the commission of that dreadful sin? You have none. You may search from Genesis to Revelation, but you will find none. Now, if the thing were possible, we ought to have an example, seeing the Word of God is given for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be “thoroughly furnished,” but behold, we have NOT ONE! What, then, is the common inference or conclusion to be drawn from this memorable fact? The conclusion, I apprehend, will be thus: THAT THE CHILD OF GOD, OR SPIRITUAL BELIEVER IN CHRIST, IS NEVER PERMITTED TO FALL INTO SUICIDE.

But some say, Did not Samson commit Suicide? By no means. He died as a martyr, fighting in the cause of God. He fell contending with the world, and went triumphantly to glory. O there is a mighty difference in dying to the confusion of God’s enemies, and falling as a Suicide to the confusion of friends! When Samson contended with a thousand of his foes, his life was prolonged; but in this, his last conflict, he fought, fell, and conquered as in a moment. Grasping the pillars upon which the house stood, Samson cried unto his God; and having received power from on high (the sanction of the HOLY ONE!) he bowed his head and yielded up the ghost. Like his blessed Lord and Master (of whom he was a glorious type) he overcame most in his death. Samson died a blessed martyr in the cause of God; he fell *not* into Suicide. Did Stephen shrink to declare the truth in the very teeth of his enemies? so neither did Samson shrink from the pillars of the house, though like Stephen, he were to be stoned to death. Thus fell these champions of the faith, scorning bodily deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. “He that hateth his life in this world,” said our blessed Lord to His disciples, “shall keep it unto life eternal.”

But it will be asked, Have not the saints of God ever *attempted* Suicide? Most certainly they have; both *before* and *after* calling. Like the poor Demoniac recorded by Matthew (17:15) they have oftentimes sought their own destruction; but, through Mercy, have, as oftentimes, been *wonderfully delivered*. “Thou shalt not die, but live, and declare the works of God.” “Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law but under grace.” “Destitute, afflicted, tormented.” One of the dear children of God determines upon self-destruction: carried as by a flood, she steals along the river’s brink, selects the fatal spot, and is just about to plunge into the stream, when suddenly the voice of God is heard; in

an instant, Satan's fled, the soul set free, and Christ has resumed His throne. O Satan, "thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall, but *the Lord helped me!*" "The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my Nation." Another child of God draws the knife, but the weapon fails. Another grasps the cup of poison, but his hand so trembles that he cannot hold it to his lips. Another takes a halter and looks for a beam, but is prevented he knows not how. Another suspends his body from a door, but soon the fastening fails, and he drops to the floor. Carnal professors, whose hearts have been "swept and garnished" by themselves, never dream of such temptations as these, and are ready to reproach and accuse the children of God when thus exercised; but let such professors remember God hath not spoken in vain, "when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." Carried by this flood, David fell into adultery and murder; and poor boasting Peter cursed and swore, and declared he knew not his Lord and Master. Merciful God! What ways and means hast Thou devised to prove the unchangeableness of Thy sovereign mercy, the *immutability* of Thy Covenant love! "My Covenant will I *not* break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips."

But, it may be asked, are there not instances of men celebrated for knowledge of Divine mysteries, and of most exemplary conduct, falling into the crime of Suicide? The fact is notorious, and cannot be denied: but that we may reply to the question effectually, let us turn to the Word of Truth, the unerring testimony of God. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, (Christ *dwelling in my soul*) I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." In other words, though I be ever so *gifted*, and have not *grace*, I am nothing. As a preacher I may be greatly attractive to my hearers; as "one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument"; but if Christ be not formed in my soul "the hope of glory" I am nothing. Even David, that eminent man of God, was deceived in this matter. He took a man of gifts, for a man of grace; but as he advanced in the Divine life, God showed him greater things. He went to the house of God with Ahithophel and took sweet counsel together, and thought him a dear brother in the Lord; but in time of temptation this high-sounding professor (this cymbal of the Sanctuary) fell away. He sided with Absalom in the rebellion, pleaded against the sweet singer of Israel, and sought to compass the death of the king, by the very son of his bowels! I say, therefore, though men be gifted to speak as with the tongues of men and of angels, and draw the eyes of the Church upon them as the beloved of God, if they be not **TEMPLES OF THE HOLY GHOST** (truly "born of God"), in time of temptation they fall away.

Of the *sanctified* Professor, the Lord hath declared, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper"; but of unsanctified professors, however eloquent and commanding their gifts and attainments, "in time of temptation they fall away." And hence the propriety of the apostolic injunction; "Let him who *thinketh* he standeth, take heed lest he fall": and again, "If a man think himself to be

something (a Christian) when he is nothing (not so), he deceiveth himself.” As, therefore, in the apostolic days, so in the present, men may be found so highly gifted that for a season they deceive the very elect: “But they went out from us,” says the Apostle, “because THEY WERE NOT OF US.” The question, therefore, may be thus scripturally solved: such men have received *gifts*, but they have *not* received God—the GIVER: now, what are the gifts of the Bridegroom, to the Bridegroom himself?

Let no man, therefore, and especially a teacher in Israel, presume to judge his brethren in this matter; nor consider the flock contumacious, because they cannot, dare not receive unauthorized, the unscriptural affirmation, that men of grace may, *unwittingly* play the part of Judas, and fall into the crime of Suicide. “To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is *no light* in them.”

Let the ministers of Christ remember they are not to set themselves up as judges of doctrine for the Church, but the Church are to judge the doctrine of their minister; and if it be of God, to receive it; and if not, to condemn it. “Let the prophets speak,” says Paul, “and let the other (the Church) judge.” Nay, farther, If the Church have authority to try the doctrine of the Apostles, how much more, ministers of the present day? “But though we,” says Paul, “or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which is preached, let him be accursed.”

Let no man, therefore, contend against the Word; nor presume to affirm, without the shadow of Divine proof, that the elect of God, may under *any* circumstances, fall into the commission of Suicide. It is surely impossible; seeing that God, *who cannot lie*, hath declared by the mouth of His faithful Apostle, “*He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation MAKE A WAY TO ESCAPE.*” “Many are the afflictions of *the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.*” Of *unsanctified* professors, the Lord hath said, “in time of temptation THEY FALL AWAY”; but of the *sanctified* professor, “mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the *end* of that man is PEACE.” (George Hunt, 1848: a pamphlet entitled “The child of God is never permitted to fall into suicide.”)

The Doctrine of Sanctification

12. Its Process

By the process of sanctification we mean the principal *actings* of those who have already been manifestatively set apart by God unto Himself and for Himself. To speak of the actings of sanctification necessarily presupposes *a previous principle* of holiness from which they arise. Sanctification, as we have pointed out in previous articles, begins with, and continues as a consequent of, regeneration. Viewed from the experimental and practical side, sanctification is not a Divine act, but a *work* of God's grace, wherein He sustains and develops, continues and perfects, that which He imparted at the new birth. Thus considered, sanctification is *a growth*, under the supporting and fructifying influences of the indwelling Holy Spirit: a growth from spiritual infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth, from youth to spiritual maturity. This growth follows a two-fold process: the mortification of the old nature, and the vivification of the new nature.

Throughout that twofold process there is a concurrence between the Spirit and the believer, and this, because holiness is both a *privilege* and a *duty*, a Divine gift and a human attainment. To our last statement some are likely to take exception, for the balance of Truth has been well-nigh lost on this subject. Antinomies insist that sanctification is solely the work of God, and that the believer has no part or hand in it. Pelagians virtually affirm that it is entirely the product of human industry. From one viewpoint, sanctification is indeed the work of God, but from another it is the work of man, assisted by supernatural grace. As a *privilege*, sanctification is the subject of promise and prayer: see Ezekiel 36:25-27, John 17:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:23. But as a *duty*, sanctification is the subject of exhortation: see Ezekiel 18:31, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Peter 1:15.

Those who are so insistent upon affirming that sanctification is entirely the work of God, and that man has no part in it, overlook God's general *method of working*. Behold His handiwork in Nature. God does not create trees fully grown, nor even plants with flowers fully developed. Instead, they first exist as tiny seeds, and then they develop gradually unto maturity, and their growth is made dependent on the outworking of natural laws—supplies of rain and sunshine—and often of human cultivation. So it is spiritually. In the realm of grace, God works by means and according to the sequences of law. "Although the strength with which we believe is wholly and entirely from the Spirit, and put into the soul by Him who is said to 'strengthen us in the inner man' (Eph. 3:16), yet He useth apt and suitable motives, by and with which He conveys it, and conveys it answerable to the fitness and force that is in such motives to work upon an intelligent creature" (Thomas Goodwin, Vol. 8., p. 108).

Sanctification is *our* work *not* as though we could change our own hearts from the love of sin to the love of God, nor even when they are changed to carry forward that change to perfection or completion; no, it is only as we are enabled from on High, for of ourselves we can do nothing (John 15:5). It is our work as we diligently *use* the appointed means, and *trust* God to make them effectual. It is God's work as the Spirit employs powerful motives to influence us to action. For instance, He impresses us with the fact that God's eye is ever upon us, and this causes us to walk softly before Him. Or, He applies to our hearts the solemn warnings of Scripture, so that we are afraid to sport with sin or give heed to Satan's allurements. Or again, He fills the heart with a sense of Christ's dying love for us, so that the springs of gratitude are set in motion, and we endeavour to please and glorify Him. By various considerations the Holy Spirit stirs up the believer to resist sin and cultivate holiness.

The process of our sanctification, then, is both a Divine and a human one. Having dwelt so much upon the Divine side in the earlier articles we now continue our consideration of the human. This process is a protracted one, so that the believer gradually becomes more and more out of love with sin and in love with holiness. Now, as we have said above, this spiritual growth follows the twofold process of mortification and vivification. Yet those two actings are not so distinct that the one can go on independently, or at a distinct time from the other, for the one necessarily accompanies the other; nevertheless, in explaining that process of experimental and practical sanctification they need to be separately expounded; and a little reflection will show the *order* in which they need to be contemplated—we have to die to sin before we can live to God.

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection” etc. (Col. 3:5). This means, put to death those fleshly lusts which are set upon earthly objects, and thus prevent their evil fruits of “fornication” etc.: with this expression “your *members* which are upon the earth” compare “the *body of sin*” (Rom. 6:6), which does not mean our physical body, though sin acts through it. The term “mortify” is not used in Scripture absolutely to kill and destroy, so as that which is mortified no longer has any being, but rather that it should be rendered impotent and useless, unable to produce its wicked works. In proof of this assertion, let it be carefully noted that the same Greek word which is translated “mortify” in Colossians 3:5 is rendered “and being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now *dead*, when he was about a hundred years old” (Rom. 14:19). Now the body of Abraham was not absolutely dead, but the natural force and vigour of it was considerably abated.

The object of this duty of mortification is *indwelling sin*, which may be viewed in a threefold manner: its root or principle, its disposition and powers, its effects or fruits. The root of indwelling sin is that depraved habit or principle which inclines fallen man unto all that is evil: it is “the flesh” or “our old man.” The disposition or powers of indwelling sin are designated its “affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24),

“deceitful lusts” (Eph. 4:22), “secret (hidden, inward) faults” (Psa. 19:12). Its effects or fruits are its open transgressions against God’s Law. Now to “mortify” sin is a continual act or work, whereby we are to strive against sin, sap its power, rendering it impotent to beget evil works. The same duty (with relation to the death of Christ as the meritorious and efficient cause of it), is expressed by *crucifying* the flesh (Gal. 5:24)—a form of death which is a painful and lingering one.

Mortification consists of a deliberate and diligent opposition to the solicitations of sin. It is the exercise and working of that hatred of sin which the Spirit communicated to the heart at the new birth. It is taking sides with the new nature against the flesh. It is the acting out of the grace received at regeneration unto a continual endeavour in the subjugating of the old nature, so that we may be able to truthfully say with the Apostle “*I keep under* my body, and bring it into subjection” (1 Cor. 9:27). It is the putting forth of our utmost endeavours to resist our corruptions by all those methods prescribed in the Gospel. It is the “putting off of the old man” (Eph. 4:22): a displacing it from its former throne in the heart, so as no longer to yield obedience to its lusts or walk according to its dictates.

There are but two masters which divide the world between them; sin and God. Every man serves one of them, but no man can *serve* both. Every man serves either sin or righteousness, God or Satan, for there is no middle or neutral state: either their time and strength are spent in the service of the flesh, or the service of God. “For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5); “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal. 6:8). How it concerns us, then, to consider *what or who* it is that *employs* our souls! The faculties of the soul and the energies of the body cannot be inactive: they must be employed one way or the other—Heavenwards or Hellwards.

Both of these services are entered *by consent*: “Know ye not, that to whom ye *yield yourselves* servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness” (Rom. 6:16). It is true there are degrees in this, some yielding up themselves more completely and entirely than others; nevertheless, the service which the unregenerate render to sin and the service which the regenerate render to righteousness, is quite voluntary. Of the one we read “The heart of the sons of men is *fully set in them* to do evil” (Eccl. 8:11), and again “Who being past feeling *have given themselves over* unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Eph. 4:19); of the other it is written “but first *gave their own selves* to the Lord” (2 Cor. 8:5). No excuses, no quibblings, no reasonings can neutralize the plain testimony of these Scriptures. Each man freely follows the bent of his own heart and pursues that which he is most in love with. The great difference between the regenerate and the unregenerate is this: the one *denies* self, the other *gratifies* it.

“Self denial lies in a man’s renouncing, foregoing, and postponing all his pleasures, profits, relations, interest, and whatever he enjoys, which may be in competition with Christ. From love to Him, and to be given up at His command. A self-denying person seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and leaves all other things with God, to bestow upon him as He thinks fit; and what He has given him, he is ready at His command to bring all he has and place it at His feet, as the first Christians brought all they had and laid it at the Apostles’ feet. This is self-denial” (John Gill). The great motive to this is the example left us by the Son of God Himself: see Philippians 2:5-8.

Mortification consists in the application to the heart and life of the principle of the Cross. It does not denote the abolition of sin in the believer or the present destruction of its being: our corruptions are not put off until we leave this world. Nor is the work of mortification to be understood in the literal and natural sense of the term, by the starving or scourging of the body: many deluded souls mistake the mortification of the *body* for the mortification of *sin*. Nor does it consist in the suppressing of the external acts of sin only, for sin may reign over the heart where the outward conduct is highly esteemed among men. Nor should it be supposed that the mortification of sin has taken place because some particular inclination which formerly predominated is now weakened, for the effects of illness or the advances of old age often produce this consequence.

No, mortification is the purging of the soul, the freeing of it from that slavery of the flesh which detained it from God and disabled it from the duties of a holy and heavenly life. It is the resisting and denying of our corrupt inclinations. It is founded in a hatred of them, and not simply in fear of their consequences. It is not a bare abstinence from acts of evil, but an abhorrence for them *from a regard to the authority of God* in His Law, which forbids them. This is most important to note, for there is much abstaining from outward acts of sin where there is not a grain of holiness in the heart. There are various prudential considerations which deter many from crime, such as the fear of human punishment, the loss of reputation among men, the jeopardizing of a lucrative position, or concern for their health. But evangelical mortification proceeds from an abhorrence of evil and has respect to the will of Him who forbids its exercise.

Evangelical mortification rises from the principle of grace in the renewed soul, for that principle heartily approves both the precepts and prohibitions of the Law. And herein lies the imperative need of self-examination, observing our hearts and ascertaining *from what* views and motives we act, otherwise there will be little or no real holiness, even though our outward conduct be such as raises it above the censure of those who know us best. We have no warrant whatever to deem ourselves any further holy than as we act under the influence of *spiritual* considerations: that is, doing what we do out of love to God, with a respect unto His authority, seeking His glory. It is a very dangerous mistake to suppose that all

opposition to sin is genuine mortification, and therefore we need to carefully examine into the *design and ends* of our actions.

Mortification of sin is one of the chief duties and should be the daily business of every Christian. Some who seem much mortified to bodily lusts, are yet greatly captivated by intellectual lusts. They do not wallow in the mire of immorality, drunkenness, and other fleshly gratifications, but they are full of pride, envy, covetousness, malice, contempt of others, which lusts are just as vile in themselves and as hateful to God as the others. True grace opposes lusts of *every* kind, for it will not connive at any evil. The new nature is just as much antagonistic to internal eruptions of sin as to the outward acts: necessarily so, for without this there is no purity of heart and nothing of that holiness which is indispensably requisite for eternal happiness. Many appear to think otherwise, and therefore so long as their lusts break not forth into outward acts of sin, they are well pleased with themselves.

Alas, what multitudes are fatally deceived at this very point: the externals of religion and the outward acts of morality are all that concern them. But God is to be worshipped “in spirit and in truth,” if He is to be worshipped acceptably; and none but the pure in heart are admitted into Heaven. O how few make conscience of evil thoughts, or the first motions of the affections after that which is prohibited: the “plague of his own heart” (1 Kings 8:38) occasions them no concern—which is sure proof that they are not indwelt by the Holy Spirit. God requires the *heart* (Prov. 23:26), and if we give not *that* to Him, then He receives nothing which He values in the slightest degree. Such was the case with the Pharisees—and they have numerous successors today—whom our Lord compared to whited sepulchres, which are beautiful *without*, but within are full of putridity.

Here is the great difference between faith and presumption: the one hates sin, is plagued by its presence, and mourns over its activities; the other is bold in sinning, persuades itself of security in Christ, lightly passes over its commission, having little remorse when guilty of it. Evangelical mortification of sin, then, respects not only the behaviour, but the heart, for *there* it begins. Its aim is to produce *spirituality of mind*, for “to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom. 8:6). Abhorrence of evil, love of God, and a delight in conformity to His will, is the root of it, and where these be not in some measure, there is *nothing* of that mortification which God requires. Indwelling sin must not be spared, but attacked, for there is no other way of being freed from bondage to it, but by constantly opposing it, root and branch.

Every unmortified sin will weaken the soul, so as to deprive it of its strength Godwards, and it will darken the soul, so as to deprive it of its peace and comfort. Observe what an unmortified lust in the heart did for David: “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer” (Psa. 32:3, 4). So too unmortified lust spreads a cloud over the soul, so that the

beams of God's favour are intercepted: "Your sins have hid His face from you" (Isa. 59:2). Nothing is so destructive of communion with God as the allowance of sin. Nothing is so opposed to our best interests as the indulgence of fleshly lusts. Nothing presents so serious a stumbling block to babes in Christ's family as to behold the older members of it trifling with that which caused His crucifixion. If He died *for* sin, surely we must die *to* sin.

On the other hand, there is a blessedness which results from mortification which should set every Christian to be more diligent and earnest in the prosecution of it. There is a double comfort in mortification: one in the nature of the work itself, as it is a God-appointed duty; the other as it respects Christ, affording evidence of our union with Him. God will be no man's debtor, and He richly rewards those who set themselves to the work He has assigned. What a blessed tranquility of conscience and joy of heart is ours when we have faithfully repelled temptations and successfully resisted our corruptions! What recompense is found in the smile of God! There is then a Heaven within—whereas the wicked have a taste of Hell, in their gripes of conscience and terrors of the wrath to come. Moreover, mortification evidences our interest in Christ (Gal. 5:24): those endeavours of mortification, sincere yet feeble, plainly show that the Holy Spirit is in me, and what joy such assurance brings!

Further, the daily mortification of indwelling sin not only has much to do with the comforts enjoyed by our souls, but it is instrumental in fitting us to be used by Christ, in whatever humble capacity He is pleased to employ us. "If a man therefore *purge himself* from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and *meet* for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. 2:21). What is the blessedness of life but in being of some use in the Lord's vineyard? Only so far as we live a fruitful life unto God, do we answer the end of our being. But let a proud, a carnal, or a worldly heart be employed in any service to the Lord, and such an heart is certain to spoil the work by managing it for some *self* end. Sin is a disease, a consumption upon the inner man, and so far as it prevails, unfits us to be used by Christ. When the Lord employed Isaiah, He first *purged* his iniquity: Isaiah 6:7, 8!

Temptations can only be resisted in proportion as we devote ourselves to the work of mortification. It is the condition of our heart which determines whether or not we respond to Satan's allurements. So too afflictions are unsupportable without mortification. My reader, you live in a mutable world, where Providence rings the changes in all its affairs. You that have husband or wife may be left desolate tomorrow. You that have riches or children may be bereft of both before you are aware. Sickness treads upon the heels of health, and death as surely follows life as the night does the day. Consider well with yourself: are you able to bear the loss of your sweetest enjoyments with patience? O get the heart mortified to all these things, and you will bless a *taking* as well as a *giving* God.—A.W.P.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

7. *The Cruelty of Jacob's sons: Genesis 34*

When we do not attend to *the design of God* with respect to the family of Jacob, we are inclined not only to blame the guilty conduct of two of the sons of Jacob, with respect to the Shechemites, but to regret the result of that nefarious doing. To human wisdom a fair prospect was opened of extending the knowledge and worship of God. Why, then, did the hand of Providence interpose and entirely break off this happy alliance? To those acquainted with the typical character of Israel, a moment's consideration will show it was necessary to prevent the union of the accursed nations of Canaan with the family of Jacob. The nations of Canaan are in time to be expelled, and no union must be formed that will prevent this. As the kingdom of Christ is distinguished from the kingdom of Satan, so the nation of Israel, the type of Christ's kingdom, must be distinct from the nations of Canaan, the types of God's enemies in every age.

Besides, a religious accession of the Shechemites to the house of Jacob, from the political motives on which they were about to act, was more likely to draw the worshippers of God into idolatry, than to draw idolaters into the service of God. The union proposed would most likely have ended in the rapid apostasy of the children of Israel. The union, then, must be prevented, and the guilty conduct of the sons of Jacob was overruled by God to prevent the union. The thing was of God, though all the guilt of it was with man. A sovereign Providence knew how to execute His purposes by the hands of wicked men.

Divine Providence could have prevented this union in many ways. He had, no doubt, a sufficient reason for that way which He actually did employ. It affords a striking emblem of the wisdom of the world in adopting a profession of Christianity from worldly motives, and the folly of such wisdom. However wise the men of this world may think themselves in their conduct with respect to the religion of Christ, from political motives, in the end, certain, and dreadful, and sudden will be their destruction. How many thousands, called Christians, are influenced in religion by no higher motives than those employed by Hamor and Shechem to persuade their subjects to embrace the religion of the house of Jacob! The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.

8. *Jacob's escape from their vengeance: Genesis 35:5.*

But were the sons of Jacob blind through revenge? If their thirst of blood had been ever so great, might we not expect that they would still have respect to their safety? If they should succeed, by their abominable hypocrisy, in cutting off the people of Shechem, could they expect to escape the vengeance of the neighboring nations? Shall a single family undertake a quarrel against a multitude of nations, among whom they reside as strangers? Had they reflected, what could they expect but destruction to themselves and to the whole house of their father? It is evident

that they could not have trusted for deliverance to the God of Israel, for they who believe and trust in Him also *obey Him*. Could they thus expect safety in this enormous violation of the law of God? It is evident they thought of nothing but of gratifying their revenge. They were blinded by the fury of their wrath.

But, notwithstanding this, God did not forget His servant Jacob. Divine Providence casts a shield over him, and his guilty sons. But what were *the means* that God saw fit to make use of on this occasion for the deliverance of Jacob? Did He order Jacob to face His adversaries in the field, promising him the victory? Often He did so with the house of Israel. But not so here. This would have had an appearance of compromising the character of the Ruler of the world. He would have appeared to be like the gods of the Greeks and Trojans, without respect to right and wrong. God, therefore, employs not the children of Israel to defend themselves on this occasion. Here His wisdom sees fit to act without human means. Instead of delivering through the hands of men, He acts, by His Providence, on the minds of the affected nations, and fills them with the fear of the family of Jacob. The family of Jacob were but a handful of people, yet the Sovereign Lord made them a terror to powerful nations: “And the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.”—A.W.P.

April

THE SPIRIT PRESERVING

There are two eminent benefits or spiritual blessings which comprehend all others, filling up the entire space of the Christian's life, from the moment of his quickening unto his ultimate arrival in heaven, namely, his regeneration and his preservation. And as the renowned Puritan Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) says, "If a debate were admitted which of them is the greater, it would be found that no jury of mankind could determine on either side, but must leave it to God's free grace itself, which is the author and finisher of our faith, to decide." As the creating of the world at first, and the upholding and governing of all things by divine power and providence are yoked together (Heb 1:2-3), so are regeneration and preservation. "Faithful is he that *calleth* you, who also will do it" (1Th 5:24)—i.e. *preserve* (v. 23). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath *begotten* us again unto a lively hope...to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled...who are *kept* by the power of God through faith" (1Pe 1:3-5).

The same blessed linking together of these eminent benefits is seen in the Old Testament, "Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not *made* thee and *established* thee?" (Deu 32:6). "And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have *made*, and I will *bear*" (Isa 46:4). "Which *holdeth* our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved" (Psa 66:9)—the verb has a double meaning, as the margin signifies, "putteth" at the first and "holdeth" or maintaineth afterwards. How wonderful is this in the natural—delivered from countless dangers, preserved from epidemics and diseases which carried off thousands of our fellows, recovered from various illnesses which had otherwise proven fatal. Still more wonderful is the spiritual preservation of the saint—kept from the dominion of sin which still indwells him, kept from being drawn out of the narrow way by the enticements of the world, kept from the horrible heresies which ensnare multitudes on every side, kept from being entirely overcome by Satan, who ever seeks his destruction.

What pleasure it now gives the Christian to hear of the varied and wondrous ways in which God *regenerates* His people! What delight will be ours in heaven

when we learn of the loving care, abiding faithfulness, and mighty power of God in the *preservation* of each of His own! What joy will be ours when we learn the details of how He made good His promise, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isa 43:2)—His providence working for us externally, His grace operating internally—preserving amid the tossings and tempests of life, recovering from woeful backslidings, reviving us when almost dead.

The preservation of God’s people through all the vicissitudes of their pilgrim journey is accomplished, immediately, by the Holy Spirit. He it is who watches over the believer, delivering him when he knows it not, keeping him from living in the world’s sinks of iniquity, lifting up a standard when the enemy comes like a flood against him (Isa 59:19). He it is who keeps him from accepting those fatal heresies which deceive and destroy so many empty professors. He it is who prevents his becoming contented with a mere “letter” ministry, or satisfied with head-knowledge and notional religion. And *how* does the Spirit accomplish the Christian’s preservation? By sustaining the new nature within him, and calling it forth into exercise and act. By working such graces in him that he becomes “established” (2Co 1:21). By keeping him conscious of his utter ruin and deep need of Christ. By bringing him to a concurrence with His gracious design, moving him to use appropriate means. But let us be more specific.

“Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end” (Psa 119:33). We lost the way of true happiness when we fell in Adam, and ever since men have wandered up and down vainly seeking rest and satisfaction, “They are *all* gone out of the way” (Rom 3:12). Nor can any man discover the way of holiness and happiness of himself—he must be *taught it* spiritually and supernaturally by God. Such teaching is earnestly desired by the regenerate, for they have been made painfully conscious of their perversity and insufficiency, “Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man” (Pro 30:2) is their confession. It is by divine and inward teaching that we are stirred into holy activity, “*I will keep it*”—that which is inwrought by the Spirit is outwrought by us. Thereby our final perseverance is accomplished, “*I will keep it unto the end*”—because effectually taught of JEHOVAH.

“When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; *discretion shall preserve thee*, understanding shall keep thee” (Pro 2:10-11). For wisdom to enter into our hearts means that the things of God have such an influence upon us as to dominate our affections and move our wills. For knowledge to be pleasant to our souls, signifies that we ‘delight in the law of God after the inward man’ (Rom 7:22), that submission to God’s will is not irksome but desirable. Now where such really be the case, the individual possesses a discernment which enables him to penetrate Satan’s disguises and perceive the barb beneath the bait, and is endowed with a discretion which makes him prudent

and cautious, so that he shuns those places where alluring temptations abound, and avoids the company of evil men and women. Thereby is he delivered from danger and secured from making shipwreck of the faith, see also Proverbs 4:6; 6:22-24.

“I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put *my fear* in their hearts, that they shall *not depart* from me” (Jer 32:40). This statement casts much light upon the means and method employed by God in the preserving of His people. The indwelling Spirit not only *constrains* the new nature by considerations drawn from the love of Christ (2Co 5:14), but He also *restrains* the old nature by a sense of God’s majesty. He often drops an awe on the believer’s heart, which holds him back from running into that excess of riot which his lusts would carry him unto. The Spirit makes the soul to realise that God is not to be trifled with, and delivers from wickedly presuming upon His mercy. He stimulates a spirit of filial reverence in the saint, so that he shuns those things which would dishonour his Father. He causes us to heed such a word as, “Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee” (Rom 11:20-21). By such means does God fulfill His promise, “I will put my spirit within you, and *cause you to walk in my statutes*” (Eze 36:27).

“For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith” (Gal 5:5). It is the stirrings of hope, however faint, which keeps the soul alive in seasons of disappointment and despondency. But for the renewings of the gracious Spirit, the believer would relinquish his hope and sink into abject despair. “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert” (Isa 35:5-6). It is by fresh supplies of the Spirit (Phi 1:19) that there comes not only further light, but new strength and comfort. Amid the perturbations caused by indwelling sin and the anguish from our repeated defeats, it is one of the Spirit’s greatest works to sustain the soul by the expectation of things to come.

“Who are kept by the power of God *through faith*” (1Pe 1:5). Here again we are shown *how* the preservation of the saint is effected—through the influences of an exercised faith—compare 1 John 5:4. Now faith implies not only the knowledge and belief of the truth, but also those pious affections, and dispositions, and the performance of those spiritual duties which constitute practical holiness. Without faith, no man can attain unto that holiness, and without the power of God, none can exercise this faith. Faith is the channel through which the mighty works of God are wrought—as Hebrews 11 so clearly shows—not the least of which is the conducting of His people safely through the enemy’s land (1Jo 5:19).

Perseverance in grace, or continuance in holiness, is not promoted by a blind confidence or carnal security, but by watchfulness, earnest effort, and self-denial. So far from teaching that believers shall certainly reach heaven whether or not they use the means of grace, Scripture affirms, “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). God has not promised that, no matter how loosely a saint may live or what vile habits he may persist in, he shall not perish, but rather does He assure us that He will preserve from such looseness and wickedness as would expose him to His wrath. It is by working grace in our hearts, by calling into exercise the faculties of our souls, by exciting fear and hope, hatred and love, sorrow and joy, that the saint is preserved.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

112. The Heart Established (13:8-9)

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Heb 13:8). Sir Robert Anderson and others regarded this as a declaration of the Saviour’s Godhead, arguing that “The Same” is a divine title taken from Psalm 102:27, etc. But why, it may be asked, should the apostle break his line of thought and introduce a formal affirmation of Christ’s deity in the midst of a series of exhortations? Such an interpretation destroys the unity of the passage. Moreover, there was no need for this, for the Redeemer’s Godhead had been clearly and fully established in the opening chapter of the epistle. Nor was there any special reason for Paul, at this point, to insist upon the essential immutability of Christ, and that the translators of the A.V. did *not* so understand him is evident from their declining to add the *auxiliary* verb, “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, and today,” etc.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Heb 13:8). These words, as was intimated in the final paragraph of last month’s article, are not to be taken absolutely, but are to be regarded relatively—that is to say, they are not to be considered by themselves alone, but in connection with the precise place they occupy in the Sacred Canon. Every statement of Scripture is positioned by divine wisdom, and often we miss an important key to interpretation when ignoring the particular location of a passage. The verse before us illustrates the special theme of the book in which it is found. The subject of the Hebrews’ letter is the immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism, and here is further demonstration of the fact. Under Judaism, Aaron had been followed by Eleazer, and he, by Eli, but our great High Priest abides forever. Israel’s prophets followed each other on the stage of action, but our Prophet had no successor. So too there had been a long line of kings, but Zion’s King is eternal.

“The apostle speaks not of the person of Christ absolutely, but with respect unto His office and His discharge of it. He declares who and what He is therein. He is ‘the same’ in His divine person—eternal, immutable, indeficient. Being so in Himself, He is so *in His office* from first to last. Although diverse alterations were

made in the institutions of divine worship, and there were many degrees and parts of divine revelation (Heb. 1:1), yet in and through them all, Jesus Christ was still the same. In every state of the church, in every condition of believers, He is the same unto them, and will be so unto the consummation of all things. He is, He ever was, all in all unto the church. He is the Object, the Author, and Finisher of faith, the Preserver and Rewarder of all them that believe, and that equally in all generations” (Condensed from John Owen, 1616-1683).

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Heb 13:8). How thoughtlessly is this statement received by many! How carelessly is its setting ignored by most sermonizers! Were we to take this declaration absolutely, it would involve us in inextricable difficulties. Ponder its terms for a moment. Did our Lord undergo no radical change when He became incarnate? Did He experience no great change at His resurrection? During the days of His flesh, He was “The man of sorrows,” is He so now after His ascension?—one has but to ask the question to perceive its absurdity. This statement, then, is to be understood with certain limitations, or rather, it is to be interpreted in the light of its setting, and for that, not a novice, but an experienced expositor is required. Let us consider it, then, in connection with its context.

First, as has already been pointed out, it most blessedly illustrated the special theme of this epistle, for in contrast from so much that was mutable and transitory in Judaism, the Author of Christianity abides essentially the same in all generations. Second, verse 8 supplies an additional and most powerful motive to fidelity. Some of their spiritual guides had already passed away, and in those still left, time and change would swiftly work their sure effects, but the great Head of the church remained, being alive for evermore. Jesus Christ was the One who had supported their deceased leaders, who had passed through their trials victoriously, and if trusted in, He would sustain *them*, for He was the same gracious and powerful Shepherd of the sheep. He is for *you*, as for them, “the same” Object of faith, “the same” all-sufficient Saviour, “the same” effectual Intercessor. He is “the same” in His loving design and covenant faithfulness. Then cleave to Him with unshakable confidence.

Third, the blessed declaration of verse 8 lays a foundation on which to base the exhortation which immediately follows. “The only way by which we can persevere in the right faith is to hold to the foundation, and not in the slightest degree depart from it, for he who holds not to Christ knows nothing but mere vanity, though he may comprehend heaven and earth” (John Calvin, 1509-1564). The Lord Jesus is the same, therefore, *be ye not unstable* and fickle. Christ is the same Teacher—His doctrine does not vary, His will does not fluctuate, nor His purpose alter. Therefore should we remain steadfast in the truth, shunning novelties and refusing all innovations. It is only by “holding the head” (Col 2:19), submitting to His will, receiving His doctrine, obeying His precepts, that we shall be fortified against false teachers and persevere unto the end.

Thus, Heb 13:7-9 are intimately related and together form a complete hortatory passage. So far as we have light thereon, we understand them to mean—Hold fast to the testimony of your former leaders, for they proved the sufficiency of the truth they proclaimed. Christian doctrine does not vary from day to day, for Jesus Christ is ever the same. The designation used of Him at once intimates that He is *not* here contemplated so much as the second person in the Godhead, as the Mediator and Head of the church. He is the same in His identity (Rev 5:6), the same in His offices, the same in His efficacy, the same in His will. Therefore must we refuse to be led away by those who teach anything different. The whole passage is a strong dissuasion against vacillation. The truth is fixed. The Gospel is everlasting, therefore should we be “stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1Co 15:58).

“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein” (Heb 13:9). This is the point to which the apostle had been leading in the previous verses—trust in Christ, and cleave to Him according to the instruction you have received from your fathers in the faith, and give not ear unto those who would unsettle and seduce you. “Divers doctrines” are those which differ from pure Christianity, “strange” doctrines are those which are foreign or opposed to the Gospel. To be carried “about” by such is for the mind to be unsettled thereby, producing an unsteadiness of conduct. To be immune from this evil, the heart has to be established with grace, which, because of its deep importance, calls for a careful inquiry thereunto. “Not with meats” has reference to the efforts of the Judaisers to graft the ceremonial law on to the Gospel, a thing utterly unprofitable, yea, baneful.

“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines” (Heb 13:9). It is to be duly noted that the noun is in the plural number. This is in marked and designed contrast from the revelation which *God* has given us. Truth is a perfect unit, but error is multiform. There is but “*one* faith,” as there is but “one Lord” (Eph 4:3-5), namely, that which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3) in the revelation made of it by Christ and the apostles (Heb 2:3-4). Hence, when the truth is in view, it is always “doctrine” in the singular number, as “the doctrine” (Joh 7:17), “the doctrine of Christ” (2Jo 1:9), and see Romans 16:17; 1 Timothy 4:16, etc. On the other hand, where error is referred to, the plural number is employed, as in “doctrines of men” (Col 2:22), “doctrines of demons” (1Ti 4:1). The truth of God is one uniform system and chain of doctrine, which begins in God and ends in Him, but error is inconsistent and manifold.

“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines” (Heb 13:8). The very fact that this dehortation was not only given verbally by the apostles to the Christians of their own day, but is also preserved in the written Word of God, clearly intimates that the people of God will always have to contend against error unto the end of time. Christ Himself declared, “Take heed that no man deceive

you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many” (Mat 24:4-5), and the last of His apostles wrote, “Try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1Jo 4:1). How unfeignedly thankful we should be that God has put into our hands an unfailing plummet by which we may measure every preacher and teacher. The doctrine of Christ changes not, and whatever proceeds not from it and accords not with it, is alien to the faith of the church and is to be refused and rejected.

“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines” (Heb 13:9). As this dehortation concerned the Hebrew saints the reference was, of course, to the Mosaic institutions, as the remainder of our verse denotes, “for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace: not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.” The Levitical law made distinctions of meats, and things of a like nature, which the false teachers were pressing with much zeal. It is plain from such passages as Romans 14:13-23; 1 Corinthians 8; Galatians 4, etc., that determined efforts were being made by the enemy to corrupt the Gospel by attaching to it parts of the ceremonialism of Judaism. When Paul says “which have not profited *them* that have been occupied therein” (Heb 13:9), he referred *not* to the Old Testament saints who had obeyed the Mosaic precepts, but to those who heeded the errorists of his day.

The principle expressed in this dissuasion is as applicable to and as much needed by the saints of each succeeding generation as it was by those Hebrews. It is one of the marks of the Fall that man is fonder of that which is *material* in religion, than he is of what is *spiritual*. He is most prone—as history universally and sadly shows—to concentrate on *trivialities* rather than upon *essentials*. He is more concerned about the details of ordinances than he is of getting his heart established with grace. He will lend a readier ear to novel “doctrines” than to a solid exposition of the fundamentals of the faith. He will contend zealously for things which contribute nothing to his salvation nor conduce an iota unto true holiness. And the only sure way of being delivered from this evil tendency, and of being preserved from false doctrines, is to buy the truth and sell it not, and to have the heart established with grace.

“For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace” (Heb 13:9). What is denoted by this weighty expression? First, what is it for the heart to be “established” and then how it is so established “with grace”? An established heart is the opposite from one which is “carried about,” which term is used again in “that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men” (Eph 4:14). It is a poetic expression in allusion to sailing-ships and the impression of the wind upon them. The figure is apt, and suggestive of the nature of strange doctrines, the way in which they are spread, and their effects on the minds of men. In themselves they are light and vain, “clouds they are without water” (Jude 1:12). There is nothing solid and substantial in them for the soul. Those who would impose such doctrines on

others, generally do so with much bombast and blustering—unless we believe and practice such things, we are denounced as heretics and unsaved (Act 15:1). The unlearned and unstable are disturbed by them, carried out of their course, and are in danger of making shipwreck of their faith. Hence, an “established heart” is one which is rooted and grounded in the truth, securely anchored in Christ, rejoicing in God.

The word “grace” is vastly comprehensive and has various meanings in its Scripture usage. Its grand, original, fundamental signification is to express the free, eternal, and sovereign *favour of God toward His people*, for *that* is the spring and source of all the gifts, benefits, and blessings we receive from Him. From this infinite fountain of the uncaused favour and special love of God—which is the “good pleasure of his [immutable] will”—proceed all the *acts* of His grace toward, in, and upon the elect. “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2Ti 1:9). From that blessed ocean of grace proceed our personal and unconditional election in Christ, our union unto Him, interest in Him, relation to Him, together with our being blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3-6). We read of “the grace of God, and the gift by grace” (Rom 5:15)—the former of which must mean the favour of God in His own heart towards us, in distinction from all the favours He bestows upon us, while the latter signifies the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, as flowing from the original grace in God.

The operations, breathings, and influences of the Holy Spirit in quickening, enlightening, revealing, and applying Christ to us, so that we are put into an actual enjoyment of Him and His salvation, are the outworkings of the everlasting covenant of grace—therefore it is *all of grace*. The next most common use of the term is inherent or indwelling grace, being used to designate that supernatural work which is wrought in the Christian at his regeneration, whereby he is made alive Godwards and is given a relish for spiritual things. Such passages as, “He giveth more grace” (Jam 4:6), and “grow in grace” (2Pe 3:18) have respect to grace in the heart. Then too the whole system of doctrine comprehended by “the Gospel” is so designated, for when Paul said to the Galatians, “Whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal 5:4), he meant they had forsaken *the truth of grace*. Among the less frequent uses of the term, we may note that its transforming effects are themselves called “grace” (Act 11:23), gifts for preaching bear the title of “grace” (2Co 6:1), as do those virtues wrought in us by the Spirit (2Co 12:9-10).

“For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace” (Heb 13:9). By “grace” in this verse we understand, first, *the doctrine of grace*, that is, the truth of God’s free favour without us, in His own heart towards us, which is made known to us in the Gospel (Act 20:24). Concerning this we read, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Ti 2:11), i.e., it has been

revealed in His Gospel. The doctrine of grace is also styled, “wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness” (1Ti 6:3). The doctrine of grace includes all that sacred system of theology, all the fundamentals of the everlasting Gospel of the blessed God, that grand “mystery” of His mind and will which sets forth to us the complete counsel and covenant of the Eternal Three, the record of God concerning His Son, by which He declares that “he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” (Joh 3:36).

As the whole of the Gospel, with the great salvation contained in it, and the blessings, consolations, privileges, and promises of it, were fully, freely, and impartially preached by the apostles, so it was attended with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven to the minds and hearts of many who heard it, so that they were brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord, and to a true and actual closure with Him, by means of the Word of truth. The doctrine of grace as proclaimed by God’s accredited servants, and as clothed with the power of the Spirit, is the divinely appointed means of turning the elect from darkness unto light, from the power of Satan into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Act 26:18). Their understandings are illumined to know from the Gospel that it is God’s will to save them through the appointed Redeemer, and they are enabled to personally realise that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Second, it is most important and blessed for the heart to be “*established*” with inherent grace—a fact which every one born of God must more or less know and feel. Where the Holy Spirit of God dwells, there sin is known in its guilt and felt in its power, while the effects of the Fall on all the faculties of the soul are experienced. When the Spirit has revealed the super-excellency of Christ, His all-sufficiency as a Saviour, His suitableness as such, this begets some longings after Him, thirstings for Him, desires to be found in Him, and high prizings of His blood and righteousness. But many there are who, though quickened and called of God, have not yet closed in with Christ, cannot say He died for *them*, know not that *their* sins are pardoned. The Spirit has thus far wrought with them that they feel themselves to be vile sinners, justly deserving of the wrath of God, yet they cannot affirm that their names are written in heaven.

They are emptied of all creature dependency and self-sufficiency. Their hearts are broken and humbled, with a true and thorough sight and sense of sin. They have heard of Christ, and of His infinite tenderness and compassion, love and mercy, to sinners like themselves. The Lord the Spirit has brought them on so far as to listen attentively to the preaching of the Gospel and the searching of the Scriptures. Though they may be as bruised reeds and smoking flax, incapable of expressing their wants to God, or of describing their case to others, yet they find in the preaching of Christ crucified that which suits them. Though they cannot yet confidently say of Him, “who loved *me* and gave himself for *me*” (Gal 2:20). Nevertheless *they wait on Him* in His ordinances, longing for Him to arise upon

them as the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings. And though such may be called “seekers only,” “inquirers after Christ,” yet they are blessed. “*Blessed* are all they that *wait for him*” (Isa 30:18), “Let the heart of them rejoice that *seek the LORD*” (1Ch 16:10).

Upon such persons the Lord, in His good time, causes His light of grace to break forth more clearly, shining within them, causing their spiritual faculties to expand, and be exercised more particularly upon “the mystery of the gospel” (Eph 6:19) and the doctrine of grace. Thereby their spiritual “senses” (Heb 5:14) are brought to taste the sweetness of divine truth, to have a heart relish of it, to derive nourishment from it, to perceive its spiritual excellency. In receiving and digesting it, they are brought to find the doctrine of God’s free grace to be wholesome and sustaining. By this means, they are “nourished up” (1Ti 4:6) unto everlasting life. It is thus the Lord carries on His work in the souls of His people. At regeneration, they are filled with joy in Him and sin is but little felt within. But as the work of grace is deepened, they are made to see and feel their depravity, and their peace is clouded by increasing discoveries of their vileness, which makes way for a growing appreciation of grace.

Inherent grace, then, is a new nature or holy principle implanted by the Spirit at the new birth. It consists in spiritual perceptions, inward apprehensions, spiritual affections, in the souls of those who are born of God, whereby they are fitted for Him, and divine things, enabled to take holy delight in God, to have holy breathings after Him, to hunger and thirst after righteousness, to yearn for a consciousness of Christ’s presence, to have a spiritual appetite to feed upon Him as the Bread of Life. Thus, it is most profitable for the saint to have his heart established with inherent grace, for he is the personal subject of it, and it is for this reason that God’s people *in general are so fond of experimental* preaching—the tracing out of the work of the Spirit in their hearts—thereby enabling them to set to their seal that God is true, that He has thus far wrought in them to the praise and glory of His grace.

Nor is there any legality in this, for the work of the Spirit, in all its parts and phases, flows as freely from the covenant of grace as does the work of Christ. Yea, we are expressly said to be “*saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*” (see Ti 3:5), which is thus expressed to show that salvation depends equally upon the distinct offices which the eternal three are engaged in on behalf of the elect. It is helpful to converse at times with such as are experimentally acquainted with God, and His Son Jesus Christ, and who hold communion with Him by the Holy Spirit. Genuine Christian experience consists principally in this—the Spirit is pleased to open the Scriptures unto us, making them the ground of our faith, giving us to feel their power, making the experience described in them our own, revealing Christ as set forth in the Word to us, and filling our hearts with His love agreeably to what is revealed of it in the Gospel.

The people of God need to be taught and brought to an acquaintance with the real work of God *within* them, with His *method* of strengthening and comforting them, that they may learn the grounds of spiritual assurance. There is a need that the heart be established with grace as it respects their ascertaining for themselves that a supernatural work is actually wrought within them, that Christ is in them the hope of glory, that they “knew the grace of God *in truth*” (Col 1:6), and that their works are “wrought in God” (Joh 3:21) as Christ expressed it. Let us therefore diligently study the work of the Spirit within us, comparing it with the written Word, and carefully distinguishing between natural and spiritual affections, moral refinements, and supernatural regeneration. Nor let us forget that the grace of God within us is only discovered to us as the Spirit shines upon His own work in our souls.

It is also good for the heart to be established with grace as it respects *the doctrine* of it—in the belief of the Father’s everlasting love, the Son’s complete salvation, and the Spirit’s testimony thereof, which strengthens the faith and confirms the hope of the Christian. Confidence before God can be maintained on no other foundation than that of His *grace*. There are seasons when the believer’s mind is filled with distress, when the guilt of sin presses heavily on his conscience, when Satan is allowed to buffet him. Then it is that he is forced to cry “have respect unto the covenant” (Psa 74:20). There are seasons when he cannot pray except with groanings that cannot be uttered, being cast down with soul burdens and conflicts, but they only serve to prove to him the deep need of his heart being established with the truth of grace.

Thus, for the heart to be “established with grace” (Heb 13:9) signifies, first, the doctrine of God’s free grace *without* us, in His own heart toward us, and second, the blessed operations of the Spirit *within* us. When God’s free-grace salvation is brought home to the heart by the Spirit, it produces blessed fruits and consequences in the person to whom it becomes “the power of God” (Rom 1:16). It is of vast importance to hold forth a clear profession of the doctrine of grace, and it is of incalculable worth to be able to declare a genuine work of grace wrought in the heart by the Spirit agreeably to the truth we profess. The doctrine of grace is the means, in the hands of the Spirit, of begetting faith, promoting its growth, and supporting it. Therefore, there is a real need of God’s everlasting love and Christ’s finished redemption being preached, though they be already known, and their power felt in the heart, because our walk with God and our confidence in Him receive all their encouragement therefrom.

While it is certain that the head must be enlightened with the knowledge of truth before the heart can experience the virtue and efficacy of it, yet our text speaks of “the heart” so as to emphasize the quickening and operative power of divine truth, when it is embraced and maintained in the soul. It is good for the heart to be established with grace, for it promotes the believer’s spiritual growth, secures his well-being, and greatly contributes to his comfort. It is also a

preservative against error, an antidote against unbelief, and a choice cordial to revive the soul in seasons of distress.

(N.B. For much in the second half of this article we are indebted to a valuable sermon by S .E. Pierce, 1746-1829).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

64. His Ascending Olivet

We resume at the point left off in our last. “The king said also unto Zadok the priest, Art not thou a seer? return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz thy son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there come word from you to certify me” (2Sa 15:27-28). Though they could not be permitted to minister unto him in holy things, he does not disdain their services. They could further his interests by returning to their post of duty and from there acquaint him with developments in Jerusalem. What implicit confidence in them was evidenced by this experienced strategist, in revealing to them his immediate plans—the place where he intended to remain for the time being! O that God’s servants today so conducted themselves that those in trouble would not hesitate to confide in them and seek their counsel. “Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem: and they tarried there” (2Sa 15:29). Blessed obedience—sinking their own wishes, complying with the will of their master.

“And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot” (2Sa 15:30). Let not the reader forget what was said in the opening paragraphs of last month’s article, where we pointed out that the real key to the whole of this passage is to be found in the state of David’s heart. Throughout he is to be viewed as *the humble penitent*. God’s rebuke was heavy upon him and therefore did he humble himself beneath His mighty hand. Hence it is that we here see him giving outward expression to his self-abasement and grief for his sins, and for the miseries which he had brought upon himself, his family, and his people. Suitable tokens of his godly sorrow were these, for the covering of his head was a symbol of self-condemnation, while his walking barefooted betokened his mourning, cf. Isaiah 20:2, 4; Ezekiel 24:17.

“And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up” (2Sa 15:30). How striking is this, coming right after his crossing of the brook Kidron! In last month’s article, we pointed out five respects in which that foreshadowed our Lord’s crossing that same brook on the night of His betrayal. Who can fail to see here another unmistakable analogy? After His crossing of that doleful brook, our Saviour entered Gethsemane, where His soul was “exceeding

sorrowful” (Mat 26:38) and where His supplications were accompanied with “strong crying *and tears*” (Heb 5:7). Yet while observing the comparison, let us not forget the radical contrast—his own sins were the cause of David’s grief, but the sins of His people occasioned Christ’s tears.

“And all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up” (2Sa 15:30). It is our duty to weep with those that weep, and those that were with him were deeply affected by their king’s grief. Once again our minds revert to our Saviour’s passion, and discover another resemblance between it and David’s case here, though it has been strangely overlooked by many. The disciples who accompanied Christ into the garden failed, it is true, to “watch with him” (see Mat 26:38) for one hour, yet it most certainly was not through indifference, nor because they sought fleshly ease in slumber, for as the Holy Spirit expressly informs us, Christ “found them sleeping *for sorrow*” (Luk 22:45). Thus the weeping people who followed David up Olivet found its counterpart in the sorrowing of those disciples who had accompanied the Saviour unto Gethsemane.

“And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom” (2Sa 15:31). With the exception of his own son’s insurrection, this was the bitterest ingredient in the cup which David was now having to drink. It was no ordinary blow for him to bear, for Ahithophel was no ordinary man. He was one whom the king had taken into his confidence, numbered among his closest friends, and to whom he had shown much kindness. He not only enjoyed the most intimate relations with David concerning the affairs of state, but had close fellowship with him in spiritual things. This is evident from the psalmist’s own statement, “We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company” (Psa 55:14). Fickle and treacherous is human nature. Our sharpest trials often come from those in whom we have reposed the most trust and to whom we have shown the greatest kindness. Yet, on the other hand, the most unlikely friends are sometimes raised up among those from whom we had the least expectations—as the Gittites attached to David, 2 Samuel 15:19-21.

“And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom” (2Sa 15:31). Troubles rarely come singly. Often they crowd one on top of another, as was the case with Job. This sad news was brought to the king just when he was being the most severely tried. Absalom had revolted and now his “prime minister” turned traitor at the most crucial moment. It was a vile requital for the king’s generosity to him. Here again we may perceive these historical incidents shadowing forth events even more solemn and frightful in connection with our blessed Lord, for Ahithophel is undoubtedly a striking type of Judas, who, after being admitted to the inner circle of Christ’s disciples, basely turned against Him and went over to the side of His enemies. Sufficient, then, for the disciple to be as his Master. If *His* charity was rewarded with cruel treachery, let *us* be prepared for similar treatment.

How keenly David felt the perfidy of Ahithophel is evident from several statements in the Psalms which obviously refer to him. In the 41st, he mentions one evil after another which afflicted him, and finishes with, “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me” (Psa 41:9)—that was the climax. Anything worse could scarcely be imagined, as the opening, “Yea,” suggests. Ahithophel had not only forsaken David in his hour of need, but had gone over to the side of his foe. The “lifted up his heel against me” is the figure of a horse which has just been fed by its master, and then lashing out with his feet, viciously kicks him. More plainly still is his anguish evidenced in, “For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance” (Psa 55:12-13).

There is still another reference in the Psalms where David laments, “For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love” (Psa 109:4-5). This sad trial of David’s was illustrative of what is often the most painful experience of the church, for her troubles usually begin at home. Her open enemies can do her little or no harm until her pretended friends have delivered her into their hands. The statement that David “gave himself to prayer” at once links up with our passage, for there we read next, “And David said, O LORD, I *pray* thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness” (2Sa 15:31). It is apparent that David was more afraid of Ahithophel’s wisdom than he was of Absalom’s daring, for he was a man of experience in statecraft and was highly respected by the people (2Sa 16:23).

“And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness” (2Sa 15:8). Here again the type points forward to the antitype, in fact *that* is the outstanding feature of our passage. David’s crossing of the Kidron (2Sa 15:24), his complete surrender of himself to the will of God (2Sa 15:26), his tears (2Sa 15:30), and now his *praying*, present one of the most remarkable prefigurations of our Lord’s sufferings to be found anywhere in the Old Testament. In asking the Lord to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel, David recognised and acknowledged that all hearts are in His hands, that He can “maketh the judges fools” (Job 12:17). There was no suitable opportunity for David to engage in a *lengthy* season of prayer, nor was that necessary, for we are not heard for our much speaking. Apparently, a brief ejaculation was all that now issued from his heart, but it was heard on High!

What a blessed and encouraging example David has here left us! Prayer should ever be the believer’s resource, for there is never a time when it is unseasonable. We too may pray for God to bring to naught the crafty counsel of the wicked against His people. We too may come to Him when all appears to be lost and spread our case before Him. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, for vain is all worldly wisdom and power against it. So it proved

here—though David’s petition was a very brief one, yet it met with an unmistakable answer as 2 Samuel 17:14 shows, where we are told, “And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the LORD had appointed *to defeat* the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.” Let us take encouragement from this incident, then, and “*in every thing* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God” (Phi 4:6).

“And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God” (2Sa 15:32). This is very blessed and teaches a lovely practical lesson, “weeping must never hinder worshipping” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). No, why should it. We may worship God in the minor key as truly as in the major. We may adore the Lord as genuinely in the valley of humiliation as from the heights of jubilation. Furthermore, we may worship God as acceptably from the rugged mountain-top as in the most ornate cathedral. This principle was clearly apprehended by the spiritually-minded in Old Testament times, as is evident from our passage. Though David was away from the tabernacle, he realised that God was still accessible in spirit. Let us, then, grasp this fact, that nothing should prevent us worshipping the Lord, even though we no longer have access to His *public* ordinances. How thankful we should be for such a merciful provision in a day like ours.

“And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God” (2Sa 15:32). There are some who believe—we consider with good reason—that David sang the third psalm as a part of his worship on this occasion, for it bears the title, “A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.” It has been well said that, “Among all the Psalms of David there is none which more remarkably evidences the triumph of his faith out of the depths of affliction and chastisement” than this one (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899). There was no shutting of his eyes to the gravity of his situation, no ignoring the imminence of his danger, for he said, “LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah” (Psa 3:1-2).

David described his foes as being numerous and as boasting there would be no deliverance for him by the Lord. As we have seen (2Sa 15:12), the revolt had assumed considerable dimensions and the conspirators were assured that David’s sins had turned away the aid of heaven from his cause. “But thou, O LORD, *art* a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head” (Psa 3:3). This is most blessed—he opposes their malicious utterances and confident hatred by the conviction that amidst real perils JEHOVAH was still his defence. With bowed and covered head, he had fled from Jerusalem, but “Thou art the lifter up of mine head” was his confidence. “Though the dangers were still present, yet in faith he

speaks of them as past (Hebrew) the deliverance was yet future, yet he speaks of it as already come” (Benjamin W. Newton).

“I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah” (Psa 3:4). He was an exile from the tabernacle on Zion, and he had sent back the ark to its rest, but though he had to cry to God from the mountain side, He graciously answers from “his holy hill.” “He and his men camped amidst dangers, but an unslumbering Helper mounted guard over the undefended slumberers” (Alexander Maclaren, 1826-1929). “I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me” (Psa 3:5). Such was the calm confidence of David, even while multiplied perils were still encircling him. Refreshed by the night’s repose, heartened by the divine protection granted while sheltering in caves or sleeping in the open, the Psalmist breaks forth in triumphant exclamation, “I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about” (Psa 3:6).

Betaking himself for renewed energy to the weapon of prayer, even before the battle David sees the victory, but ascribes it solely to his God. “Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou *hast* smitten all mine enemies upon the cheekbone; thou *hast* broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah” (Psa 3:7-8). “Nor was his confidence in vain. He was restored and allowed again to see Israel in peace—again to prove that God’s blessing is upon His people. How precious is the individual use of such a Psalm as this, to every one who, after having backslidden or trespassed, has only turned again to the mercies and faithfulness of God. Even though the tokens of divine rebuke and chastisement be present on every side, even though every tongue may say, ‘There is no help for him in God’ (Psa 3:2), such an one may remember David, and again say, ‘Thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head’ (Psa 3:3). Thus, even the sins and chastisements of God’s servants are made blessings in result to His people” (Benjamin W. Newton).

“Behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head” (2Sa 15:32). From 1 Chronicles 27:33, we learn that Hushai was another who had taken a prominent part in the affairs of state, for there it is recorded, “Hushai the Archite was the king’s companion.” That Hushai was regarded as a man of wisdom is also apparent from the fact that, a little later, Absalom applied to him for advice (2Sa 17:5). In the light of what immediately follows, it seems to us that the coming to David of Hushai at this time was *a test*, to manifest whether his confidence lay wholly in the Lord, for it is often His way to so regulate our circumstances as to exhibit the secret workings of our hearts—that we may, subsequently, be humbled thereby, and brought to prize more highly that grace which bears so patiently with us.

“Unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me: but if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; as I have been thy father’s servant hitherto, so will I now also be

thy servant: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. And hast thou not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, that what thing soever, thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Behold, they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz Zadok's son, and Jonathan Abiathar's son; and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear. So Hushai David's friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem" (2Sa 15:33-37).

"As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Pro 27:19). Alas, cannot both writer and reader see in the above incident a reflection of his own character? Have there not been times when we confidently committed our cause and case unto the Lord, and then we saw an opportunity where, by fleshly scheming, we thought that we could secure the answer to our prayers? It is far easier to commit our way unto the Lord, than it is to "rest in the LORD and wait patiently for him" (see Psa 37:5, 7). It is *there* that the real test of faith often lies—whether we *leave* things entirely in God's hands or seek to take matters into our own. Learn, then, that the appearing of a willing Hushai at the critical moment is often permitted to put us to the proof—whether or not our heart be still inclined to lean upon an arm of flesh.

Various attempts have been made seeking to vindicate David for sending Hushai to become a spy for him in Absalom's camp. Strategy may be permissible in warfare, but nothing could justify the king in causing Hushai to act and utter a lie. It is true that God overruled, and through Hushai defeated Ahithophel's counsel, but that no more proves He *approved* of this deception, than did the flowing of water from the smitten rock show God's approbation of Moses' anger. The best that can be said is, "Alas! where shall we find wisdom and simplicity so united in any mere man that we can perceive nothing which admits of censure and needs forgiveness?" (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). There has only been One on this earth in whom there was *no* spot or blemish.

EXPERIMENTAL PREACHING

It was our desire to say more upon this in the Hebrews' article in this issue, but so as not to unduly lengthen it, we decided to write a separate article thereon. The subject is one of great practical importance and value, though sadly neglected by the modern pulpit. By "experimental preaching," we mean preaching that analyses, diagnoses, describes the strange and often bewildering experience of the Christian. As we have pointed out before, there is a real distinction to be drawn between Christian experience and the experience of the Christian. True Christian experience consists of a knowledge of Christ, communion with Him, conformity to Him. But the experience of a Christian grows out of the conflict of the two

natures within—natures which are radically different in their character, tendency, and products. In consequence of that conflict, there is a ceaseless warfare going on within him, issuing in a series of defeats and victories, victories and defeats. These, in turn, produce joy and sorrow, doubtings and confidence, fears and peace, until often he knows not what to think or how to place himself.

Now it is one important and fundamental part of the office of God's minister to trace out the workings of sin and the actings of grace in the believer's heart; to turn the light of Scripture upon the mysterious anomaly of what is daily taking place in the Christian's soul; to enable him to determine how far he is growing in grace or is backsliding from the Lord. It is his business to take the stumbling stones out of the way of Zion's travelers, to explain to them "*the mystery of the gospel*" (see Eph 3:3-6), to define the grounds of true assurance, and to undermine a carnal confidence. It is an essential part of his task as preacher to trace out the work of the Spirit in the regenerate, and to show He is a Spirit of "judgment" as well as consolation, a Spirit of "burning" (Isa 4:4) as well as building, that He wounds as well as heals.

The human soul possesses three principal faculties—the understanding, the affections, and the will—and the Word of God is addressed to each of them. Consequently, the preaching of the Word comes under this general threefold classification—doctrinal preaching, experimental, and hortatory. Doctrinal preaching expounds the great truths and facts which constitute the substance of Holy Writ, and has for its prime aim the instruction of the hearer, the enlightening of his mind. Experimental preaching concerns the actual application of salvation to the individual and traces out the operations of the Spirit in the effectuation thereof, having for its main object the stirring of the affections. Hortatory preaching deals with the requirements of God and the obligations of the hearer, takes up the exhortations and warnings of Scripture, calls to the discharge of duty, and is addressed principally to the will. And it is only as these three fundamental offices of the minister are adequately and wisely *combined* that the pulpit has performed its proper functions.

Doctrinal preaching treats of the character of God, proclaims His attributes, extols His perfections. It deals with the nature of man, his accountability to God, his obligation to serve and glorify Him. It exalts the law, and presses its requirement that we love the Lord God with all our hearts and our neighbour as ourselves. It is concerned with showing what sin is, its enormity, its workings, its consequences. It delineates God's wondrous salvation, and shows the grace from which it springs, the wisdom which contrived it, the holiness which required it, the love that secured it. It describes what the church is, both universally and locally. It expounds the ordinances—their significance, their purpose, their value.

Experimental preaching deals with the actual experience of those upon whom and in whom God works. It begins with their natural estate, as those who were shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin. It shows how, as fallen creatures, we are

sin's slaves and Satan's serfs. It describes the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart, its pride and self-righteousness. It treats of man's spiritual impotency, and the hypocrisy and uselessness of making this a ground of self-pity and an excuse for slothfulness. It delineates the workings of the Spirit when He convicts of sin and the effects this produces in the subject of it. It takes up the heart exercises of an awakened soul, and seeks to counsel, admonish, and comfort.

Hortatory preaching is concerned with the claims of God upon us and how we should endeavour to meet the same. It bids us remember the Creator in the days of our youth and affirms that our chief end is to glorify Him. It bids us throw down the weapons of our warfare against Him and seek reconciliation with Him. It calls upon us to repent of our sins, forsake our wicked ways, and sue for mercy through Christ. It emphasises the various motives unto obedience. It describes the life which the Christian is required to live, and exhorts him to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Christ. In short, it enforces the righteous demands of the Lord and urges unto a compliance therewith.

Now it is in *a due combination* of these three distinct lines of preaching that the best results are likely to ensue. Care needs to be exercised that the balance is properly maintained. If there be a disproportionate dwelling on any one of these, souls are likely to be hindered rather than helped. There needs to be *variety* in our mental and spiritual food, as much as there is in our material, and He who has graciously furnished the latter in nature, has mercifully provided the former in His Word. If a person ate nothing but meat, his system would soon be clogged. If he confined himself to sweets, his stomach would quickly be soured. It is so spiritually. A surfeit of doctrinal preaching produces swelled heads, too much experimental induces morbidity, and nothing but hortatory issues in legality.

Alas, one of the most lamentable features of Christendom is the *lopsidedness* of present-day ministry. Where the law is faithfully expounded, the Gospel is conspicuous by its absence, and where the Gospel is freely proclaimed, the law is rigidly excluded. Even when a more or less balanced doctrine is maintained, there is very little experimental preaching, yea, it is generally decried as harmful, as fostering doubts, as getting us occupied with ourselves instead of Christ. In those places where really helpful experimental preaching *is* to be heard, the hortatory note is never raised—promises are freely quoted, but the precepts are shelved, while exhorting the unregenerate to repent and believe in Christ is denounced as inculcating creature ability and as insulting to the Holy Spirit. In other quarters, one might hear little or nothing except our duties—becoming personal workers, giving to missions etc.—which is like whipping a horse that has had no food.

But of the three, it is *experimental* preaching which is given least place in our day. So much so is this the case, that many of God's poor people, and not a few preachers themselves, have never so much as heard the expression. Yet this is scarcely to be wondered at, for experimental preaching is by far *the most difficult* of the three. A little reading and study is all that is required to equip one naturally

(we do not say spiritually) to prepare a doctrinal sermon, while a novice, a “young convert,” is deemed capable of standing at a street corner and urging all and sundry to receive Christ as their personal Saviour. But *a personal experience* of the truth is indispensable before one can helpfully preach along experimental lines. Such sermons have to be hammered out on the anvil of the preacher’s own heart. An unregenerate man may preach most orthodoxly on doctrine, but he cannot describe the operations of the Spirit in the heart to any good purpose.

Though experimental preaching be the hardest task which the preacher has to perform, yet it is needful he attend to it, and when the blessing of God rests thereon, salutary are its effects. It is calculated to expose empty professors—both to themselves and others—more effectually than any other type of sermon, for it shows at length that the saving of a soul is very much more than a sudden “decision” on my part or believing that Christ died in my room and stead, for it is a supernatural work of the Spirit in the heart. Such preaching is most likely to open the eyes of sincere but deceived souls, for as they are shown *what* the work of the Spirit is, and *the effects it produces*, they will discover a miracle of grace has been wrought in them. While nothing is so apt to establish trembling believers, above all, it honours the Spirit Himself.

Let us now point out *along what lines* experimental preaching is to proceed in order to be most helpful to the saints. First and primarily, its business is to show *of what* “salvation” consists in its actual application to the individual. Doctrinal preaching lays the foundation for this by an exposition of the grand truth of election (which makes known the blessed fact that God has chosen a people unto salvation, 2Th 2:13), and by opening up the subject of the atonement, showing how Christ has fully satisfied every requirement of divine justice upon the elect, thereby purchasing redemption for them. Doctrinal preaching is *the means* which the Spirit uses in the enlightenment, conviction, and conversion of the elect, and the practical value of experimental preaching is that it enables concerned and attentive hearers to ascertain *what stage* has been reached in the Spirit’s work in them.

In taking up the Spirit’s application of that salvation which the Father ordained and the Son secured, the preacher first shows *how* the soul is prepared to receive it. By nature his heart is as hard and unresponsive to the truth as the “highway” is to the reception of wheat, so there has to be a preliminary plowing and harrowing, a breaking up and turning over of the soil of his soul before the Word will obtain entrance and take root therein. Experimental preaching, then, will show *which* of his hearers is still accurately pictured by the “wayside” around, namely, those whose hearts are thoroughly antagonistic to God’s claims upon them, those who are unconcerned about their eternal interests, those who wish to be left alone and undisturbed in their pleasures and worldly interests. The preacher will then press upon them the woeful state they are in, the terribleness of their condition, that they are dead toward God, devoid of any actual interest in spiritual things.

As the preacher develops and follows out the above line of thought, those who have been quickened and awakened by the Spirit of God will be better able to place themselves. As they measure themselves by the message, as they apply to themselves what the minister is saying (which the hearer should ever do if he is to “take heed therefore *how* ye hear,” Luk 8:18), he will perceive that by the sovereign grace of God it is now no longer with him as it once was. He will recall the time when *he too* sat under the preaching of the Word with stoical indifference, when it was a meaningless jumble to him, a weariness to sit through. He will remember he rarely gave more than a passing thought as to where he would spend eternity. But now it is otherwise. He is no longer unconcerned, but is truly anxious to be saved. The preacher will point out that this is a hopeful sign, but must press the fact that it is *not* one to be rested in, that it is the height of folly and most dangerous to be contented with anything short of the full assurance of faith.

Again, the preacher will show that the great work of the Spirit in preparing the heart for a saving reception of the Gospel, consists in revealing to the individual *his dire need of Christ*, and this is accomplished by His making him to see and feel what a *vile sinner* he is in the sight of God. A life belt receives little notice from those who are safe on dry ground, but let a man be drowning in the water, and he will eagerly grasp at and deeply appreciate one. They that are whole need not a physician, but when they are desperately sick, he is most welcome. So it is spiritually. Let a man be unconscious of his moral leprosy, unconcerned of how he appears in the eyes of the Holy One, and salvation is little considered by him. But let him be convicted of his lifelong rebellion against God, let him discover that there is “no soundness” in him, let him realise that the wrath of God abideth on him, and he is ready to give the Gospel an earnest hearing.

Now the great *instrument* or means used by the Spirit in bringing the people to see their ruined and lost condition is *the law*, for “by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:20). A striking illustration of this is found in Nehemiah 8. There we read of Ezra ministering to those who had returned from the Babylonian captivity, “And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate *from the morning until mid-day*, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law” (Neh 8:2-3). He, in turn, was assisted by others, who “caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense” (Neh 8:7-8). And what was the outcome? This, “all the people *wept*, when they heard the words of the law” (v. 9). The Spirit had applied it to their hearts in power. They were convicted of their wicked self-will and self-pleasing, their disobedience and defiance to the Lord, and they repented of the same and mourned before Him.

God wounds before He heals and abases before He exalts. When the Spirit applies the law to a sinner's heart, his self-complacency is shattered and his self-righteousness receives its death-wound. When he is brought to realise the justice of the law's requirements, discovers that it demands perfect and perpetual conformity to the revealed will of God in thought and word and deed, then he perceives that "innumerable evils have encompassed me about," his iniquities "have taken hold upon me" so that he cannot look up, and he recognizes that his sins are "more than the hairs of mine head" (Psa 40:12). Such an experience is beyond misunderstanding—those subject to the same cannot mistake it. Unspeakably painful though it be, it is most necessary if man's proud heart is to be humbled and made receptive to the Gospel of God's grace. Such an experience evidences that God has not abandoned him to a heart that is "past feeling" (Eph 4:19), yet this is not to be rested in as though the goal had been reached.

So far from a state of becoming aroused to see our danger and be concerned about our eternal destiny being, of itself, something to complacently rest in, assured that all will certainly end well, it is one that is full of peril. Satan is never more active than when he discovers souls are being awakened, for he is loathe to lose his captives, and redoubles his efforts to retain them. It is then that he transforms himself as an angel of light, and performs his most subtle and successful work. There are multitudes, my reader, who were shaken out of their indifference and became diligent in seeking the way of salvation. But false guides misled them, and they were fatally deceived, as Ezekiel 13:22 expresses it, they "strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life." The sinner must "*forsake his way*" *before* he can return to the Lord and find pardon (Isa 55:7).

Not until we actually *comply* with the terms of the Gospel, not until we really *close* with Christ as He is presented therein, is forgiveness obtainable. To stop anywhere short of that, is to gravely endanger the soul's going to sleep on the devil's "enchanted ground"—to borrow a figure from Bunyan. It is therefore the pressing duty of the preacher to sound the alarm here, and warn awakened souls of the danger of taking their ease, assuming that all is well. The foolish virgins "went forth to meet the bridegroom" but they went to sleep, and when they awoke it was *too late* to procure the requisite oil! It is good that the ground should be plowed, yet that is only the preliminary work—seed must actually be sown and take root therein ere there can be any fruit. The anxious soul, then, must be continually exhorted to make sure that "the root of the matter" (Job 19:28) is in him.

This brings us to the next important stage or branch of experimental preaching—the making clear unto the concerned *how* it may be ascertained whether or no "the root of the matter" *is* in them. In other words, whether a work of grace has actually been started in their souls. This is a point of vast importance, for it concerns the vital difference between the general and special work of the Spirit—on which we wrote at some length when expounding Hebrews 6:4-6. But

the determining if a “good work” has been begun in the soul is far too important for us to dismiss with a few sentences. And too, we desire to also take up the later experiences of a Christian. It will therefore be necessary for us to devote another article to the further consideration of this many-sided and momentous subject of experimental preaching.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

5. The Sinaitic

In last month’s article, we sought to show how that the inadequacy and imperfections of the Mosaic economy only served to pave the way for the introduction of Christianity. Such marks of imperfection were stamped on the very nature of the Levitical institutions, for they were, to a large extent, as the apostle termed them, “weak and beggarly elements” (Gal 4:9), and this was because it was then the comparative minority of the church, and the materials of a more spiritual economy did not exist. “The atonement was yet but prospective; the Holy Spirit did not operate as He does under the Gospel; and God’s gracious designs as regards the redemption of our race [rather “of the elect”] lay embedded and concealed in the obscure intimations that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head and in the promises to Abraham. Nor were those defects perfectly remedied throughout the whole course of the dispensation. To the last, the Jew walked in comparative darkness” (Edward A. Litton’s [1733-1804] Bampton Lectures [1780-1920]).

In the historical outworking of the economy, not only imperfection, but as we all know, gross failure, characterised the entire history of Israel as a nation—ominously foreshadowed at the beginning, when Aaron lent himself to the awful idolatry of the golden calf at the very base of Sinai itself. In the vast majority, spirituality was so lacking and love to God beat so feebly in their hearts, that the requirements of the law were regarded as an oppressive yoke. Only too often, those who ought to have been the most exemplary in performing what was enjoined, and from their position in the commonwealth should have checked the practice of evil in others, were themselves the most forward in promoting it. Consequently, the predominating principle of the Mosaic economy, namely, the inseparable connection between obedience and blessing, transgression and punishment, was obscured, for souls which should have been “cut off” from the congregation as deliberate covenant-breakers were allowed to retain their standing in the community and to enjoy its privileges.

It should be pointed out that this expression “that soul shall be cut off,” which occurs so frequently in the Pentateuch, signifies something far more solemn and awful than does being “disfellowshipped from the church” today—such an

explanation or definition on the part of not a few learned men is quite unpardonable. "That soul shall he cut off" refers primarily to *God's* act, for it occurs in connections and cases where those in human authority could not interfere, the violations of the law being *secret* ones, see Leviticus 17:10; 18:29; 22:2—in fact, in a number of instances God expressly said "*I will cut off*" (Lev 20:3, 5), etc. But where the act was open and the guilt known, God's decision was to be carried out by the community, as in Numbers 15:30; Joshua 7:24-26. Yet even when Israel's judges or magistrates failed to enforce this, the guilty *were* cut off in *God's* judgment.

It was very largely through the failure of the responsible heads in Israel to execute the sentence of the law upon its open violators that the nation fell into such a low state, bringing down upon itself the providential judgments of JEHOVAH. Alas that history has repeated itself, for at no one point is the failure of Christendom more apparent than in the almost universal refusal of the so-called "churches" to enforce a Scriptural discipline upon its refractory members—sentiment and the fear of man have ousted a love of holiness and the fear of God. And just as surely, *the consequence has been the same*, though, in keeping with the more spiritual character of this dispensation, the divine judgments have assumed another form—error has supplanted truth, a company of godless worldlings occupy the pulpits, so that those who long for Bread are now being mocked with a stone.

Had Israel been faithful to their covenant engagement at Sinai, had they as a nation striven in earnest, through the grace offered them in the Abrahamic covenant, to produce the fruits of that righteousness required by the Mosaic, then, as another has beautifully expressed it, "delighting in the law of the Lord and meditating therein day and night, in their condition they should assuredly have been "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in his season, whose leaf doth not wither and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Canaan would then, indeed, have verified the description of "a land flowing with milk and honey." But alas, the law was despised, discipline was neglected, self-will and self-pleasing were rampant, and consequently, famines, pestilences, and wars, frequently became their portion.

Just in proportion as practical holiness disappeared from Israel's midst, so was there a withdrawal of God's blessing. Israel's history in Canaan never presented anything more than a most faulty display of that righteousness and prosperity which, like twin sisters, should have accompanied them all through their course. Yet again, we would point out that Israel's failure by no means signified that the plan of the Almighty had been overthrown. So far from that, if the reader will turn to and glance at Deuteronomy 28 and 32, he will find that the Lord Himself *predicted* the future backslidings of the people, and from the beginning announced the sore afflictions which should come in consequence upon them. Thus, coincident with the birth of the covenant, intimations were given of its imperfect

nature and temporal purpose. It was made clear that not through *its* provisions and agencies would come the ultimate good for Israel and mankind.

But it is high time that we now pointed out, second, wherein the *types* under the Mosaic economy prepared the way for the dawn of Christianity. A large field is here before us, but its ground has been covered so thoroughly by others that it is not necessary to do more than now call attention to its outstanding features. Ere doing so, let us again remind the reader that the Old Testament types were divinely designed to teach by way of *contrast*, as well as by comparison—the recognition of this important principle at once refutes the God-insulting theory that the types were defective and often misleading. The reason for this should be obvious—the Antitype far excelled the types in value—God is ever jealous of the glory of His beloved Son, and to Him was reserved the honour of producing and bringing in that which is perfect.

First, let us notice the special and *peculiar relation which Israel sustained to the Lord*. They were His chosen people and He was their God in a way that He was the God of no others. It was as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as the children of promise, that God dealt with them from the beginning, see Exodus 2:24-25 and 6:5. It was in fulfillment of His holy promise to Abraham that “He brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness” (Psa 105:43) from the cruel bondage of the land of Egypt—this basic fact must be steadily borne in mind when pondering all of God’s subsequent dealings with them. Therein we find a perfect foreshadowment of God’s dealings with His people today—each of them receives mercy on a covenant basis—the everlasting covenant made with Christ—and on the ground of it are they delivered from the power of Satan and translated into the kingdom of Christ.

Second, what we have just said above supplies the key to our right understanding of the *typical significance* of God’s giving the Decalogue to Israel. The revelation of law at Sinai did not come forth in independence of what had preceded, as if it were to lay the foundation of something altogether new. It did not proceed from God considered simply as the Creator, exercising His prerogative to impose commands on the consciences of His creatures, which with no other helps and endowments but those of mere nature, they were required with unfailing rectitude to fulfill. The history of Israel knows nothing of law in connection with promise and blessing. It was as *the Redeemer* of Israel that God announced the Ten Words, as being in a special sense “the LORD thy God” (Exo 20:2), proclaiming Himself therein to be the God of “*mercy*” as well as holiness (Exo 20:5-6), and recognising their title to the inheritance of Canaan as His own sovereign gift to them (Exo 20:12).

The law, then, was not given to Israel as a deliverer from evil, nor as the bestower of life. Its design was not to rescue from bondage, nor found a title to the favour and blessing of JEHOVAH, for all that was *already* Israel’s, see Galatians 3:16-22. “So that grace here also took precedence of law, life of righteousness;

and the covenant of law, assuming and rooting itself in the prior covenant of grace [the Abrahamic] only came to shut the heirs of promise up to that course of dutiful obedience toward God, and brotherly kindness toward each other, by which alone they could accomplish the higher ends of their calling. In *form* merely [viz., the law now given as a covenant] was there anything new in this, not in *principle*. For what else was involved in the command given to Abraham, ‘I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect’ (Gen 17:1)—a word which was comprehensive of all true service and righteous behaviour.

“But an advance *was* made by the entrance of the law over such preceding calls and appointments, and it was this—the obligation to rectitude of life resting upon the heirs of promise was now thrown into a categorical and imperative form, embracing the entire round of moral and religious duty; yet, not that they might by the observance of this work themselves into a blissful relation to God, but that, as already standing in such a relation, they might walk worthy of it, and become filled with the fruits of righteousness, which alone could either prove the reality of their interest in God, or fulfill the calling they had received from Him” (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874).

Therein we have a striking exemplification of the relation which the law sustains to the people of God in all dispensations, most blessedly so in this Christian era. In every dispensation, God has first revealed Himself unto His people as the Giver of life and blessing, and then as the Requirer of obedience to His commands. Their obedience, so far from entitling them to justification, can never be acceptably rendered until they *are* justified. All the blessings of Israel were purely and solely of grace, received through faith. And what is faith but the acceptance of heaven’s gifts, or the trusting in the record wherein those gifts are promised? The order of experience in the life of every saint, as it is so clearly set forth in the epistle to the Romans (summed up in 12:1), is first participation in the divine mercy, and then, issuing from it, a constraining obligation to run in the way of God’s commandments.

How could it be otherwise? Surely it is not more obvious than that it is impossible for fallen and depraved creatures, already lying under the divine condemnation and wrath, to *earn* anything at God’s hands, or even to perform good works acceptable in His sight, until they have become partakers of His sovereign *grace*. Can they, *against* the tide of inward corruption, against the power of Satan, and the allurements of the world, and against God’s judicial displeasure, recover themselves and set out on a journey heaven-wards, only requiring the aid of the Spirit to *perfect* their efforts? To suppose such an absurdity betrays an utter ignorance of God’s character in reference to His dealings with the guilty. If He “spared not his own Son” (Rom 8:32), how shall He refuse to smite thee, O sinner! But blessed be His name, He can, for His Son’s sake, bestow eternal life and everlasting blessing on the most unworthy—but He *cannot* stoop

to bargain with criminals about their acquiring a title to it, through their own defective services.

Third, if the circumstances of God's placing Israel under the law typified the fact that it was *not* given to *un*-redeemed sinners in order for them to procure the divine favour, on the other hand, it is equally clear that it exemplifies the fact that *the redeemed are placed under the law*—otherwise, one of the most important of all the divine transactions of the past (Exo 19) would have no threat bearing upon us today. The Christian *needs* the law. First, to subdue the spirit of self-righteousness. Nothing is more calculated to produce humility than a daily measuring of ourselves by the exalted standard of righteousness required by the law. As we recognise how far short we come of rendering that unremitting love demanded, we shall be constantly driven out of self unto Christ. Second, to restrain the flesh and hold us back from lawlessness. Third, as a rule of life, setting before us continually that holiness of heart and conduct which, through the power of the Spirit, we should be ever striving to attain.

Should it be objected—But the believer has perfect freedom, and must not be entangled again in the yoke of bondage. The answer is, Yes, he is “free *to righteousness*” (see Rom 6:18), he is free to act as a *servant* of Christ, and not as a lord over himself. Believers are not free to introduce what they please into the service of God, for He is a jealous God, and will not suffer His glory to be associated with the vain imaginations of men. They are free to worship Him only in spirit and in truth. “The freedom of the Spirit is a freedom only within the bounds of the law” (Patrick Fairbairn). Subjection to the law is that which alone proves our title to the grace which is in Christ Jesus. None has any legitimate ground to conclude that he has savingly trusted in the Saviour, unless he possesses a sincere desire and determination of heart to serve and glorify God. Faith is not a lawless sentiment, but a holy principle, its sure fruit being obedience. Love to God ever yields itself willingly to His requirements.

But let us now observe a conspicuous *contrast* in the type. At Sinai, God said “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed [as enunciated in the Ten Words], and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people...ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exo 19:5-6). There was a *contingency*—Israel's entering into those blessings turned upon *their* fulfillment of the condition of obedience. But the terms of the “new covenant,” under which Christians live, are quite otherwise. Here there is *no* contingency, but blessed certainty, for the condition of it was *perfectly fulfilled by Christ*. Hence God now says, “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that *they shall* not depart from me” (Jer 32:40), and, “I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye *shall* keep my judgments, and do *them*” (Eze 36:27). Therein we may adore God for the antitype excelling the type—the IF concerning Israel being displaced by His SHALL.

Yet in concluding our consideration of this branch of the subject, let us say very emphatically, that the only ones who are entitled to draw comfort from those precious “shalls” of God, are they who correspond to the characters described in the immediate context. Jeremiah depicts them as those in whose hearts God puts His holy “fear.” If, then, the fear of God is not in me, if I do not stand in awe of His majesty, and dread a despising of His authority, then I have no reason to conclude that I am numbered amongst those to whom the promises belong. Ezekiel describes those who “shall keep God’s judgments and do them,” as they from whom He takes away the stony heart and gives a heart of flesh. If, then, my heart is unresponsive to the divine voice and impenitent when I have disregarded it, then I am not one of the characters there delineated. Finally, God says of them “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts” (Heb 8:10). If, then, I do not “*delight* in the law of God after the inward man” and “*serve* the law of God” (Rom 7:22, 25), then I have no part or lot in the better covenant.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

13. Its Process

Notwithstanding the *judicial* death of the Christian’s old man and all his sins in the death of Christ (Rom 6:6; 1Pe 2:24), and notwithstanding that a real foundation of universal mortification is laid in the believer’s first conversion (by conviction of sin, humiliation for it, and the forsaking of it), yet his indwelling corruptions so remain and work in the best of Christians that, the constant mortification of sin is, all their days, incumbent upon them. Mortification, then, is a life-long continuance of our initial repentance, which included hatred of sin, sorrow for sin, confession of sin, and turning away therefrom, and, if these were really sincere, then a *continued opposition* to all the solicitations of the flesh, the devil and the world, must ensue. “Mortify” means put to death—to slay an enemy is to destroy the principle of all his vigour and power, so that he cannot exert or put forth any actings of his own.

The subjugation of indwelling sin, so that it may not have power to bring forth the works of the flesh, is the constant duty of the believer. The health and comfort of his spiritual life depends thereon. He must be daily killing sin or it will kill 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); “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: *lest* that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1Co 9:27). The solemn alternatives presented in these passages are too plain to be misunderstood. Nor is their point to be dulled by pitting against them the truth of the final preservation of the believer. These passages are to be taken at their face value, for there is no conflict between them

and any others. Believers are preserved in the paths of righteousness and God has nowhere promised to secure any soul which sports with sin.

This work of mortification is a *very difficult one*, especially considering the prevalence of corruption and the multitude of temptations we are exposed to, the subtlety and watchfulness of Satan, who goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, the treachery of our own hearts, that are so prone to depart from God, the instability of our resolutions and the fickleness of our affections, the ceaseless efforts made by our corruptions to gain the advantage over us. O the deceitfulness and wickedness of our hearts, to call evil good and good evil, to represent such things as harmless and not displeasing to God, when really they are most injurious to us and offensive to Him. O the blindness of our sin-darkened understandings, to lead us into mistakes both as to the matter of sin and duty, and to persuade us those things will issue well that prove bitterness in the end. O the perversity of our wills, in walking contrary to God.

Now it is *this* which renders it so essential that we make a right use of those methods which God has prescribed for the mortification of sin, the chief of which is the denying of self and the taking up of our cross. And that is to be done *daily*, see Luke 9:23. We would advise those who have access to the complete works of Bunyan to read this piece, “*Instruction for the Ignorant*” and especially the section on “Self-denial.” It is in the form of questions and answers. We give a brief excerpt. “Q, If a man carrieth himself well outwardly, so that he doth not dishonour the Gospel before men, may not this be counted self-denial? A, No, If he be not right at heart, 1 Samuel 16:7. He that makes not daily conscience of self-denial is very unlikely to abide a disciple in times of persecution. Q, Who are they that *indulge* their lusts? A, They that make provision for them, either in apparel, diet, or otherwise, Romans 13:12-14, Isaiah 3:6-21, Amos 6:3-6. Q, Who else do? A, They that heap to themselves such teachers as favour their lusts.

“Q, Who else indulge their sins? A, They that choose rather to walk by the imperfect lives of professors, rather than by the holy Word of God, or those what make the miscarriages of some good men an encouragement unto themselves to forbear to be exact in self-denial. Self-denial is one of the distinguishing marks by which Christians are manifested from the feigned ones—for those that are feigned flatter God with their mouths, but their hearts seek Him not, but the sincere, for the love that he hath to Christ, forsaketh all that he hath which is opposed to Him, Psalm 78:36-37; Ezekiel 33:31-32.” It is because of the extreme difficulty of the work of mortification that Christ bids those contemplating discipleship to “sit down first and count the cost” (see Luk 14:28). Nevertheless, we must settle it in our minds that, either we must fight sin, or be eternally lost.

Mortification, then, is not optional, but an imperative necessity. Sin indwells us to the end, and it is ever lusting and labouring to bring forth the deeds of the flesh. Therefore no indulgence is to be shown it—the axe must be laid to the root of the tree. Dangerous enemies are to be grappled with promptly and no quarter shown

them. One reason why God has given His children a new nature is that they may have within them a principle which is opposed to sin, and *not to employ it* in resisting sin is to neglect that excellent succour which God has granted us against our greatest foe. “Not to be daily mortifying sin, is to sin against the goodness, kindness, wisdom, grace, and love of God, who has furnished us with a principle of defying it” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

But alas, we are living in a day when mortification has well-nigh disappeared among those who bear the name of Christ. Carnal ease rather than striving against sin, self-gratification instead of self-denial, is the order of our perverse generation. Preachers and professing Christians generally now hold such a perverted concept of God’s grace and mercy, that they are able to digest sin without any bitterness of soul, which shows they are rotten at heart. Rightly has it been said that, “To use the blood of Christ—which is given to cleanse us, the exaltation of Christ—which is to give us repentance (Act 5:31), the doctrine of grace—which teaches us to deny all ungodliness (Ti 2:11-12), to *countenance sin*, is a rebellion that in the issue will break the bones.”

It is not without good reason that God has expressed this duty of opposing sin and curbing its power by “mortification” or putting to death. There is something peculiar therein beyond any other duty. There is intimated a great contest of sin for the preservation of its life. Every creature will do its utmost to preserve its being, and sin is no exception. Sin cannot be vanquished, my reader, by gentle taps or half-hearted efforts to subdue it. The subjugation of indwelling sin is also likened unto “crucifixion” (Gal 5:24) and *that* is a most painful process. And note that in Galatians 5:24, the apostle does not say “they that *believe* Christ was crucified for them, are his,” but only they who experience the efficacy of His sufferings in subduing their evil lusts. This duty is also likened to a cutting off of right hands and plucking out of right eyes. It is the difficulties and severities of mortification which constitute the narrowness of that “way which leadeth unto life” (Mat 7:14), for it shuts out the unbridled indulgence of sinful affections.

“If they that be Christ’s have crucified the flesh, then the number of real Christians *is very small*. It is true, if all that *seem* to be meek, humble, and heavenly, might pass for Christians, the number would be great, but if no more must be accounted Christians than those who *crucify the flesh*, with its affections and lusts, O how small is the number! For O how many there be under the Christian name that pamper and indulge their lusts, that secretly hate all who faithfully reprove them, and really love none but such as feed their lusts by praising and admiring them. How many that make provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts, who cannot endure to have their corruptions crossed. How many are there that seem very meek and humble until an occasion be given them to stir up their passion, and then you shall see in what degree they are mortified—the flint is a cold stone till it be *struck* and then it is *all fiery*. I know the best of Christians are mortified but in part, and strong corruptions are oftentimes found in the most

eminent, but they love them not so well as to defend and countenance them, nor dare they secretly hate such as faithfully reprove them, as many thousands that go under the name of Christians *do*” (John Flavell, 1650).

But difficult as this work may be, and few as there are that set themselves to it, real Christians are not left to themselves therein, “*The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities*” (Rom 8:26), and therefore do we read, “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). How clearly that shows the inseparable connection (of means and end) there is between mortification and life. Let it also be remarked that the term “body” in the second clause corresponds to “the flesh” in the first, and “deeds” here are the same as “works” in Galatians 5:19, some of which are internal others external. But let it be carefully noted that it does not say, “If the deeds of the flesh be mortified in you through the Spirit,” but “if ye do mortify!”

“We must not dream of a mortification to be wrought in us without our consent or endeavours, as well whilst we are asleep as when we are waking, as if it were wrought in our cradles or whilst we were passing our days in childhood’s play and pastime; or shall be done in our ripe age without any careful watch over our works and thoughts; or it may be by a sluggish wish or slothful prayer, as if this would mortify sin. No, all renewed ones must address themselves to the work; the flesh must be mortified, and mortified it must be *by us*, through the Spirit, if we would cherish the hope of life. The Spirit alone giveth victory, but *we* must be *active* in it, for His grace and powerful work do not license us to be idle, but calleth for an assiduous, diligent, and faithful use of means” (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677). To the same effect wrote another renowned Puritan, when treating of mortification under the figure of “purging” used by Christ in John 15:2-3.

“In this work of mortification, considered thus in the progress of it, *we are not mere passives*—as at that final finishing of it and carrying away all sin at death we are, and are at that first beginning of it in the new birth—but therein we are ‘workers together with God.’ We being purged from sin as the body is by physic from poisons—though the physic work, yet *nature joins with the physic*, being quickened and helped by it to cast out the poisons. For give a dead man physic and it carries not any poisons away. So as those means whereby God purgeth us are not to be imagined to do it as mere physical agents, like as the pruning-hook cuts off branches from a tree, or as when a surgeon cuts out dead flesh. But these means do it by stirring up our graces, and by setting our thoughts, faith, and affections a-work, and so God assisting with the power of Christ’s death, He doth purge us daily. It is certain that unless *our thoughts work upon the means*, as well as the means work upon us, and so do mingle themselves with those means, that unless faith and Christ’s death be mingled in the heart, it purgeth not. And therefore it is said that we ‘purge ourselves,’ 2 Timothy 2:21; 1 John 3:3” (Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680, Vol. 3, p. 475).

The influence of the blessed Spirit upon the principle of grace in the believer is absolutely necessary unto the mortification of sin. The flesh needs no external influence to excite it to action. It is at all times capable of exerting itself without assistance from without. But not so with indwelling grace—it is entirely dependent on God to strengthen and move it, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God” (2Co 3:5). It is the Spirit who maintains in the believer a realisation of the sinfulness of sin, without which we would never be in earnest in opposing it. It is the Spirit who suggests to the mind considerations and motives unto watchfulness against Satan’s encroachments and rouses us to endeavours against our evil lusts. He it is who makes us sensible of temptations, warns us against them, and often grants strength to resist them. He causes us to meditate upon the sufferings of Christ for our sins, and stirs us up to strive against them.

Though the utter destruction of sin in him is to be the believer’s aim, so that it shall no more hold any residence in his heart, yet in this life such success is never fully accomplished. It was the apostle’s consuming desire to be “made conformable unto Christ’s death, if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection from the dead” (see Phi 3:10-11), that is, so deny the lust of the flesh as to perfectly and wholly walk in newness of life. But he at once added, “*Not* as though I had already attained, either were already perfect,” (Phi 3:12) which at once gives the lie to all claiming “sinless perfection” in this life. Nevertheless, he continued “but I *follow after*.” He still earnestly pursued his quest, and as his “if by any means” indicates, exerted all his faculties and followed out all the methods God has appointed for our fighting against sin. This brings us to speak more definitely on the means and methods of mortification.

If indwelling sin is to be subdued by the Christian, if temptations are to be successfully resisted, then he must, first, make a real effort daily to maintain in his mind a constant sense of the heinousness of sin, as being that abominable thing which God hates. The believer will never put forth his utmost endeavours against it while he regards sin lightly. Second, he must strive to keep his conscience under the awe of God, for this is the great preventative against sin, without which all other external rules and helps signify nothing, for “by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil” (Pro 16:6). Third, there must be a diligent watching against the occasions of sin, against those things which excite our corruptions, and tempt us to wrongdoing. Let those who are really concerned turn up and ponder the following passages: Job 31:1; Psalm 18:23; Proverbs 4:14-15, and 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; Jude 1:23. It is our disobedience to these precepts which accounts for much of our failure.

Fourth, see to it that you do not give sin an advantage by making provision for its lusts. How diligent we are in this respect over the body. If there be any constitutional weakness, how carefully we guard against it—shame on us that we are less diligent about our souls. Fifth, form the habit of nipping sin in the bud,

resisting its first risings—that is more than half the battle—to *promptly* heed the convictions from the Spirit. Sixth, train the mind to dwell upon the enormity of sin—the fearfulness of its guilt, the horribleness of its defilement, and think of what it cost Christ to make atonement for it. Seventh, let there be frequent self-examination as to our motives and ends, and to discover what most absorbs our hearts. Eighth, deep humility for past sins begets hatred of sin and caution against it, see 2 Corinthians 7:11.

Ninth, spare no pains to nourish and develop those graces which are the opposites of your besetting sins—pride is weakened by cultivating humility, uncleanness by purity of mind and conscience, love of the world by heavenly mindedness. Tenth, make yourself willing to be reprov'd for your faults, Psalm 141:5. Eleventh, meditate often upon the vanity of the creature and the transitoriness of all earthly pleasures—the sweetest enjoyments this world has to offer are but fading flowers and withering grass. Twelfth, cry mightily unto God for restraining grace, Psalm 19:13. Appropriate such promises as Micah 7:19 and Romans 6:14. Plead the blood of Christ for victory. Thirteenth, seek to get chastisements and afflictions sanctified unto your souls, Isaiah 27:9; Hebrews 12:11. Finally, beg the Spirit to teach you to “Put on the whole armour of God” (Eph 6:10-18). We have covered much ground in these fourteen points and they need to be carefully pondered if they are to be made real helps in this work.

In bringing this article to a close we offer a few suggestions on *the evidences* of a mortified heart, for that is a matter of deep concern to renewed souls, unto whom it frequently appears that sin completely fills and dominates their hearts, and who feel that if their resistance to indwelling corruption is anything more than a mere pretence, it is certainly unavailing and a total failure. Satan will frequently tell the Christian that he might as well seek to subdue the wind or reverse the action of the tides, as expect to overcome the evil inclinations of the flesh. Satan will taunt him with his defeats, assure him he is waging a losing battle, and bid him give up the hopeless fight. But success is *not* the true criterion—*sincerity*, genuine desires, and faithful efforts are the determining factors as to whether or not we are really engaged in this protracted and painful work.

First, genuine tenderness of conscience as to all known sins is a sign that sin does not have dominion in the soul. It is a great mercy to have a heart that smites us for things which others do not regard as sinful, to have a heart that admonishes us for secret faults is proof that sin is loathed by us, “what I hate, that do I” (Rom 7:15). Second, “The sincere and earnest desires of our souls to God in prayer for heart-purging and sin-mortifying grace, is a good sign our souls have no love for sin. Canst thou say, poor believer, in the truth of thy heart, that if God would give thee thy choice, it would please thee better to have *sin cast out*, than to have the world cast in, that thy heart is not so earnest with God for daily bread, as it is for heart-purging grace?” (John Flavell, 1630-1691).

Third, honest efforts to guard against the occasions of sin and a daily attempt to preserve the heart from Satan's incursions, argue a purpose to mortify sin. Fourth, thankfulness to God when His providences cross our worldly and evil desires, blocks the actual commission of sin, manifests that sin is hated and not loved—such was the case with David, 1 Samuel 25:33. Fifth, bitter grief over failure, mourning when sin has overcome you, is clear evidence of a mortified heart. Sixth, the holding of earthly things lightly and valuing them cheaply, is another mark of a mortified heart. The unregenerate set a high price on worldly possessions and carnal pleasures, for their hearts are completely wedded to material and outward things, but the regenerate set their affections on spiritual and heavenly objects. Seventh, contentment with the position and portion God has allotted in this life, is another fruit of mortification, for such an one can genuinely pray, "Give me neither poverty nor riches" (Pro 30:8).

That aspect of our subject which we are now dealing with is of great practical importance and value, for the more thorough be the mortification of our lusts, and the clearer the evidence of the same, then the stronger and brighter the assurance of our interest in and union with Christ. Note how the Spirit has joined the two things together in Galatians 5:24! The proof that we are Christ's is that we have crucified the flesh. This does *not* mean that the flesh is now dead or that it has improved any, but that we are engaged in seeking to put it *to* death. Among further evidences of this process, we name the following. The degree of our mortification may be ascertained by the extent of our self-denial. A deeper insight into *spiritual* corruptions and a striving against them. A *spiritual* appetite for the Word—not an intellectual curiosity. Shame over our previous performances and attainments—i.e., over wasted opportunities and half-hearted efforts.

PRESERVING GRACE

A few remarks seemed called for upon the article in the preceding issue under this title. The subject of *suicide* is, admittedly, not a pleasant one, and to a few of our readers, probably most painful. We do not expect to return to it again, but ere turning away therefrom desire to throw further light from Scripture thereon, for there are many in this evil day harbouring most God-dishonouring ideas on the matter. Human reasoning in such things is quite worthless—an appeal to carnal sentiment, which is the recourse of the worldling, should not satisfy a child of God. "To the law and to the testimony" (Isa 8:20) must ever be the demand of those who desire to see things in the divine light. The unerring Word of truth is the final court of appeal to which every problem and question must be submitted. Nor will an appeal thereto be in vain, if we set aside our own preconceptions and prejudices, and approach it in an humble, reverent, and expectant spirit.

Let us put the question in its strongest form—is it possible for a real Christian, under the pressure of sore trial and protracted trouble, for his mind to give way, and in a fit of madness take things into his own hands, and make an end of his earthly sufferings? Or take another case. Insanity sometimes assumes the form of religious melancholia. A person so afflicted often resembles very closely a child of God under deep convictions of sin, which even a minister of Christ may regard as the beginnings of a genuine work of grace in the soul. But the sequel is staggering. Instead of that seeming soul-travail being followed by a happy deliverance, tumult and sorrow giving way to peace and joy, the subject of that melancholia lays violent hands upon himself. And then it is that a false charity so often steps in, and with the desire to comfort the bereaved survivors, it is said that such an one *was* a regenerate soul, but his mind becoming unhinged, and he no longer responsible for his actions, ended his life.

How hard the flesh will appeal for a favourable verdict in such a case! How loath and slow the poor relatives are to submit unto the decision of God's infallible Word. The writer has personally met with those concerning whose spirituality he entertained no doubts, for they appeared to have the hall-mark of the new birth plainly stamped upon them. Even so, we cannot read the heart, and none can say what natural effects a religious training will produce. If the eleven apostles were deceived by Judas, need it be cause for surprise if the best taught and most deeply-experienced ministers should sometimes err in their estimate of others today? "The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2Ti 2:19) implies that often *we do not*. There is only One who is endowed with omniscience, and He is very jealous of His glory, and therefore does He often stain our pride by making us conscious of *our* fallibility.

But though it be human to err, the Holy Scriptures make no mistakes, and it is by them that this issue is to be decided, for the more our minds be regulated by their teaching, the more shall we be found "thinking God's thoughts after Him." When, then, some insist that a real child of God *may* lay suicidal hands upon himself, we ask, *Where is Scripture* in support of such a horrible affirmation? And the answer is, there is none. Surely this is sufficient to settle the matter for all those who be in subjection to the authority of God. As Mr. Hunt so plainly pointed out, Samson certainly was not guilty of this enormous sin. Instead, he died as a godly hero for the good of Israel. It is to be carefully noted that the life of Samson ended by his calling upon the Lord! His last act is one of *prayer*, and it was in direct answer thereto that supernatural strength was granted unto him, so that "the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life" (Jdg 16:28, 30).

There is more than one instance of suicide recorded in the Bible, and most solemn and instructive is their testimony. There are three cases in all, and each of them was that of a professor, who belonged externally to the people of God, but in none of them can it be fairly shown that he was a regenerated soul. The first was

Saul, the apostate king. It is true that for a brief season he seemed to run well, but the evil spirit which troubled him, his rank disobedience to the Lord, his murderous designs upon David, and his consulting with the witch of Endor, all clearly marked him out as a son of Belial, before he took his own life (1Ch 10:4). The second was Ahithophel, who basely deserted David and befriended Absalom in his insurrection (2Sa 17:23). The third was Judas, the traitorous apostle, who, though he deceived his fellows, was denominated by Christ as “a devil” (Joh 6:70). Rightly has it been said, “These stand forth as so many monuments of the power of Satan, the strength of despair, and the indignation of the Almighty.”

This, in itself, is quite sufficient in our judgment to settle the matter—the only ones mentioned in Scripture who directly took their own lives, were not believers, but *unbelievers*! Let the reader carefully ponder that fact. But that is negative evidence. The positive, as we shall see, is equally conclusive. But before weighing that, perhaps a word or two should be said upon what the Spirit has chronicled about Jonah, for the nearest approach to a saint actually committing suicide is his, for he distinctly bade the sailors in the ship “take me up, and cast me forth into the sea” (Jon 1:12). But observe, first, that was designed for *their* good, “*So shall the sea be calm unto you!*” Second, Jonah did not himself jump overboard. Third, as in the case of Samson, the providence of God had designed that he should be a remarkable type of Christ. Finally, remember that God *miraculously delivered him*, as though to show us that He will not, under any circumstances, suffer one of His own to destroy himself.

The same feature appears most conspicuously in the case of Job. In addition to what was said thereon by Mr. Hunt, it may be pointed out, first, that the situation of that patriarch was a most desperate one and his sufferings almost unprecedented. Second, he was tempted, yea urged by his wicked wife, to resort unto extreme measures, “Curse God, and die” (Job 2:9). Third, poor Job ardently longed for death, as that which would put a happy end to his miseries. This is clear from his own words, “O that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off” (Job 6:8-9)—recorded, we need hardly say, for our admonition, and not for our imitation. Fourth, yet though he was peeved at death’s delay, and fretful because life still remained in him, nevertheless the fact remains that *he did not* destroy himself. The Lord’s qualification to Satan—“Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life” (Job 2:6)—makes it clear that while He allows the devil to sorely buffet a saint, he cannot take his *life*.

“Is suicide *a sin*, or not? Is rebellion a sin, unbelief a sin, despair a sin? then suicide must be a sin of sins, for it is the last fruit, the highest top and summit of those sins. Can a man who commits it be said to die in faith, or hope, or love? Where is receiving the end of faith, the salvation of the soul (see 1Pe 1:9), if a man die in unbelief, as a suicide must do? How can his hope be “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast” (Heb 6:19) if it break in the storm? And where is love,

when he bids defiance to the Almighty by breaking through the bounds of life and death which He has set up? Evidently he dies in sin, and in a sin for which he can have no repentance, for he cuts himself off from repentance by that same act by which he cuts himself off from life” (J. C. Philpot, 1802-1869, Gospel Standard, 1861).

How each of us, then, needs to earnestly pray, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe!” (Psa 119:117). It is naught but sovereign grace which maketh any of us to differ. Probably there are very few Christians but at one time or other seriously pondered suicide, yet the Lord in His covenant-faithfulness either renewed their graces, changed their intentions, or thwarted their efforts—as He did more than once with the hymn-writer of blessed memory, W. Cowper. And to those Christians who are fearful lest such a terrible ending as suicide should be their lot, we close by reminding them of the sure promises of the preserving hand of the Most High over His saints. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD *delivereth him* out of them *all*” (Psa 34:19). “Who are *kept* by the power of God through faith unto salvation” (1Pe 1:5).

“He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not” (1Jo 5:18). These are strong testimonies to show that JEHOVAH will not allow Satan to prevail over any of His chosen ones.



May

THE SPIRIT CONFIRMING

In view of the preceding articles on the Spirit *preserving*, there was really no need for us to take up another aspect of the subject which so closely approximates thereto. Yet a little reflection has persuaded us that it may be wise to do so. Some of our readers are fearful that the editor wavers on the blessed truth of the eternal security of the Christian. Some Arminians, because of our strong emphasis upon the absolute supremacy and sovereignty of God and the total impotency of fallen men unto holiness, have charged us with denying human responsibility, when the fact is that we go much farther than they do in the holding and proclaiming of man's accountability. On the other hand, some Calvinists, because we insist so emphatically and frequently on the imperative necessity of treading the Highway of Holiness in order to escape the everlasting burnings, have questioned our soundness on the final perseverance of the saints—when probably, as our article on Suicide shows, we believe this truth *more fully* than they do. Very few today hold the balance of the truth.

That which we now desire to contemplate is the blessed Spirit viewed under the metaphor of an “*earnest*.” This term is used of Him in the following passages, “Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2Cor 1:22); “Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit” (2Cor 5:5); “After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” (Eph 1:13-14). The figure is taken from an ancient custom (which is by no means obsolete today) of the method used in the clinching of a commercial bargain or compact. The seller agrees to make delivery at some future date of what has been agreed upon, and as a *guaranty* of this the purchaser receives an “earnest,” that is, a sample or token, an insignificant installment, of what has been contracted for.

An “earnest,” then, *supposes a compact* wherein two parties are agreed, the one who is ultimately to come into possession of what has been agreed upon being given a token of the other's good faith that he will abide by the terms of the bargain. It is a part of the price given beforehand, to assure the one to whom the

“earnest” is given that at the appointed season he shall receive the whole of that which is promised. Now the right which the believer has to eternal life and glory comes in a way of *compact* or covenant. On the one side, the believer agrees to the terms specified (the forsaking of sin and the serving of the Lord), and yields himself to God by repentance and faith. On the other side, God binds Himself to give the believer forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith. This is clearly enough stated in, “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; *and* I will [then] make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David” (Isa 55:3)—upon our hearty consent to the terms of the Gospel, God engages Himself to bestow upon us those inestimable blessings secured for His people by the spiritual or antitypical David.

An “earnest” *intimates there is some delay* before the thing bargained for is actually bestowed—in the case of goods, deliverance at once is not agreed upon, in the case of property, possession is not immediately entered into. It is for this reason that the token of good faith or preliminary installment is given, because the promised deliverance is deferred, possession being delayed for a season, an “earnest” is bestowed as a pledge or confirmation of what is to follow. Now as soon as the believer really enters into covenant with God, he has a right to the everlasting inheritance, but his actual entrance into full blessedness is deferred. God does not remove us to heaven the moment we believe, any more than He brought Israel into Canaan within a few days after delivering them from Egypt. Instead, we are left for a while in this world, and that for various reasons—one among them being, that we may have opportunities for exercising faith and love—faith in “*looking for* that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Ti 2:13), hope in *longing*, “ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, *waiting for* the adoption” (Rom 8:23).

An “earnest” is *a part*, though only a very small one, *of the whole* that has been agreed upon. If a contract was made for the delivery of a sum of money on a certain date, then a trifling installment thereof was given. If it were the transfer of a piece of land, then a square of turf was cut and handed to its future possessor, that being a symbolic guarantee to assure him during the interval of waiting. So too, those comforts which the Spirit communicates to believers are the same in kind as the joys of heaven though they are vastly inferior in their degree. The saving gifts and graces of the Spirit are but a small beginning and part of that glory which shall yet be revealed in and to us. Grace is glory begun, and they differ from each other only as an infant does from a fully matured adult. Holiness or purity of heart is a pledge of that sinless estate and full conformity to Christ which is promised the Christian in the future. That present loosing of our bonds, is but a sample of our perfect and final freedom.

An “earnest” is given *for the security* of the party who receives it and not for the benefit of him that bestows it. He who gives the earnest is legally bound to

complete his bargain, but the recipient has this guarantee in hand for the confirming and comforting of his mind while he is waiting, it being to him a tangible pledge and sample of what as yet is only promised. Here again we may see the aptness and accuracy of the figure, for the spiritual earnest which Christians receive is given solely for *their benefit*, for there is no danger whatever of backing out on God's part. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, *we* might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Heb 6:17-18)—and this because believers commonly are assailed by many doubts and fears.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

113. The Christian's Altar (13:10)

There is a saying that "a man usually finds what he is looking for," and there is a sense in which that principle holds good of not a little consulting of the Scriptures. Various kinds of people approach the Scriptures with the object of finding something in them which will countenance their ideas, and no matter how foolish and far-fetched those ideas may be, they generally succeed in locating that which with some degree of plausibility supports them—that is why the scoffer will often counter a quotation from God's Word with, "O you can prove anything from the Bible." It matters not to those who are determined to procure "proof" for their vagaries, that they "*wrest*" the Scriptures (2Pe 3:16) either by detaching a sentence from its context and giving it a meaning quite contrary to its setting, or by interpreting literally that which is figurative, or giving a figurative meaning to that which is literal.

Not only does practically every professedly Christian sect make a show of producing Scriptural warrant for its peculiar beliefs and practices, so that Universalists, Annihilationists, Seventh-day Adventists, quote a list of texts in proof of their errors, but others who do not claim to be "Christian" appeal to the Bible in support of their delusions. It would probably surprise some of our readers did they know how artfully (but wickedly) Spiritists juggle with Holy Writ, appearing to adduce not a little in favour of clairvoyance, clairaudience, trance-speaking, etc., while Theosophists have the gall to say that reincarnation is plainly taught in the Bible; all of which goes to show how fearfully fallen man may abuse God's mercies and profane that which is most sacred.

Nor are Romanists any exception. It is commonly supposed that they have very little concern for Scripture, buttressing their superstitions by an appeal to tradition and ancient customs. It is true that the rank and file of the Papists are deprived of

the Scriptures and are satisfied with “the authority of the church,” as sufficient justification for all they believe and do, but it is a big mistake to suppose that her officers are incapable of making a Scriptural defence of their positions. The writer of this article discovered that more than a quarter of a century ago, in his first pastorate. Situated in a mining-camp in Colorado, the only other “minister” in the country was a Romish priest, with whom we got acquainted. He volunteered to give us Scripture for every Popish dogma and practice, and when we put him to the test (as we did, again and again), were amazed and awed by the subtle manner in which he mis-“appropriated” the Word. It was then we learned the uselessness of “arguing” about divine things.

The above thoughts have been suggested by the opening words of our present passage, “We have *an* altar” (Heb 13:10). Most fearfully has this clause been perverted by those who have given it a meaning and put it to a use wholly foreign to the design of the Spirit in the passage from which it is taken. Deceived by the mere sound of words, the affirmation has been boldly made that not only did the Israelites in Old Testament times have a literal and material altar, but that “we,” Christians, also “have,” by divine appointment, “an altar” that is, a material one of wood and stone, and hence the “altar” and “high altar” in many “Protestant churches.” But an altar calls for a *sacrifice*, and hence the invention of “the mass” or “unbloody sacrifice of the flesh and blood of Christ” offered by the priests. Many who do not go this far, insist that the table used for the celebration of the Lord’s supper should be designated an “altar” and suppose that our text authorises them therein.

That such a conception as the one we have just mentioned is utterly groundless and erroneous may quickly be demonstrated. In the first place, whatever be signified by the “altar” in our passage, it is manifestly opposed to, set in contrast from, the visible and material altar of Judaism, so much so that they who officiated at the latter were debarred from feasting on the former. In the second place, the Jewish altar, like everything else in the tabernacle, was a shadow or type, and surely it would be placing a severe strain upon the imagination to conclude that the brazen altar of old was but a figure of a table now used in our “churches”! Third, sufficient has been advanced by the apostle in the preceding chapters to make it unmistakably plain that Christ Himself—in His person, office, and sacrificial work—is the antitype and substance of all the tabernacle types! Finally, the Spirit Himself has made it quite clear that our “altar” is a *spiritual* one, and that the “sacrifice” we are to offer thereon is a *spiritual* one, see verse 15.

“We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle” (Heb 13:10). In seeking to ascertain the meaning of this verse, which has needlessly perplexed and been made the occasion of much profitless controversy, it will greatly simplify the expositor’s task if he bears in mind that the primary aim of the Spirit throughout this epistle is to set forth the transcendent excellency of Christ over all persons through whom God had, in times past,

spoken unto men, and in the vast superiority of His office and work over all the institutions which had foreshadowed them under the old covenant. As the incarnate Son, He is infinitely above all prophets and angels (chapters 1 and 2). Moses, “the servant *in* the house of God” retires before the presence of Christ, “the Son *over* his own house” (chapter 3:6). So in regard to all the Mosaic institutions—*Christ* fulfills everything which they prefigured,

This is quite an elementary truth, yet is it one of basic importance, for error at this point produces most pernicious and fatal consequences. The entire system of worship that JEHOVAH appointed for Israel was of a typical character, and the reality and substance of it all is now found in Christ. *He* is “the great high priest” of whom the priests under the law, Aaron himself not excepted, were but faint adumbrations. His very body is “a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands” (Heb 9:11). *His* was the sacrifice which fully and forever accomplished that which all the Levitical offerings proclaimed as necessary to redemption, but the repetition of which clearly testified they had never effected. In like manner, Christ is the grand *Antitype* of all the sacred vessels of the tabernacle—He is the true Brazen-altar, Laver, Golden-altar of incense, Candlestick, Table of shewbread, Mercy Seat, and Ark of the Covenant.

That the Lord Jesus *is* Himself the antitype of “the altar of burnt offering” appears by comparing two of His own declarations, “Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?” (Mat 23:19); “And for their sakes I *sanctify myself*” (Joh 17:19). Both “the altar that sanctifieth the gift” and “the gift” itself *meet in* Him—just as both the officiating priest and the sacrifice which he offered find their fulfillment in Him. It seems strange that some able writers have quite missed the point of Matthew 23:19 when dealing with its fulfillment and realization in the Lord Jesus. They have made “the altar” to be the wooden cross to which the Saviour was nailed and that mistake has laid the foundation for a more serious error. No, “the altar” on which “the gift” was laid pointed to the divine dignity of Christ’s glorious *person*, and it was that which gave infinite worth to His sacrifice. It was for this very reason the Spirit dwelt at such length upon the unique glory of Christ’s person in the earlier chapters of this epistle, *before* He opened to us His sacrificial work.

What has just been pointed out above supplies the key to many a lovely Old Testament type. For instance, we are told that, “Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar” (Gen 8:20). Very blessed is that. The *first* act of Noah as he came forth from the ark onto the purified earth was not to build a house for himself, but to erect that which spoke of the person of Christ—for in all things He must have the pre-eminence. On that altar, Noah expressed his thanksgiving by presenting his burnt offerings, teaching us that it is only by Christ we can acceptably present to God our sacrifice of praise (Heb 13:15). And we are told that Noah’s offering was “a sweet savour unto the LORD” (see Gen 8:21), and then we

read, “and God *blessed* Noah and his sons (Gen 9:1),” for all blessing comes to us through Christ.

“And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him” (Gen 12:7). That was equally blessed. This was the *first* act of Abraham after he had left Chaldea, and then Haran where his progress had been delayed for a season, and had now actually entered Canaan. The Lord appeared to him here, as He had first done in Ur, and made promise of the land unto him and his seed, and his response was to set up an altar. And again we read, “And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD” (Gen 12:8). How significant! Bethel means “the house of God,” while Hai signifies “a heap of ruins.” It was *between them* that Abram pitched his tent—emblematic of the pilgrim character of the saint while in this world, and erected his altar—symbol of his dependence upon and worship of God. It was to this same altar he returned after his failure in going down into Egypt, Genesis 13:3-4.

Of Isaac we read, “And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD” (Gen 26:25). How beautifully that brings out another aspect of our type—here the “altar” is the place of prayer, for it is only in the name of Christ—the antitype of the altar—that we can present our petitions acceptably to God. Of Jacob we read, “And he erected there an altar, and called it Elelohe-Israel (God, the God of Israel)” (Gen 33:20). That was immediately after his divine deliverance from Esau and his four hundred men—intimating that it is in and by Christ the believer is eternally *secure*. Of Moses we read, that he “built an altar, and called the name of it JEHOVAH-nissi (The-LORD-Is-My-Banner)” (Exo 17:15). That was after Israel’s victory over the Amalekites—denoting that it is only by Christ that believers *can overcome* their spiritual enemies. “And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill” (Exo 24:4)—only by Christ is the law magnified and honoured.

But it is more especially upon the brazen altar in the tabernacle that our attention needs to be concentrated. A description of it is supplied in Exodus 27:1-8, though other passages should be carefully compared. This altar occupied a place of first importance among the seven pieces of the furniture in the tabernacle, for it was not only the largest of them all—being almost big enough to hold the others—but it was placed “before the door” (Exo 40:6), just inside the outer court (Exo 40:33), and would thus be the first object to meet the eye of the worshipper as he entered the sacred precincts. It was made of wood, but overlaid with brass, so that it could withstand the action of fire, which was burning continually upon it (Lev 6:13). To it the sinner came with his divinely-appointed sacrifice, wherein the innocent was slain in the place of the guilty. At this altar, the high priest officiated on the great day of atonement (Lev 16).

The brazen altar was the way of approach to God, for it was there that the Lord promised to meet with His people, “*There I will meet with the children of Israel*” (Exo 29:43). How that reminds us of the Saviour’s declaration “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Joh 14:6)! This altar was really the basis of the whole Levitical system, for on it the burnt offering, meal offering, peace offering, and sin offering were presented to God. Blood was put upon its horns, sprinkled upon it, round about it, and poured out at its base. It was the chief connecting-link between the people and JEHOVAH, they being so identified with it that certain parts of the offerings there presented to Him were eaten by them, and hence we read, “Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices *partakers* of the altar” (1Co 10:18).

This was an altar for all Israel—and for none else!—and their jealousy was promptly stirred if anything seemed to interfere with it. A striking illustration of this is found in Joshua 22. There we read that the two and a half tribes whose inheritance lay on the far side of Jordan erected an altar—“a great altar to see to” (Jos 22:10). When the other tribes heard of this, they were greatly alarmed and severely censured them, for it appeared to deny the unity of the nation and to be a rival unto the altar for all the people. They were only satisfied when the Reubenites assured them that they had *not* built this altar by the Jordan to offer sacrifices thereon, but for a *witness* (Jos 22:27), declaring, “God forbid that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn this day from following the LORD, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for meat offerings, or for sacrifices, besides the altar of the LORD our God that is before his tabernacle” (Jos 22:29).

We may see again the prominent place which was given to the altar by Israel in the days of Ezra, for when they returned from the captivity, it was the *first* thing they set up—thus signifying they could not approach God or be connected with Him on any other ground. “Then stood up Jeshua [Joshua] the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God” (Ezr 3:2).

In view of its significance, its importance, its hallowed associations, one can readily imagine what it meant to a converted Jew to abandon the altar of Judaism. Unto his unbelieving brethren, he would necessarily appear as a renegade of his fathers, an apostate from God, and a fool to himself. Their taunt would be—In turning your back upon Judaism you have lost everything, you have *no* altar! Why, you are worse off than the wretched Samaritans, for they *do* have a place and system of worship on mount Gerizim, whereas you Christians have *nothing*! But here the apostle turns the tables upon them. He affirms that not only do we “*have* an altar,” but it was one which those who still identified themselves with the temple and its services had no right to. In turning from Judaism to Christ, the believing Hebrew had left the shadow for the substance, the figure for the

reality—whereas those who despised and rejected Christ merely had that which was become “weak and beggarly elements “(Gal 4:9).

The sad failure of the great mass of the Jews, under the Gospel-preaching of the apostles, to turn their affections unto things above, where Christ had passed within the veil, and their stubbornness in clinging to the tangible system at Jerusalem, was something more than a peculiarity of that nation—it exemplified the universal fondness of man for that which is material in religion, and his disrelish of that which is strictly *spiritual*. In Judaism, there was much that was addressed to the senses, herein too lies the power and secret of Rome’s success—the strength of its appeal to the natural man lies in its sensuous show. Though Christians have no visible manifestation of the divine glory on earth to which they may draw near when they worship, they do have access to the throne of grace in heaven; but it is only the truly regenerate who prefer the substance to the shadow.

“We have an altar” (Heb 13:10). Our altar, unlike that of Judaism’s, is inside the veil, “whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus” (Heb 6:20), after that He had appeared here upon earth to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. To the Christian comes the blessed exhortation, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let *us* draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Heb 10:19-22). What a marvel of mercy, what a wonder of grace that poor fallen sinners, through faith in Christ’s blood, may come into the presence of God without a fear! On the ground of Christ’s infinite merits, such are *welcome* there. The presence of Christ on high is the proof that our sins have been put away, and in the joyous consciousness thereof we may approach God as worshippers.

But the special aspect in which our text sets forth Christ as “the altar” of His people, is to present Him as the One who furnishes them with that *spiritual* meat which is needed for nourishment and sustenance in their worship and service. The apostle had just said, “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with *grace*; not with *meats*, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein” (Heb 13:9), and when he now adds “we have an altar” (Heb 13:10), his obvious meaning is—we have in Christ the true altar, which supplies us with “grace,” that better food which really establishes the heart before God. In other words, the Holy Spirit here explains and declares the fulfillment of those words of Christ’s, “My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him” (Joh 6:55-56).

Let us now consider our verse a little closer in the light of its immediate context—that there *is* an intimate connection between them is obvious, for in verse 9, the apostle had spoken of “meats” and here he still refers to “eating”! Of the one, he had affirmed they “profited not,” concerning the latter, he mentions those

who have “no right” thereto. Over against the “meats which profited not,” he had set that “grace” which establishes the heart, and now he contrasts “the altar” from the defunct figures of Judaism. As we have shown in last month’s article, to have the heart “established with grace” (Heb 13:9) signifies two things—first, to be so weaned from self-righteousness and creature dependence as to clearly apprehend that salvation from start to finish is of the unmerited and unconditional favour of God. Second, to have the Spirit so shine upon His work within that as we diligently examine the same and carefully compare it with the experience of saints as described in the Scriptures, we may be definitely assured that we are born of God.

Having affirmed the vast superiority of the heart being established with grace over being occupied with “meats”—which expression referred directly to the Mosaic distinctions between clean and unclean articles of diet, but in its wider signification was a part put for the whole ceremonial system—the apostle now declares that the Christian is provided with far more excellent food for the soul. The striking force of this is only apparent by a careful study of the Levitical types and by closely following the apostle’s argument in the verses which immediately succeed our text. The Jewish altar had not only typed out Christ offering Himself as a sacrifice to God for the sins of His people, but it had also foreshadowed Him as *the life-sustenance* of the true worshippers of God. How remarkably full were the Old Testament types, and how much we lose by ignoring the same and confining our reading to the New Testament—no wonder so much in Hebrews seems to be obscure and of little interest to the Gentile.

Of many of the offerings which were laid on the tabernacle altar, only parts of them were consumed by the fire, the remaining portions being reserved *as food* for the priests, or for the offerer and his friends—this food being regarded as particularly sacred, and the eating of it as a great religious privilege. For instance, we read, “This is the law of the meat offering: the sons of Aaron shall offer it before the LORD, before the altar. And he shall take of it his handful, of the flour of the meat offering, and of the oil thereof, and all the frankincense which is upon the meat offering, and shall burn it upon the altar for a sweet savour, even the memorial of it, unto the LORD. And *the remainder* thereof shall Aaron and his sons eat: with unleavened bread shall it be eaten in the holy place” (Lev 6:14-16). “This is the law of the trespass offering: it is most holy....Every male among the priests shall eat thereof....And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is offered” (Lev 7:1, 6, 15). “And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave offerings...In the most holy place shalt thou eat it: every male shall eat it: it shall be holy unto thee” (Num 18:8, 10).

But the Christian has spiritual food far more holy and precious than any Israelite ever had, or even Aaron the high priest was permitted to taste. *Christ* is our food, the “Bread of life” (Joh 6:35) to our souls. He is not only our sacrifice

but our sustenance. He has not only propitiated God, but He is the nourishment of His people. It is true that we should by faith, feed upon Him when remembering His death in the way appointed, yet there is no reference in our text to “the Lord’s supper,” nor is “the Lord’s table” ever called an “altar” in Scripture. Moreover, it is our blessed privilege to feed upon Christ not only at “Communion seasons,” but constantly. And herein appears again the immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism. Israel according to the flesh partook only of the symbols, whereas we have the Reality. They had only certain parts of the offerings—as it were the crumbs from God’s table, whereas we feed with Him on the fatted calf itself. They ate of the sacrifices only occasionally, whereas Christ is our daily food.

“We have an altar” (Heb 13:10) namely, Christ, and He is the only altar which *God owns*, and the only one which must be recognised by us. For almost nineteen centuries—since God employed the Romans to destroy Jerusalem—the Jews have been without an altar and are so to this day. For Romanists to *invent* an altar, and make it both the foundation and centre of their entire idolatrous system, is the height of presumption, and a fearful insult to Christ and the sufficiency of His sacrifice. If those “which serve the tabernacle” (Heb 13:10)—they who continued officiating at Jerusalem in the days when the apostle wrote this epistle—had “no right” to “eat” of the Christian’s altar, that is, enjoy and derive benefit from the person and sacrifice of Christ, then, how much less have the pope and his satellites any title to the benefits of Christ while they so wickedly usurp His place and prerogative. That the Lord Jesus Himself *is* our “altar” as well as interceding High Priest also appears from, “Another angel [Christ as ‘the angel of the covenant’] came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne” (Rev 8:3)!

THE LIFE OF DAVID

65. His Misjudging Mephibosheth

“It is human to err.” True, yet that does not excuse it, especially where a fellow-mortal is unjustly condemned by us. Appearances are proverbially deceptive. We need to get beneath the surface in order to form a right estimate. Gossip is never to be credited, in fact should not be heeded at all. Only from the mouths of two or more reliable witnesses is an accusation against another to be given a hearing. Even then there must be a fair trial accorded, so that the one accused may know what he is charged with, and have opportunity to defend himself and refute the charge. Only arrant cowards stab in the back or under the cover of darkness. A safe rule to be guided by is never to say anything behind a person’s back which you would be afraid to say and are not prepared to

substantiate before his face. Alas, how commonly is that rule violated in this evil day! How ready people are to imagine and believe the worst, rather than the best of others—few have escaped this infection.

“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (Joh 7:24). The setting of those words is worthy of note. The Lord Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath day, and His enemies—ever seeking some pretext to condemn Him—were angry. He had flagrantly disregarded their dicta—He had acted at complete variance with *their* ideas of how the Sabbath should be kept holy. Therefore they at once jumped to the harsh conclusion that the Redeemer had desecrated the Sabbath. Christ pointed out that their verdict was both an arbitrary and superficial one. Circumstances alter cases—as the circumcising of a child on the Sabbath, if that were the eighth day from its birth, showed (Joh 7:23). It is the motive which largely determines the value of an act and it is sinful to guess at the motives of others. Moreover, the reign of law must not be suffered to freeze the milk of human kindness in our veins, nor make us impervious to human suffering.

“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (Joh 7:24). Is not this a word which is much needed today by both writer and reader? There is a twofold danger to be guarded against. First, to form too favourable a judgment of people, particularly of those who profess to be Christians. Words are cheap and gushiness is never a mark of reality. That a man calls himself a Christian, and sincerely thinks himself to be so, does not make him one. The fact that he is a great reader of the Bible, a regular attendee of religious services, and is sound in his morals, is no proof that he has been born again. “Lay hands suddenly on no man” (1Ti 5:22). Look for the marks of regeneration and be satisfied you have found them, before you address any one as a brother or sister in Christ. It is our own fault if we are imposed upon by wolves in sheep’s clothing.

On the other hand, there is just as real a danger of forming too harsh a judgment of people and imputing to hypocrisy what is genuine. A man is not to be made an offender for a word, nor does he deserve to be snubbed, because he fails to fawn upon and flatter you. We must not expect everybody to pronounce *our* shibboleths or see eye to eye with us in everything. A kindly heart often beats beneath a gruff exterior. A babbling brook is very shallow, but still waters run deep. Not all are endowed with five talents. Others may not have had the same opportunities and privileges you have enjoyed. Let not a single action alienate a friend. Bear in mind the general tenor of his conduct towards you. Be as ready to forgive as you desire to be forgiven. Remember there is still much in you which grates upon others. When wronged, *pray over it* before you pass a verdict. Many a person has afterwards bitterly regretted a hasty decision. Take *all* the circumstances into account and “judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”

We have begun this article thus, because the passage we are about to consider (2Sa 16:1-4) shows us David grievously misjudging one who was affectionately

attached to him. David was unwarrantably influenced by “appearances.” He gave ear to an unconfirmed slander against an absent one. He at once believed the worst, without affording the accused any opportunity to vindicate himself. It was one to whom David had shown much kindness in the past, and now that a servant brought to him an evil report, the king accepted the same, concluding that the master had turned traitor. It is true that human nature is lamentably fickle, and that kindness is often rewarded with the basest of ingratitude, yet all are not unthankful and treacherous. We must not allow the wickedness of some to prejudice us against all. We should deal impartially and judge righteously of everyone alike. Yet only divine grace—humbly and earnestly sought—will enable us to remain just and merciful after we have been deceived and wronged a few times.

Later, David discovered that he had been deceived (2Sa 19:24-30) and was obliged to reverse his harsh verdict, but this did not alter the fact that he had grievously misjudged Mephibosheth and had harboured unjust prejudices against him. And this incident, like many another narrated in Holy Writ, is recorded, my reader, for *our* learning and warning. We are prone to misjudge even our friends, and because of this, are in danger of crediting false reports about them. But there is no reason why we should be deceived, either for or against another, “He that is spiritual discerneth all things” (1Co 2:15 margin). Ah, *there* is the seat of our trouble—it is because we are so unspiritual that we so often judge according to the appearance, and not righteous judgment. A jaundiced eye is incapable of seeing things in their true colours. When the regenerate walk after the flesh, they are just as liable to be imposed upon as are the unregenerate. And this, as we shall see, was the cause of David’s sad error.

“And when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him” (2Sa 16:1). The topographical reference connects with 15:30 and 32. On leaving Jerusalem, David and his little band had crossed the Kidron, and ascended Olivet. They were making for Bahurim (2Sa 16:5), which was a low-lying village in the descent from Olivet to the Jordan. Ultimately, they pitched camp at Mahanaim, on the far side of the Jordan (2Sa 17:24). Thus it will be seen that they were passing through that portion of the land which was allotted to the tribe of Benjamin (see Jos 18:11-28), which was the territory of Saul’s tribe, and *that* was surely dangerous ground for him to tread! This is the first point for us to carefully weigh, for it is one of the keys which opens to us the inner significance of our present incident.

There is nothing meaningless in God’s Word, even the geographical details often contain deeply important instruction, pointing valuable spiritual lessons, if only we take the trouble to search them out. This is what we have to do here, for the Holy Spirit has given us no direct hint that the direction which David was now taking furnishes a clue to his subsequent conduct. In making for the territory of Saul’s tribe, David was (typically) entering upon *the enemy’s* ground—should the reader deem this a rather far-fetched conclusion on our part, we would ask him to

note that in the verse which immediately follows our present passage, we are plainly told that there came out “a man of the family of the house of *Saul*...and *cursed*” (2Sa 16:5) David! Surely that was the devil as a “roaring lion” raging against him. Now to come onto the enemy’s ground, my reader, is to give him an “advantage of us” (2Co 2:11), and that is to come under his power—and when under his power, our judgment is blinded, and we are quite incapable of judging righteously.

But there is another little detail here, a confirmatory one, which is necessary for us to observe, if we are to view this incident in its true perspective. Our passage opens with the word “And,” and common-place and trivial as that may appear, yet it is a vital link in the chain of thought we are now endeavouring to follow out. That “And” tells us we must *connect* what is recorded at the beginning of chapter 16 with that which is narrated at the close of 15. And there, as we saw in last month’s article, David was guilty of dishonest subterfuge, counseling the priests to feign themselves the faithful servants of Absalom, when in reality they were David’s spies. Therein the king was manifestly acting in the energy of *the flesh*, seeking by his own carnal efforts to “defeat the counsel of Ahithophel” (2Sa 15:34), instead of leaving it with the Lord to answer his prayer to that end (2 Sa 15:31).

Here, then, is vitally important practical teaching for you and me, dear reader. If *we* are not to be misguided by superficial appearances and are to judge “righteous judgment,” then we must *avoid* these mistakes that David made. The two small details we have dwelt upon above, explain why he so grievously misjudged Mephibosheth. If, then, we are to have clear discernment, which will preserve us from being deceived by glib-tongued imposters and taken in by apparent acts of kindness toward us, we must walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh, and tread the paths of righteousness and not get onto the enemy’s territory. “He that is spiritual discerneth all things” (1Co 2:15)—yes, the “spiritual,” and not the carnal. As we have said above, it is our *own* fault if we form a wrong judgment of others—due to making the mistakes David did. “If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” (Mat 6:22).

“And when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine” (2Sa 16:1). Those who have not followed us throughout this series of articles should turn to 2 Samuel 9, where not a little is recorded of these two men. Mephibosheth was the grandson of Saul, the arch-enemy of David, yet to him David showed great kindness because he was the son of Jonathan (2Sa 4:4), with whom David had made a covenant that he would not cut off his kindness to his house forever (1Sa 20:11-17). In 2 Samuel 9, we read, “The king called to Ziba, Saul’s servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master’s son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house. Thou therefore, and thy

sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread alway at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants" (vv. 9-10).

Ziba, then, was a man of some importance, for he had twenty servants, yet both they and his sons were commanded to serve Mephibosheth. This it is which explains his conduct in our present incident. Ziba was not content to be manager of the considerable estate of Mephibosheth, but coveted to be master of it, and covetousness is ever the mother of a brood of other sins. It was so here. So carried away was he by his evil lust, Ziba scorned not to resort to the basest treachery. He concluded that now was a favourable opportunity for furthering his base design. Having laid his plans with serpentine cunning, he put them into execution, and apparently with success. But "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment" (Job 20:5) and so it proved in this case.

Ziba was determined to procure from David a royal grant of his master's estate, and then, whether David or Absalom prevailed in the present conflict, his desire would be secured. To obtain that grant two things were necessary. First, Ziba himself must obtain favour in the king's eyes, and second, Mephibosheth must be brought into decided disfavour. The opening verse shows the measure Ziba took to accomplish the first. He met the fugitive king and his band with an elaborate present. It was well-timed and appropriately selected. Ziba posed as one who was not only loyal to David's cause, but as very solicitous of his welfare and comfort. But as Thomas Scott says, "Selfish men are often very generous in giving away the property of others for their own advantage." Looking at this detail from the divine side of things, we may see here the mercy of God in providing for His own, as He ever does—even though He employs the *ravens* to feed them!

"And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these?" (2Sa 16:2). David was habitually cautious, and at this critical juncture he had need to be doubly so. His own spoilt son had risen up against him, securing a large following, and when such a one as Ahithophel had gone over to his side, the king knew not whom he could trust. Yet, while this sad situation warranted the utmost caution, it certainly did not justify a readiness to believe the worst of everybody—there is a happy medium between losing all confidence in human nature, and having such a blind trust in men that any charlatan may impose upon us. David did not, then, immediately accept Ziba's present, but issued this challenge—was it a subtle trap or the liberality of a generous man kindly disposed toward him?

"And Ziba said, The asses be for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink" (2Sa 16:2). This was the means used by this wretched Ziba to ingratiate himself with David, "A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men" (Pro 18:16). Rightly did Matthew Henry ask, "Shall the prospect of advantage in the world, make men generous to be *rich*; and

shall not the belief of an abundant recompense in the resurrection of the just, make us charitable to the *poor*?" Surely *that* is the practical lesson for us in this verse, "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations" (Luk 16:9).

"And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, Today shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father" (2Sa 16:3). Having wormed himself into the king's heart—for being so largely swayed by his emotions, David was peculiarly susceptible to kindness—Ziba now undertook to blacken the character of his master and turn David utterly against him. He represents Mephibosheth as ungrateful, treacherous, and covetous. How often masters and mistresses suffer unjustly from the lies of their servants! "A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment" (Pro 17:23). "It is true indeed that David did not *know* that Ziba was wicked. His unexpected kindness came at a time when almost every other hand was either paralysed by terror or else armed against him in active enmity. No doubt at such a moment, it required great self-possession to pause, and to withhold the tongue from rashly pronouncing judgment. But David was a king and it behooved him to be wisely cautious" (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899).

"Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth" (2Sa 16:4). David credited the foul calumny and without further inquiry or consideration condemns Mephibosheth, seizes his lands as forfeited, and makes a grant of them to his servant. What a solemn warning is this for us! What pains we should take to confirm what we hear, and thus arrive at the real truth of things. As an old writer quaintly said, "God has given us *two* ears that we may hear *both* sides." But sooner or later the truth *will* come to light, as it did in this case. When at last David returned in triumph to Jerusalem, Mephibosheth met him and had opportunity to vindicate himself. How bitterly must the king have then regretted his hasty verdict and the cruel wrong he had done him by crediting such vile reports against him!

"And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight my lord, O king" (2Sa 16:4). Yes, words are cheap, and backbiters are generally flatterers. But note well that Ziba *did not accompany* the fugitive king! No, he thought too much of his own skin for that, and was determined to be on the safe side, no matter what should be the outcome of Absalom's rebellion. "Anxious apparently lest he should suffer if Absalom were to succeed, he seems to have retired to Shimei and the Benjamites, to secure his interests with them; for he was found, when the king returned, in the train of Shimei—that same Shimei who had cursed David" (B. W. Newton). Thus, when David arrived back again in Jerusalem, Ziba was in the ranks of the king's enemies!—whereas Mephibosheth was among his most loyal subjects.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

5. *The Siniatic*

Continuing our survey of the *typical teachings* of the Mosaic economy as they anticipated and prepared the way for the establishing of Christianity, we note, fourth, the *corporate character of Israel*. This was a distinct line in the typical picture, and a feature in marked advance of anything that had preceded. Under the previous covenants, God treated only with particular persons, and throughout the history associated therewith everything was peculiarly individualistic. But at Sinai, the Lord established a formal bond between Himself and the favoured nation. It was then, for the first time, that we see the people of God in an *organized* condition. It is true that they were divided into twelve separate tribes, yet their union before God was most blessedly evidenced when the high priest, as the representative of the whole nation, ministered before JEHOVAH in the holy place with their names inscribed on his breastplate.

Israel, in their national capacity, was a people set apart from all others, and the degree in which they fulfilled the end of their separation foreshadowed the church of God, the true kingdom over which the Messiah presides. Vain indeed is the claim of any church or collection of churches, any party or “assemblies,” that *it* or *they* are either the antitype or the “representation” of the true church, though this arrogant pretension is by no means confined to the Roman hierarchy. The purest churches on earth are but most imperfect shadows of that true kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness. “The true antitype is the ‘church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven’ (Heb 12:23)—that willing and chosen people, the spiritual seed of Abraham, of whom Christ is the Head, in whose character the law will be perfectly transcribed, and who will be all righteous, not in profession merely, but in fact” (John Kelly).

That church will only be revealed in its corporate character or collective capacity when Christ comes the second time “without sin unto salvation” (Heb 9:28), to conduct them to that inheritance which He hath prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Yet it is in the New Testament, in those Scriptures which more especially pertain to the Christian dispensation, that we find the clearest and fullest unfolding of the people of God in their *corporate* character. It is there that the Body of Christ—the sum total of the elect, redeemed, regenerated people of God of *all* ages—is revealed as the object of His love and the reward of His sacrificial work. Though Christian churches are in nowise the antitype of the Commonwealth of Israel, nor the prototype of the church in glory, yet in proportion as they *are* “Christian,” they supply a continuous testimony to the practical separation of God’s people from this present evil world.

Fifth, the representation given of the blessed *truth of sanctification*. Though justification and sanctification cannot be separated, yet they may be distinguished—that is to say, though these divine blessings always go together, so

that those whom God justifies He also sanctifies, still they are capable of being considered singly. When this be essayed, then they should be taken up in the order wherein they are presented to us in the epistle of the Romans. In chapters 4 and 5, the apostle expounds the doctrine of justification, in chapters 6 to 8, he treats of various aspects of sanctification. This same order is observable in connection with the covenants—under the Abrahamic, the blessed truth of justification received clear illustration (Gen 15:6, under the Sinaitic, the equally blessed truth of sanctification was plainly demonstrated. The same order is also exemplified in Israel's own history. They had been redeemed from Egypt *before* the great transaction at Sinai took place.

Now in order to the practice of true holiness there must be a deliverance from the power of Satan and the dominion of sin, for none are free to serve God in newness of spirit until they have been emancipated from the old bondage of depravity. Thus, the deliverance of Israel from the serfdom and slavery of Pharaoh laid the necessary foundation for them to enter the service of JEHOVAH. The grace which makes believers free from the dominion of sin supplies the strongest argument and motive imaginable to resist and mortify sin, and the greatest obligation to the practice of holiness. Most vividly was this adumbrated in JEHOVAH's dealings with the seed of Abraham, who had for so long groaned in the brick-kilns of Egypt. The gracious deliverance from their merciless taskmasters placed them under deep obligations to render a grateful obedience to their Benefactor, which He accordingly emphasised in His preface to the ten commandments.

That which occurred at Sinai typified *the sanctification of the church*. The first words JEHOVAH addressed to Israel after they had reached the holy mount were, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and *brought you unto myself*" (Exo 19:4). Here was their relative or *positional* sanctification. Israel had not only been separated from the heathen, but they were taken into a place of nearness to the Lord Himself. Then followed, "Now therefore if ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant...ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and *a holy nation*." Next, Moses was bidden to "Go unto the people, and *sanctify* them today and tomorrow, and let them *wash* their clothes" (Exo 19:10). Here there was a prefiguration of *practical* sanctification. In giving to them the law, God provided Israel with *the rule* of holiness, the standard to which all conduct is to be conformed. Finally, in sprinkling the blood upon the people (Exo 24:8), there was shadowed forth that which is declared in, "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might *sanctify* the people with his *own blood*, suffered without the gate" (Heb 13:12).

Sixth, *the teaching of the tabernacle* and the ceremonial institutions. And here we must distinguish between God's immediate design in connection with them and their ultimate purpose. The significance of the tabernacle and its worship can only be rightly understood when we apprehend the place given to it in connection

with the ceremonial law. And as we have shown in a previous article, the ceremonial law can only be understood when we clearly perceive its *subordination* to the moral law. The ceremonial law was an auxiliary of the moral, and the Levitical institutions were, in their primary aspect, *an exhibition* (by means of symbolical rites) of the *righteousness* enjoined in the decalogue, by which the heart might be brought into some conformity therewith. Only by a clear insight, then, into the prior revelation of the decalogue and of the prominent place it was designed to hold in the Mosaic economy, are we prepared to approach and consider that which was merely supplementary thereto.

It is failure to observe what has just been pointed out which leads to regarding the tabernacle and its service as *too exclusively typical*, causing recent writers to seek therein an adumbration of the person and work of Christ as the only reason for the things belonging thereto. This is not only a mistake, but it ignores the key to sound interpretation, for only as we perceive the *symbolical* design of the Levitical institutions are we prepared to understand their *typical* purport. The more fully the ceremonial parts of the Mosaic legislation were fitted to accomplish their prime end of enforcing the requirements of the decalogue—setting forth the personal *holiness* it demanded and supplying the means for the removal of unholy pollutions—the more must they have tended to fulfil their *ultimate* design—by producing convictions of sin and by testifying to the defilement which it produced, the heart was prepared *for Christ*!

The sanctuary is not only called “the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation” (Exo 40:2, 32, etc.) or as the Hebrew more literally signifies “the tent of meeting,” but also “the tabernacle of the testimony” (Exo 38:21, etc.) or “the tabernacle of witness” (Num 17:7-8). The “witness” there borne, conspicuously and continually, had respect more immediately to the ineffable holiness of God, and then by necessary implication to the fearful sinfulness of His people. The tables of stone in the ark “testified” to the righteous demands of the former, while they also witnessed in a condemnatory manner unto the latter. Thus, the “meeting” which God’s people were to have with Him in His habitation was not simply for fellowship, but it also bore a prominent respect unto *sins* on their part (against which the law was ever testifying) and the *means* provided for their restoration to His favour and blessing.

“By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:20) and Israel’s sense of their shortcomings would be in exact proportion to the insight they obtained of its true spiritual meaning and scope. The numerous restrictions and services of a bodily kind which were imposed by the Levitical statutes, as they all spoke (symbolically) of holiness and sin, so where their voice was honestly listened to, must have produced deeper impressions of guilt. “The law entered, that the offence might *abound*” (Rom 5:20), for while the ceremonial statutes were bidding men abstain from sin, they were at the same time multiplying the occasions of offence. They made things to be sins which were not so before, or in

their own nature—as the prohibition from certain foods, the touching of a carcass, manufacturing the anointing oil for personal use, etc., etc.—thus it *increased* the number of transgressions and the burden upon the conscience.

Two things were thus outstandingly taught the Israelites. First, the ineffable holiness of God and the exalted standard of purity up to which He required His people to measure. Second, their own utter sinfulness, continually failing at some point or other to meet the divine requirements. To the thoughtful mind it must have appeared that there was a struggle which was continually being waged between God's holiness and the sinfulness of His creatures. And what would be the immediate outcome? Why, the oftener they were oppressed by a sense of guilt, the oftener would they resort to the blood of atonement. Necessarily so, for until sin was remitted and defilement removed, they could not enter the holy habitation and commune with the Lord. How strikingly all of this finds its counterpart in the experience of the Christian! The more he is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the more does he perceive his vileness and what a complete failure he is, and then the more is he made to appreciate the precious blood of Christ which “cleanseth from all sin.”

Having viewed the tabernacle as “the tabernacle of *witness*” (Num 17:7), a brief word now on it as “the tent of *meeting*.” It was the place where God met with His people, and where they were permitted to draw nigh unto Him. This received its *typical realisation*, first in Christ personally, when He became “flesh, and dwelt among us” (Joh 1:14), for in Him “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col 2:9). But second, it finds its realisation in Christ mystical, for as the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ, so again He dwells in the church of true believers as His “fullness” (Eph 1:23). The dwelling of God in the man Christ Jesus was not for Himself alone, but as the Medium of intercourse between God and the church, and therefore is the church called “the house of God” (1Ti 3:15) or “an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph 2:22). Thus the grand truth symbolized of old in the tabernacle and temple receives its antitypical realization not in Christ apart, but in Christ as the Head of His redeemed, for through Him they have access to the Father Himself.

Seventh, *the significance of the promised land*. Canaan was the type of heaven, and therefore the constitution appointed for those who were to occupy it, was framed with a view of rendering the affairs of time an image of eternity. The representation was, of course, imperfect, as was everything connected with the Mosaic economy, and rendered the more so by the failure of the people. Nevertheless, there was a real and discernible likeness furnished of the true, and it had been far more so had Israel's history approximated more closely to the ideal. Canaan was (as heaven is) the inheritance and home of God's redeemed. It was there JEHOVAH had His abode. It was the place of life and blessing (the land of “milk and honey”) (Exo 3:17), and therefore death was regarded as abnormal and

treated as a pollution. The inheritance was inalienable or untransferable, for if an Israelite sold his land, it reverted back to him at the Jubilee.

“Canaan stood to the eye of faith the type of heaven, and the character and condition of its inhabitants *should have presented the image* of what theirs shall be who have entered on the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. The condition of such, we are well-assured, shall be all blessedness and glory. The region of their inheritance shall be Immanuel’s land, where the vicissitudes of evil and the pangs of sufferings shall be alike unknown—where everything shall reflect the effulgent glory of its divine Author and streams of purest delight shall be ever-flowing to satisfy the souls of the redeemed. But it is never to be forgotten that their condition shall be thus replenished with all that is attractive and good, because their character shall first have become *perfect in holiness*. No otherwise than as conformed to Christ’s image can they share with Him in His inheritance” (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874). Hence, God’s demand that Israel should be a holy and obedient people, and hence their banishment from Canaan when they apostatised.

In concluding this article, let us pause and admire *that wondrous commingling* of justice and mercy, law and grace, holiness and leniency, which was displayed throughout the Mosaic economy. This marvel of divine wisdom, for there is nothing that can be compared with it in all the productions of man, appears at almost every point. We see it in the “adding” of the Sinaitic covenant to the Abrahamic (Gal 3:19), for whereas “promises” predominated in the one, *precepts* were more conspicuous in the other. We see it in God’s delivering Israel from the bondage of Egypt and then taking them into His own service. We see it in the giving of the ceremonial law as a supplement to the moral. We see it in the fact that, while the Levitical institutions were constantly emphasising the purity which JEHOVAH required from His people, condemning all that was contrary thereto, yet means were provided for the promotion of the same and the removal of impurities. The whole is well summed up in, “The law was given that grace might be sought; grace was given that the law might be fulfilled” (Augustine, St., 354-430).

The entire ritual of the annual day of atonement (Lev 16), which manifested the ground on which JEHOVAH dwelt in the midst of His people—the maintenance of *His* honour and the removal of *their* guilt—made it very evident that sin is a most solemn and serious matter, and that there was no hope for the guilty except on a footing of pure grace. Yet it just as clearly demonstrated the fact that sovereign mercy was exercised in a way that conserved *the supremacy of the law*. What else was the obvious meaning of Aaron’s sprinkling the blood of atonement upon the very cover of the ark wherein were preserved the tables of stone (Lev 16:14)? Each time Israel’s high priest entered the holy of holies, the people were impressively taught that, in the enjoyment of their national privileges, their sinful condition was not lost sight of, and that it was in no disregard of the

law that they were so highly favoured, for its just demands were satisfied by the blood of an innocent victim. Thus, the true object of all God's gracious conduct toward His people was to make them holy, delighting, after the inward man, in His law.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

12. Its Process

At the beginning of the March article, we pointed out that by the *process* of sanctification we mean the principal actings of those who have already been manifestatively set apart by God unto Himself and for Himself. It is with the experimental and practical side of the subject that we are now treating, with that which is the sequel to regeneration, namely, God's sustaining and developing the nature or principle communicated at the new birth, and the believer's co-operation with Him therein. In other words, it is the spiritual growth of the babe in Christ we are here concerned with, more especially as that growth follows the twofold process of mortification and vivification—the mortifying of the old nature and the vivifying of the new. Having devoted the last two months' articles to the former, we now turn to a consideration of the latter.

It has already been pointed out that the two different actings of the Christian in mortification and vivification are *not* so distinct that the one can go on independently of or at a distinct time from the other, for the one necessarily accompanies the other. Nevertheless, in explaining that twofold process of the believer's experimental sanctification or spiritual growth, they need to be separately expounded. The *order* in which we should consider them is obvious—we must die to sin (relatively speaking) before we can (in any measure) live to God. The privative must precede the positive—disease must be subdued before health can be enjoyed. The lamp must be cleansed before its light can shine forth clearly. Rags must be discarded before new apparel is put on. This order is uniformly insisted on throughout the Scriptures. Let the following passages be taken as examples.

“Cease to do evil” comes before “learn to do well” (Isa 1:16-17). “Hate the evil, and love the good” (Amo 5:15). The latter is impossible without the former. Self must be denied before Christ can be followed (Mat 16:24). “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God” (Rom 6:13). “He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them” (2Co 5:15). We have to cease living unto self ere we can live unto Christ—yea, we must be “crucified with Christ” before we can live by faith (Gal 2:20). The putting off of the old man precedes the putting on of the new (Eph 4:22-24). We have to be made

conformable to Christ's death ere we can attain unto spiritual resurrection (Phi 3:10-11). Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts comes before living soberly and righteously (Ti 2:12). Weights must be laid aside before we can run the race set before us (Heb 12:1).

As the term is used theologically, "vivification" means a *living unto God*. It is not enough that the believer should die unto sin—he must also walk in newness of life. Recess from the world is worthless unless it issues in access to God. Practical holiness consists not so much in a mere abstinence from a sensual life, but principally in living unto God—delighting in Him, desires after Him, carefulness to please Him, loathness to offend Him. God has imparted grace to the regenerate not simply that they may *have* it, but that they *use* the same to His glory, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal 5:25). The grace God has given His people is to be exercised by them in a course of hearty obedience to Him, according to the directions which He has given in His Word.

God has predestinated His people to be conformed to the image of His Son. Now Christ died unto sin (Rom 6:10)—so must we. Christ lives unto God—so must we. In mortification, there is a likeness unto Christ's death, and in vivification (or living unto God), there is a likeness to His resurrection—the latter is the inseparable adjunct of the former. Christ cannot be divided. Those who partake with Him in the one act, partake with Him in the other. God will not leave His work in us half done. If He makes us to hate and forsake the evil, then He also causes us to love and seek after the good. In Psalm 1, the godly man is not only described as walking not in the counsel of the ungodly, standing not in the way of sinners, and sitting not in the seat of the scornful, but also as delighting in the law of the Lord, meditating therein day and night, and then bringing forth his fruits in his season. God subdues sin in us to make way for a life of righteousness.

From the experimental side, sanctification is the acting out of that holy principle received at the new birth. At regeneration a new nature is bestowed, which re-capacitates the soul Godwards, so that the heart is now inclined toward Him, delights in Him, pants after Him. But let us be more specific and describe something of this new disposition of mind. First, there is now *a holy reverence* for God, on account of His person, His perfections, His works. Of the unsanctified it is said, "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom 3:18). But where a principle of grace and holiness has been infused, the fear of God quickly appears, for it is "the beginning of wisdom" (Pro 9:10). The regenerate man cannot now do the things which he did before and that others do, "but so did not I, because of the fear of God" (Neh 5:15).

It is this heart-awe for God, this godly reverence, this filial fear, which is one of the roots from which springs spiritual obedience, for such reverence necessarily yields submission to the revealed will of God. When Israel avowed at Sinai, "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do" (Exo 19:8), He answered, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would *fear* me, *and keep* all my

commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!” (Deu 5:29). The fear of God, then, precedes the keeping of His commandments. It is this principle of godly reverence which the Lord is pledged to give unto His people according to the terms of the new covenant, “I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever” (Jer 32:39). That “fear” is the same as the “new spirit” of (Eze 11:19) and as the writing of His law on our hearts (Heb 8:10). This same spiritual grace is also called fearing “the LORD and [not His “judgments,” but] his *goodness*” (Hos 3:5).

Second, accompanying this filial awe is a sincere and holy *love* for God, from which springs acceptable obedience to Him. That love consists in the heart’s being drawn out to God and delighting itself in Him. It is a disposition and inclination of soul unto communion with Him, with complacency, so that its language now is, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psa 73:25). An unregenerate man cannot love God nor take any delight in His perfections, ways, or worship, for “The carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom 8:7). The unsanctified desire to depart from Him and dismiss Him from their thoughts. Job says of the hypocrite, “Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?” (Job 27:10)—no, he will not. But in regeneration the Lord circumcises the heart, or renews and sanctifies it *to* love Him with all the soul, and that sincerely and cordially.

Third, vivification manifests itself in a complete *submission* to the will of God in all things, not only to His perceptive will, but to His disposing will also, even to the most adverse dispensations of providence. Instances of this may be seen in the cases of Aaron, Eli, David, and others, who rebelled not nor murmured, but were quiet and silent, resigned to the divine will under the most severe rebukes and the most painful trials, see Leviticus 10:3; 1 Samuel 3:18; 2 Samuel 15:25-26. Much of sanctification lies in the conformity of our wills to the will of God. As the saintly James Usher (1581-1656) said, “Sanctification is nothing less than for a man to be brought to an entire resignation of his will to the will of God, and to live in the offering up of his soul continually in the flames of love as a whole burnt offering.”

Fourth, vivification is expressed by being *spiritually minded*. “To be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom 8:6). That is, the bent and inclination of a renewed mind is unto spiritual things, for it is that whereby we live to God and enjoy peace with Him. By nature we care only for the things of the flesh, minding earthly concerns (Phi 3:19)—our corrupt hearts are set upon them, disposed towards them, eager after whatever leads to the enjoyment of them. But the regenerate mind things above, and in vivification their affections are drawn out after and fixed upon them (Col 3:3). It was by virtue of this that David declared his soul followed hard after God (Psa 63:8), or inclined earnestly unto all those ways whereby he might live unto Him and come unto the enjoyment of Him. This same fervour and

diligence is seen in the case of the apostle Paul, Philippians 3:13-14. None but God can satisfy the sanctified.

Fifth, vivification is seen in *religious exercises* or acts of devotion to God, particularly in the actings of grace in them. Here too there is a radical difference between the unregenerate and the regenerate. The former engages in religious exercises formally, as a matter of duty, but the latter (when in a healthy state) takes delight therein. The ministry of the Word is attended with affection, and prayer is engaged in with fervour, for prayer is the very breath of a sanctified soul toward God. It is not so much in the outward performance that the believer differs from the unbeliever, as in the holy actings of his *heart*, such as eager desires after communion with God therein. The sanctified soul cannot be satisfied with using the means of grace unless he meets with God in them. A sanctified soul seeks the glory of God in all that he does.

In whomsoever the new nature or principle of grace is, it disposes the whole soul unto the acts and duties of holiness, and that *universally or impartially*. There is no duty of holiness but what there is a disposition unto it in the sanctified heart. There is a respect unto *all* of God's commandments. Some of them may be more contrary unto our natural inclinations than others, some may more cross with our present secular interests, some are attended with more difficulties and disadvantages than others, and some of them may be rendered very dangerous by the peculiar circumstances of particular seasons. Nevertheless, if there be a gracious principle in our hearts, it will equally incline and dispose us to every one of them in their proper place and time. The reason for this is, that the new nature equally inclines unto all that pertains to it, as all acts of holy obedience do.

Again, the new nature disposes the heart unto duties of holiness *constantly and evenly*. He in whom the principle of grace resides fears the Lord always, though often the godless flesh gains the upper hand in him. Nevertheless, so far as that new nature itself is concerned, in all instances and on all occasions it equally inclines the mind unto acts of holy obedience. It is true that the actings of grace which proceed from it are in us sometimes more vigorous and intense than at others. It is also true that we are ourselves sometimes more watchful and careful in acting grace, whether in our general course or in solemn duties. There are times when the flesh rages in us, and when Satan opposes more fiercely—when grace is obstructed, but that does not clash with what we first said. That living principle of holiness is like a fountain of water ever springing up (Joh 4:14), though as its stream passes on in its course, it meets with opposition and hindrance, yet its waters continue to press on.

Once more, the new nature disposes the heart *permanently* thus. It will never cease inclining the soul unto the duties of holiness until it comes to the end of them all in the final enjoyment of God. This holy principle is an incorruptible seed, abiding in the believer forever, and constantly acts according to its own constitution. True, it is our duty to make use of all the appointed means to preserve

and cherish the principle itself and its actings. We are to “shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end” (Heb 6:11). It is also true that sometimes, and in some persons, upon fierce temptations, with the violence and deceitfulness of lusts, the principle of grace may seem for a season to be utterly stifled, and thus this property of *permanency* be destroyed, as it appeared to have been the case with David under his sad fall and decay. Yet such is its nature, that it is immortal, everlasting, and shall never absolutely die, which is owing solely to the faithfulness, power, and grace of God.

Were we to stop at this point, the Christian reader would indeed have occasion to lay down the article in despair, feeling that it has quite cut him off, that he has “neither part nor lot in this matter.” Let it be duly pointed out, then, that in the regenerate and sanctified there are yet inclinations and dispositions *to sin*, proceeding from the contrary principle of the flesh—that vicious, corrupt, depravity of our nature, disposing the soul unto all that is evil. This still continues in us, then, working constantly in varying degrees of power. This it is which occasions such a strange paradox and puzzle to the sincere believer—that in him are such *contrary* inclinations, opposing one another, acting adversely about the same objects and ends. While sin has received a fatal wound, it is far from being dead, and though the believer be most diligent and faithful in prosecuting the work of mortification, yet the task of vivification will be frequently, yea, hourly, opposed and retarded. The qualities pertaining to the principle of holiness (which we have described) pertain unto itself, but the qualities of sin ever resist them. But to return to our immediate subject.

The thoughtful reader will, no doubt, be ready to ask, If the principle of holiness communicated at regeneration possesses such characteristics as reverence for and love to God, and if it also constantly inclines the soul unto all duties of obedience, then why do we find the psalmist praying, “Unite my heart *to* fear thy name” (Psa 86:11), and “*incline* my heart unto thy testimonies”(Psa 119:36)? Do not such petitions seem to contradict our assertions that the new nature itself disposes the heart toward God and is the root from which all acceptable obedience to Him springs? No, but they *do* show that, notwithstanding the spirituality of the new nature, yet it is entirely *dependent on* the operations of the Holy Spirit for its actual exercise on all occasions. Only as He strengthens us with might in the inner man, renews us day by day, leads us in the paths of righteousness, are we enabled to render unto God that which He requires. The new nature is what makes the soul *meet for* good works, but the Spirit must supply the necessary *power*.

This it is which explains the prayers of the psalmist. Take, again, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; quicken thou me in thy way” (Psa 119:37). Note, first, the *order* is the same here as in all the passages quoted in the third paragraph, mortification preceding vivification. The first clause is an asking God to remove the impediment unto obedience—“vanity” being a general term to include all carnal and worldly things. The second clause is asking God for

additional grace, to make our affections lively toward spiritual and heavenly things. “Quicken” is the actuation of the spiritual life, grace to perform all duties with cheerfulness and zeal. Our original quickening was at regeneration (Eph 2:1), when grace or spiritual life was first infused, but we stand in need, constantly, of further renewing, so that the life of grace may be invigorated—just as a person, even a healthy one, requires to have his physical strength renewed each day.

The nature of this need for renewal may be summed in two words—comfort and enlivening. By nature, our hearts are prone to sink when trouble comes upon us, unless grace be renewed in our hearts, the soul faints. When left to ourselves, we become so occupied with our trials, and so distrustful of God to undertake for us, that we are overwhelmed, so as to have no spirit or courage left. Then it is that the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, “This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath *quickened* me” (Psa 119:50)—God has raised up the heart above the trouble, increasing faith and strengthening patience. Again, by nature we are slothful unto the performance of all duties of holiness, and when left to ourselves a spirit of lethargy seizes us, creeping over the soul until its faculties are paralyzed unto all spiritual endeavour. It is then that the Spirit helpeth our infirmities by re-animating us, calling into exercise the new nature.

When the believer grows slack in using the appointed means of grace, or is slothful in pursuing the business of the spiritual life, deadness soon falls upon the soul. A key never turned will rust in the lock and grace not used quickly becomes lukewarm, “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be *overcharged* with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and *cares of this life*” (Luk 21:34). Such “quickening” of the believer, then, is absolutely essential for his well-being. Without it, he cannot pray with any spiritual vigour, “*Quicken* us, and we will *call* upon thy name” (Psa 80:18). Without it, he cannot hear the Word to profit, “For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing” (Mat 13:15). “I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness” (Psa 119:40). Without it, he cannot obey, “Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; *so* shall I *keep* the testimony of thy mouth” (Psa 119:88).

But let it not be forgotten that throughout the entire process of mortification and vivification, there is a concurrence between the believer and the Spirit. Those who are born again should show the reality of that miracle of grace by being as earnest in the pursuit of holiness, as they were formerly in seeking the pleasures of sin. *Living unto God* does not connote a single act done once for all (at a “consecration” meeting), but is what must mark the general course of our conduct. The Christian is required to put forth his best endeavours, “If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but *I follow after*, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and *reaching forth* unto those things which are before” (Phi 3:11-13).

Alas, how often God has cause to say, “There is none that calleth upon my name, *that stirreth up himself* to take hold of me” (see Isa 64:7). O that we may “*stir up* the gift of God, which is in us” (see 2Ti 1:6).

EXPERIMENTAL PREACHING

“He which hath begun a good work in you will perform [finish] it” (Phi 1:6). And *how* is an exercised soul to ascertain whether this “good work” has actually begun in him? How is he to distinguish between the natural workings of conscience and the supernatural conviction which the Holy Spirit produces? How is he to distinguish between the spasmodic religiousness of the flesh—which appears conspicuously in many of the devotees of Mohammed and the worshippers of the Virgin Mary, and finds its counterpart in thousands of those who come under the magnetic influence of “Evangelists” and “Revivalists”—and true spiritual aspirations after God? How is he to distinguish between a radical moral reformation and a divine regeneration—for some of the effects of the one closely resemble those of the other? How is he to distinguish between the general work of the Spirit on the non-elect (like king Saul and those described in Heb 6:4-5) and the special work of the Spirit in the elect?

Such questions as the above may never have arisen in the minds of some of our readers, and now that they have seen them raised, may consider them as “hair-splitting” or theological distinctions of little practical interest. But others of our readers are deeply exercised by such considerations. They dare not take it for granted that all is well with them, until they are satisfied from God’s Word that a miracle of grace *has* been wrought in them. They fear that Satan may be deceiving them with his lies, comforting with a *false* assurance. As they seek to contemplate an endless eternity unto which time is so swiftly conducting them, they are deeply anxious to make sure whither they are bound. And well may such inquiries disturb our serenity and agitate our minds. They are of vital moment, of vast importance—for they concern the difference there is between life and death, heaven and hell.

It is an essential branch of experimental preaching that must deal with such momentous issues. It is the bounden duty of the pulpit to afford help unto such exercised souls. It is the office of the minister to take up such distinctions and show clearly wherein the difference lies. It is the business of God’s servant to define and describe *of what* the “good work” of the Spirit consists, and *how* it may be identified. That “good work” is but another name for the new birth, which consists of the Spirit’s communicating to the heart a new nature, a principle of grace and holiness. It is the impartation of that which is radically different from anything that was in us by nature. It is something which has come from God, is

Godlike in its nature, and which instinctively turns unto God. It is discoverable by the fact that there is now in the soul *a relish* for spiritual things, which was not there previously—a “relish” which goes far, far deeper than a mere intellectual interest being awakened in a new subject. It evidences itself by a hungering after righteousness, a thirsting for holiness, pantings after God Himself, yearnings for Christ.

But while an entirely new nature is imparted at regeneration, the old one is not removed, nor is it even *improved* or refined. The old nature, the “flesh,” indwelling sin, remains in the Christian to the end of his earthly life, and is a constant source of grief to him. It opposes every aspiration and effort of the new nature. It is earthly, sensual, devilish, and craves only that which the swine feed on. Nor does the finishing of that “good work” in the soul effect any change for the better in the flesh or even render it less active. No, the carrying on of that “good work” is the *preserving* of a spark of grace in an ocean of sin, the *maintaining* of the new nature in a heart that is desperately and incurably wicked. Notwithstanding every effort of carnal enmity to quench it, love for God survives—“faint, *yet pursuing*” (Jdg 8:4), and despite all the ragings of unbelief, faith’s head is kept above the waters.

Just as the natural infant clings instinctively to its mother and yearns for her breast, so the spiritual babe seeks after Christ and desires the pure milk of the Word. *That* is another evidence of the Spirit’s “good work” in the soul. The Spirit’s quickening is in order to capacitate the *heart* for Christ, for one who is yet “dead in trespasses and sins” has neither spiritual desires nor spiritual ability. But once a person has been born again, and truly convicted of his ruined and lost condition, he is spiritually fitted to receive the Gospel. It is at this point he is ready to hear how the Spirit works in revealing Christ to such, bringing them to believe on Him, and thereby putting them into actual possession of Him. The Spirit causes the quickened soul to live over the truth of the Gospel in his own mind, moves him to give full credit thereto, mix faith with the same, and derive spiritual nourishment from it.

As the truth of the Gospel is received into the heart—in some cases rapidly, in others much more slowly—it becomes the means of the believer’s growing into an experimental and practical acquaintance with Christ, to be rooted and grounded in Him, to live upon Him. When God is pleased to shine upon the souls of the elect, and make an open discovery to them of His work of grace within them, or when Christ is first made a living and precious reality to their hearts, there is a going forth of their spiritual affections unto Him. All seems to be life and vigour in their souls, difficulties vanish, doubts are dispelled, they are quite carried out of themselves, lifted above their sins and iniquities, and made to rejoice in Christ and praise God for His wondrous grace. This is “the love of thine espousals” (Jer 2:2), the “joy of salvation.”

It is very rare, however, that this blissful season is of long duration and wisely has God so ordered this. Such spiritual ecstasy, which is often experienced by newly-converted souls would, if it lasted, unfit them for the discharge of life's duties in this world. For example, one engaged in office work would be unable to concentrate on his books if his mind were rapt with visions of glory. There was only one Elim—with its well of water and palm trees—for Israel in the wilderness. God grants His people a foretaste of heaven and its realities, and then brings them down to a consciousness that they are still on earth. Even the apostle Paul needed a thorn in the flesh, lest he be exalted above measure, after he had been caught up to Paradise. Heavy ballast is needed in her hold if the ship is to sail steadily and this the believer obtains by painful discoveries of his *corruptions*.

It is therefore the duty of the preacher to faithfully warn the young convert that the peace, joy, and assurance which usually follows the first realization of sins' forgiveness, will in turn be succeeded by fierce temptations, inward conflicts, sad failures which will produce grief, darkness, and doubtings. It was so with Abraham, with Moses, with Job, with Peter, with Paul, yea, with all the saints whose biographies are recorded at any length in the Scriptures. Great changes are to be expected in the young convert's feelings and frames, so that his comforts are dampened, and the dew of death seems to settle upon his graces. A deeper realization of his awful depravity—what he is by nature—will make him groan and cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom 7:24), yet that only makes way for a fuller and further weaning from *self*.

Very often the young Christian is allowed by God to sink yet lower in his experience. Satan is let loose upon him and sin rages fiercely within him, and strive and pray as he may, it often obtains the upper hand over him. Guilt weighs heavily on his conscience, no relief is granted from any source until he now seriously questions the genuineness of his conversion, and greatly fears that Satan has fatally deceived him. He feels that his heart is as hard as the nether millstone, that faith in him is dead, that there is no help and no hope for him. He cannot imagine that one who has been born again and is indwelt by the Holy Spirit could be so enslaved by sin. If God *were* his Father, He would surely hear his cries and grant deliverance from his spiritual enemies. But the heavens are as brass over him until the very breath of prayer seems frozen within him.

Hoping against hope, he seeks relief from the pulpit. But in vain. The sermons he hears only aggravate his woes for they depict the Christian's experience as vastly different from his own—they deal with the bright side and say little or nothing on the dark side. If he converses with the professing Christians of the day, he is likely to get laughed at, and told to cease being occupied with himself and look only to Christ—to lay hold of the promises of God and go on his way rejoicing. *That* is the very thing he most of all desires—"to will IS present" with him, "but how to perform that which is good" he "finds NOT" (Rom 7:18). Poor

soul! is there no one that understands his case? no one qualified to minister comfort to him? Alas, alas, there are few indeed in this frothy age.

Here, again, *experimental* preaching is urgently needed, preaching which enters into the very experiences described above—experiences shared, in some measure, by all quickened souls while they are in this “Wilderness of Sin.” But O what wisdom from on High (not from books!) is needed if, on the one hand, the “smoking *flax*” is not to be “quenched” and the “bruised reed” be not broken (Mat 12:20)—on the other hand, sin be not made light of, failures be not excused, and the standard of holiness be not lowered. The pulpit should declare frankly that there are times when the mind of the believer is filled with deep distress, that there are seasons when the light of God’s countenance is turned away from His people, and the devil is permitted to sorely wound them, tell them that they have committed the unpardonable sin, and that there is no hope for them, but that such experiences *are no proof* at all that they are still unregenerate.

The preacher has to bear steadily in mind that if there are among his hearers carnal professors who are ready to seize eagerly anything which would bolster them up in their false assurance, there are also feeble and ailing babes in Christ which require tender nursing (Isa 60:4; 1Th 2:7), and little ones of God’s family who lack assurance, and because of this think the worst of themselves. It is therefore wise business to “take forth the precious from the vile” (Jer 15:19)—that is, by a *discriminating* ministry expose and terrify the sin-hardened, but speak words of comfort to the real mourners in Zion. “In our congregations there are wheat and chaff on the same floor: we cannot distinguish them by *name*, but we must by *character*” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). We must make it clear that those who regard sin lightly, have not the fear of God before their eyes—those not grieved, because they find so much in their hearts opposed to divine holiness, *are unregenerate*—no matter how much head-knowledge of the truth they possess or how loud be their Christian profession.

It is at this very point that the true under-shepherd of Christ stands out in marked contrast from the “hireling” of the flock, concerning whom God says, “Ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life” (Eze 13:22). On the one hand, the regenerate are “made sad” by pratings about “the victorious life,” or “the second blessing,” or “the baptism of the Spirit.” These blind leaders of the blind claim to have so “got out of Romans 7 into Romans 8,” to have so left behind them all inward conflicts and agonizing doubtings, as to virtually have entered into the state of the glorified—causing real Christians to conclude that *they* know nothing of that Gospel, which is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16), and must be complete strangers to a miracle of grace within them.

On the other hand, these false prophets declare that all who have “accepted Christ as their personal Saviour” are saved, even though they have not yet received

the second blessing, that they are justified though not “entirely sanctified.” They assure the godless, the worldling, the pleasure-intoxicated, that they may be saved at this very moment on the sole and simple condition that they believe God so loved them as to give His Son to die for them. Thus peace is assured to the unconcerned “when there is no peace,” the hearts of the careless are hardened, and the wicked are promised life without any regard to God’s demand that they must “forsake” their idols. “Nor can anything strengthen the hands of sinners more than to tell them they may be saved in their sins without repentance; or that there may be repentance, though they do not return from their wicked ways” (Matthew Henry).

The duty of God’s servants is clearly enough defined in this respect, “They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean” (Eze 44:23). Surely it is of vast importance that a deeply exercised soul should know whether or not *his* sins have been cleansed by the blood of Christ. But for *that*, teaching is necessary, teaching from a divinely-qualified teacher, for if an inexperienced “novice” lays his hand to such a task, he will only make bad matters worse and add to the fearful confusion which now prevails on every side. Only one who has himself sailed much in these deep waters is fitted to serve as pilot to floundering ships. None, but one who had been harassed by Satan as Bunyan had, could have written “The Pilgrim’s Progress.”

“That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort *wherewith we ourselves* are comforted of God” (2Co 1:4) states the principle. One who has actually suffered from a serious disease is best fitted to recognize symptoms of it in others and recommend the remedies which he found most efficacious. Furthermore, one must be personally taught by the Spirit before he can explain to sin-sick and Satan-tormented souls the “mystery of the Gospel” (Eph 3)—the strange paradoxes of the Christian life. It is one thing to *read*, “for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2Co 12:10), it is quite another matter to *prove* the truth of it in actual experience. Nor is that statement any more paradoxical than the fact that it is the spiritually “poor” who are spiritually rich (Mat 5:3). And equally true is it that those who most clearly perceive their filthiness and mourn over their pollution are they who have the best evidence that *their* sins have been washed away—as the most humble souls are the ones who most bewail their pride.

It is by no means easy to combine tenderness with faithfulness—sympathy for doubting sons with a deep concern for the honour of God. Of old the Lord complained, “For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people *slightly*, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace” (Jer 8:11). We have personally met not a few who were pitying themselves when they should have been condemning themselves, hugging their doubts instead of contritely confessing them to God. Unbelief is *not* a virtue, but a heinous *sin*. It is to be reproved, and never excused. There is no real relief for a badly festered limb by scratching the skin. The lancet

must pierce right down to the seat of the trouble if the poisonous matter is to be pressed out. Self-love, self-complacency, self-righteousness must be thoroughly probed by the knife of the Word before the heart will be broken before God.

The great issue between God and man is SIN, and salvation is deliverance from sin. True, that in the fullest meaning of the term, salvation is not complete in this life, for glorification is included within its scope. Nevertheless there is a very real sense in which the believer is initially saved even now. In other words, there is a present aspect of salvation, as well as a future, and that present salvation is an experimental thing, as well as judicial. But it is just at this point the conscientious Christian confronts his most acute problem. How dare he profess to be saved from sin, or even regard himself as now *being* saved from it, when sin rages so fiercely within and so often gets the upper hand of him?

Here, again, the business of the preacher is to throw light upon this problem. First, by showing that the believer is *not* yet saved from the *presence* of sin, for it still indwells him, nor is he saved from the *power* of sin, except relatively, for it is still a mighty force within him, utterly beyond his control. Second, by showing that the believer *is* now saved *from the love of sin*. THAT is the essence of the matter. The thrice holy God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab 1:13), and therefore He abhors all sin, saying, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate” (Jer 44:4). But man by nature *loves* sin, therefore the first thing God does in salvation is to put within His people a principle or nature that *hates* sin.

But here, too, we must pass from generalities and get down to details. The honest soul will at once ask, If I really hate sin, why do I so often yield to it? If I have been delivered from the love of sin, why can Satan’s temptations still appeal to me? The answer is, because the “flesh” is still left in you and it remains *unholy* to the end of its history. Our responsibility is to “make not provision for the flesh” (Rom 13:14), to “mortify” its members (Col 3:5), to unsparingly judge it, root and branch (1Co 11:31-32), to confess its evil works (1Jo 1:9). The fact that the believer resists sin, prays and strives against it, mourns and groans over it, loathes himself for it, are so many proofs that he no longer loves it as he once did. Here, then, is the task of experimental preaching, to make clear what salvation is, and what it is not—to trace out the heart’s history of one who is being saved, and this in such a way that the unregenerate are not emboldened in their sins, nor the regenerate crushed by their defeats. There is urgent need to show what the love of sin consists of, and then to describe *how* a holy hatred of sin may be recognized, and what is compatible and what is not compatible with this hatred.

SERVANTS OF GOD

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Rom 6:22). In this verse, the Holy Spirit presents to us an epitome of the exceeding great and precious privileges which are the birthright of the child of God, of *every* real believer in the Lord Jesus. The important truths presented in the previous verses, and indeed throughout the whole of this epistle, are here summarized, for the clearer apprehension and assurance of faith, that the Christian might see at a glance what is his true standing in the sight of God, and what are those wondrous blessings which divine grace has bestowed upon him, and this, that his heart may be drawn more and more away from the world, that he may delight himself in and glorify his Lord and Master. Four grand facts are presented for faith to lay hold of. First, the believer has been gloriously emancipated, “being made free from sin.” Second, he is now consecrated, “become servants to God.” Third, he is, in union with Christ, as a branch of the true vine, fruitful unto holiness. Fourth, the end before him, the sure issue of all his conflicts and trials is “everlasting life.”

In the verse before us, the apostle is not seeking to *persuade* Christians to separate from sin, he is not *promising* that upon the fulfillment of certain conditions they will enter into freedom from sin, but is *stating a positive fact*, which is true of *every* believer. He is not dealing with a contingency or speaking of some future good, but affirms a present reality, “but *now* being made free from sin” (Rom 6:22). This is not a matter of attainment, but a miracle of divine grace, Christ has “made an end of sins,” He has made “reconciliation for iniquity,” He has brought in “everlasting righteousness” (Dan 9:24), and because the believer is identified with Christ, because in the sight of the Judge of all the earth he is legally one with the Redeemer, he is now, judicially, “free from sin”—its penalty has been endured, its guilt has been blotted out, its condemnation has been removed. “But now being made free from sin” is in the *passive* voice, for it is an act of grace upon us, and *not* an act put forth by us. It is an act of which we are the subjects and not a work of which we are the agents.

“And become servants to God” (Rom 6:22). Here, too, as in the preceding clause, the apostle is dwelling upon the believer’s *standing before God*. Divine grace has given him a new status—in his unregenerate days, he was “the servant of sin” (see Rom 6:20). Sin was his master, he was its subject. But because of his legal oneness with Christ and because of his vital union with Him (when the Spirit created him anew in Christ), he now has a new standing and a new Master. Being made free from sin (judicially), he has become “servant to God.” Here again the passive is used. It is *not* by an act of theirs, but by God’s omnipotent act of grace which grafted them into Christ, constituting them one with JEHOVAH’s Servant, which made them “servants to God.” This is the necessary and blessed sequel to our having been “made free from sin.” Said David of old, “O LORD, truly I am

thy servant; I am thy servant, *and* the son of thine handmaid: thou hast *loosed my bonds*" (Psa 116:16).

What, then, is the believer's responsibility in connection with this blessed fact, what is to be his *response* thereto? First, to *believe* it, to receive it by childlike and unquestioning faith, and that, on the sole but sufficient testimony of God's own Word. Second, to *conduct* himself accordingly, to submit himself unto God, to be in complete subjection to the will of his new Master, to obey Him in all things. His bounden duty and his blessed privilege is to now translate that grand fact into his own practical experience—to be God's intelligent, willing, dutiful servant, to endeavour to please Him at all times, to seek to honour and glorify Him on every occasion. The Christian is to recognize his new status, utterly deserting his old master, and loving and obeying his new One with all his heart and mind. This is the victory of faith. This is the return which is due from us unto God's amazing grace toward us. This is to show forth our oneness with God's perfect Servant, to follow the example which He has left us.

Freedom from sin is the direct consequence of our union with the Lord Jesus, and the fact of our being the servants of God is also and equally the result of that union. We have no standing before God as His servants, no power for service, no spirit for service, no acceptance of our service, except in our union with Christ. Only as this is realized by faith, and only as we truly exercise faith therein, will there be any actual making good of it in our experience and daily walk. This is but another way of saying that, only as our hearts are truly conscious of the fact that we are *not our own*, but the purchased property of God, shall we conduct ourselves accordingly. The same grand truth is expressed again in, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph 2:10). If we be the servants of God, it is because we are created in Christ Jesus for that very service. Just as our being made free from sin was owing to the work of Christ for us, so we are created in Him for this very privilege of service.

How frequently in Scripture is Christ presented to us as God's Servant. JEHOVAH had but one perfect Servant here, One with whom He was altogether pleased, to whom He could with implicit confidence entrust the affairs of the covenant, namely, Jesus Christ. Of Him God says, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth" (Isa 42:1). "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently" (Isa 52:13). "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many" (Isa 53:11). In the New Testament we find the apostle Paul calling attention to this, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 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 2:5-7). And we have Him announcing Himself on the earth, "Lo! I come...to do thy will, O God" (Heb 10:7)—do it unreservedly, do it joyfully, do it unceasingly, no matter what it involved.

It is refreshing to the heart to read through the four Gospels with this thought in view and observe how often Christ is there seen in this special character. "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). See Him in John 4, sitting weary at the well. The disciples go to buy bread, and on returning they found Him full of love, life, and power, speaking to the poor woman of Samaria. They said, "Hath any man brought him ought to eat?" and he answered, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me" (Joh 4:33-34). Behold, God's perfect Servant! And again He said, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (Joh 6:38). So too in Gethsemane "Not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Mat 26:39) exemplified His changeless attitude of perfect submission to the Father.

Nor has Christ ceased to be God's Servant, no, not even though He is now exalted high above all angels, and sits at the right hand of the Majesty on High. As Hebrews 8:2 tells us, He is the "minister (or servant) of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." He is there discharging His priestly office, ever living to make intercession for His people. He is there, active, as the angel of the covenant. It was thus that John beheld Him in the apocalyptic visions, standing at the altar in heaven, "having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints" (Rev 8:3). He is there discharging His kingly office, "upholding all things by the word of his power (Heb 1:3). He is there preparing a place for us (Joh 14:2). He is there, submissively, subjecting Himself to God's will, "expecting till his enemies be made his footstool" (Heb 10:13). Behold, JEHOVAH's perfect Servant, and our perfect Exemplar.

And you and I, dear Christian reader, are "*servants to God*." It is a great privilege and high honour to be the servants of an earthly monarch, but who can conceive the dignity and honour of being a servant of the Most High, the only Potentate! When Paul would glory in his calling, he made mention of the Lord, saying, "whose I am and whom I *serve*" (Act 27:123). When Peter would magnify his office, he wrote, "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ" (2Pe 1:1). When James would present his credentials to his readers, he wrote, "James, a *servant* of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Jam 1:1). So too with Jude (Jude 1:1). When the queen of Sheba came that long journey to hear and see the wisdom of Solomon, she said, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, *and* that hear thy wisdom" (1Ki 10:8). O, my reader, if the servants of Solomon were happy and privileged, how much more so are the servants of the living God!

The service of God is one of *freedom*, yea, it is the only one where perfect freedom is to be found. Yet that is the very opposite of the natural man's idea. So thoroughly has sin perverted his judgment and blinded his mind, that he calls light darkness and darkness light, bitters sweet and sweets bitter. The unregenerate suppose that to be in subjection to God is the end of all freedom, and entering into

the most irksome bondage. And contrariwise, they imagine that the more they refuse divine restraints, the greater their liberty. Poor deluded souls. It is the service of sin which tyrannizes and enslaves. “For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness....but now being made free from sin, and become servants to God” (Rom 6:20, 22). It is the servant of God, the one who willingly renders obedience to Him, that is “the Lord’s *freeman*” (1Co 7:22). God does not force His people into His service, but constrains them by His love, and their language is, “I will walk at *liberty*: for I seek thy precepts” (Psa 119:45).

“Become servants to God” (Rom 6:22). A good master provides for his servants. Is not God a good Master? O how He thinks of and provides for His servants. He supplies their every need both spiritual and temporal, makes all things work together for their good, and protects them as they journey through the enemy’s land. The realization of this should comfort and stabilize our hearts, and it should encourage us to come boldly to the throne of grace, and seek from God fresh supplies of grace and temporal mercies, on the ground that we *are* His “servants.” Turn to the Psalms and see how frequently David did so. You will find that again and again he asked of God and presented *this* as his plea, “Save *thy servant*” (Psa 86:2), “Cause thy face to shine upon *thy servant*” (see Psa 119:135), “hear the prayer of *thy servant*” (Psa 86:1-17). So in the New Testament, we behold aged Simeon looking death in the face and saying, “Lord, now lettest thou *thy servant* depart in peace” (Luk 2:29). It is indeed a wondrous blessing to be the servant of God, and have such an One to look after us.

But this great privilege and honour carries with it a definite responsibility, namely, to conduct ourselves *as* “servants.” A good servant is described in Scripture as one who has *a watchful eye*, “Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God” (Psa 123:2)—in the Orient, instead of giving directions by word of mouth, they are often given by a gesture of the hand or glance of the eye. A good servant, then, will be attentive to his Master’s will, that there may be no delay in pleasing Him. A good servant will have *a listening ear*, “Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth” (1Sa 3:9). A good servant will have *ready feet*, “I will run in the way of thy commandments” (Psa 119:32). A good servant will have a *submissive will*, that is the primary and essential qualification—to have no will of my own, but to be completely yielded to the Lord.

“Christian service” is a vastly different thing from that which is so designated in modern Christendom. In many places doing what is termed “personal work” and “winning souls to Christ” is what now passes for “Christian service,” and thousands are thus engaged who were never called nor qualified by God for it. Others suppose that only those whom God has called to occupy the pulpit or sent forth to evangelize the heathen, are His “servants.” Such are His *official* servants and none others have any title to occupy such a position. But *all* Christians are the

servants of God—called to a life of obedience, whether they are shoeblacks, street-sweepers, or housewives. Having delivered him from the power of darkness, the believer is now to live unto God and for Him in whatever position divine providence has called him to occupy.

In conclusion, let it be pointed out that *a rich reward* is promised the good and faithful servant. The Lord Jesus declared, “Where I am, there shall also my servant be” (Joh 12:26). “Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col 3:24). “There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him” (Rev 22:3). Now serving Him in the office, the shop, or the kitchen, then serving Him in the courts of the Father’s house above.



June

THE SPIRIT CONFIRMING

An “earnest” remains *the irrevocable possession* of its recipient until the bargain is consummated, and even then it is not taken from him. Therein an “earnest” differs from a “pledge,” for when a pledged article is returned, the pledge is taken back again. So too the “earnest” which Christians receive is irrevocable and inalienable, “For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Rom 11:29). As the Lord Jesus declared, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you *for ever*” (Joh 14:16). How blessedly and how positively this intimates the eternal security of God’s elect! JEHOVAH has made with them “an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, *and sure*” (2Sa 23:5). Even now they have received “the firstfruits of the Spirit” (Rom 8:23), and that is the divine certification of the glorious harvest, the plentitude of God’s favour, yet to follow. Like Mary, the believer today, by yielding to the Lordship of Christ, has “chosen that good part, which shall *not be taken away*” (Luk 10:42).

“Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2Co 1:21-22). It is to be duly noted that both the sealing and the earnest are for our “stablishing.” As one hymn-writer put it, “What more can He *say* than to you He hath said, to you who to Jesus for refuge hath fled?” And what more can He *do*, we may ask, than what He has done to assure His people of the glorious inheritance awaiting them? We have the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven *with our nature*, to show that our nature shall yet come there, “Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus” (Heb 6:20). Nor is that all. We have the Holy Spirit sent down *into our hearts* as proof that we are not only children, but also the heirs of God, Romans 8:14-17.

“Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit” (2Co 5:5). That “selfsame thing” is *not* to be restricted unto a resurrected body. It is the “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” of 2 Corinthians 4:17, the “things which are not seen” of 2 Corinthians 4:18. Having spoken of the everlasting bliss awaiting the saints on

high, for which they now groan and earnestly long, the apostle mentions two of the principal grounds on which such a hope rests. First, God has “wrought us for” the same, that is He has regenerated us, giving us a holy and heavenly nature which fully capacitates us to be with Himself. Second, He has given us “the earnest of the Spirit” as a guaranty of this glorious estate. Thus are we fitted for, and thus are we assured of the infinitely better life awaiting us.

“After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” (Eph 1:13-14). In this passage (Eph 1:3-14), the apostle describes those wondrous and numerous blessings with which the saints are blest in Christ. Eternal election (Eph 1:4), membership in God’s family (Eph 1:5), acceptance in the Beloved (Eph 1:6), the forgiveness of sins (Eph 1:7), and understanding of divine mysteries (Eph 1:8-9), predestinated unto an inheritance (Eph 1:11), sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13), and now the Spirit given to us as “the earnest of our inheritance” (Eph 1:14)—a part-payment in promise and pledge of the whole. The dwelling of the Spirit in the believer’s heart is the guaranty of his yet taking his place in that holy and joyous scene where all is according to the nature of God and where Christ is the grand Centre.

According to the literal meaning of the figure, an “earnest” signifies the clinching of a bargain, that it is a sample of what has been agreed upon, that it confirms and ensures the consummation of the contract. And that is what the operations and presence of the Spirit in the believer connote. First, they supply proof that God has made a covenant with him “ordered in all things and sure.” Second, the present work of the Spirit in him is a real foretaste and firstfruit of the coming harvest. Is there not something of *the glorified eye* in that faith which the Spirit has implanted? Do the pure in heart see God face to face in heaven? Well, even now, faith enables us to endure “as *seeing him* who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). Is there not now something of that *glorified joy* wherein they in heaven delight themselves in God, “In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts *delight* my soul” (Psa 94:19). And is there not now a real though faint adumbration of that *glorified transformation of soul* into the image of Christ? Compare 2 Corinthians 3:18 with 1 John 3:2!

The “earnest” ensures the consummation of that contract. It is so here. The first operation of the Spirit in the elect is the guaranty of the successful completion of the same, “being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you *will perform* it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phi 1:6). Thus, God has given us something in hand that we may confidently anticipate the promised inheritance. And this, in order that both our desire and our diligence may be stimulated. We are not asked to mortify sin, deny self, forsake the world, for nothing. If the “Earnest” be so blessed, what shall the Inheritance itself be! O what lively expectations of it should be cherished in our hearts. O what earnest efforts should be made in “reaching forth unto those things which are before” (Phi 3:13).

And *what is* the Inheritance of which the Spirit is the “Earnest” unto the believer? It is nothing less than God Himself! The blessed God, in the trinity of His persons, is the everlasting portion of the saints. Is it not written, “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17)? And what is Christ’s “inheritance”? “The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance” (Psa 16:5) He declared. The future bliss of believers will consist in the fullness of the Spirit capacitating them to enjoy God to the full! And has not the believer already “*tasted* that the Lord is gracious” (1Pe 2:3)? Yes, by the Spirit. The Spirit is the utmost proof to us of God’s love, the firstfruit of glory, “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts” (Gal 4:6).

God, then, grants His people a taste in this world of what He has prepared for them in the world to come. The gifts and graces of the Spirit in the elect affirm *the certainty* of the glory awaiting them. As surely as an “earnest” guarantees the whole sum, so do the “firstfruits of the Spirit” (Rom 8:23) the coming harvest of bliss. *The nature of* the Christian’s “earnest” intimates both the character and the greatness of what is in store for him—even now He bestows a measure of life, light, love, liberty, but what shall these be in their fullness! One ounce of real grace is esteemed by its possessor more highly than a ton of gold. What, then, will it be like to bathe in the ocean of God’s favour? If now there are times when we experience that peace which “passeth all understanding” (Phi 4:7) and are made to “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8), how incapable we are of estimating the full value of our Inheritance, for an “earnest” is but a tiny installment of that which is promised. O that the realization of this, faint though it be, may move us to look and long for the heavenly glory with greater vehemence.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

114. Christ Our Sin Offering (13:11-12)

In the verses at which we have now arrived, the apostle once more sets before us the Old Testament shadow and the New Testament substance, which emphasizes the importance and necessity of *diligently comparing* one portion of the Scripture with another, and particularly those sections which record those ordinances that God gave unto Israel wherein the person, office, and work of His son were so vividly, so blessedly, and so fully foreshadowed. The study of the types, when conducted soberly and reverently, yields a rich return. Its evidential value is of great worth, for it affords an unmistakable demonstration of the divine authorship of the Scriptures, and when the Holy Spirit is pleased to reveal how that type and antitype fit in to each other more perfectly than hand and glove, then the hidden harmony of the different parts of the Word is unveiled to us. The

minute analogies, the numerous points of agreement between the one and the other make it manifest that one presiding mind controlled the whole.

The comparing of type with antitype also brings out the wondrous *unity of the Scriptures*, showing that beneath incidental diversity there has ever been an essential oneness in God's dealings with His people. Nothing so convincingly exposes the principle error of the Dispensationalists than this particular branch of study. The immediate design and use of the types was to exhibit unto God's people under the old covenant those vital and fundamental elements of truth which are common alike to all dispensations, but which have received their plainest discovery under the new covenant. By means of material symbols, a fitting portrayal was made of things to come, suitably paving the way for their introduction. The ultimate spiritual realities appeared first only in prospect or existed but in embryo. Under the Levitical instructions, God caused there to be shadowed forth in parabolic representation the whole work of redemption by means of a vivid appeal to the senses, "The law having a shadow of good things to come" (Heb 10:1).

The passage just quoted warrants the assertion that a spiritual study of the New Testament types also affords a valuable *aid to the interpretation* of much in the New Testament. Just as the *doctrine* expounded in the epistles rests upon and is illustrated by the central *facts* recorded in the Gospels, so much in both Gospels and epistles can only be fully appreciated in the light of the Scriptures. It is to be deplored that so many Christians find the second half of Exodus and the whole of Leviticus little more than a record of meaningless and effete ceremonial rites. If the preacher would take his "illustrations" of Gospel truths from the types (instead of searching secular history for "suitable anecdotes"), he would not only honour the Scripture, but stir up and direct the interest of his spiritual hearers in those portions of the Word now so generally neglected. *Christ* is set forth as conspicuously in Leviticus as He is in John's Gospel, for "in the volume of the book" it is written of Him.

The pity is that many of the more sober-minded and spiritual among God's people have been prejudiced against the study of the types, and the valuable use of them in interpreting the New Testament, by the untimely efforts of unqualified novices. The types were never designed by the Holy Spirit to provide a field in which young men might give free play to their imagination, or exercise their carnal ingenuity so as to bring out a mystical meaning to the most prosaic facts, and startle their unlearned hearers by giving to trifles a far-fetched significance. The wild allegorizing of Origen in the past should serve as a lasting warning. There are essential principles and fixed rules of interpreting the types which are never to be ignored. The interpreter must concentrate his attention upon central truths and basic principles, and not occupy his thoughts with petty agreements and fanciful analogies. The central and all-important subjects exemplified in the types

are sin and salvation, the putrefying of the soul, and the dedication of the heart and life to God.

Again, familiarity with the types and the spiritual principles they exemplify is a great help to *the right understanding of prophecy*. A type necessarily possesses something of a prophetic character, for it is a symbolical promise of the ultimate thing yet to appear, and hence it is not at all surprising that in announcing things to come the prophets, to a large extent, availed themselves of the characters and events of past history, making them the images of a nobler future. In the prospective delineations which are given us in Scripture respecting the final issues of Christ's kingdom among men, while the foundation of all lies in His own mediatorial office and work, yet it is through the personage and ordinances of the *old* covenant that things to come are shadowed forth. Thus, Moses spoke of the Messiah as a Prophet like unto himself (Deu 18:18). David announced Him as Priest after the order of Melchizedek (Psa 110). While Malachi predicted His forerunner under the name of Elijah (Mal 3:1, 4:5). Herein are valuable hints for our guidance, and if they be duly observed there will be no more excuse for interpreting "the son of David" (Mat 1:1) in a carnal sense, than for literalizing the, "we have an altar," of Hebrews 13:10.

From what has been pointed out above on the manifold value of the types—which might be indefinitely amplified, especially the last point—it should be quite evident that they greatly err who look upon the types as a mere kindergarten, designed only for the infancy of the church. The very fact that the Holy Spirit has preserved a record of them in the imperishable Word of truth is clear intimation that they possess far more than a local use and temporary purpose. The mind of God and the circumstances of the fallen creature are substantially the same in all ages, while the spiritual needs of the saints are the same now as they were four thousand years ago, and were the same then as they are today. If, then, the wisdom of God placed His people of old under a course of instruction through the types, it is our folly and loss if we despise the same today. A mathematician still has use for the elementary principles of arithmetic, as a trained musician scorns not the rudimentary scales.

The basic principles underlying the types were made use of by Christ at the dawn of the New Testament era, thus intimating that the fundamental methods employed by God are the same in all generations. Every miracle the Lord Jesus performed was *a type in history*, for on the outward and visible plane of nature, He displayed the divine power and work which He came here to accomplish in the higher realm of grace. In every act of healing men's bodily diseases, there was an adumbration to the eye of sense of that salvation which He would provide for the healing of the soul. In the demands which He made upon those whom He healed, a revelation was given of the principles by which His salvation may be procured by us. The *facts* of the Gospels are the key to the *truths* of the epistles, and the types of the Old Testament are the key to the facts of the Gospel. Thus, one part of

Scripture is made dependent on the other, just as no member of our body is independent of its fellow-members.

“For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate” (Heb 13:11-12). In these verses, the apostle supplies a striking illustration and confirmation of what he had just previously affirmed. In the preceding verse, he had declared that Christ is the altar of His people—the antitype of all that had been shadowed out by the typical altars of Old Testament times—which, as we showed, signifies not only that Christ is their atoning sacrifice unto God, but that He is also the sustenance, the food, for His people. Then followed the solemn statement that those who stubbornly and unbelievably continued to adhere unto Judaism, deprived themselves of the blessings enjoyed by Christians.

As we have so often pointed out, the Hebrew saints were being urged to return unto the divinely-instituted religion of their fathers. In verse 9, the apostle presents to them two further dissuasives. First, he assured them they now possess the Antitype of all the types of Judaism—why, then, be tempted by the shadows when they possessed the Substance! Second, he solemnly affirms that those who still clung to Judaism cut themselves off from the Christian’s privileges. They had “no right,” no divine title to “eat” or partake of them. The application of this principle to us today is obvious. The same two-fold argument should suffice to draw off *our* hearts from doting upon ritualistic rites and performances—possessing Christ as our great High Priest, having access to the throne of grace, such things as bowing to the east, elevating the offering (collection), candles, incense, pictures, images, are needless and worthless, and if the heart be set on them and a saving value be ascribed to them, they effectually exclude us from an interest in Christ’s salvation.

In last month’s article, we showed how strikingly and blessedly the Old Testament types pointed to Christ as the nourishment of His people—only parts of the sacrifices were burnt upon the altar, other portions thereof being allotted to the priests, or the offerer and his family. But there was a notable exception to this, unto which the apostle now directs our attention. “For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp” (Heb 13:11). The reference is unto the sin offerings. These were slain on the altar in the outer court, but their blood was carried inside the tabernacle and sprinkled before or upon the throne of JEHOVAH, while their carcasses were utterly consumed outside the camp. This was, of course, while Israel were sojourners in the wilderness and lived in tents. But the same order was observed after they entered Canaan and the temple was built in Jerusalem—the bodies of the sin offerings being carried out beyond the walls of the city to be consumed there.

The apostle was referring to such passages as Leviticus 4:1-12, where provision was made for an atonement when a priest had unwittingly sinned against

any of the commandments of the Lord. He was to bring a bullock unto the door of the tabernacle for a sin offering, lay his hand upon its head (as an act of identification, to denote that the doom awaiting *it* was what *he* deserved), and kill it before the Lord. Its blood was then to be brought into the tabernacle and sprinkled seven times before the Lord, before the veil of the sanctuary, and upon the horns of the incense altar, and the remainder thereof poured out at the base of the brazen altar. The richest portions of the animal were then burned upon the altar, but the remainder of it was carried forth “without the camp,” and there utterly consumed by fire. The same order was followed when the whole congregation sinned through ignorance (Lev 4:12-21), the account closing with “He shall carry forth the bullock *without* the camp, and burn him as he burned the first bullock; it is a sin offering.” The reader may also compare Numbers 19:3, 9.

But there is no doubt that the apostle was alluding more particularly unto the chief sin offering which was offered on the annual day of atonement, when propitiation was made for all the sins of Israel once a year, described at length in Leviticus 16. Concerning the blood of this sacrifice we read, “And he [the high priest] shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times” (Lev 16:14). Regarding the bodies of those beasts used on this occasion, we are told, “and the bullock for the sin offering, and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall one carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung” (Lev 16:27). These passages, then, make it quite clear to which particular class of sacrifices the apostle was referring in Hebrews 13:10-11.

The question now arises, Wherein lies *the relevancy* of this allusion to these passages in Leviticus in our present text? What was the apostle’s particular design in referring to the sin offerings? It was twofold. First, to substantiate his assertion that they who served the tabernacle had “no right to eat” of the Christian’s altar—i.e., had no title to partake of the benefits of Christ, who has, as our next verse shows, died as a sin offering. There was a divine prohibition which expressly forbade any feeding upon the same, “And no sin offering, whereof any of the blood is brought into the tabernacle of the congregation to reconcile withal in the holy place, shall be eaten: it shall be *burnt* in the fire” (Lev 6:30). Those, then, who clung to Judaism are cut off from the Antitype’s sin offering. Second, to exhibit the superiority of Christianity—those who trust in Christ *eat* His flesh and drink His blood (Joh 6:54-56).

But let us dwell for a moment on the spiritual significance of this particular detail in the type. It presents to us that feature in the suffering of Christ which is the most solemn of all to contemplate, namely, His being made sin for His people and enduring the penal wrath of God. “Outside the camp” was the place where the *leper* was compelled to dwell (Lev 13:46), was the place where *criminals* were

condemned and slain (Lev 24:14 and cf. Jos 7:24, 1Ki 21:13, Act 7:58), it was the place where the *defiled* were put (Num 5:3), it was the place where *filth was deposited* (Deu 23:12-13). And *that* was the place, dear Christian reader, that the incarnate Son, the Holy One of God, entered for you and me! O the unspeakable humiliation when He suffered Himself to be “numbered with the transgressors” (Isa 53:12). O the unutterable mystery of the Blessed One “being made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13). O the unspeakable anguish when the sword of divine justice smote Him (Zec 13:7), and God forsook Him (Mat 27:46).

Yet let it be emphatically insisted upon that Christ remained, personally and essentially, the *Untainted One*, even when the fearful load of the sins of His people was laid upon Him. This very point was carefully guarded by God—ever jealous of the honour of His Son—in the types, yea, in the sin offerings themselves. First, the blood of the sin offering was carried within the sanctuary itself and sprinkled before the Lord (Lev 4:6), which was *not* done with any other offering. Second, “the fat that covereth the inwards” of the animal was burned upon the altar (Lev 4:8-10), yea, “for a sweet savour unto the LORD” (v. 31), intimating that God still beheld that in His Son with which He was well-pleased even while He was bearing the sins of His people. Third, it was expressly enjoined that the carcass of the bullock should be carried forth “without the camp unto a *clean* place” (Lev 4:12), signifying it was still *holy* unto the Lord, and *not* a polluted thing.

Christ was “as pure, as holy, and as precious in the sight of God whilst groaning under the infliction of damnatory wrath on the accursed tree, as when He was in the bosom of the Father before all worlds—the very same moment in which He was ‘bruised’ and ‘made a curse’ for us, being also that in which He offered Himself for us ‘an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.’” Never was the character of Jesus exhibited in more transcendent excellency, never were His relations to God and to man maintained in greater perfectness than during the time that He suffered for us on the tree. Never did the Father more delight in and appreciate the excellency of the Son of His love, never did the Son more love and honour and delight in the Father than when He uttered that bitter cry, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ (Mat 27:46). The very circumstances which placed Jesus, outwardly, in the extreme of distance from heaven and from God, only proved that there was an essential nearness—an everlasting moral nearness, which not even the fact of His being the Bearer of damnatory wrath could for one moment alter” (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899).

The *immediate* reason why none of the Israelites, not even the high priest, was allowed to *eat* any portion of the sin offering, and why its carcass was burnt outside the camp rather than upon the altar, seems to lie in the distinctive nature and special design of this offering. Had the priest eaten of any portion thereof, *that* had given it the character of a peace offering, and had the whole been consumed upon the altar it had too closely resembled the burnt offering. But as we have

pointed out before, the *ultimate* reason and deeper design was to denote that Judaism had to be abandoned before one could “eat” or derive benefit from the Christian “altar.” Herein lies the superiority of Christianity, that *we are permitted* to feed upon a Sacrifice of the highest and holiest kind, receiving those blessings and benefits which Christ has procured for His people by the shedding of His precious blood.

The apostle, then, has furnished clear proof of what he had asserted in Hebrews verses 9, 10, and that from the Old Testament Scriptures themselves. There he had said, “It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace,” which means for the mind to have such a fixed persuasion of the truth as to enjoy peace with God, without which there can be no real and solid tranquility. Then the apostle had said, “Not with meats, which have *not profited* them that have been occupied therein,” which must be understood in the light of the previous clause—the ceremonial distinctions of the Levitical law were altogether inadequate for justification and peace with God. Moreover, that sacrifice which made atonement for *sin* provided *no food* for those who offered it, and the heart cannot be established before God where sins are not remitted.

“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate” (Heb 13:12). Here is the Christian’s altar, here is the all-sufficient sacrifice offered once for all upon it, and here is the blessed effect thereof, his sanctification. The opening “wherefore” of this verse called for the line of thought developed in the opening paragraphs of this article. It intimated that it was for the express purpose of meeting the requirements of the Old Testament types that the Lord Jesus was “led as a lamb to the slaughter” (see Act 8:32), and suffered the horrible ignominy of being cast out of the holy city, and put to death in the place where the worst criminals were executed. What honour did the Substance now place upon the shadows! A wide field of study is here suggested to us, and a reverent and patient survey of it will well repay our efforts.

How frequently in the four Gospels has the Holy Spirit assigned as the reason for what Christ did “that the scriptures might be fulfilled” (Mat 26:54, Mar 14:49, Luk 24:44, Joh 18:9). That expression is *not* to be restricted to Christ’s design in accomplishing the terms of Messianic *prophecy*—though, of course, that is included—for it also and often has reference to His so acting in order that *the types* which foreshadowed Him might be realized. The will of God concerning the Mediator had been intimated in the legal institutions, for in them a prefiguration was made of what Christ should do and suffer, and His perfect obedience to the Father moved Him unto a compliance therewith. Consequently, the fuller be our knowledge of the types, the more shall we be able to understand the recorded details of our Saviour’s earthly life (particularly of His last week), and the more can we appreciate the motive which actuated Him—complete subjection to the will of the One who had sent Him. That particular which the Holy Spirit notes in

our text is but one illustration from many, if we take the trouble to search them out.

“The complete answering and fulfilling of all types in the person and office of Christ, testifieth the sameness and *immutability* of the counsel of God in the whole work of the redemption and salvation of the church, notwithstanding all the outward changes that have been in the institutions of divine worship” (John Owen, 1616-1683). But it did something else too—it left the unbelieving Jews *without excuse*. Christ’s implicit compliance with the types, His complete and perfect production of all that had been foreshadowed of Him, furnished the most indubitable demonstration that He was the promised Messiah, and therefore His rejection by the nation at large sealed their own doom, and was the reason why, a little later, God destroyed the sanctuary, city, and heritage.

“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate” (Heb 13:12). Christ Himself is the all-sufficient sin offering of His people. Just as all the iniquities, transgressions, and sins of natural Israel were, in a figure, transferred to the typical offering (Lev 16:21), so all the iniquities, transgressions, and sins of the Spirit Israel were imputed to their Surety (Isa 53:6-7, 11-12). Just as the goat bearing the iniquities of natural Israel was sent away “unto a land not inhabited” (Lev 16:22), so “as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psa 103:12). And just as “on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be *clean from all your sins* before the LORD” (Lev 16:30), so “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son *cleanseth us from all sin*” (1Jo 1:7).

Observe that in strict keeping with the fact that the Redeemer is here contemplated as the antitypical Sin-offering, He is referred to simply as “Jesus,” and *not* “Jesus Christ,” as in Hebrews verses 8, 21, still less “our Lord Jesus” as in verse 20. He is not alluded to in these different ways at random, nor for the mere purpose of variation. Not so does the Holy Spirit order *His* speech. There is nothing haphazard in His language. The various designations accorded the Saviour in the Word are selected with divine propriety and nothing affords a more striking evidence of the *verbal* inspiration of the Scriptures than the unerring precision with which they are used. “Jesus” is His *personal* name as man (Mat 1:21). “Christ” is His official title, as the One anointed of God (Mat 16:16, 20), while “The Lord Jesus” points to His exalted *status and authority* (Joh 13:13, Act 2:36). When “Jesus” is used alone, it is either for the special purpose of identification (as in Act 1:11) or to emphasize the infinite depths of humiliation into which the Son of God descended.

“Wherefore [in fulfillment of the types which had defined the path He should tread], Jesus also [the Antitype, the Just who had entered the place of the unjust, the infinitely Glorious One who had descended into such unfathomable depths of degradation], that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, *suffered* without the gate” (Heb 13:12). This was the particular feature made most

prominent in the type, for the sin-offering was not only slain, and its carcass taken outside the camp, but there it was *utterly consumed*. It spoke of Christ as the Sin-bearer enduring the fiery indignation of a sin-hating God, suffering His penal wrath. It spoke of Christ offering Himself to God as a sacrifice for the sins of His people, to make atonement for them, for His blood was shed, and *blood* was never employed under the types except to make atonement (Lev 17:11).

“That he might sanctify *the people*” (Heb 13:12). Ponder carefully, my reader, the definiteness of the language here used. Scripture knows nothing of a vague, general, undeterminable, and futile shedding of the precious blood of the Lamb. No indeed, it had a predestined, specific, and invincible hand in view. That blood was *not* shed for the whole human race at large (a considerable portion of which was already in hell when Christ died!), but for “the people,” each of whom are sanctified by it. It was for “the *sheep*” He laid down His life (Joh 10:11). It was to gather together in one “the *children of God* that were scattered abroad” that He was slain (Joh 11:51-52). It was for “his *friends*” He endured the cross (Joh 15:13). It was for *the church* He gave Himself (Eph 5:25).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

66. His Being Cursed

In an earlier article, we emphasised the fact that in his flight from Jerusalem, David is to be viewed as a contrite penitent. His refusal to stand his ground when Absalom rose up in rebellion against him, is to be attributed not to moral weakness, but to spiritual strength. Apparently this had been preceded by a lengthy and debilitating illness which had hindered him nipping that rebellion while it was in the bud, but the king had recovered by the time the conspiracy had come to a head. No, in his son’s rebellion David saw the righteous retribution of God upon his fearful sins against Bathsheba and Uriah, and accordingly he humbled himself beneath His mighty hand. He recognized the ways of God in His moral government, so instead of vainly flinging himself against the bosses of JEHOVAH’s buckler (rebellious and murmuring at His providences), he meekly bowed before His chastening rod. This was “bringing forth fruits meet for repentance” (see Mat 3:8)—as lovely, and as acceptable to God, as are “the fruits of righteousness” (Phi 1:11) in their season.

It is, then, in the viewing of David *as an humble penitent* that we obtain the key to most of what is recorded in 2 Samuel 15 and 16. His sin had found him out and brought him to remembrance before the Holy One of Israel, and he bowed his head and meekly accepted His reproofs. It was for this reason that he bade his loyal followers go back and leave him alone in his trouble. It was in that spirit he had ordered the priests to carry back the ark to Jerusalem—he felt utterly

unworthy that *it* should accompany him on his flight. It was in that same spirit, as an humble penitent, he had crossed the Kidron and ascended Olivet, barefooted and in tears. It was as *the mourner before God* that David had now turned his face toward the wilderness. All of this has been before us on a previous occasion, but we deemed it necessary to repeat the same, for it explains, as nothing else does, his amazing attitude in the incident we are about to contemplate.

As the fugitive king and his little following began to descend into the valley leading to the Jordan, a man who belonged to the family of the house of Saul came forth, and *cursed* him, charging him with a fearful crime he had never committed. Meeting with no opposition, this wretched creature cast stones at the king and his men. Now David was not the man, naturally speaking, to suffer such indignities to pass unnoticed. Why, then, did he now endure them in silence? Abishai, one of the king's followers, asked permission to avenge his master of these insults by slaying the offender, but David restrained him and suffered Shimei to continue his outrageous conduct. But what seems stranger still, David attributed this humiliating experience unto God Himself, saying "*The LORD hath said unto him, Curse David*" (2Sa 16:10)—language which raises a problem of the first magnitude—the relation of God to evil—for David was not guilty of speaking rashly and wickedly, but gave utterance to a most solemn and weighty truth. But to keep to our main thought.

"He saw God in every circumstance, and owned Him with a subdued and reverent spirit. To him it was not Shimei, but the Lord. Like Peter afterwards, when he sought to defend his beloved Master from the band of murderers sent to arrest Him. Both Peter and Abishai were living upon the surface and looking at secondary causes. The Lord Jesus was living in the most profound subjection to the Father, 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' (Joh 18:11). This gave Him power over everything. He looked beyond the instrument to God—beyond the cup to the hand which had filled it. It mattered not whether it were Judas, Herod, Caiaphas, or Pilate, He could say, in all, '*My Father's cup.*' Thus, too, was David, in his measure, lifted above subordinate agents. He looked right up to God, and with unshod feet and covered head, he bowed before Him, '*The LORD hath said unto him, Curse David*' (2Sa 16:10). This was enough.

"Now, there are, perhaps, few things in which we so much fail as in apprehending the presence of God, and His dealings with our souls, in every circumstance of daily life. We are constantly ensnared by looking at secondary causes. We do not realize God *in everything*. Hence Satan gets the victory over us. Were we more alive to the fact that there is not an event which happens to us, from morning to night, in which the voice of God may not be heard, the hand of God seen, with what a holy atmosphere would it surround us! Men and things would then be received as so many agents and instruments in our Father's hands, so many ingredients in our Father's cup. Thus would our minds be solemnized, our spirits calmed, our hearts subdued. Then we shall not say with Abishai, 'Why

should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head' (2Sa 16:9). Nor shall we, with Peter, draw the sword in natural excitement. How far below their respective masters were both these affectionate though mistaken men! How must the sound of Peter's sword have grated on his Master's ear and offended His spirit! And how must Abishai's words have wounded the meek and submitting David! Could David defend himself while God was dealing with his soul in a manner so solemn and impressive? Surely not. He dare not take himself out of the hands of the Lord. He was His for life or death—as a king or an exile. Blessed subjection!" (Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892).

"And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came" (2Sa 16:5). What a contrast is this from what was before us in the preceding verse! There we saw the hypocritical Ziba fawning upon David, pretending that he desired to "find grace" in his sight, and addressing him as "my lord, O king." Here we find Shimei "cursing" the king, and denouncing him as "thou man of Belial." Ziba presented David with an elaborate present, whereas Shimei threw stones and cast dust at him. Unto the flatteries of the former, David reacted by grievously misjudging Mephibosheth, whereas to the revilings of the latter, he meekly bowed before God—ah, my reader, the Christian has good reason to fear the smiles of the world, far more than he has its frowns.

"And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came" (2Sa 16:5). The first book of Samuel furnished the background to this dark scene. Saul had been Israel's king, and upon his death a determined effort had been made to preserve the throne in *his* family, see 2 Samuel 2:8 to 3:2. But the attempt of Abner and the determination of Ishbosheth to reign as king over Israel was in direct defiance of JEHOVAH's ordination (1Sa 16:1-3, 2Sa 2:8). But Shimei disregarded this divine appointment, and his heart was filled with enmity against David, whom he wrongly regarded as the usurper of the throne. While David was in power, he dared not openly anathematize him—though he hated him just the same. But now he was fleeing from Absalom, Shimei took the opportunity to vent his malice, which shows his utter baseness in taking advantage of David's trouble at this time.

"And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left" (2Sa 16:6). The rank hatred of Shimei's heart now burst forth in full force. With savage vehemence he curses the king, and flings stones and dust in the transports of his fury—stumbling along among the rocks high up in the glen, he keeps pace with the little band in the valley below. But ere passing on, let us not overlook the fact that Bahurim has been mentioned previously in this book, see 2 Samuel 3:16-18 and context. Did David now recall how the husband from whom he had torn Michal had followed her to this very place, and then turned back weeping to his

lonely home? We cannot be sure, but the remembrance of later and more evil deeds now subdued David's spirit and caused him to meekly submit to these outrageous insults.

“And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man” (2Sa 16:7-8). The different scenes presented in these chapters require to be viewed from various angles, if their manifold signification is to be perceived. This we endeavour to bear in mind as we pass from incident to incident. Shimei is not only to be regarded as the Lord's instrument for chastening David, as a figure of the devil as a “roaring lion”—raging against David because he had come into the enemy's territory (see last month's article), but also as a type of those who slandered and persecuted Christ Himself. It is this many-sidedness of these historical pictures which give to them their chief interest for us today.

When the parents of the infant Jesus presented Him to God in the temple, old Simeon was moved by the Spirit of prophecy to say, “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against...*that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed*” (Luk 2:34-35). How truly the terms of this prediction concerning the Antitype was adumbrated in the type. All through his checkered career, but especially that part of it we are now considering, David's various experiences served as occasions that “the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed.” Much that was hidden beneath the surface was forced out into the open. Those who were loyal to him at heart were now unmistakably manifested as his staunch supporters and faithful friend. His “mighty men” continued to cling to him despite the drastic change of his fortunes. It now became clear who really loved him for his own sake,—like Mary and Martha and the apostles. On the other hand, hypocrites were exposed (Ahithophel, the forerunner of Judas), and bitter enemies openly reviled and condemned him—this was the lot of our Lord.

The conduct of Shimei on this occasion was base and vile to the last degree. In the first place, it was in direct defiance of the express commandment of the Lord, “Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people” (Exo 22:28). “Curse not the king, no not in thy thought” (Ecc 10:20). Second, it was despicable beyond words that Shimei should wait to vent his malice upon David till the time when his cup of sorrow was already full, thus adding to his grief, “For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded” (Psa 69:26). Third, the awful charge he now preferred was absolutely false, and against the plainest evidence—so far from David having slain Saul, he had again and again spared his life when he was at his mercy. He was

many miles away at the time of Saul's death, and when the tidings of it reached him, he made lamentation for him, (2Sa 1:12).

"And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man" (2Sa 16:7-8). What a solemn case is this of the holy name of the Lord being found upon the lips of the wicked!—a warning to us that all who make use of the name of Christ do *not* "depart from iniquity" (2Ti 2:19). Observe too how Shimei undertook to interpret the divine dispensations toward David, showing us that wicked men are ever ready to press God's judgments into their service, for they judge right and wrong by selfish interests. May divine grace preserve both writer and reader from the folly and sin of attempting to philosophise about God's dealing with others.

"Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head. And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" (2Sa 16:9-10). Here again the type merges into the Antitype, and that in two respects. First, how this well-meant but fleshly suggestion of David's devoted follower reminds us of that request of Christ's disciples concerning those who "did not receive him," namely, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias [Elijah] did?" (Luk 9:54). As Christ answered, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of," so David restrained Abishai—clear proof he was *not* the "bloody man" Shimei had called him! Second, David refused to return railing for railing, reminding us of "when he [Christ] was reviled, [He] reviled not again" (1Pe 2:23), in this leaving an example for us to follow. But turning from the typical, let *us* consider the practical.

Though the fact itself be not here specifically mentioned, David realized that he *deserved to be* both cursed and stoned, and this consciousness thereof must have taken off the edge from this cutting experience, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" (Lam 3:39). Though the blood of Saul did not rest upon David, that of Uriah did—this he knew full well, and therefore bowed to God's righteous chastisement, and spared Shimei—both Absalom and Shimei were instruments in the hand of God, justly afflicting him—though the guilt of their conduct belonged to them. A parallel case is found in Aaron—the remembrance of his great wickedness in making the golden calf, composed his mind under the fearful trial of the death of his sons (Lev 10:1-3)—knowing he deserved yet sorer judgment, he was silent.

"And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David" (2Sa 16:10). David

saw the hand of God in this experience, afflicting him for his sins against Bathsheba and Uriah. Shimei had received a commission from heaven, to curse David, though that no more excused him or took away his guilt than the crucifiers of Christ were guiltless because they did what God's hand and counsel "determined before to be done" (Act 2:23, 4:28). God has foreordained *all* that comes to pass in this world, but this does not mean that He regards the wickedness of men with complacency or that He condones their evil. No indeed. In their zeal to clear God of being the Author of sin, many have denied that He is the Ordainer and Orderer of it. Because the creature cannot comprehend His ways, or perceive how He is the Author of an act without being chargeable with the evil of it, they have rejected the important truth that sin is under the absolute *control* of God, and is as much subject to His moral government, as the winds and waves are directed by Him in the material sphere.

The subject is admittedly a difficult one, and if we are spared, we hope to write more at length upon it in the future. Meanwhile, we content ourselves by giving a quotation from the Westminster Confession, "God's providence extendeth itself to all sins of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and other wise *ordering and governing* them, in a manifold disposition unto His own holy ends; yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God" (Chapter 5). The holiness of God is no more sullied by directing the activities of evil men than the beams of the sun are defiled when they shine upon a filthy swamp. The hatred of his heart belonged to Shimei himself, but it was God's work that that hatred should settle so definitely on David, and show itself in exactly the manner and time it did.

"And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him. It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day" (2Sa 16:11-12). Two further considerations are here presented. David calmed himself under the lesser affliction of Shimei's cursing him, by reminding himself of the greater trial of Absalom's rising up against him. And he sought comfort in the possibility that God might yet overrule this trouble for his own ultimate blessing. The *practical* value of this incident is the valuable teaching it contains on how a saint ought to conduct and console himself under severe trials. Let us summarize. First, David comforted himself with the thought that his sins deserved sorer chastisement than he was receiving. Second, he looked beyond the afflicting instrument, to the righteous hand of God. Third, he considered the minor affliction unworthy of consideration in view of the major. Fourth, he exercised *hope* that God would yet bring "good" out of evil. May grace be granted us to do likewise.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

5. *The Siniatic*

In bringing to a close these articles on the Siniatic covenant, we propose to review the ground which has been covered, summarize the various aspects of truth which have been before us, and endeavour to further clarify one or two points which may not yet be quite clear to the interested reader. We began the series (June/1936) by asking a number of questions which we will now repeat and briefly answer.

“What was the precise nature of the covenant which God entered into with Israel at Sinai?” It was an arrangement or constitution which pertained to them *as a nation*, and was for the regulation of their religious, political, and social life. “Did it concern only their temporal welfare as a nation, or did it also set forth God’s requirements for the individual’s enjoyment of eternal blessings?” The latter, for the substance of the covenant was according to the unchanging principles on which God’s throne is founded—none but those who are partakers of the divine holiness and are conformed to the divine righteousness can commune with God and dwell with Him forever. “Was a radical change now made in God’s revelations to men and what He demanded of them?” No, for it had for its foundation the everlasting covenant of grace, while in substance it was a renewal of the Adamic covenant of works. Moreover, as we have shown, the Siniatic transaction must not be considered as an isolated event, but as an appendage to the Abrahamic covenant, the ends of which it was designed to carry forward to their accomplishment.

In saying that the Mosaic economy was founded upon the everlasting covenant of grace, we mean that it was owing to the eternal compact which the three persons of the Godhead had made with the Mediator, Christ Jesus, that the Lord dealt with Israel in pure grace when He delivered them from the bondage of Egypt and brought them to Himself. When we say that in substance it was a renewal of the Adamic covenant of works, we mean that Israel was placed under the same law (in principle) as the federal head of the race was, and that as Adam’s *continued* enjoyment of Eden was continued upon his obedience, so Israel’s *continued* enjoyment of Canaan was conditioned on their obedience. In saying that the Siniatic constitution was an appendage to the Abrahamic covenant, we mean that it gathered up into itself the Primordial and Patriarchal institutions—the Sabbath, sacrifices, circumcision—while it added a multitude of new ordinances which, though in themselves “weak and beggarly elements,” were both instructive symbols and typical prefigurations of future spiritual blessings.

“Was an entirely different ‘way of salvation’ now introduced?” Most certainly not. Salvation has *always* been by grace through faith, never on the ground of works, but always producing good works. When Jude says that he proposed to write of “the *common* salvation” (Jude 1:3), he signified that the saints of *all* ages

have participated in the same salvation. The regenerated in Israel looked beyond the sign to the thing signified and saw in the shadow a figure of the substance, and obtained *through Christ* acceptance with God. Every aspect of the cardinal truth of justification is found in the Psalms just as it is set forth in the New Testament. First, the same confession of sin and depravation, Psalm 14:1. Second, the same acknowledgement of guilt and ill-desert, Psalm 40:12-13. Third, the same fear of God's righteous judgment, Psalm 6:1. Fourth, the same sense of inevitable condemnation on the ground of God's law, Psalm 143:2. Fifth, the same cry for undeserved mercy, Psalm 51:1. Sixth, the same faith in God's revealed character as a just God and Saviour, Psalm 25:8. Seventh, the same hope of "mercy" through "redemption," Psalm 130:7. Eighth, the same pleading of God's name, Psalm 25:11. Ninth, the same trust in another righteousness than his own, Psalm 71:16; 84:9. Tenth, the same love for "the Son," Psalm 2:12. Eleventh, the same joy and peace in believing, Psalm 89:15-16. Twelfth, the same assurance in God's faithfulness to fulfill His promises, Psalm 89:1-2. Let the reader carefully ponder these passages from the Psalms and he will discover *the Gospel itself in all its essential elements*.

"Wherein is the Siniatic covenant related to the others, particularly to the everlasting covenant of grace and the Adamic covenant of works?—was it in harmony with the former or a renewal of the latter?" *These* questions raise an issue which presents *the chief difficulty* to be elucidated. In seeking its solution, several vital and basic considerations must needs be steadily borne in mind, otherwise a one-sided view of it is bound to lead unto an erroneous conclusion. Those important "considerations" include the relation which the Siniatic compact bore to the Abrahamic covenant—the distinction which must be drawn between the relation that existed between JEHOVAH and the nation at large, and between JEHOVAH and the spiritual remnant in it, and the contribution which God designed the Mosaic economy should make toward paving the way for the advent of Christ and the establishing of Christianity.

Now the Holy Spirit has Himself graciously made known to us in Galatians 3, the relation which the Siniatic covenant sustained to the Abrahamic. The latter did not, "*cannot* disannul," the former (Gal 3:17), it was "added" thereto (Gal 3:19), it is not "against" it (Gal 3:21), it had a *gracious* design (Gal 3:23-24). It was "added" not by way of amendment or alteration, not to discredit it, nor to be blended with it as water may be mixed with wine. No, it still remained subservient to the promises made to Abraham concerning his seed. And yet it was *not* set up by itself alone, but was brought in as a necessary appendix, which clearly proves that God gave Israel the law with an *evangelical* design and purpose.

"It was added *because of transgressions*" (Gal 3:19), which probably has a *double* reference. First, because sin was then so rampant in the world, and Israel had acquired so many of the ways of the heathen during their long sojourn in Egypt, the law (both moral and ceremonial) was formally given at Sinai to serve

as a restraint and preserve a pure seed till the Messiah appeared. Second, in order to convict *Israel* of their guilt and convince them of the need of another righteousness than their own, thus preparing their hearts for Christ. If I preach the law to the unsaved, showing its spirituality and the breadth of its requirements, pressing upon them the justice of its demands, proving they are under its righteous condemnation, and all of this with the object of driving them out of themselves to Christ, then I make a right and legitimate service of the law. I “use it lawfully” (1Ti 1:8) and do not pit it against the Gospel.

In the historical order and dispensational relation between the Abrahamic and Siniatic covenants, we see again that marvel of divine wisdom which conjoins such opposites as law and grace, justice and mercy, requirement and provision. The fact that the latter was “added to the former,” shows that the one was not set aside or ignored by the other, but was acknowledged in its unimpaired validity. Now under the Abrahamic covenant, as we saw when examining the same, there was a striking conjunction of grace and law, yet the former more largely predominated—as is evident from the frequent references [and allusions] to the “promises” (Gal 3:7-8, 16, 18, 21) and from the “preached before *the gospel* to Abraham” (Gal 3:8)—so too under the Mosaic economy grace and law were both exhibited, yet the latter was far more conspicuous—as is clear from the contrast drawn in “for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (Joh 1:17).

The Siniatic covenant was supplementary and subsidiary to the Abrahamic, serving to promote both its natural and spiritual ends. Its object was *not to convey*, but to *direct* life. Its immediate design was to make clear to Abraham’s seed how it behooved them to act toward God and toward each other, as a chosen generation, as the people of JEHOVAH. It made evident the character and conduct required from those who were partakers of the grace revealed in the promises. It made manifest the all-important principle that redemption carries in its bosom a conformity to the divine will, and that only when the soul really responds to the righteousness of heaven is the work of redemption completed. It trained the mind and stimulated the conscience of the regenerate unto a more enlightened apprehension of the mercy revealed, and which its instituted symbols served more fully to explain.

It was grace alone which delivered Israel from Egypt, but as God’s acknowledged people they were going to occupy for their inheritance that land which the Lord claimed as more peculiarly His own. They must go there, then, as (typically, at least) partakers of His holiness, for thus alone could they either glorify His name or enjoy His blessings. Hence the *holiness* of Israel was the common end aimed at in all the Levitical institutions under which they were placed. Take, for example, the laver, at which the *priests* (under pain of death, Exo 30:20-21) were always required to wash their hands and feet before either serving at the altar or entering the tabernacle. That was symbolical of *the inward purity*

which God required. The psalmist clearly intimates this, and shows he held it to be no less applicable to *himself*, when he says, “I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD” (Psa 26:6)—that he spoke of no bodily ablution, but of the state of his *heart* and conduct, is evident from the whole tenor of the Psalm.

By undeserved and sovereign goodness, the Israelites were chosen to be the people of God, and their obedience to the law was never intended *to purchase* immunities or advantages not already theirs. Such an idea is preposterous. No, their obedience simply *preserved* to them the possession of what God had *previously* bestowed. The moral law made known the character and conduct which He required from His “children” (Deu 14:1). That it revealed to them their shortcomings and convicted them of their depravity only served to make the spiritually-minded seek more earnestly fresh supplies of grace and be increasingly thankful for the provisions of mercy supplied for the removal of their sins and maintenance of fellowship with the Lord.

In requiring the guilty Israelite to lay his hand on the head of the sacrificial victim (Lev 4:24), it was plainly taught that the worshipper could never approach God in any other character than that of *a sinner*, and by no other way than through the shedding of blood. On the annual day of atonement the people were required to “afflict their souls” (Lev 16:29). The *same* principle is equally applicable under the new covenant era—the atonement of Christ becomes available to the sinner *only* as he approaches it with heartfelt convictions of sin, and with mingled sorrow and confidence, disburdens himself of the whole accumulation of guilt at the foot of the cross. Repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ must grow and work together in the experience of the soul.

What has been said in the last eight paragraphs is all fairly obvious and simple, for it finds its exact counterpart in the New Testament. Everything connected with the earthly and temporal inheritance of Israel was so ordered as to plainly exhibit those principles by which God alone confers upon His people the tokens of His favour. God’s ways with Israel on earth were designed to disclose the path to heaven. True obedience is only possible as the effect of sovereign grace in redemption. But grace reigns “through righteousness” (Rom 5:21), and never at the expense of it, and therefore are the redeemed placed under the law as their rule of life. It is perfectly true that the Gospel contains far higher examples of the morality enjoined in the law than any to be found in the Old Testament and provides much more powerful motives for exercising the same, but that is a very different thing from maintaining that the morality itself is higher or essentially more perfect.

But the real problem confronts us when we consider the relation of the law to the great masses of *the unregenerate* in Israel. Manifestly it sustained an entirely different relation to *them* than it did to the spiritual remnant. *They*, as the fallen descendants of Adam, were born under the covenant of works (i.e., bound by its

inexorable requirements), which they, in the person of their federal head, had broken, and therefore they lay under its curse. And the giving of the moral law at Sinai was well-calculated to impress this solemn truth on them, showing that the only way of escape was by availing themselves of the provisions of mercy in the sacrifices—just as the only way for the sinner now to obtain deliverance from the law’s condemnation is for him to flee to Christ. But the spiritual remnant, though under the law as a rule of life, participated in the mercy contained in the Abrahamic promises, for in all ages God has been *administering* the everlasting covenant of grace when dealing with His elect.

This *twofold* application of the law, as it related to the mass of the unregenerate and the remnant of the regenerate, was significantly intimated in the *double giving* of the law. The first time Moses received the tables of stone from the hands of the Lord (Exo 32:15-16), they were broken by him on the mount—symbolizing the fact that Israel lay under the condemnation of a broken law. But the second time Moses received the tables (Exo 34:1), they were deposited in the ark and covered with the mercy-seat (Exo 40:20), which was sprinkled by the atoning blood (Lev 16:14)—adumbrating the truth that saints are sheltered (in Christ) from its accusation and penalty. “The law at Sinai was a covenant of works to all the carnal descendants of Abraham, but a rule of life to the spiritual. Thus, like the pillar of cloud, the law had both a bright and a dark side to it” (Thomas Bell, 1814, “The Covenants”).

The predication made by Thomas Bell and others that the covenant of works was renewed at Sinai, requires to be carefully qualified. Certainly God *did not* promulgate the law at Sinai with *the same* end and use as in Eden, so that it was strictly and solely a covenant of works, for the law was most surely given to Israel with a *gracious* design. It was in order to impress them with a sense of the holiness and justice of Him with whom they had to do, with the spirituality and breadth of the obedience which they owed to Him, and this, for the purpose of convicting them of the multitude and heinousness of their sins, of the utter impossibility of becoming righteous by their own efforts, or escaping from the divine wrath, except by availing themselves of the provisions of His mercy—thus shutting them up to Christ.

The *double bearing* of the Mosaic law upon the carnal in Israel, and then upon the spiritual seed, was mystically anticipated and adumbrated in the history of Abraham—the progenitor of the one and the spiritual “father” (pattern) of the other. Promise was made to Abraham that he should have a son, yet at first it was not so clearly revealed *by whom* the patriarch was to have issue. Sarah, ten years after the promise, counseled Abraham to go in to Hagar, that by her she might have children (Gen 16:3). Thus, though by office only a servant, Hagar was (wrongfully) taken into her mistress’ place. This prefigured the carnal Jew’s perversion of the Siniatic covenant, putting their trust in the subordinate precept instead of the original promise. Israel followed after righteousness, but did not

obtain it, because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law (see Rom 9:32-33 and 10:2-3). They called Abraham their father (Joh 8:39) yet trusted in Moses (Joh 5:45). After all his efforts, the legalist can only bring forth an Ishmael—one rejected of God—and not an Isaac!

When Thomas Bell insisted that the Siniatic covenant *must be* a renewal of the covenant of works (though subservient to the Abrahamic) because it was not the covenant of grace, and “there is no other,” he failed to take into account *the unique* character of the Jewish theocracy—that it *was* “unique” is clear from this one fact alone, that *all* of Abraham’s natural descendants were members of the theocracy, whereas only the regenerate belong to the Body of Christ. The Siniatic covenant formally and visibly manifested God’s kingdom on earth, for His throne was so established over Israel that JEHOVAH became known as “king in Jeshurun” (Deu 33:5), and in consequence thereof, Israel became *in a political sense* “the people of God” (Jud 20:2), and in *that* character He became “their God.” We read of “the Commonwealth [literally ‘polity’] of Israel” (Eph 2:12), by which we are to understand its whole civil, religious, and national fabric.

Now that “Commonwealth” was purely a temporal and external one, being an economy “after the law of a carnal commandment” (Heb 7:16). There was *nothing spiritual*, strictly speaking, about it. It *had* a spiritual meaning when looked at in its *typical* character, but taken in itself, it was merely temporal and earthly. God did not, by the terms of the Siniatic constitution, undertake to write the law on their hearts, as He does now under the new covenant. As a kingdom or commonwealth, Israel was *a theocracy*, that is, God Himself *directly* ruled over them. He gave them a complete body of laws, by which they were to regulate all their affairs, law accompanied with promises and threatenings of a temporal kind. Under that constitution, Israel’s continued occupation of Canaan, and the enjoyment of their other privileges depended on obedience to their King.

Returning to the questions raised in our first article (June 1936), “Was the Siniatic covenant a simple or mixed one—did it have only a ‘letter’ significance pertaining to earthly things, or a ‘spirit’ as well, pertaining to heavenly things?” This has just been answered in the last two paragraphs—a “letter” only when viewed strictly in connection with Israel *as a nation*, but a “spirit” also when considered typically of God’s people in general. “What specific contribution did it make unto the progressive unfolding of the divine plan and purpose?” In addition to all that has been said on this point in previous articles, we will now, in closing, answer by pointing out how that further details *of the everlasting covenant* which God made with Christ were therein strikingly adumbrated.

First, by making the Siniatic covenant with the nation of Israel, the church of Christ was there prefigured in its *corporate* character. Second, by treating *through Moses* in all his dealings with Israel, God signified that we receive all His blessings through “*the mediator* of the better covenant” (Heb 8:6). Third, by first redeeming Israel from Egypt and then placing them under the law, God intimated

that His grace reigns “through righteousness” (Rom 5:21). Fourth, by taking upon Himself the office of “King” (Deu 33:5), God showed that He requires implicit submission (obedience) from His people. Fifth, by setting up the tabernacle in Israel’s midst, God revealed that place of nearness to Himself into which He has brought us. Sixth, by the various institutions of the ceremonial law, we learn that “without *holiness* no man shall see the LORD” (Heb 12:14). Seventh, by bringing Israel into the land of Canaan, God supplied an image of our heavenly inheritance.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

12. Its Process

When the young believer first realizes the dying love of Christ for him and the amazing grace of God unto him, his heart cries out, What can I do for Him who has done so much for me? The answer is, live to Him and for Him. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, “but *yield yourselves unto God*, as those that are alive from the dead” (Rom 6:13). “The believer is to give himself up to God without any reservation. He is to employ both body and mind in every work that God, by His Word, requires of him. He must decline no labour that God sets before him, no trial to which He calls him, no cross which He lays upon him. He is not to count his life dear to himself, if God demands it of him” (Robert Haldane, 1764-1842). We are not our own, but bought with a price. The faculties of our souls and the members of our bodies, which previously were used only for self and to serve sin, are now to be used only for Him.

“Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead” (Rom 6:13). An adequate development of the truth of vivification and a proper exposition of Romans 6:13 really calls for a detailed consideration of the whole of Romans 6—one of the most important chapters in the New Testament. In the first part of the chapter (vv. 1-10), the apostle dwells upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as God’s provision in grace for lost sinners—His way of meeting the dire need of His people and securing their salvation. The death of Christ exhausted the penalty of sin on the elect, and His resurrection secured their present title and future position of eternal glory. The Son of God incarnate was the Surety of God’s people, making Himself responsible for their debts, undertaking to fulfill all righteousness on their behalf, and putting away their sins by the sacrifice of Himself.

On the cross, Christ met all the demands of divine justice in reference to the iniquities of His people. In rising again from the dead, “after the power of an endless life,” Christ secured their full discharge, and in that endless life He “liveth unto God” (Rom 6:10)—fulfilling all of God’s will in reference to us, performing all God’s pleasure concerning us, securing all God’s purpose of grace toward us,

becoming the Author of eternal salvation to all that obey Him. By revealing to us these wondrous and blessed facts, the Holy Spirit has transferred from self all ground of confidence and hope, fixing them upon Christ, and on Him alone. And because of this we are exhorted, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:11)—account yourselves to be so identified with Christ, so legally one with Him, that *His* death was your death, His resurrection *your* resurrection.

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:11). This is a divine command, equally binding on *all* believers, at *all* times—in every phase of their experience and under every circumstance. To “reckon” means to act faith on the same, to unquestioningly accept God’s testimony thereto. It is not to be a mere passing influence on the mind when we are undisturbed by active temptations, no mere happy frame of spirit when under a refreshing from the presence of the Lord, but an abiding conviction and assurance. But someone will at once object, Alas, I have the daily evidence that I am *not* dead unto sin, and to ask me to believe that I am, is an impossibility. Ah, God does not ask us to reckon or regard ourselves as being dead unto sin practically, but *judicially so*—dead to its guilt, dead to its condemnation, dead to its penalty, because Christ received the wages of sin on our behalf.

See how God has anticipated and met this very objection here in Romans 6:11. Observe well the word we place in italics, “*Likewise* reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” In verse 10, the apostle had affirmed that Christ Himself “died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God,” and now the command is “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be” (Rom 6:11), etc. *Like as* Christ died unto sin, so the Christian is (by faith in what God has declared) to reckon himself also “to be dead indeed unto sin,” and *like as* Christ lives unto God, so is the Christian to consider himself as being alive to God. Now *how* did Christ die unto sin? You say that you cannot believe yourself *to be* dead unto sin while the presence and pollution of it plagues your daily experience. My reader, Christ did *not* die unto sin in *that* sense. No, He never had the coldness, hardness, inconsistency, and failures you complain of, for He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” Christ died as suffering the penalty of it. He died to expiate it, to blot it out of God’s sight by His precious blood, and to so blot *you* out of God’s sight as one against whom not a single sin can ever be charged.

The general subject of the first half of Romans 6 is the believer’s justification or deliverance from the *guilt* of sin. The subject of the second half is the believer’s sanctification or his deliverance from the *power* of sin. The dividing line is verse 11, where we are exhorted to set to our seal that God is true and acts faithfully in our federal union with Christ in His death and resurrection. On *that* foundation, we are then bidden to, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should

obey it in the lusts thereof” (Rom 6:12). You have been *judicially* freed from sin—see to it, then, that you are *practically* delivered from its domination. Watch unto prayer, lest ye enter into temptation, for though the spirit be willing, yet the flesh is weak. Settle it in your minds that unless sin be mortified daily in your hearts, it will assert itself and more or less obtain the mastery over your members. Sin is still in you, and if permitted, will reign over you. But remember also there are resources in Christ to help in every difficulty, strength enough to overcome in you, grace enough in Him to be sufficient for you.

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom 6:13). This is the practical response which the believer is required to make unto the amazing grace which God has exercised toward him through Christ. Having been judicially delivered from death when his Surety rose again, having been quickened by the Spirit, he is to act to conduct himself as one who is spiritually alive. He is to *yield himself unto God*. It is very striking to observe the variation of language in the two clauses—“neither yield ye your *members*...but yield *yourselves*...and your members.” The apostle does *not* say “neither yield ye *yourselves* as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin,” for thank God, *that* is no longer possible—Christ standing at God’s right hand prevents the believer yielding *himself* to the service of that from which He has redeemed him. But he can “yield his *members* unto sin”—his thoughts, his impulses, his eyes, his hands, etc. to prevent that, he is to yield himself unto God, that is, unreservedly consecrate himself to His service.

“Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom 6:13). The general dedication is the ground of the particular outworking of the same. I am God’s, and then I use my time and strength for Him. We are to give up ourselves to Him not in part, but in whole, to serve Him with all our hearts and might. We are to give up ourselves to Him in order to be governed and disposed by Him, to be what He would have us be, and to do what He would have us do, to subject ourselves to His disposing will, and submit ourselves to His commanding will. “Let him [the Lord] do to me as seemeth good unto him” (2Sa 15:26) is to be the Christian’s attitude. “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Act 9:6) is to be our readiness to obey. God has given Himself to us in the person of His Son, the least we can do in return is to give ourselves up to Him, spirit and soul and body.

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Rom 6:22). This order is unchangeable—mortification, vivification, fruitfulness. There is a direct antithesis from what has been said in verses 20-21, “For when ye were the servants of sin....what fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.” In the service of sin is nothing to be had but shame and death, but in the service of God the fruit is holiness and the issue everlasting

life. The more we serve God, the more holy shall we be, and the larger will be our capacity for happiness in the life to come. Here, then, is the secret and essence of practical sanctification—the measure in which we really yield ourselves to God, is the measure in which we shall be fruitful and pleasing to Him. Obedience carries its own reward in itself, for holiness is the same in the soul as health is in the body.

Vivification, or living unto God, is a miraculous change of the heart by divine grace, and then the acting out of that grace which was received at regeneration. They that have received grace are not to sit down in idle contentment, but see to it what remains of their earthly existence be entirely yielded up to God. As the first act of faith is a surrendering of ourselves unto God in Christ (2Co 8:5), so a life of faith consists in a continued devotedness unto God. We began by receiving Christ as Lord (Col 2:6), and we are to continue in the exercise of entire dependence on Him in all His offices—His prophetic to enlighten us, His priestly to intercede for us, His kingly to rule over us. God's law is our rule and we delight in it after the inward man. Experimental sanctification is a deliverance from the tyranny of sin into a life of righteousness—begun at regeneration, continued by mortification and vivification, completed at glorification.

“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). Under the law, those beasts which were offered to God were first separated from a common use—singled out from the flock or herd for this specific purpose. So the Christian has been called out from the world and is no more to live unto himself—“For the time *past* of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles” (1Pe 4:3). Then those animals were solemnly offered to God in sacrifice. In like manner, the Christian is to dedicate himself to the service of the Lord, to love, live unto, and glorify Him, “As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Rom 6:19). The Christian is to walk in newness of life, delighting himself in God, seeking to please Him in all things, being completely submissive to His will.

Vivification or living unto God was, by many of the older writers, called “new obedience,” in reference to that obedience which God requires from His people according to the tenor of the *new* covenant. The rule of our *performance* of this obedience is the revealed will of God, but the rule of its *acceptance* is its sincerity and impartiality. Because God does *not* yet (in this life) renew us *perfectly* to His image—leaving in us a contrary principle—He accepts an imperfect obedience, namely, an obedience which is rendered to Him in all known instances of duty and sincere in the manner of its performance. It is not that a lower and inferior righteousness answers the ends of God's glory under the new covenant than was the case under the old, but that our evangelical obedience does not hold the same *place* which obedience did under the (Adamic) covenant of works. Under the former, our obedience would have been our righteousness, absolutely, before God,

whereby we should have been justified in His sight, but *that* place is now filled by the obedience of Christ, our Mediator.

God has appointed this evangelical obedience (which is required by the new covenant), as the means whereby we show our subjection to Him, our dependence upon Him, our fruitfulness and thankfulness unto Him, and as the only way of converse and intercourse with Him. It is by our submission, service, and devotedness unto God, that we improve the effects of His love unto us, the benefits of Christ's mediation, and whereby we glorify Him in this world. Vivification, then, is the living of a holy life unto God, constrained by the love of Christ, regulated by the divine commands. In the *outworking* of vivification, the Christian is no longer greedy to catch at every opportunity of pleasure and profit in worldly concerns, caring not *how* he obtains them, but is occupied with God's will for him, and is careful to follow it out, so that he may be "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Phi 1:11).

The title which God has unto unreserved and hearty obedience from His people is an indubitable one, and it is one which He presses upon us in His Word again and again, "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: *therefore* glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are *God's*" (1Co 6:19-20). We belong to God first of all by predestination. He chose us for Himself, as His portion and heritage, and therefore it should be our chief concern to give Him pleasure. Second, we belong to God by creation. We are the work of His hands and therefore it should be our deepest desire to be vessels unto His honour. Third, we belong to God by redemption. We are His purchased property. The right of personal ownership is His and our responsibility is to be used in His service. Fourth, we belong to Him by regeneration, whereby He has made us His children, and the Father has an unqualified right to demand loving obedience from His offspring. Finally, we belong to Him by consecration. This is a voluntary act whereby we have dedicated ourselves to Him.

There is nothing so pleasant, honourable, or profitable, as living unto God, having communion with Him in the path of obedience. Pleasant it certainly is to the renewed soul, for just so far as we are subject to God's will, are we in harmony with Him. Nothing so breeds serenity of mind, peace of conscience, assurance of God's favour, as when we are engaged in those things which are pleasing in His sight. All the unhappiness there is in the world is the outcome of sin, and therefore, the further we keep from sin, the more shall we discover the secret of true happiness. "The work [fruit] of righteousness [right-doing] shall be peace" (Isa 32:17). When our animal spirits keep their due proportion and temperature, cheerfulness and health of body ensues, and when the faculties of the soul are regulated by holiness, spiritual health is secured. Wisdom's "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Pro 3:17).

Nothing is more *honourable* than to be a dutiful servant of God. “The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour” (Pro 12:26). The judgment of the unregenerate is darkened by sin and blinded by Satan, and therefore they suppose it to be a weak and mean thing to be godly. And on the contrary, imagine it is a sort of excellency to be free from the restraints of piety, and to live a life of pomp and ease, without any care of the life to come. The deluded worldling has no esteem for a pious man and prizes only that which is carnal and transient. But the things which are “highly esteemed among men is abominations in the sight of God (Luk 16:15), whereas the things they despise He regards as of great price (1Pe 3:4). Since God is the sum of all excellency, they are most excellent who approximate the closest to His likeness. If honour be derived from the real fount of honour, then those who are the most Godlike are the most honourable, the “excellent” of the earth (Psa 16:3).

Nothing is more *profitable* than to live in subjection to God, for it gaineth His favour and fellowship for the present, and makes way for an everlasting fruition of Him in glory. What an unprofitable drudgery is the life of an unsanctified worldling in comparison with that of a holy man who waits upon God and has access of welcome unto Him. “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes” (Psa 118:9). The princes of earth are very uncertain and fickle, but God changes not. The poorest Christian is never denied an audience at the throne of grace, never upbraided for seeking mercy, never reproached for the frequency of his appeals. What can bring greater blessing to the soul than daily attendance upon the King of kings—the heart engaged in loving Him, the tongue in praising Him, the life in serving Him! This is to secure a foretaste of the pleasures and joys that await us on High. It is heaven begun on earth. It is to enjoy the smiles and approbation of Him who delighteth in the righteous.

What considerations are these to stir us up unto vivification! How they should persuade us to make our devotedness to God more evident! First, by manifesting the change itself, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2Co 5:17), and then by our increase in the same, “Ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would *abound more and more*” (1Th 4:1). It is not an indifferent thing whether we be eminent in obedience or no, God makes a great matter of it, as appears from His injunctions, “Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently” (Psa 119:4), as also by His promises, “O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be *well with them*” (Deu 5:29). By our obedience, Christ is glorified, grace is magnified, and God is gratified. By our obedience, we are preserved from the paths of the destroyer, kept from placing a stumbling-block before our fellows, and prevented from ruining our testimony.

Vivification or living unto God is the same thing as being conformed unto the image of His Son or emulating the example which Christ has left us, “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1Jo 2:6).

Christ is a pattern unto us in His graces, His states, and in the special acts of His mediation. None so perfectly exemplified the graces of faith, patience, humility, self-denial, and obedience, and therefore did He say, “Take my yoke upon you, and *learn of me*” (Mat 11:29). The states through which Christ passed were those of humiliation and exaltation, and the members follow their Head, in first suffering and then entering into the glory (Rom 8:17). The special acts of Christ’s mediation were His death and resurrection, and to these also we are to be conformed (Phi 3:10-11). Experimental sanctification, then, consists in *Christlikeness*. This, however, is of such importance that we ask the reader to turn, in this connection, to our article upon “Christ our Exemplar.”—D.V. in the July or August issue.—

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Rahab: Joshua 2

What a lucky chance! What an instance of providential direction! What brought the spies to the house of Rahab? They came not by invitation. They came not by previous acquaintance, or information, with respect to her faith and friendship towards Israel. Among all the houses of Jericho, why did they happen to lodge with Rahab? It has been uselessly, as well as foolishly, attempted to be proved that she had not been an harlot, but the keeper of a house of entertainment. There is no evidence that she kept a house of general entertainment at all. But were this even in evidence, why did the spies happen to lodge in *this* house, rather than in any other of the same kind? Rahab was the only believer in Jericho! Why was there one believer found in Jericho? The Lord in His providence has need of Rahab’s services. He took out of Jericho just what served His purpose. But could not JEHOVAH have performed His will without Rahab? Doubtless He could. but He chose to act by means, and by the means of His people, and in this case by a Gentile believer, as a figure of the calling of the Gentiles to the blessings of God’s true Israel.

The king of Jericho is informed that Israelite spies were in the country—in the city—in the very house of Rahab. Could not the watchful providence of God have prevented this? Could not the over-ruling power of JEHOVAH have kept it secret from the king of Jericho that spies were in the country—in the city—in the house of Rahab? Did providence in this instance fight against itself? If we see the hand of providence for Israel in the faith of Rahab, may not our enemies claim a similar providence in manifesting the fact to the king of Jericho? Such manifestation was God’s purpose, and for God’s glory, as well as the eventual success of the spies. It tried the faith of Rahab. It proved her faith and her ignorance of duty. It showed an important truth—that God’s people often glorify Him by their obedience, while in that very obedience there is sinful weakness. Rahab’s faith and hiding of the spies

are approved by God. Her lying was the result of ignorance of duty or weakness of faith. There need not any singular defense be set up for Rahab. Every Christian needs a similar defense in many instances. Who is it that is perfect in the knowledge of the revealed will of God? Who is it, then, who commits not sins from ignorance of duty?

Rahab hides the spies and denies that they are in the house. But the danger is not over. Why does this lie succeed? Why did the king's messengers take her word? They should have died for their negligence. They should have searched every corner of the house. Would the police of any city, on such information, take the word of the most respectable house-holder? The thing was of God, and the cautious are negligent, or forgetful, when it is God's purpose to keep them from succeeding. The messengers are deceived by Rahab, and go in pursuit where the prey is not to be found. The stalks of flax would have been no cover, had it been God's purpose to reveal. Who can hide when God would make manifest? Who can discover what God would conceal? Who is it that may not see the work of providence of the Lord in the history of this matter?

Adonibezek: Judges 1:6

"But Adonibezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes" (Jdg 1:6) Cruel, cruel, cruel! It may be so, but it is of God. And in this point of view, it is right. The Ruler of the world in this affair executes an awful *retribution*. And He does it in the way of His *providence*. There is no account of a command to punish in this way on this occasion. There is no evidence that the Israelites knew that Adonibezek had punished in this manner the kings whom he had conquered. There is no evidence that they intended this punishment to be retributive. What, then, suggested the manner of punishment to them in this instance? Whatever it was, the providence of the Lord secured its accomplishment. The tyrant himself confesses not only the justice of his punishment, but acknowledges that it was a retribution overruled by God.

"And Adonibezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me" (Jdg 1:7). Hear this, ye foolish wise men. Hear the testimony of one of the kings of ancient Canaan. Here are the heathen recognizing the providence of God in the manner of his punishment, while ye see no providence but as the effect of general laws. Your ignorance is below heathen ignorance. It is brutish. It would blaspheme the light of heathenism to say that it was heathenish. Of all men living there are no such enemies of the divine character, as those who profess to fathom the nature of God, and determine a bound to His conduct. All the wisdom of philosophers could not discover how God could do this, while, at the same time, it was the uncommanded act of the Israelites. And that for which they cannot account, they will, in the presumption of their ignorance, boldly deny. As they cannot see the way in which God can do such things, they will solve the

matter by explaining it as if it were merely permitted or foreseen by God. But neither permission nor foreknowledge can warrant a thing to be ascribed to God, as His doing. I might permit or foreknow with the utmost certainty, what I could in no sense be said to do. Here, then, I may be asked, can God be said to *do* such things? Were I to attempt an answer to such questions, I would be as presumptuous as the inquirer. God tells me in His Holy Writ that *He* doth such things. He tells me also that *men* do such things. I believe both assertions, though I cannot make the smallest approach to reconcile them. Does not God tell me in His Word that, “His ways are past finding out”? If we could fathom all the ways of God, the Scriptures could not be His Word.—(Alexander Carson, 1776-1844)

EXPERIMENTAL PREACHING

Our principle object in these articles is, under God, to open the eyes of preachers (to quite a number of whom this magazine is sent) to see the necessity and importance of taking up some of the soul-exercises which occasion so much concern to their most interested hearers and to offer some suggestions along what lines this may be accomplished. Incidentally, we are endeavouring to make them of interest and profit to the general reader as well. Much skill and spiritual wisdom are required to speak on those subjects which more immediately affect the experience of Christians, and those are acquired only by the anointing of the Spirit and a careful analysis and diagnosis of our own inward life. It is just as requisite for the preacher to make a study of *the human heart*, as to be assiduous in the reading of books, otherwise he will not know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.

To know what our spiritual state really is, and what our practical acquaintance with Christ actually amounts to is most desirable and profitable, for it arms us against our spiritual enemies, puts a stop to doubting, and causes us to glory in the Lord. But to describe clearly and declare fully the influences and operations of the Spirit within us, as they truly are, is a very difficult task. It is much easier to preach the *doctrine* of grace, than to describe *the effects* of it when applied to the heart of God. It is to those portions of the Word which treat most directly and largely with the exercises of the heart that the preacher should turn, both for guidance and material. Much in the Book of Job and in the Lamentations will afford help, but it is in *the Psalms* more particularly that the Spirit has recorded the varied breathings and traced out the diverse experiences of “the living in Jerusalem.”

True Christian experience may be defined as *the teaching of God in the soul*, an inward acquaintance with divine things. It is a feeling sense of their reality, in contrast from a mere notional and theoretical knowledge of them, so that we know

them not “in word only, but also *in power*, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance” (1Th 1:5). It is the Spirit’s application of the truth to the soul, so that what is written in the Word is now inscribed on the heart. This supplies demonstration of what before was intangible and unreal, the divine verities have become known realities. The soul can now say of God, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee” (Job 42:5). He knows that God is holy, for he has been made painfully conscious of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. He *knows* that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness” (Rom 1:18), for he has *felt* the same, scorching his own conscience. He knows that He is “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10), for he has “*tasted* that the Lord is gracious” (1Pe 2:3).

Christian experience is the teaching of God in the soul and the effects this produces. Those effects may be, broadly, summed up in two words, *pain* and *pleasure*, sorrow and gladness, mourning and rejoicing. The natural world adumbrates the spiritual—as there is a continual alternation between spring and autumn, summer and winter, so there is in the history of the soul. He who gives rain and sunshine, also sends droughts and biting frosts, likewise does He grant fresh supplies of grace and then withhold the same, and also sends grievous afflictions and sore tribulations. Herein is His high sovereignty conspicuously displayed. As there are some lands which enjoy far more sunshine than others, so some of His elect experience more of joy than sorrow, and as there are parts of the earth where there is far more cold than heat, so there are some of God’s children who are called on to suffer more of adversity—both inward and outward—than of prosperity. Unless this be clearly recognized we shall be without the principle key which unlocks the profoundest mysteries of life.

But while there is great diversity in the lot of different Christians, there is an underlying unity. In incidentals there is infinite variety, but in fundamentals there is a real agreement. This may be illustrated by the analogy furnished from the members and groups of the human family. What differences of form, feature, and complexion, distinguishes individuals one from another! Where, out of all mankind, can we find two persons precisely alike? Nevertheless, how much greater is their resemblance than their dissimilarity. Take any man, black or white, red or yellow, and then place him by the side of a horse or cow, and it at once appears that an impassable gulf separates the lowest man from the highest animal. Yet of any two men, taken at random from the remotest nationalities, and their greatest contrast is but as nothing when compared to their general resemblance. The differences are but superficial and on the surface.

Let us now apply the above illustration to the spiritual family of God. Here too there are many variations, yet an underlying oneness—differences of specie, yet but a single genus. Each of the twelve tribes of Israel had its distinctive individuality, yet they formed a single nation. Peter was quite different from Nathanael, and Thomas from John, yet they were equally dear to Christ and

equally gave proof they belonged to Him. The differences are patent because they lie on the surface, as freckles and wrinkles are seen on the face. Whereas bones and muscles, arteries and nerves—the real stamina of the body—are unseen. Some believers have more faith than others, some more courage, some more gentleness. Some believers have a lighter burden to carry. Allowance must be made for temperament, heredity, environment, privileges, etc., yet notwithstanding, all have the same cast of spiritual features, speak the same language, evidence the same stock, and stand out as distinct from the unregenerate as men differ from beasts.

“We must not make the experience of others, in *all* respects, a rule to ourselves, nor our own a rule to others, yet these are common mistakes. Though all are exercised at times, yet some pass through the voyage of life much more smoothly than others” (John Newton, 1725-1807). Excellent counsel is contained in those words, and some of God’s dear children would be spared many an heartache if they would but heed it. There are some who know the very hour and place where they were first converted, but there are others who cannot even single out the year when their hearts were first really turned to the Lord, and because they cannot, they grieve, and doubt the reality of their conversion. This is very silly, for God does not deal with all of His people in the manner he dealt with the dying thief and Saul of Tarsus. Moreover, the genuineness of conversion is not to be determined by its suddenness or drastic character, but rather by *its lasting effects and fruits*.

“The wind bloweth where it listeth...so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (Joh 3:8). The figure which Christ there employed is very suggestive. Sometimes the wind blows so softly it is almost imperceptible—at other times it comes with hurricane velocity and power. It is so in connection with the new birth. In some cases there is long travail and much hard labour, in others the deliverance is speedy and easy. There is no uniformity in the natural realm, nor is there in the spiritual. If “order” be heaven’s first law, endless variety and diversity is surely its second. As we have said above, considerable allowance must be made (in our calculation and consideration) of what is termed the “accidentals” of life, though of course there are no accidents in a world where everything has been ordained by God. Those reared in a godly home, and who have sat under sound preaching from earliest days, can hardly expect the Spirit’s application of the Word to produce so drastic a *conscious* change as those who were comparative strangers of the truth when God first meets with them.

The same thing is true of the experiences which *follow* conversion. Some long retain their newborn peace and joy, while others quickly come under a cloud and are shut up for years in “doubting castle.” It is often due to the lopsided and deficient teaching they sit under, for there are some preachers who, if they do not plainly say so, at least convey the impression that it is sinful for any one to be joyful in this world. There is a class of spiritual dyspeptics who are never happy unless they are miserable, and the influence of such is very chilling upon those

who are still enjoying their “first love.” But more generally the blame for losing his assurance lies at the young convert’s *own door*—failure to separate from worldly companions will grieve the Spirit and cause Him to withhold His witness, while neglect of private prayer and daily feeding on the Word will give the enemy an advantage which he will be quick to seize.

But even where there *is* a complete break from ungodly companions, and where the means of grace *are* diligently used, the joy of conversion is usually short-lived. Nor is this surprising—deeper discoveries of our depravity must sober those with the most exuberant spirits and cause groans to mingle with their songs. At conversion sin is only stunned and not killed, and sooner or later it revives and seeks to recover its lost ground, and gain complete mastery again over the heart. This presents a painful problem to the babe in Christ, for unless he has been previously instructed, he naturally thought he was completely done with sin when he gave himself to the Lord. It was his sincere and deep desire to henceforth live a holy life, and the sight he now obtains of his corruptions, his weakness in the face of temptations, the sad falls he encounters, awaken serious doubts in his heart, and Satan promptly assures him that he has been deceived, that his conversion was not a genuine one after all.

It is at this stage that the distressed and fearing young saint is in need of real help. Alas, only too often he is hindered and stumbles. Some will laugh at his fears and say “to the winds with your doubts.” The absurdity of such a course may be exposed by drawing an analogy. What good would it do to jeer at one who has a splitting headache or a raging toothache? Would it afford him any relief to say, You are foolish to harbour the thought that all is not well with you? Or to tell the poor sufferer that he is simply heeding the devil’s suggestions? “Physicians of no value” are all such Job’s comforters. They do not understand the malady, nor can they prescribe the remedy, and if we yield ourselves to *their* guidance, being blind themselves, they can but lead us into “the ditch.” Beware, my reader, of those who mock at souls in despair.

“Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people” (Isa 62:10). This word to God’s servant is most pertinent to the case we are now considering. To “gather out the stones” from the path of experience of a tried saint is as much a part of the minister’s work as it is for him to “lift up a standard.” Now that which is stumbling our young convert is the discovery of his (unsuspected) inward corruptions, the power which sin still has over him, and the fact that earnest prayer seems to produce no change for the better. Only one who has himself known these stumbling stones in his own soul is qualified to take them out of the way of others. In fact the preacher knows nothing in reality of any branch of the truth, except as he has felt its necessity, suitableness, and power in his own experience. We must ourselves be helped of God before we can be of service to His needy people.

It is the preacher's business to point out that corruptions are no evidence of grace, yet that grace manifests corruptions, causes its recipient to strive against them, and groan beneath them. The sighs of a wounded spirit, the cries for deliverance from the ragings of indwelling sin, the sinkings of soul amidst the turbulent waves of depravity, are evidences of spiritual life, and he who sneers at such is a Pharisee, despising a poor publican. Many of God's people are greatly harassed with temptations, frequently buffeted by Satan, and deeply exercised over the workings of sin in their hearts, and for them to learn that this is the common experience of the regenerate strengthens their hope and moves them to renew their struggles against their spiritual foes. It means much to a sorely tried and deeply perplexed Christian to learn that his minister is *also* his "brother and companion *in tribulation*" (Rev 1:9).

Much wisdom and grace are needed here if the preacher is to be both faithful and helpful. On the one hand, he must not lower God's standard to his own poor attainments, nor must he give any countenance to failure. Sin in the believer is as vile in God's sight as sin in the unbeliever, and the allowance of it doubly reprehensible. For in the case of a believer, it is against more light, fuller knowledge, greater privilege, deeper obligations. Unbelief is not to be pitied, doubtings are not to be condoned, falls are not to be excused. Sin must be frankly confessed to God, failures penitently acknowledged, all that is of the flesh condemned by us. On the other hand, the minister must be much on his guard lest by unnecessary roughness the bruised reed be broken and the smoking flax be quenched. Feeble knees are to be strengthened and not ignored, and the hands which hang down are to be lifted up. Patience, too, must be exercised, for as old heads do not grow on young shoulders, neither are raw recruits as well versed in spiritual warfare as the veterans of Christ's army.

There are some godly ministers who have failed to express themselves consistently with their own actual experience and with that of other holy persons, and thereby the faith and hope of gracious souls are weakened and dismayed, and occasion is given unto unbelief to more completely prevail over them. Perhaps some ministers are fearful that if they speak too plainly and freely about *their own* failures and falls, the impression will be conveyed that divine grace is an empty expression, rather than a powerful deterrent to sin. But such a fear is quite needless—surely none should hesitate to be as frank as was the apostle Paul in Romans 7—and none was more jealous of the glory of divine grace than he! But we suspect that in some instances it is *pride* which dominates, causing the preacher to be ashamed of acknowledging his own vileness, fearful lest his people will cease to look up to him as a spiritual giant.

Here too these are two extremes to be guarded against. Whilst we are far from advocating that the preacher should make it a practice of referring to his own spiritual ups and downs in every sermon, yet we are convinced that he has failed in discharging an important branch of his duty if he never makes reference to his own

experiences. The servant of God is not only a herald, but *a witness* as well, and how can he feelingly *testify* to the longsuffering of God, unless he affirms that He has exercised infinite patience to such a wretch as *himself*? In like manner, he should bear personal witness to the ceaseless conflict between the two natures in the regenerate, the ragings of sin against grace, the surgings of unbelief against faith, the eclipses of hope by doubtings. True, this should always be done in a spirit of humiliation and self-loathing, never minimizing the sinfulness of sin, and still less glorying in his “putrefying sores.”

There should be a balance preserved between describing how a Christian *ought* to live and how the Christian *does* live—how far short the falls of measuring up to the standard which God has set before him, that “in *many* things we offend *all*” (Jam 3:2). There should also be a balance preserved between the reproving of failure and a setting forth of the gracious provisions which God has made for the meeting of the same. There must be no hesitation in proclaiming *the sufficiency of Christ* to deal with the most desperate cases, His compassion for the most wretched sufferers, His readiness to hear the feeblest cry which goes up from a penitent heart. The groaning saint is to be exhorted unto cultivating the freest possible dealings with the Friend of publicans and sinners, and assured that He is as ready and willing to minister unto the needy now as when He tabernacled here on earth, for He is “the same yesterday and today and for ever” (Heb 13:10) and “His compassions fail not” (Lam 3:22).

As the young convert, distressed by the discovery of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of his heart, is to be informed that *that* is no proof he is still unregenerate, so he is to be told that the ragings of sin within him are no occasion why he should turn away from the throne of grace, but rather a reason why he should go boldly thereto, that he may “obtain *mercy*.” While he is to be frequently exhorted unto keeping his heart with all diligence, and the necessity, importance, and method thereof explained to him, he is also to be warned that his most diligent efforts therein will meet with very imperfect success. He is to be instructed that the spiritual warfare to which God has called him, the good fight of faith in which he is to be daily engaged, is a lifelong task, and that *sincerity and faithfulness* therein, rather than victory, is what God requires. The wounds which he receives in this warfare are so many reasons for him to constantly have recourse to the Great Physician.

A PRAYER

O my God and Father! my heart is naked and open to Thee. Thou knowest the secrets of it. Thou seest how fervently I pray for the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. My prayer comes from a feeling sense of my want of Him, and from a dependence on Thy promise to give the Spirit to them that ask for Him. Lord! I ask. Grant me to be strengthened by Him with every needful gift and grace in the inner man. Send Him to manifest plainer and plainer my union with Christ, in order to my keeping up communion with Him, that, having Him dwelling in my heart by faith, I may be established in the experience of Thy love to me in Him. (William Romaine, 1714-1795)



July

THE SPIRIT FRUCTIFYING

Far more is said in Scripture upon this aspect of our many-sided subject than is generally supposed—different figures being used, especially in the Old Testament, to express the graces and virtues which the Spirit imparts to and develops in the elect. A considerable variety of emblems are employed to set them forth. They are frequently referred to as flowers and gardens of them, to beds of spices, and unto trees and orchards. For example, in Solomon’s Song we hear Christ saying to His spouse, “A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard. Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices: a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon” (Song 4:12-15).

The figures used in the above passage are very beautiful and call for careful consideration. A “garden” is a piece of ground distinguished and separated from others, for the owner’s use and delight. So the church of Christ is distinguished and separated from all other people by electing, redeeming, and regenerating grace. In a garden is a great variety of plants, herbs, and flowers—so in the church there are members differing much from each other, yet in all there is that which is delightful to their Lord. In a garden the plants and flowers do not grow up naturally of themselves, they do not spring forth spontaneously from its soil, but have to be set or sown, for nothing but weeds grow up of themselves. So in Christ’s church, those excellencies which are found in its members are not natural to them, but are the direct product *of the Spirit’s operations*, for by nature nothing grows in their hearts but the weeds of sin and corruption.

The commentators are not agreed as to whether Christ is speaking to His spouse in verse 15, or whether she is there heard replying to what He had said in verses 12-14. Personally, we strongly incline to the latter, that Christ having commended His church as a fruitful garden, she now ascribes it all to Him, “A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.” Yet, if we accept the former interpretation, it amounts to much the same thing, for He would there be explaining *what it was* that made His garden so fertile. To be

healthy and productive a garden must be well watered, otherwise its delicate plants will quickly wilt and wither. The same being true of trees and all vegetation, a plentiful supply of water is indispensable. Consequently, in keeping with the fact that believers are likened unto plants and trees, and their graces to flowers and fruits, the quickening, renewing, reviving, and fructifying operations of the Spirit are spoken of as “dew,” as “showers,” as “streams in the desert,” etc.

The Holy Spirit not only *imparts* life and holiness, but He *sustains* the same in the soul. He not only communicates heavenly graces, but He cultivates and develops them. “That they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified....For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations” (Isa 61:3, 11). Yes, the same One who “planted” those “trees of righteousness” must also “*cause* them” to “spring forth” to grow and bear fruit. While the tendency of the new nature is ever Godwards, yet it has no power of its own, being entirely dependent upon its Creator and Giver. Hence, that fruit which is borne by the believer is expressly called “the fruit *of the Spirit*” (Gal 5:22), so that the honour and glory may be ascribed alone unto Him. “From *me* is thy fruit found” (Hos 14:8).

“For I will *pour water* upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will *pour my spirit* upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses” (Isa 44:3-4). Just as surely as a drought brings death, so the absence of the Spirit’s working leaves all in a state of spiritual death. But just as heavy rains renew a parched vegetation, so an outpouring of the Spirit brings new life. Then shall it indeed be said, “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose” (Isa 35:1), which is expressly interpreted for us by the Spirit in, “For the LORD shall comfort *Zion*: he will comfort all *her waste places*; and he will make *her wilderness* like Eden, and *her desert* like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody” (Isa 51:3). We have purposely added Scripture to Scripture, because the spiritual meaning of these passages is commonly unperceived today, when carnal dispensationalists insist on the ignoring of all figures, and the interpreting of everything “literally.”

“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (Gal 4:19)—that which the apostle did ministerially, the Spirit does efficiently. *This is how* the Spirit makes the Christian fruitful, or rather, it is how He first fits him to be fruitful—by forming *Christ* in him. The metaphor is taken from the shaping of the child in its mother’s womb, so that as its natural parents communicated the matter of its body, it is then framed and shaped into their likeness, limb for limb, answering to themselves. In like manner, the Spirit communicates to the heart an incorruptible “seed” (1Jo 3:9) or spiritual nature, and

then conforms the soul unto Christ's image—first to His graces and then to His example, “That ye should *shew forth* the praises of him who hath called you” (1Pe 2:9)—which we could not do unless we had first *received* them. Ah, my reader, this is a solemn thing. We pass among men for genuine Christians, but the only coins which will pass the eye of God are those which bear stamped upon them the image of His Son.

In other words, then, the Spirit's fructifying of the believer is the conforming of him *unto Christ*, first in his heart, and then in his life. By nature we are totally *unlike* Christ, being born in the image of Adam and dominated by Satan. Or to revert to the figure in the opening paragraph, so far from resembling a beautiful and well-kept garden, we are like a barren desert, where nothing but useless shrubs and poisonous weeds are found. “I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down” (Pro 24:30-31). *That* is how we appeared unto the holy eye of God in our unregenerate state! It is only when a miracle of grace has been wrought in our hearts that Christ begins to be formed in us, and that we (in our measure) reproduce His graces, and this is due solely to the sovereign and effectual operations of the Holy Spirit.

“And every virtue we possess,
and every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His, and His alone.”

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

115. Outside the Camp (13:12-13)

Were it not so pathetic and tragic, it would be most amusing if we could obtain and read a complete record of the manner in which our text has been employed by various individuals and groups during the last four hundred years—to go no farther back. The reader would thereby be supplied with a striking illustration of the fact that, “There is no new thing under the sun” (Ecc 1:9) and see how frequently history repeats itself. He would learn too how easily simple souls were beguiled by a plausible tongue and how successfully Satan deceives the unwary by the very letter of Scripture. He would discover how the different *divisive moments* in the ecclesiastical realm—whether in Poland, Germany, Great Britain, or the U.S.A.—all started in much the same way, followed the same course, and we might add, met with a similar disappointing sequel. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. It is because the rank and file of the people do so little reading, and are

so ignorant of religious history, that they so readily fall a prey to those with high spiritual pretensions.

Hebrews 13:13 has ever been a great favourite with those who started “Come out” movements. It has been used, or rather misused, again and again by ambitious Diotrophes, who desired to head some new party or cause. It has been a sop for the conscience by many a little group of discontented and disgruntled souls, who because of some grievance (fancied or real) against their religious leaders, church, or denomination, forsook them, and set up an independent banner of their own. It is a verse which has been called into the service of all separatists, who urged all whose confidence they could gain to turn away from—not the secular world, but—their fellow-Christians, on the ground of trifling differences. That which these men urged their dupes to forsake was denounced as the God-abandoned and apostate “Camp,” while the criticism they have (often *justly*) met with for their pharisaic conduct, has been smugly interpreted as “bearing Christ’s reproach.”

In his most interesting and instructive work, “The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity”—a standard work which long found a place in all well-furnished libraries—Richard Hooker, three hundred years ago, described the tactics followed by the Separatist leaders which preceded or were contemporaneous with him. We will give here a very brief digest of the same. First, in seeking to win the people’s attention unto their “cause,” these would-be Separatists, loudly proclaimed the faults and failings of those in high places, magnifying and reproving the same with much severity, and thereby obtaining the reputation of great faithfulness, spiritual discernment, love of holiness. Second, those faults and corruptions which have their roots in human frailty, are attributed to an unscriptural and evil ecclesiastical government, whereby they are regarded as possessing much wisdom in determining the cause of those sins they denounce—whereas in reality, the very failures they decry will adhere to *any* form of government which may be established.

Third, having thus obtained such sway in the hearts of their hearers, these men now propose *their own* form of church government (or whatever else they are pleased to designate their scheme or system), declaring with a great blowing of trumpets that it is the only sovereign *remedy* for the evils which poor Christendom is groaning under, embellishing the same with an ear-tickling name or designation. Fourth, they now “interpret” (?) the Scriptures in such a way that everything in them is made to favour their discipline, and discredit the contrary. Fifth, then they seek to persuade the credulous that *they* have been favoured with a special illumination of the Spirit, whereby they are able to discern these things in the Word, while others reading it perceive them not. Sixth, assured that they are led by the Spirit, “This hath bred high terms of separation between such and the rest of the world, whereby the one sort are termed, The brethren, The godly, and so forth; the other, worldlings, time-servers, pleasures of men not of God” etc. (Richard Hooker, 1554-1600, Vol. 1, p. 106).

Finally, the deceived are now easily drawn to become ardent propagators of their new tenets, zealous proselytisers, seeking to persuade others to leave the apostate “Camp” and join them on “the *true* scriptural ground.” “We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us” (1Jo 4:6), as for the rest, “ye are of the world” (Hooker). Such was the policy pursued by the “Fifth Monarchy men,” the “Brownists,” Thomas Cartwright and his following in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such too was the course taken by John Kelly in Ireland, Alexander Campbell in Kentucky, more than a century ago—the latter founding “the Christian church,” denouncing all others as unscriptural. So that Mr. J. N. Darby (1800-1882) followed a well-trodden path!

“Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach” (Heb 13:13). After mentioning the Christian’s altar and the suffering and offering of Christ thereon, the apostle now draws an exhortation unto that duty which is the basis of our whole Christian profession. There are five things in this brief text which call for prayerful consideration. First, the exact force of its “therefore”—requiring us to ascertain the relation of our text to its setting. Second, what is signified here by “the camp,” both as it concerned the Hebrews and as it respects us today. Third, in what sense we are to go forth from it. Fourth, how in so doing we go unto Christ. Fifth, by what means this duty is to be discharged.

“Let us go forth *therefore* unto him without the camp” (Heb 13:13). The duty which is here enjoined on the believer is drawn from what had just been declared, “Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate” (Heb 13:12). There were one or two points in that verse which we reserved for consideration in this article. First, with regard to the meaning of “sanctify.” We cannot agree with those commentators (among them some for whom we have a high regard) that would here restrict it to “expiate.” We see no reason for this narrowing of its force. Personally, we consider the term has as wide a signification here as elsewhere in Scripture—by His perfect oblation Christ has *separated* His people from the world, *purified* them from all their iniquities, *consecrated* them to God, so that they stand before Him in all *acceptableness* of their Head.

Many words have a wider scope in Scripture than in ordinary usage, and the expositor needs to be constantly on his guard against narrowing the meaning of important terms. It is blessedly true that at the cross the believer’s Surety expiated all his sins, that is, cancelled their guilt, by making reparation to the law, but it is *the effects of that* which are here in view. The sanctification of His people was the grand object which Christ had in view in becoming incarnate, and that He steadily pursued throughout the whole of His life and sufferings. The church is now cleansed, set apart, and adorned by His atoning sacrifice. Christ sustained all the transgressions of His people, made atonement for them, removed the same from before God, and washed them from all defilement by His soul travail, bloody

sweat, and death. And in consequence, they now stand before the eye of infinite justice and holiness as everlastingly righteous and pure.

Herein we may behold once more the outstanding excellency of Christianity above Judaism—something which we must ever be on the lookout for if we are not to miss the principal design of the Spirit in this epistle. These verses abound in details which exhibit the privileges of the new covenant as far surpassing those of the old. First, we have that “establishing of the heart” before God (Heb 13:9) which the natural Israel possessed not. Second, we have “an altar” furnishing the highest and holiest sacrifice of all (Heb 13:10), which they had no right or title to partake of—their sin offerings were *burned*, not eaten (Heb 13:11). Third, we have an effectual and abiding sanctification of our souls before God, whereas they had a sanctification which was but external and evanescent “to the [ceremonial] purifying of the flesh” (Heb 9:13). Fourth, Jesus has sanctified the people “with *his own* blood” (Heb 13:12), which was something that the high priest of Judaism could never do—they offered to God the blood of others, even that of animals.

A further word now on the fact that the Saviour “suffered without the gate” that is (Heb 13:12), outside the city of Jerusalem which answered to the camp in the wilderness, wherein the tabernacle was first set up. Sundry things were represented thereby. First, this signified that He was not only a sacrifice for sin, but was being punished for sins, dealt with as a malefactor and dying that death which by divine institution was a sign of the curse (Gal 3:13). “They took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth [out of Jerusalem] into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified him, and two others with him” (Joh 19:16-18). This was done by the malice of the Jews, yet their wickedness was “by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Act 2:23), so that it might appear Christ is *the true sin offering*. Thus, God made the hatred of Satan and his agents to subserve His purpose and accomplish His own will—how the knowledge of this should *comfort* us when the wicked are plotting against us!

Second, in ordaining that His Son should be put to death outside the city of Jerusalem, symbolic intimation was thereby given by God to the Jews that He had *put an end to all sacrificing in the temple*, so far as their acceptance by Him was concerned. Now that Christ Himself was laid on the altar, there was no longer any need for those offerings which prefigured Him. The shadow and the substance could not stand together, for the Levitical sacrifices to be continued after Christ’s death would denote either that He had *not come* or that His offering was *not sufficient* to obtain salvation. Third, Christ’s going forth out of Jerusalem signified *the end of the church-state of the Jews*, and therefore as He left the city, He announced their destruction, see Luke 23:28-30. Very solemn was this. Christ was no longer “in the church” of the Jews (Act 7:38), their house was now left unto them desolate (Mat 23:38). If, then, a Jew desired to partake of the benefits of the Messiah, he too must leave the camp—the whole temple system.

What a depth and breadth of meaning there is to every action of our blessed Redeemer! what important truths they illustrated and exemplified! How much we lose by failing to meditate upon the details of our Lord's passion! In addition to what had been pointed out above, we may observe, fourth, that Christ's offering Himself as a sin offering to God outside Jerusalem clearly shows that His sacrifice and its benefits *were not confined* to the elect among the Jews, but extended equally unto the chosen remnant from the Gentiles. It was, then, yet another sign that "the middle wall of partition" was now broken down, that the barrier which had for so long existed between Judaism and the world no more existed. As 1 John 2:2 declared, "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"—for an exposition of which see our booklet on "The Atonement."

Thus, the force of the "therefore" in our text is not difficult to determine, because Jesus Himself "suffered without the gate, let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Heb 13:12-13). But to make it still more simple for the reader to comprehend, let us divide the "therefore" into its component parts. First and more generally, because Christ has left us an example, let us follow His steps. Second, since we partake of the food of our altar, let us use the strength therefrom in a way pleasing and glorifying to Christ. Third and more specifically, if the Son of God were willing to suffer the ignominy of being cast out of Jerusalem in order to bear our doom, surely it would ill-become the sons of God if they were unwilling to go forth and bear His reproach! Fourth, if Christ in obedience to God took the place of being scorned and hated by men, shall we in disobedience to Him seek to be esteemed and flattered by His enemies? Fifth, because Christ has "sanctified" us, let us *evidence* our separation from the ungodly.

"Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Heb 13:13). The second thing requiring our careful consideration here is what is meant by "the camp." "The apostle, in all this epistle, hath respect unto the original institution of the Jewish church-state and worship in the wilderness. Therefore he confines his discourse to the tabernacle and the services of it, without any mention of the temple or the city wherein it was built, though all that he speaks be equally applicable unto them. Now the camp in the wilderness was that space of ground which was taken up by the tents of the people, as they were regularly pitched about the tabernacle. Out of this compass the bodies of the beasts for the sin offerings were carried and burned. Hereunto afterwards answered the city of Jerusalem, as is evident in this place. For whereas in the foregoing verse, Christ is said to suffer 'without the gate,' here He is said to be 'without the camp': these being all one and the same as to the purpose of the apostle" (John Owen, 1616-1683).

"The camp" of Israel, then, and later the city of Jerusalem, was the seat and centre of the political and religious life of the Jewish church. To be in "the camp"

was to have a right unto all the advantages and privileges of the commonwealth of Israel (Eph 2:12) and the divine service of the tabernacle. For to forfeit that right, for any cause, for a season, meant that the offender was taken *out of* the camp, Leviticus 14:3; 24:14; Numbers 5:2; 12:15. Now it was in that camp that Christ had been “despised and rejected” by the nation. It was concerning that camp He had solemnly declared, “Your house is left unto you desolate” (Mat 23:38). It was from that camp He had suffered Himself to be conducted, when He went forth to the cross. Thus, at the time our epistle was written, “the camp” signified an apostate Judaism, which would have none of Christ, which *hated and anathematized* Him, and in consequence, it was the place *abandoned by God*, given up by Him to destruction—for a generation later it ceased to be, even in a material and outward way.

But Judaism as such has long since passed away, what, then is *its present counterpart*? The question should not be difficult to decide, though it meets with varied answers. Some say “the camp” is Romanism, and call attention to the many striking points of analogy between it and Judaism. Some say it is “the dead and carnal professing church”—from which, of course, *their* denomination is an exception. Others insist that it is “all the man-made sects and systems of Christendom,” from which they have withdrawn, only to set up another system of their own, even more pharisaical than those they denounce. But a single consideration is sufficient to dispose of all such vagaries—which have, in the past, misled the writer. Is *Christ Himself* hated and anathematized by either Rome, or the deadest and most erroneous portions of Protestantism? The answer is, NO. We must turn to *other* Scriptures (like Rev 18:4 and 2Ti 3:5) to learn God’s will for us concerning Romanism or the carnal sects, for Hebrews 13:13 cannot be fairly applied to either of them. The very name of Christ was abhorred by Judaism, it is *not so* by either Rome or degenerate Protestantism.

Let us not be misunderstood at this point. We are *not* here expressing our views on *the whole subject* of the Christian’s separation from what is dishonouring to Christ, nor are we holding a brief for the Papacy and her daughters. Admittedly Christendom is in a far worse state today than it was a century ago, and there is very much going on in it with which the follower of the Lord Jesus should have *no* fellowship. But that is a totally different thing from withdrawing from a company where there are many of God’s people and where all the fundamentals of the truth were faithfully proclaimed—think of denouncing Spurgeon’s Tabernacle as a part of “Babylon,” and refusing to allow those to “break bread” who occasionally attended its services! No, our present object is to define what “the camp” of Hebrews 13:13 actually signifies, and then to show how erroneously that term has been applied to something radically different.

As we have said above, “the camp” was that degenerate Judaism which had hounded the Lord of Glory to death, and which could not be appeased by anything less than putting Him to death as a base malefactor and blasphemer. It is readily

conceded that not only may numerous points of analogy be drawn between Judaism and Romanism, but that large sections of degenerate Protestantism now have many things in common with it. But it was *not* its law, its priesthood, its ceremonialism, nor even its corruptions, which caused God to give up Jerusalem unto destruction. The “camp” from which the apostle bade his readers “go forth” was a Judaism which had not only rejected Jesus as the Christ of God, denied that He was risen from the dead, but which also insisted that He was a vile imposter, and *reviled His very name*. But so far as we are aware, there is not a single church or company upon earth that professes to be “Christian” of whom *that* can be said!

The fact is, there is nothing upon earth today which exactly duplicates the Judaistic “camp” of the apostle’s time. Yet there *is* that which essentially corresponds to it, even though externally it differs somewhat therefrom, and that is *the world*—the secular and profane world. Concerning it we read, “The whole world lieth in wickedness” (1Jo 5:19). Those who compromise it are unregenerate, unholy, ungodly. It is true that one of the effects of Christianity has been to cast a veneer of morality and religious respectability over large sections of the world, though that veneer is now getting very thin. It is true that in some circles of it, it is still fashionable to feign *respect* for divine things, yet, if the exacting claims of God be pressed upon them, it soon becomes apparent that the carnal mind is enmity against Him. But for the most part, Christ is openly *hated* by the masses, and His name fearfully blasphemed by them. And hence it is that we are plainly told “the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jam 4:4).

Our next consideration is, *In what sense* is the Christian to “go forth” from the camp, i.e., from that which is avowedly and actively hostile to Christ? This question needs to be carefully considered, for here too the language of our text has been sadly wrested. Let us bring the point to a definite issue—is it a corporeal or a mental act which is here enjoined? Is it by the body or the soul that the duty is performed? Is it by our feet or our hearts that obedience is rendered? In other words, is it a “literal” or a metaphorical forsaking of the world which God requires from us? Those who made the serious mistake of supposing that it is the former, have betaken themselves to monasteries and convents. The explanatory and qualifying words of the apostle, “For then [if separation from the wicked were to be taken absolutely] must ye needs go out of the world” (1Co 5:10) shows the error of this. Contrary also would it be to the spirit of the Lord’s prayer, “I pray *not* that thou shouldest take them out of the world” (Joh 17:15).

Let us consider the case of the Jews in the apostles’ time. When one of them savingly believed on the Lord Jesus Christ was he required to “literally” or physically get out of Jerusalem? No, indeed, even the apostles themselves continued to abide there (Act 8:1)! It was *not a local* departure which was intended—though a little later that *was* necessary if their lives were to be preserved (Luk 21:21-32), rather was it a *moral and religious* going forth from the

camp. “There was nothing that these Hebrews did more value and more tenaciously adhere unto, than that political and religious interest in the commonwealth of Israel. They could not understand how all the glorious privileges granted of old unto that church and people, should so cease as that they ought to forsake them. Hereon most of them continued in their unbelief of the Gospel, many would have mixed the doctrine of it with their old ceremonies, and the best of them found no small difficulty in their renunciation. But the apostle shows them, that by the suffering of Christ without the gate or camp, this they *were* called unto” (John Owen).

The application of this principle unto us today is not difficult to perceive. It may be stated thus—God requires us to forgo and renounce all advantages and privileges—whether social, financial, political, or religious—*which are inconsistent with* an interest in Christ, communion with Him, or fidelity to His cause. An illustration of this is furnished in Philippians 3:4-10. Those things which Saul of Tarsus had formerly counted gain—his Jewish birth and orthodoxy, his pharisaic strictness and righteousness, his persecution of the church—he now “counted loss for Christ” (Phi 3:7). The same thing obtains now in heathendom—when a Parsee, Buddhist, Mahommedan (or a Jew or a Romanist) is truly converted, he has to turn his back upon, relinquish those things which he had hitherto most highly venerated. Love to Christ moves him to now hate those things which are directly opposed to Him.

Now for the fourth point in our text—by going forth from the camp we go “unto him,” or conversely, by going forth unto Christ, we go outside the camp. The two things are inseparable—they are convertible terms. We cannot go *unto*, without going *from*, and we cannot go “from” without going “unto.” This is exactly what conversion is—a turning around, a right-about face. It is the heart turning from Satan to God, from sin to holiness, from things below to things above, from “the camp” unto Christ. That which is opposed to the Lord Jesus is renounced for His sake. The world is left and He is followed. Self-righteousness is dropped, that an empty hand may lay hold of His atoning sacrifice. To “go forth unto him” is to betake ourselves to Christ in His office as the Prophet, Priest, and King of His church, and thereby find acceptance with God. It is to cleave unto and own Him under the contempt and opposition of those who despise and reject Him.

To go forth unto Christ without the camp, signifies for us to be so enlightened by the Spirit as for the eyes of our understanding to see Him as the promised Messiah, the alone Mediator between God and men—to behold the One whom the Jews and Gentile condemned to a malefactor’s death, as the all-sufficient Saviour. It is for the heart to be attracted by the supernal excellencies of His person, to be won by Him, the soul perceiving Him to be “the fairest of ten thousand.” It is for the will to be brought into subjection to Him, so that His yoke is gladly accepted and His sceptre readily submitted to. In a word, it is to heartily approve of Him whom the world still hates, becoming His humble follower, His willing disciple,

and gladly enduring for His sake all the ridicule and persecution which fidelity to Him and His cause entails. Like the Gadarenes of old, the professing world now say to Him, “Depart out of our coasts” (see Mar 5:17), but those who go forth unto Him exclaim, “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Song 2:16).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

67. His Being Befriended

Amid much that is saddening in the next two or three chapters, there occasionally shine rays of light through the darkness which overshadows them. The record is mainly concerned with the deeds of David’s enemies, but here and there we find chronicled some of the kindly actions of his friends. The depravity of fallen human nature is exhibited again and again, and we behold what fearful depths of iniquity men will fall into when not immediately restrained from above. God righteously permits the devil to work freely in the children of disobedience (Eph 2:2), for man at the beginning deliberately elected to become subject to Satan’s sceptre rather than remain in allegiance to his Maker—preferring death to life, darkness to light, bondage to freedom, he is made to suffer the consequences of the same. Nevertheless, the Almighty is over Satan and makes his ragings to subserve His own purposes, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain” (Psa 76:10)—strikingly illustrated again and again in the various scenes which are to come before us.

The depravity of fallen human nature is not an attractive subject, yet it is a solemn fact confronting us daily, both within and without. Moreover, it explains to us, as nothing else will, the fearful wickedness which abounds on every hand. A corrupt tree can (of itself) produce naught but corrupt fruit. That which should really surprise us is not the bountiful harvest which sin is producing in the human family, but rather that so many of its foul blossoms and buds are nipped before they can develop. Now and again God permits some monster of iniquity to run his race without hindrance, to show us what fearful evil man is capable of, and what would be common occurrence were He to leave Adam’s descendants entirely to themselves. The deeds of Ahithophel and Absalom would be duplicated all around us were it not that God puts bridles into the mouths of those who hate Him, and bounds their enmity as truly as He does those of the winds and waves.

But the restraining of man’s wickedness is not the sole operation of the divine government of the human family. From the uncongenial soil of fallen human nature, God is also engaged in producing that which makes this world a fit place for His people to live in, for He is doing *all* things for *their* sakes (Rom 8:28)—His glory and their good being inseparably bound up together. That the saint meets with *any* mercy, justice, or kindness at the hands of the unregenerate is due alone

to the grace and power of the Lord. That the believer is at times befriended by those who have not the love of God in their hearts, is as much the product and marvel of divine power as His creating an occasional oasis in the desert. There are times when the Lord makes the leopard to “lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together” (Isa 11:6). There are times when He causes the ravens to feed His servants. Yet whatever be the instruments God is pleased to use, the language of the believer should be “*Thou* preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies” (Psa 23:5).

Thus, amid the hardships and sufferings which his enemies inflicted upon David, we are also to note the reliefs and kindly supplies which God moved others to furnish him and his men. It was so in the experience of his blessed Son—if on the one hand, we read that He “had not where to lay his head,” on the other we are told, “And many others [of the women], which ministered unto him of their substance” (Luk 8:3). It was so in the history of the apostle Paul. If on the one hand, he sometimes experienced “hunger and thirst...cold and nakedness” (2Co 11:27), at others it could be recorded, “The barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold....who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary” (Act 28:2, 10). And has it not been thus in the lives of both writer and reader? Undoubtedly. Sweets and bitters, disappointments and pleasant surprises, have been intermingled, “In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath *set the one over against the other*” (Ecc 7:14).

“And the king, and all the people that were with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there” (2Sa 16:14), that is, at Bahurim (2Sa 16:5). After their long and arduous journey from Jerusalem, David and his band of loyal followers pitched camp and obtained a much-needed rest. At the same time, “Absalom, and all the people the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him” (2Sa 16:15). David and his retinue having left the way wide open for Absalom to take possession of the royal city whenever he pleased. There were none to oppose him. Accordingly he came, and no doubt felt much elated by this initial success, promising himself that the whole country would soon be his. “God suffers wicked men to prosper a while in their wicked plots, even beyond their expectation, that their disappointment may be the more grievous and disgraceful” (Matthew Henry, 1642-1714).

“And it came to pass, when Hushai the Archite, David’s friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, Let the king live, Let the king live [margin]. And Absalom said to Hushai, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? why wentest thou not with thy friend? and Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay; but whom the LORD, and this people, and all the men of Israel, choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide. And again, whom should I serve? should I not serve in the presence of his son? as I have served in thy father’s presence, so will I be in thy

presence” (2Sa 16:16-19). This is the sequel to what was before us in (2Sa 15:32-37). Hushai, at some risk to himself, ventured into the lion’s den, in order to serve and help David. His conduct on this occasion raises a problem, one which the commentators have differed widely upon. Some have argued that, on the worldly principle of “all is fair in love and war,” Hushai was fully justified in his dissimulation. Others have condemned him without qualification, as an unmitigated liar. While a few have been so puzzled they withheld a judgment.

Let it be pointed out, first, that Hushai did *not* say, “Let king Absalom live,” and when challenged concerning his infidelity to David, he did not reply “I have done with thy father, and am now devoted solely to *thee* and thy cause.” His language was ambiguous, capable of a double construction. While that somewhat modified his offence, it by no means cleared Hushai, for his language was intended to mislead, and therefore was chargeable with duplicity. That his intention was a good one, and that his efforts succeeded, by no means exonerated him. “Results” are not the criterion by which we should determine the rightness or wrongness of anything. Bear in mind, it is the *human* side of things we are now considering—from the divine side, God suffered the pride of Absalom’s heart to deceive him. He fondly imagined that David’s best friends were so in love with himself that they gladly took the present opportunity to flock to his banner, and therefore he construed Hushai’s words in favour of himself.

The above incident is recorded as a warning, and *not* for our imitation. It shows that something more than a good motive is necessary in order for a deed to be right in the sight of God. This is an important principle for us to weigh, for not a few today excuse much that is wrong by saying, “Well, his intentions were good.” While it be true that the motive often determines the value of an act, yet *other* principles and considerations must also regulate us. For instance, in seeking to carry out our good intentions, we must use *the right means*. It is praiseworthy for a parent to seek food for his hungry children, yet he or she must not steal the same. *This* was where Hushai failed. The desire to help David did not warrant his playing the part of a hypocrite. “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in *simplicity and godly sincerity*, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world” (2Co 1:12) is the Christian’s standard. It is never right to do wrong.

The principal means which the believer should employ in every time of trouble and emergency, is *prayer*—presenting his case in humble and trustful confidence to Him with whom there are no difficulties, leaving Him to undertake for us as seemeth Him best. This is what David had done at first (2Sa 15:31), but later, he spoilt it by reasoning to a carnal policy (2Sa 15:34). Ere passing on, let us note how Absalom’s challenge to Hushai may be taken to heart by ourselves in a higher sense, “Men who admire themselves will be easily deceived by those who profess an attachment to them, yet they readily discern those faults in others, of which themselves are far more notoriously guilty, and are apt to express astonishment at

them. If a zealous disciple of Christ commits evident wickedness, even profligates will exclaim, ‘Is this thy kindness to thy Friend?’ But alas, how often might the Saviour Himself address each of us in these words, to our shame and confusion! And how often should we thus check ourselves, and remember our ingratitude, to our deep humiliation” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). Unfaithfulness to Christ is a species of unkindness to our best Friend! What a theme that is for a practical sermon!

We have, in a former article, already made allusion to the revolting episode recorded in the closing verses of 2 Samuel 16, so a few brief remarks on it here will suffice. “Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do” (2Sa 16:20). First, we note that Absalom did not seek unto the custodians of the ark (which David had sent back to Jerusalem) for guidance, for he had no concern for the will of JEHOVAH. Throughout the entire piece he acts as an infidel, a blatant rebel. Second, the obvious design of Ahithophel in so evilly advising Absalom—which, as Matthew Henry rightly says, was as though he inquired “at the oracle of Satan” rather than “of God”—was to get his new master to so conduct and commit himself that all hope of forgiveness by David would be out of the question. Third, but behind the scenes, was the overruling hand of God, fulfilling His own word (2Sa 12:11), and chastising David for his wickedness—that he had these “concubines,” in addition to a plurality of wives, is a sad reflection upon the Psalmist.

“Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: and I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only: and I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest is as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace” (2Sa 17:1-3). It may be thought that this vile suggestion was prompted by the feelings of private animosity, for as previously pointed out, Bathsheba was the grand-daughter of Ahithophel, and therefore he would desire to personally avenge the wrong done to his family. But whether this be the case or no, as a politic man Ahithophel would be quick to recognize that delay was dangerous, and that if Absalom desired the removal of David from his path, there must be swift action, and a striking while his father and men were tired and low-spirited.

Those who surrounded the wicked Absalom at this time understood clearly that nothing short of the death of David and the seizing of the throne for himself would satisfy his covetousness—the only matter to be determined was the best way in which to accomplish this base design. Consequently, when Ahithophel voiced his evil counsel, there were none that raised hands of holy horror, none who so much as objected to the *gross injustice* of such a course. Not long ago Absalom himself had fled a crime, and David contented himself by allowing his son to remain in exile, though he deserved death—nay, he craved his return. But so utterly devoid

was Absalom of natural affection, so incapable of gratitude, that he thirsts for David's blood. See, my reader, what human nature is capable of (yours and mine not excepted) when God leaves us entirely to ourselves. How far, far astray are they who deny the solemn truth of total depravity of fallen man!

The scheme propounded by Ahithophel had much to commend itself to a man of such a designing type as Absalom. It would not serve his purpose for there to be a wholesale massacre of his subjects—the Philistines were too near and numerous to unnecessarily weaken his forces. Let the king himself be smitten and his followers will readily capitulate. “Smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered, and be an easy prey to the wolf” was the principle of Ahithophel's plan. It has been pointed out by others that there was a close resemblance (if not an actual foreshadowment) here to the policy suggested by Caiaphas, “Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that *one man* should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not” (Joh 11:50). So too the language of others of Christ's enemies was “This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours” (Mar 12:7).

“And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel” (2Sa 17:4). The desperate wickedness of the cold-blooded proposal of Ahithophel to “smite”—slay—God's anointed, so far from filling Absalom with horror, met with his hearty approval. If “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Pro 4:18), it is equally true that evil men and seducers wax worse and worse. The falling stone gathers momentum, and the further it rolls down the hill, the greater is its velocity. So it is with one who has thoroughly sold himself to the devil—he gives his wretched victims no rest, but urges them on from crime to crime, until their cup of iniquity is full. Satan is a merciless taskmaster, who ever demands an increasing tally of bricks from his slaves. How earnestly we should pray to be delivered from the evil one!

“Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith” (2Sa 17:5). This is surely very striking. In the previous instance, Absalom had acted promptly on the evil counsel of Ahithophel (2Sa 16:22), why, then, did he not do so now? The proposal made had “pleased him well,” yet he hesitated and consulted with Hushai, the secret friend of David. It was not that Hushai took the initiative and pushed himself forward. It was Absalom himself who *sought* to know his mind. What a proof that “the king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever *he* will” (Pro 21:1). “The LORD had appointed to defeat the good [politic] counsel of Ahithophel” (2Sa 17:14), yet He accomplished this not by physical force, but by the working of natural laws. Absalom appeared to act quite freely in following out the thought that had entered his mind, nevertheless a divine hand was directing him, unknown to himself. Man is free to act only within the circumference of the divine decrees.

It was at this critical moment, when the doom of David appeared to be as good as sealed, that his faithful follower was given the opportunity of befriending him. How blessedly God *times* His interventions. He is never too early and never too late. It is the impatience of unbelief and the fretfulness of self-will which so often makes us think the Lord is tardy. Often God waits “that he may be gracious” (Isa 30:18) in order to bring us to the end of ourselves, and that the deliverance may more evidently appear to be from Himself. At other times, He delays His interposition on behalf of His own for the greater chagrin and dismay of their enemies. Hushai did not fail David at this critical moment, but by clever and plausible arguments caused Absalom to change his mind and postpone an immediate attack upon the fugitive king. This accomplished his objective, for any delay on the part of Absalom afforded David an opportunity to rest his weary men, add to his forces, and station them to best advantages. But more of that in our next.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

13. Its Progress

Normal Christian experience is a progress in practical holiness. Where there is life there is growth, and even when growth ceases there is a development and maturing of what is grown, unto increasing fruitfulness or usefulness. We say “normal,” for even in the natural (which ever adumbrates the spiritual) there is such a thing as stunted growth and arrested development—alas that we so often see examples of this among the Lord’s people. Yet those very failures only emphasize the fact—testified to by every Christian conscience—that we *ought* to go on “from strength to strength” (Psa 84:7), that we *should be* “changed into” the image of the Lord “from glory to glory” (2Co 3:18), that is, from one degree of it to another. That such progress *is* our duty is clear from many passages, “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound *more and more*” (1Th 4:1).

It seems strange that there are those who not only repudiate in toto any such thing as “progressive sanctification,” but who are bitterly opposed to those who contend for the same, even though our contention be scripturally and soberly conducted. Stranger still that those very men belong to the same denomination as John Gill (1697-1771). They know quite well that those whom they condemn do not advocate any refining of the old nature or spiritualizing of the old man, nor have the slightest leanings to the evil dogma of fleshly perfection. Nevertheless, they continue to misrepresent and denounce them. It is quite true that the believer possesses a sanctification which is absolute and perfect, admitting of no degrees or improvements. Yet that does not alter the fact that there is another sense in which

the believer's sanctification is a relative and imperfect one, and that the pursuit of holiness is to be his chief quest. Why confuse two totally different aspects of the subject and refuse to recognize they *both* exist?!

“The adjuncts or properties of sanctification. First, it is *imperfect* in the present state, though it will most certainly be made perfect—where the work is begun it will be performed. Sanctification in Christ is perfect, but sanctification in the saints themselves is imperfect. It is perfect with respect to parts, but not with respect to degrees. Sanctification, as a principle, which is the new creature or new man, has all his parts, though these are not grown up to the measure of the fullness of the stature of Christ, as they will do. Where there is one grace, there is every grace, though none perfect. There is a comparative perfection in the saints when compared with what they themselves once were, and others are, and when compared even with other saints, for one saint may have a greater degree of grace and holiness than another, ‘Let us therefore, as many as be perfect’ (Phi 3:15), and yet the greatest of those was not absolutely perfect, even the apostle himself, who said so in Philippians 3:12” (John Gill).

That sanctification in the best of men *is imperfect* appears unmistakably from various considerations. First, from the continual wants of the saints. In this life they “hunger and thirst after righteousness,” which shows they are not yet filled. They own themselves to be “poor and needy” (Psa 86:1). Their strength is feeble, and they constantly require fresh supplies of grace to subdue sin, resist temptation, perform duties, and persevere in faith and in obedience. True, the grace of God is sufficient for them, yet they are bidden to seek it (Heb 4:16; Jam 1:5). Second, it appears from the confessions of the same, “*Not* as though I had already attained, either were already perfect” (Phi 3:12). Third, it appears from the defects of their graces. Let us ask those who repudiate “progressive sanctification,” Is your faith such that there is no need for it to be increased—your love, hope, patience, meekness, goodness, self-control, such that there is no room for improvement?

But though our practical sanctification be imperfect, *it is progressive*, “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Pro 4:18). Various figures are employed in Scripture to set this forth. The increase of grace in the believer was likened by Christ to “first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear” (Mar 4:28). The apostle John distinguishes the various stages of Christian growth by likening young converts to “little children,” whose knowledge is small and strength weak. Then to “young men,” who are strong and vigorous and have overcome the wicked one, and then to “fathers” in Christ, who are mature and fruitful (1Jo 2:12-14). At first, light and discernment is very dim, like the sight of the man whose eyes Christ opened—he saw men like trees walking, but later all things clearly (Mar 8:24-25). There is such a thing as growing in grace, increasing in the knowledge of God, becoming more fruitful. To admit this, is to grant a progress in practical holiness.

An increase of holiness should be desired and sought by us above everything else. What a high price should we set upon closer conformity to Christ. How diligently should we hide God's Word in our hearts that we sin not against Him. How earnestly and frequently should we pray for the cleansing of our hearts and the renewing of a right spirit within us. Heavenly grace is to be prized above all the comforts, honours, riches of this passing world. The approbation of God is to be greatly preferred to the good opinion of men. Trials and afflictions are to be valued if they promote (as they should) our practical sanctification. If we are willing to take bitter medicine for the removal of bodily disorders, shall we murmur at bitter experiences sent for the purging of our lusts? If we can bear the pain of lancing a festered limb, shall we fight against the knife of the Great Physician when He would let out some of our corruptions? Let, then, growth in grace be made the chief business of life, no matter what temporal sacrifices it involves.

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet *more and more* in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being *filled* with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Phi 1:9-11). Those prayers recorded in Scripture are the outbreathings of holy men, expressing their deepest longings after those things which the Spirit in them deemed to be most excellent. Here the apostle besought God on behalf of the Philippian saints. First, for those graces in them which are the inward springs of holiness—love, and knowledge, and judgment. Second, that they might perform their duties with sincere hearts and God's approval to the end of their course. Third, that they might be increasingly fruitful.

“That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment” (Phi 1:9). Why is love first. Do not faith and knowledge, in the order of nature, go before “love”? Must we not know and trust a person before we can love him? Ah, it is *the springs of holiness* which are here in view, and love is the more immediate, for “faith which worketh by love” (Gal 5:6). Provoke one another “unto love and to good works” (Heb 10:24) is the order. Stir up the principle of love till it be enkindled, and good works, as the flame, will arise. We are predestinated to be holy before Him in love (Eph 1:4)—holiness arises from love and therefore is love the fulfilling of the law. It is love which makes the divine commandments to be “not grievous” unto us (1Jo 5:3). Let us, then, see to it that our hearts be inflamed with the wondrous love of God for us.

The apostle adds “that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge” (Phi 1:9). Generally Christians have to pray that their love might keep pace with their knowledge, but here Paul prays that their knowledge might be equal unto their love. Usually, the believer's intelligence is ahead of his affections, it was, it seems, otherwise with the Philippians. No doubt the reader has observed that there are, broadly speaking, two sorts of saints—affectionate souls, whose

hearts are warm toward Christ and His people, but less intelligent in spiritual things. Others more knowing, yet less passionate, though equally Christians. The primitive times give instances of each. The Corinthians were very intelligent (see 1Co 4, 5), but they were short in love (1Co 8:2-3). The Thessalonian and Philippian saints were a more simple and affectionate sort of Christian, whose love exceeded their knowledge—hence this particular prayer on their behalf.

There is nothing more painful to behold than Christians, who are truly sincere in love and warm in zeal of God, falling into wrong courses through lack of needful light, by which to distinguish between truth and error, duty and sin, bringing dishonour upon the Lord, and being a stumblingblock to their fellows. Yet so it sometimes happens. If there are those who possess much light and knowledge, who are not so exercised about the sincerity of their heart and the uprightness of their walk as they ought to be, there are others whose affections are warm and who are conscious of their sincerity, yet largely ignorant of God's revealed will, nevertheless confident that their course is right, and unwilling to study the Word or listen to those who desire to teach them the way of the Lord more perfectly. It is the part of wisdom to be slow in engaging in any new course, for once we are committed to it, pride makes it very hard to acknowledge we are wrong.

Love, then, needs the adjunct of light. Our affections require *directing* if they are to issue in righteousness. A longing to please God is the first essential, willingness to be instructed by Him therein is the second. Therefore Paul here prayed for the Philippian saints that their love might “abound yet more and more in knowledge and all judgment,” that is, that they might ever be able to distinguish between right and wrong, and discern their duty in every case, however dark and doubtful or disputable it might appear. That “knowledge” is only obtainable through the Scriptures, and effectual by the Spirit's powerful application of the same. There is much fanaticism on this point today, which though having a pious sound is most dishonouring to God. We have personally heard more than one assert very emphatically that they were “prompted by the Spirit” to do a thing God has expressly forbidden. My reader, the Holy Spirit never prompts one to do anything which is contrary to the Scriptures, so a knowledge *of them* is essential if we are to ascertain whether *our* “prompting” be of the Spirit or the restless urge of the flesh.

The apostle adds to knowledge “and in all judgment” (Phi 1:9), or as the margin gives (preferably, we believe) “sense.” This is where he places the emphasis—“in *all* sense”—to denote this is of the greatest importance—such “knowledge” as has sense added to it. Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) very helpfully suggested that this term has a threefold force. First, as added to “knowledge,” the two words together signify the same as the term *faith*. What is “faith” but a spiritual perception of spiritual things? As God has placed in our bodies senses suited to the material objects we come into contact with, so at

regeneration He communicates that which is suited to the spiritual realm. There is no bodily sense but what faith is expressed by it, “*Taste and see that the LORD is good*” (Psa 34:8); “My sheep *hear* my voice” (Joh 10:27); which “our hands have handled” (1Jo 1:1)—all referring to actions of *faith*.

Second, by “sense” is meant *experience*, which is a distinct thing from faith, as is clear from Romans 5:1-4. “Tribulation worketh patience” or submission to God, “and patience, experience.” Did we not find in our afflictions that, after we had submitted to God (humbly bowed to His rod), He either delivered us from them or manifestly supported us under them? Thereby faith was strengthened against the next trial, for experience breeds “hope” or a confidence that God will conduct us safely through this wilderness and land us eventually in Canaan. Experience, then, is an acquired knowledge based on sense. The possessor of it has learned for himself the reality of God and the sufficiency of His grace. Contrariwise, just so far as the tried Christian turns from God to self or the creature for help, will he discover how worthless it is to lean upon an arm of flesh. It is thus “by reason of use” that we learn to have our “*senses exercised* to discern both good and evil” (Heb 5:14).

Third, by “sense” is meant those deep and blessed *impressions* on the soul, over and above the light of faith or knowledge by ordinary experiences. Such impressions truly are sense rather than knowledge, as all find who are favoured with them. They are therefore said to “*passeth knowledge*” (Eph 3:19) and are entitled “the peace of God, which *passeth all understanding*” (Phi 4:7). The same is hinted at in Romans 5. First, the believer through being justified by faith, has peace with God (Rom 5:1). Later, his passing through tribulations develops his graces—patience is strengthened, hope is kindled, “and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost” (Rom 5:5). This assurance of God’s love, then, is not apprehended so much by knowledge, as it is *shed abroad*—not in the understanding, but in the heart! So too, “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8)—a high and heavenly sense of Christ is what is meant, compare John 14:21.

“That ye may approve things that are excellent” or (margin) “try things that differ” (Phi 1:10). An increase in love, knowledge, and sense, issues in an enlarged ability in the understanding to discern, judge of, and approve spiritual things—there is more discretion to choose that which is best. What is here mentioned has reference to the capacity to detect counterfeits, and contrary, with the additional idea of the judgment relishing, closing with and cleaving to that which is perceived to be good. The same term occurs again in, “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may *prove* what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom 12:2)—i.e., not only discern the will of God in its truth from falsehood, in all the latitude of it, but *approve* it. There is a variety and vastness in the duties commanded (and the sins forbidden), and to

discern this, especially the spiritual part of them, calls for much holiness of heart and discernment of mind.

As there is a double meaning to the term “approve” (discern and esteem), so the objects approved may be understood in a twofold way. First, as “the things that are excellent,” which agrees with “approve.” Second, “things which differ” which corresponds to “try” or “discern” between good and evil. An increase of holiness in the heart enables the understanding to distinguish more readily between true and false doctrine, wherein so many go astray. Not only so, there is a choosing of and cleaving to the former, and a rejection of the latter. So very much depends upon the state of our hearts—where *that* is healthy and the understanding properly enlightened, there will be wisdom in matters doctrinal and prudence in matters practical. “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phi 3:8) is the sure consequence of love abounding “yet more and more” (Phi 1:9).

“That ye may be sincere” (Phi 1:10), is the next consequence which follows from increasing holiness. Sincerity is opposed to what is counterfeit—“sincerity and truth” are joined together in 1 Corinthians 5:8. That is *sincere* which is genuine, right, true. “Sincere” (according to the derivation of our English word) means without mixture of wax—there is no pretense or mingling of the false with the true. In connection with piety, sincerity signifies a right intention Godwards. In 2 Corinthians 1:12, we read of “godly sincerity”—a sincerity of which God is witness. It is joined there with “simplicity,” which is explained in, “If therefore thine eye be *single*” (Mat 6:22)—the same word. We cannot, as the whitewashed worldling desires, serve two masters or mix fleshly craftiness with spiritual purity. Sincerity, then, is uprightness of heart, purity in its motives, aiming solely at the pleasing and glorifying of God.

“And without offence till the day of Christ” (Phi 1:10). The word for “offence” signifies the mistreadings, stumblings, and bruising of the feet in walking. As in “sincerity” the intention of the mind is compared to the (“single”) *eye*, so our actions are likened unto *steppings*. To be “without offence” is to avoid such ways as would induce others to sin or be occasions of stumbling. It is to give no scandal. Second, it is to refrain from any action contrary to the principles we profess before others. Hence we find Paul blaming Peter and others for their departing from the truth of the Gospel and not walking uprightly (Gal 2:14). Third, it is to keep from anything contrary to that light which the conscience has received to walk by. Now in order to this blameless walk, we need to “exercise” ourselves (Act 24:16), and promptly confess and seek cleansing (1Jo 1:9) wherein we have failed.

“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness” is the final issue of increased holiness. Now a tree is said to be full of fruit when all its branches are laden therewith. A Christian is full of fruit when all the faculties of his soul and members of his body are active in obedience to God. As there is a superfluity of evil flowing from the unregenerate, so there should be an abounding of goodness

from the regenerate, “unto *all* pleasing, being fruitful in *every* good work” (Col 1:10). One virtue is to be added to another, 2 Peter 1:5-7. To be holy “in *all manner* of conversation” (1Pe 1:15) is the standard at which we must aim, and that, not occasionally and spasmodically, but at all times, and that unto the very end of our earthly course, “till the day of Christ.”

“Which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Phi 1:11). Those fruits are “by Jesus Christ,” first, because of our union with Him, as branches in the vine. Second, because their life is that of the Spirit, which we have received from Christ. Third, because they are performed by motives drawn from Christ and are patterned after the example He has left us. Fourth, because it is for His sake God accepts them. And they are unto the “glory and praise of God” so far as that is our aim in them. Here, then, is what we understand by “progressive sanctification” or increasing holiness—our love for God and His principle waxing stronger and stronger, directed by spiritual knowledge and confirmed by spiritual perception, the result being that we have an enlightened understanding to perceive more clearly the path of duty, a heart that rings true before God, and a walk that is without scandal—making us fruitful both inwardly and outwardly, thereby honouring Christ and pleasing God. (For part of the above we are indebted to Thomas Goodwin).

EXPERIMENTAL PREACHING

The mere *quoting* of Scripture in the pulpit is not sufficient—people can become familiar with the letter of the Word by reading it at home. It is the *expounding* of it which is so much needed today. “And Paul, as his manner was...reasoned with them out of the scriptures, *opening* and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead” (Act 17:2-3). But to “open” the Scriptures helpfully to the saints requires more than a young man who has had a few months’ training in some “Bible Institute” or a year or two in a theological seminary. None but those who have been personally taught of God in the hard school of experience are qualified to *so* “open” up the Word that divine light has cast upon the perplexing experiences of the believer, for while Scripture interprets experience, experience is often the best interpreter of Scripture. “The *heart* of the wise *teacheth* his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips” (Pro 16:23), and *that* “learning” cannot be acquired in any of man’s schools.

As an example of what we have just referred to above, what would be the use of quoting, what benefit would be derived from simply hearing the words of such a passage as this? “Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his

ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rie in their place? For his God doth *instruct him to discretion*, and doth teach him. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working” (Isa 28:23-29). Where are the preachers today endowed with wisdom from on high to “open” a Scripture like this one?

Obviously, the above passage is a parable—that which obtains in the natural world is made a similitude of what pertains to the spiritual realm. God’s church upon earth is His “husbandry” (1Co 3:9). The subordinate “husbandmen” are His ministers, who, instrumentally, break up the fallow ground of the hearts of His people. As the farmer *varies* his work as occasion requires, plowing, sowing, reaping, threshing, as the need arises, so the ministerial husbandman does likewise. The “seed” is the Word of God (Luk 8:11), and as God gives wisdom to the farmer to sow “wheat” or “barley” or “rye”—according as the soil be clayey, loamy, or sandy, so He teaches His ministers to preach according to the condition of the hearts of His people. Painful afflictions, both inward and outward, are God’s “threshing” instruments, to loosen from the world, to separate the wheat from the chaff in our souls, to fit us for His garner.

Now there are two ways of learning of divine things—true alike for the preacher and hearer—the one is to acquire a letter knowledge of them from the Bible, the other is to be given an actual experience of them in the soul under the Spirit’s teaching. So many today suppose that by spending a few minutes on a good concordance they can discover what humility is, that by studying certain passages of Scriptures they may obtain an increase of faith, or that by reading and re-reading a certain chapter they may secure more love. But that is not the way those graces are experimentally developed. Humility is learned by a daily smarting under the plague of the heart and having its innumerable abominations exposed to our view. Repentance is learned by feeling the load of guilt and the heavy burden of conscious defilement bowing down the soul. Faith is learned by increasing discoveries of unbelief and infidelity. Love is learned by a personal sense of the undeserved goodness of God to the vilest of the vile.

It is thus with all the spiritual graces of the Christian. Patience cannot be learned from books—it is acquired in the furnace of affliction! “We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Rom 5:3-4). Ah, my reader, we beg the Lord *to* teach us, but the fact is that we do not like His *method* of teaching us. Fiery trials, storms of persecution, the dashing of our carnal hopes, are indeed painful to flesh and blood, yet it is by them that the spirit is purged. We say that we wish to

live to God's glory, but fail to remember that we can do so only as self is denied and the cross be taken up. The crossing of our wills and the thwarting of our plans stirs up the enmity of the carnal mind, yet that makes way for our taking a lower place before God. God's ways of teaching His children are, like all His ways, entirely different from ours.

"I asked the Lord that I might grow in faith and love, and every grace, might more of His salvation know, and seek more earnestly His face. 'Twas He who taught me thus to pray, and He, I trust, has answered prayer, but it has been in such a way as almost drove me to despair. I hoped that in some favoured hour at once He'd answer my request, and by His love's constraining power subdue my will and give me rest. Instead of this, He made me feel the hidden evils of my heart, and let the angry powers of hell assault my soul in every part. Yea, more, with His own hand He seemed intent to aggravate my woe, crossed all the fair designs I schemed, blasted my gourd, and laid me low. Lord, why is this? I, trembling, cried, wilt Thou pursue Thy worm to death? 'Tis in this way, the Lord replied, I answer prayer for grace and faith. These inward trials I employ from self and pride to set thee free, and break thy schemes of earthly joy, that thou mayest see thy all *in Me*" (John Newton, 1725-1807). These lines (by the author of "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds in a Believer's Ear") may not suit the sentiments of a few of our readers, but we are sure they accurately express the actual experience of many of God's people.

The more we really grow in grace the more tender becomes the conscience, the more conscious we are of our corruptions, and the more distressing is the hiding of the Lord's countenance. The brighter the sun's shining into a room, the more apparent becomes any dust or cobwebs in it, and the greater the illumination granted by the Holy Spirit, the more will the filth of our hearts be manifested. So too when the Word of God is accompanied with life and power to the soul, it pierces "even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" (Heb 4:12)—that is, there is a separating between the wheat and the chaff, a dividing between what *God* has wrought and that which is merely *natural* religion. But an honest soul loves a searching ministry, even though it cuts him to the quick. He does not want to be soothed in his sins and he dreads a false peace. His earnest prayer is, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts" (Psa 139:23).

The more God searches us the more will He bring to light the "hidden things of darkness," and the more will we be made to loathe ourselves. As the conscience becomes more tender it increasingly *feels* the enormity of sin, and correspondingly grieves over the same. Then it is that "the heart knoweth its own bitterness" (Pro 14:10), and like Hannah we become "of a sorrowful spirit" (1Sa 1:15). And then it is, very often, that the Job's comforters of our day add to the grief of the groaning saint. They *unseasonably* prate to him of "the joy of the Lord," and tell him he should commend Christianity by a glowing countenance and a cheerful demeanour. Well may we remind such meddlers into matters they understand not

of those words, “As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart” (Pro 25:20). My reader, God does not require us to play the part of hypocrites before others, nor to mock Him by singing when our hearts are full of heaviness.

It is not only the workings of indwelling sin which occasion the honest-hearted so much distress, but also *the feebleness of their graces*—yea, as it often seems, the total absence of them. The weakness and fickleness of his faith occasions the true Christian much exercise of heart. He knows that God is worthy of his fullest confidence, that His Word is inerrant, and His promises sure—and it is a painful trial to him that he fails so sadly to trust Him more fully and count upon His covenant faithfulness more constantly. Herein his experience is quite different from that of the empty professor. That *natural* “faith,” which stands only in the wisdom of men, knows no such fluctuations, ebbings and flowings, risings and sinkings, as those which characterize the faith which is of “the operation of God” (Col 2:12). God is very jealous of His glory, and makes us realize that what He has given can only be exercised by *His* enabling. It is not within the Christian’s power to call forth his faith into action when he has a mind to. In this, as in all things, God keeps us entirely dependent upon Himself.

The all-important matter in connection with faith is not the quantity, but the quality of it. An intellectual assent to the divine Authorship and veracity of the Scriptures produces no spiritual fruits. A faith which is assured of the historicity of Christ, like it is of that of Augustus Caesar or Napoleon, is no evidence of regeneration. A faith which “could remove mountains, and have not charity” (1Co 13:2) is worthless. It is because of this that an honest heart is so deeply exercised as to whether or not *his* faith be the “faith of God’s elect” (Ti 1:1), or whether it be merely a product of the flesh. And the very fact that he is so often conscious that he has no faith at all in exercise, causes him to think the worst of himself. At this point, too, he stands in real need of definite help from the pulpit. Then let him be informed that a mere assent to the letter of truth never yet melted the soul into godly sorrow for sin. If any of our readers have a “faith” which is *not* dampened and chilled by the ragings of indwelling sin, they are welcome to it.

“Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out” (Song 4:16). This prayer of the church’s plainly intimates the acknowledgement of her own *helplessness*. It is the believer supplicating the Spirit (under the emblem of the “wind,” cf. Joh 3:8) for His awakening and reviving influences. He begs Him to operate upon his “garden,” that is, his soul, in order that “the spices thereof,” which are a figure of his spiritual graces, may “flow forth.” He realizes that only as the “north wind” blows, i.e., the Spirit chills his lusts and nips his corruptions, only as He, in power, rebukes his faults and reproves his failings, that he will tread more softly before God. He realizes that only as the “south wind” blows, i.e., as the Spirit breathes

upon his soul and warms his graces, that faith, hope, love, patience, meekness, humility, will become active and fruitful.

“LORD, all *my desire* is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee” (Psa 38:9). “Desire” signifies the longing, yearning, panting of a renewed heart. That soul ardently wishes to be right with God, to have a heart that is cleansed from the love and filth of sin, to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man, to be conformed to the image of Christ, to be in complete subjection to Him, to be fruitful unto His praise. Ah, but such a “desire” is only very imperfectly realized in this life, and that causes disappointment and grief, hence the psalmist added, “and *my groaning* is not hid from thee.” There is the “groaning” which the wounds of sin occasion, the groanings from the ceaseless conflict between the flesh and spirit, the groanings caused by Satan’s buffetings. And there is also the “groanings” over unrealized longings, unaccomplished ideals, unsatisfied attainments.

Ah, my reader, it is one thing to read in Scripture, “For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Rom 7:18), and quite another to have a personal corroboration of the same. But that is how God teaches His people, giving them an experimental acquaintance with the truth, that they may “set to their seal that he is true.” It is one thing to receive as an “article of faith” that not only the unregenerate, but the regenerate also, are, in themselves, impotent unto holiness, but it is quite another to discover from painful experience—as poor Peter did—that “the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is *weak*” (Mat 26:41). It is then that we pray in earnest, “*Quicken* us, and we will call upon thy name” (Psa 80:18), “*Draw* me, we will run after thee” (Song 1:4).

Do you, my reader, find your experience to be a bundle of contradictions—one day heartily thanking God for His mercies, the next day wickedly abusing them? one day fondly cherishing the hope that you have a little spiritual life, the next quite sure that you have none at all? If so, you know something of what it is to be “emptied from vessel to vessel” (Jer 48:11). But if you do not, if on the contrary, your course is a smooth and easy one, your heart always light and cheerful, there is grave cause to conclude you belong to that class of whom it is said, “because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God” (Psa 55:19). As we have previously pointed out, Christian experience alternates between pain and pleasure, sorrow and joy—*pain* arising from a sense of our sinfulness, from manifold temptations, and the hidings of God’s face—*pleasure* from a sense of pardon, promises applied by the Spirit, communion with Christ.

It is only by degrees that believers are “established,” and even then that does not prevent them from being severely tried and grievously assaulted by their spiritual enemies. Satan causes many to doubt Christ’s willingness to save them, and if they receive a little encouragement from the Word, then he seeks to stir up afresh their corruptions, and renews their fears and doubtings. The most advanced Christian often experiences a sore conflict from his lusts. Those who enjoy the

most intimate communion with God are frequently attacked by Satan. If the apostle Paul had to cry out, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom 7:24), we must not be surprised if *we* have cause to do the same. But observe, that his next words were, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 7:25). Ah, we never value *Christ* more highly than after a season of acute soul distress, as we never prize divine *grace* so much as when we have been afflicted by indwelling sin. It is a sense of pollution and filth which moves us to turn again to the fountain open for sin and for uncleanness.

Professing Christians are to be frequently exhorted to diligently examine the work of the Spirit in them, and compare the same with what is recorded of the saints in Scripture. Nor is there, as we have said before, any “legality” in this, for the work of the Spirit proceeds as truly from the everlasting covenant of grace as did the work of Christ, and the discovery of His operations enables the believer to “set to his seal that God is true” (Joh 3:33). A lively interest in the things which concern our eternal welfare, a trembling at God’s Word and being suitably affected thereby, hatred of sin, loathing of self, a child-like love for the Lord, are some of *the evidences* of God’s work in the soul. Let it also be boldly affirmed that God exercises His high sovereignty even in the very *degrees of grace* granted us—if it be true that He endows His servants with talents, some more, some less, it is equally true that He bestows upon the rank and file of His people a different “measure” of His Spirit.

While the minister is to be much on his guard against building up the hope of empty professors, he must ever seek to encourage and comfort the mourners in Zion, urging them to *continue by* “the pool” (the means of grace), waiting for the moving of the waters—assuring them that if they do, sooner or later there will be a breaking in of the light of God’s countenance, dispelling the darkness of the mind, and melting the hard heart. Remind them of such a promise as, “For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD” (Jer 30:17). Remind them of the case of Abraham “who against hope believed in hope” (Rom 4:18). Tell them that though they may have but feeble apprehensions of God’s *love*, nevertheless they can thank Him for His *longsufferance* to them.

Let us point out that *doctrinal* preaching also has its place and use in strengthening the experience of saints, and must never be pushed into the background. It is needful not only for instruction, but equally so for those who *have* knowledge of the truth, “To write *the same* things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe” (Phi 3:1). Our memories are very fickle. The impressions created by a sermon quickly pass away, so that there must be “line upon line, precept upon precept” (see Isa 28:10). It is the principal *means* used by the Spirit in feeding the soul, strengthening faith, fortifying against Satan. Make *Christ* pre-eminent in all your sermons. Do you, my reader, know something of Joseph Hart’s experience when he wrote, “I often poured out, in transports of

blissful astonishment, ‘Lord, ’tis too much, ’tis too much, surely my soul *was not worth* so great a price!’”

Finally, the Christian must be definitely warned against resting in his *present attainments*. Even though he now be rejoicing in the knowledge of sins forgiven. Press such a verse as, “Then shall we know [have assurance], if we *follow on* to know the LORD” (Hos 6:3)—explaining its meaning, enforcing its duty. It is only little by little that the believer learns how to put on his armour and use spiritual weapons against his enemies. A regenerated soul longs to know more of the power of Christ’s resurrection, for he so often feels sinking in the deadness of sin, and therefore those branches of truth best calculated to quicken the heart are also to be oft set before him.

N.B. As example is better than precept, we have sought to prepare an experimental sermon on Philippians 1:6, which immediately follows this article.

INTERNAL SALVATION

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phi 1:6). These words set forth a fundamental aspect of salvation that is now widely ignored, and it is one of the vital points at which the pulpit needs testing, for if it be faulty *here*, then its trumpet gives forth an uncertain sound. Alas, most of the pulpits today are engaged in declaring what man must do—creature performances are the sum and substance of the great majority of modern sermons, the operations of God being relegated to the rear. True, there are those who have quite a little to say of what God has done *for* sinners, yet most of these men are radically defective in their conceptions of what has to be wrought *in* sinners before there can be any salvation for them. These men talk much about the “finished work of *Christ*,” and many are misled by them, for they are largely, if not wholly, silent upon the regenerating work of *the Holy Spirit*.

How few there are today who perceive that the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Spirit is as indispensable as is the sacrificial work of Christ. That is why we often hear untaught evangelists say, and read in the “tracts” of our day, “salvation is by the blood of Christ *alone*,” or “we are saved by faith alone”—statements which are unscriptural, most misleading, and highly dangerous because of their lopsidedness. A man may hold the most Scriptural views of the atonement, and though that may evidence his “orthodoxy,” yet it is no proof at all that he is a new creature in Christ. He may highly honour faith and vehemently affirm that good works have no part or place in the saving of the soul, and yet be alienated from God. Unless the Holy Spirit has “begun a good work *in* me” (see Phi 1:6) then I am still dead in sins!

“He which hath begun a good work *in you*” (Phi 1:6). Ah, *that* is what draws the line of demarcation between the living and the dead, that is what distinguishes true possessor from empty professors. And why? because that “good work” is not in any of us by nature. That statement calls for a word or explanation and amplification. There still remains in fallen man the remnants of that “likeness” or “similitude of God” in which he was originally created, as is clear from James 3:9. The apostle Paul hesitated not to declare that even the heathen “shew the work of the law written in their hearts” (Rom 2:15). The most depraved and wicked possess a conscience, which is “the candle of the LORD” (Pro 20:27) within them. Nevertheless, the unregenerate are utterly devoid of even a “spark” of divine life in them, and therefore is it said of them, “There is none that doeth good, no not one” (Rom 3:12).

For our first main division we will consider *the nature* or character of this “good work” of which the Holy Spirit is the Agent. Under this head our text suggests four lines of thought. First, it is a *divine* work, “*He* which hath begun a good work in you” (Phi 1:6). The Author of it is God, and not man. The creature contributes nothing whatever to it. The favoured subject thereof is entirely passive in it, “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy” (Rom 9:16). This “good work” is a creative act on the part of God, and to talk of the creature “cooperating” with the Creator in connection with *creation*, is the language of imbecility. I was no more consulted about and had no more to do with my spiritual birth than I had with my natural. Nor does the preacher have any more hand in the resurrection of the soul (which is what this good work is) than he will have in the resurrection of the body. God, and God alone, is the Author of it.

Second, it is as yet an *incomplete* work, “He which hath *begun* a good work in you” (Phi 1:6). This divine miracle of grace is carried forward from stage to stage, “first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear” (Mar 4:28). It is commenced at regeneration, it is continued by sanctification, it is consummated at glorification. It is highly important that the Christian should clearly grasp this fact—God has not finished with him yet. We are impatient creatures and wish to fly before our wings are grown. Many of our expectations are as unwarrantable as they are unattainable. It is but the initial work that God has wrought in the believer and it remains uncompleted throughout this life. Then let us not look for that in us or from us which will be realized only in heaven. Sinless perfection in this world is a madman’s delusion.

Third, it is an *internal* work, “He which hath begun a good work *in you*” (Phi 1:6). This is the vital, necessary, indispensable sequel to what Christ did for them. The atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus avails them not until they exercise faith in it, and that is impossible so long as a person be dead in trespasses and sins. He must be born again before he can savingly believe and obtain forgiveness from God. The “good work,” then, is wrought in *the heart*. It is no mere making clean

the outside of the platter, while the inside be left all foul and filthy. A radical change is effected by the supernatural operations of God. A principle of spiritual life, a new nature is imparted, an “incorruptible seed” is placed within the soul, which radically affects all its faculties—the understanding, conscience, affections, and will.

Fourth, it is a *sovereign* work, “He which hath begun a good work in *you*” (Phi 1:6)—it is not performed in all the members of Adam’s race. And why? Because God disburses His charity and distributes His gifts according to the good pleasure of His own will. This “good work” is wrought in none but “God’s elect.” Nor is it wrought in them because they are any better or worthier than the non-elect, for they are not so. There was nothing whatever in them to induce God to perform a miracle of grace in their hearts. It was not because they desired or prayed for it, for “there is none that seeketh after God” (Rom 3:11). If it be asked *why* God favours them rather than others, the only answer forthcoming is, “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Mat 11:26).

For our second main division we will consider *the evidences* of this “good work.” The great question which exercises every quickened soul is, Has this “good work” begun in *me*? This is a matter which causes him the deepest possible concern, far more so than anything connected with his temporal interests. All other considerations fade into utter insignificance before this momentous inquiry—Has a miracle of grace been wrought in *my* soul? Is it possible for me to be *sure*? Many answer, No, declaring that this is a profound mystery which it is impossible for any man to elucidate, insisting that assurance is but proud presumption. But God’s Word declares, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom 8:16)—against that divine declaration all human objections are worthless.

Again, we read in the Word of truth, “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). Therefore assurance is both possible and desirable. In view of these passages, it is clear that we *may* ascertain whether or not this good work has been wrought in us. But how? By *its effects*. Recall for a moment the nature of this “good work.” It is *divine*—therefore it must be far above anything the creature can produce. Yet it is *incomplete*—therefore we must not look for something already completed. It is *internal*—therefore it is within—we must look if we are to identify it. This good work is wrought by the Holy Spirit in the heart. It is something which He imparts and produces there, and it is discoverable by the effects which the change makes *there*.

In developing this point, we will endeavour to be very plain and simple. First, *a harrowed heart* is an inevitable effect of the Spirit’s good work. By nature, the heart of fallen man is as hard as sun-baked ground after a long drought. Its possessor is quite unconcerned about his eternal destiny, utterly indifferent whether God’s smile or God’s frown be upon him. Thoroughly in love with sin, he

is a total stranger to any grief occasioned by having displeased and dishonoured the Most High. But when a work of divine grace is begun in him, all this is changed. It is like plentiful showers of rain falling upon and moistening the earth. His heart is softened and chastened. In consequence, he is deeply exercised as to his eternal destiny, greatly troubled over his past carelessness and wickedness, fearful that he has so sinned away his day of grace that he is beyond the reach of mercy. His heart is sore wounded at the realization he has offended so grievously against God.

Second, an *honest heart* is a sure proof that this good work has begun in him. “That on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it” (Luk 8:15)—this is what distinguishes them from the barren-ground believers. But note well the *order*—the heart must be made “honest” before it can rightly be designated “good.” An honest heart is indeed a rare and wonderful thing. By nature our hearts are thoroughly deceitful and hypocritical, that is why we love to be flattered and fish for compliments—that is why when the preacher is conscious of having failed, he is most anxious to be told his sermon was an excellent one—that is why we are pleased when the photographer conceals our defects. Now that streak of deceitfulness is not removed at regeneration, but a *principle of honesty* is imparted.

Ah, that is the very thing I am exercised about, for who knows better than myself how two-faced I am! If I am to be weighed against the balance of genuine honesty, I am certain to be “found wanting” (Dan 5:27). Not so fast, dear friend. Let me point out how you may discover whether this principle of honesty be in you. If it is, then you are greatly afraid of being deceived in soul matters, and you earnestly beg God to search you and show you your actual state. One with an honest heart desires to know *the worst* about himself! Measure yourself by *that* criterion. No unregenerate person can survive it, for he is determined to think well of himself, no matter what evidence there be to the contrary. One with an honest heart cries to the Lord, “If I am mistaken in supposing I am born again, reveal it to me. If I am deluded by Satan, open mine eyes before it be too late.” No one who *lacks* an honest heart will ever sincerely pray thus!

Third, a *holy heart* evidences God’s work in us. Ah, you say, that cuts me off entirely, for my heart is most unholy. Nothing you can say to the contrary can alter the fact. I am a spiritual leper, a mass of corruption, polluted at the very core of my being, and to say that such a vile creature as I am possesses a *holy heart* is both a mockery and a lie. Listen. The graces of the Spirit in our hearts are like lovely flowers growing amid rank and stinking weeds. This is the grand miracle of divine grace, that purity is planted amid impurity, a Christ-like principle is placed in soil that is earthly, sensual, devilish. Nor does that holy principle eradicate or reduce the sin which surrounds it. Nay, the one in whom it dwells frequently has occasion to cry “iniquities prevail against me” (Psa 65:3). But neither the presence

nor the power of indwelling sin is any disproof of a principle of holiness in the heart.

That principle is evidenced by *loathing* the filth that surrounds it and grieving because of inability to exterminate it. Again, that principle of holiness in the soul may be distinguished thus—a holy God is *delighted in*. You dare not say you delight in God? But do you not admire and adore His character? Do you not perceive and own His attributes are perfect? Do you not crave after and seek unto communion with Him? The unregenerate do not! that is the last thing *they* want! Are not your most joyous moments those which are spent in fellowship with God—a brief foretaste of heaven? Do you not long to be conformed to His image? These are some of the certain marks of a principle of holiness in the heart, none of which are the products of mere nature, nor can they be attributed unto any refinings of the flesh. A work of grace must be wrought before the heart desires, seeks after, delights in God.

Fourth, *an humble heart* is another sure evidence of the “good work” having been performed in it. Necessarily so, for nothing is more characteristic of fallen man than self-complacency and self-satisfaction. If, then, a person genuinely loathes himself, if he frankly acknowledges his very righteousnesses are as filthy rags, then a miracle of grace must have been wrought within him. Yes, says the dubious reader, I freely endorse the truth of that, yet I certainly dare not lay claim to possessing an *humble* heart. How can I when fully conscious of the fact that I am so often filled with pride? Why, I am such a conceited creature that I take credit for the faithful discharge of duties and pat myself on the back when I have had liberty at prayer. Even if I be chastened for a season, I congratulate myself on my growing humility. No, my heart is very far from being a lowly one.

Let it be pointed out, then, that the presence of spiritual humility does not destroy or even refine natural pride. No, not in that direction must we look for proofs of its existence. Where, then? Here—if regenerated you dare not, you cannot, you could not make yourself get alone with God and *boast before Him*. Yet the Pharisee does (Luk 18:11)! Then *you* are *not* a Pharisee, dear friend. When before God, you disown all worthiness of your own, and cast yourself upon His bare *grace*. Do you? Yes, then that proves there *is* a principle of true humility in your heart. Are you not thoroughly convinced that if ever you be justified it must be by and because of the righteousness of Christ, and *that alone*? But no self-righteous person will allow that. Are you not deeply distressed over the workings of pride in your heart? You would not be so if there were no spiritual principle of humility in you. No unregenerate person ever grieves over the swellings of self-complacency.

“There is in some weaker Christians, I do not know well what name to call it by, it is an over modesty, a thinking and speaking over meanly of themselves, and which they affect to do, and carry things to too great a length very much this way, as if they had no faith, nor love, and scarce any hope, and are ready to express

themselves in such sort as seems to border, at least, upon a denial of the work of grace upon their souls, and is like a tearing up by the roots, as much as in them lies, the very principles of grace in them—which should *never be encouraged*, but discountenanced. The least measure of grace should be *owned*, and men should be thankful for it, and pray for an increase of it” (John Gill). It is because of this we have spoken so plainly and frankly above, trusting that it may please God to bless the same unto the establishing of some of His trembling little ones.

Now, dear reader, we have sought to show that the “good work” which the Spirit has begun in those whom He has brought from death unto life may be discovered *by the effects* which it produces upon its favoured subjects. Those effects we have summed up in a harrowed, honest, holy, and humble heart. These are the sure indexes, the marks, the infallible criteria by which we may *identify* the Spirit’s miracle of grace. Such lovely graces are not the native product of earth’s human soil. No, they come down from above and are planted in the soul at regeneration.

We have not left ourselves much space for the third main division, to consider *the completion* of this good work, “He which hath begun a good work in you *will finish it* until the day of Jesus Christ.” One of the things which occasion most concern unto those who have a little assurance is that the work of divine grace within them is making such small progress, nay, it often seems, none at all—that there is no growth in grace, no fruitfulness. To those who mourn over this, the above is indeed a precious promise. First, it is an absolute and unconditional one. There are no provisos or stipulations attached to it. The good work proceeds as it began—altogether apart from creature worthiness or creature efforts. And we may add, its continuation, like its beginning, is perceivably only by the *effects* which are produced.

Second, it is a promise made good by pure grace—notwithstanding innumerable failures and sins. In himself, the believer is just as unworthy at the close of his pilgrimage as he was when the good work was begun in him. It is *all of grace* from first to last. Third, this promise is one which issues from the eternal and immutable love of God, which is solemnly pledged in the everlasting covenant and guaranteed by the infinitely meritorious work of Christ. Fourth, this promise is secured by divine omnipotence, despite indwelling sin, a hostile world, an opposing devil, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you *will perform it* until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phi 1:6). O what thanks and praise are due unto Him who enables the believer to say, “The LORD *will perfect* that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever” (Psa 138:8).

WELCOME TIDINGS

“For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2Co 5:7). From the very beginning, the publishing of this magazine has been a work of faith—alas that unbelief has so often obtruded and marred it. We had no earthly organization behind us, no influential friends who guaranteed their support. Nor had a company of Christians offered to subscribe if we would print. We were the pastor of no church, belonged to no denomination, and were “in fellowship” with no “assemblies.” We had not a single reader in sight! We were cast entirely upon Him whom we believe put it into our heart to embark on this enterprise. And He did not fail us. That was in 1922. We set our hearts upon a thousand subscribers for the first year, and we obtained them with a number to spare—a few of which are still receiving the “Studies.”

Before the second year was ended, the Lord made it plain that He would have us undertake this work single-handed, for we began it in cooperation with a friend. This was a severe trial of faith. Neither the editor nor his wife had any experience of typing. It took all my available time to compose the articles. My dear wife, in addition to her household duties, took up this work, and though she never had a lesson, by the Lord’s grace soon became able to type out all the articles. It may interest some of our friends to learn that all of my earlier books—Gleanings in Genesis, The Sovereignty of God, The Redeemer’s Return, etc.—were written out by hand.

After five years, God led us to remove the subscription-price from the magazine, and trust Him to move the readers to send in sufficient by voluntary gifts to defray all expenses. Nor has He failed us. Sometimes the meal ran very low in the barrel, but it was never completely exhausted, and during the ten years we have been issuing it free, not a single bill has remained unpaid for forty-eight hours. Some of those who contributed most liberally in the earlier years have been called home, yet we have suffered no lack. If we do not receive a few large donations, the Lord sends us in a greater number of smaller ones.

We are still called upon to walk by faith. More recently our severest trial is a decreasing circulation. At the close of the last year or two, when hundreds of names had to be dropped from our list (because they gave no evidence of being helped), it looked as though it would be impossible for us to continue another six months. The fact is that it has been, and now is, literally a “hand to mouth” experience in this matter of having enough readers to warrant our continuing to publish. At the end of June, we again had to drop from our mailing-list quite a number, and where new ones will come from to take their places, we know not.

And is not this experience of ours in connection with the magazine duplicated in some form or another in the life of each Christian reader? God has so ordered it that, “We walk by *faith*, not by sight” (2Co 5:7). In your case, it may be finances—God keeps you in such circumstances that you are unable to look ahead

and see where the next month's rent is coming from. Or it may be a matter of failing health and the increasing infirmities of old age. Competition grows keener each year and the battle of life harder, and so far as sight is concerned the outlook is dark—then plead Philippians 4:19! In the case of others, it is their loved ones—long since committed to the Lord, the subjects of countless prayers, yet so far there is no visible indication that God has heard. Then, “*Continue* in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col 4:2). Yes, each of God's people is called upon to walk *by faith*.

But in our case, God has graciously permitted us to see something of the fruits of our labours, granting encouragement along the way. Letters come to hand each week from readers in different parts of the earth, testifying to the help and blessing received from the “*Studies*.” If there are many who dislike that which searches the heart, there are still a few left who are thankful for the same. If there are those who greatly prefer a magazine devoted to more sensational topics, there are some who would rather have that which is more substantial and satisfying to the soul. If there are those who prefer brief generalizations and complain because we are too wordy, there are others who thank us for entering fully into detail. The following extracts from letters received the past few months are cause for thanksgiving and praise.

“How very glad I am to be able to send the enclosed towards the printing of *Studies*. How one does praise the Lord that there is such a magazine to be had. They become more and more helpful to me as the months go by. My daily prayer is that God will richly bless you, and cause you to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That you may have that divine skill and understanding which God gave to Daniel of old, that we His hungry children may be fed with heavenly manna and not stones, which is all that the ministers of today give us. Truly I would stay at home with my Bible and the *Studies*, and there drink in the truth—and as you say, it does us good to read the articles *two or three times*.”

“I thank you most sincerely for the regular arrival of *Studies* during the past year, and would say how much I have enjoyed the various articles, and I trust profited by them. Personally I know of nothing apart from the Bible that comes any where near them for real spiritual and Scriptural help. Nine bound volumes of them are among my most treasured books. The apostasy advances and the love of many is waxing cold. Wherever I go to preach I find dwindling congregations, and no exercise about it.”....“It gives me joy to send you this expression of appreciation for your magazine. I feel greatly indebted for the help received from its pages. Your articles are so pregnant with the spirit of sympathy for the weak, and yet evenly balanced with searching truth.”....“My eyesight is very bad, so that I cannot read as much as I like, but I feel I *must* have the *Studies* as they are such a help to me. The last two articles on Sanctification were a great comfort.”

“Once again it is our privilege to thank you for the *Studies*. We have found much in them to profit. We are grateful for the soul-food we have had ministered

to us—strong meat much needed in these dark days.”....“The *Studies* are much appreciated, especially by father, who is not able to travel about as formerly, and it is our desire that you may long be spared to publish a magazine in which the emphasis is on ‘Christian’ and not on ‘Denomination,’ and in which no extraneous matter obtrudes.”....“We thank you again for your part in bringing light and blessing into our life through your *Studies*, which I have read and *re-read*. May the Lord grant you wisdom and strength to carry on this wonderful work, not forgetting Mrs. Pink for her part in it.”....“We trust you will be enabled to continue printing such a valuable magazine. We quite understand the reason that the demand is not greater. If it were a carnal magazine to suit the carnal appetite, there would be a demand for them. We should praise Himself there is still a number who relish such spiritual food.”

“I have been taking this magazine for some time back and cannot do without it. It searches the heart, and I know I am a better Christian for it. I read every word in it, and then look forward with much pleasure to the coming of the next issues.” “Your *Studies* are a tonic to my soul, a rod for my back, and a guide for my feet. I greatly appreciate the fact that there is no sloppiness and no pandering to the flesh in them. We are soldiers, and in them we get our marching orders, are expected to keep our kit in trim, and are fed on soldier’s fare. May God condescend to hear my prayer and bless you and your dear wife.”....“I thank you heartily for the edification and cheer I receive from your writings, which are so much more profound and discriminating than what is usually found these days in religious magazines. I was greatly helped several years ago during a time of hard testing by your *Gleanings in Genesis*” (Lawyer)....“I gladly admit that while I find much comfort and great enlightenment in perusing the contents of the *Studies*, they sometimes cut very deep and cause great searchings of heart. I know I love the truth, and amidst all the deceitfulness of my heart I can say (I believe out of my soul) I delight in the law of God after the inward man.”....“We enjoy the articles on The Life of David and Sanctification, indeed they are all so helpful, although they make me feel discouraged at times. Yet, I know the message is from God and meant to reveal the perfidy of the human heart (my heart)—therefore it is a *true* blessing, for when the message brings us to our knees in reverence, humility, and contrition, it is truly the work of the blessed Spirit. We are still thanking God for bringing you into touch with us. What a difference (under His blessing) it has wrought in our lives.”

“I want to say that the eight years I have been reading your *Studies* they are the most helpful reading I have ever found outside the Bible.” “I am a sea-faring man, and I find your magazine a great help at sea, when I am not able to attend the means of grace.”....“I get more help from the *Studies* than any other writings I can find. Thank Him for such help.”....“I am still enjoying the old copies, and have some of the articles translated into Chinese. I am now starting to translate those upon ‘Heart Work’ which is, I believe, the message of pressing need for the present day” (Native Christian)....“We are more pleased with each issue. They

cause one deep heart searching and the humiliating of the flesh, so that we often wonder as to our standing before Him. Yet we know whom we have believed.”....“Your *Studies* always contain such helpful messages, especially if read with the thought of application to one’s self of the many heart searching facts brought to our attention. They have always been a source of great blessing to me, and I know I have been drawn closer to my Lord and Saviour because of this instruction from your pen.” To God alone be *all* the praise.



August

THE SPIRIT FRUCTIFYING

“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit....Wherefore by their *fruits* ye shall know them” (Mat 7:17-18, 20). The fruit they bear is that which distinguishes the children of God from the children of the devil. This “fruit” is the temper or disposition wrought in the elect by the Holy Spirit, which is manifested by them, severally, “according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph 4:7). The Spirit fructifies the regenerate by conforming them to the image of Christ—first to His graces and then to His example. The lovely virtues found in them do not issue from the depraved nature of fallen man, but are supernaturally inwrought by God.

There are three leading passages in the New Testament on this subject. John 15 names the *conditions* of fruitfulness—union with Christ, purging by the Father, abiding in Christ, and Christ and His Word abiding in us. Galatians 5 furnishes a *description* of the fruit itself. 2 Peter 1:5-8 states the order of fruit or the *process* of its cultivation. “In the figure of the vine, the Holy Spirit is not mentioned, but in comparing Himself to the vine and His disciples to the branches, the tree corresponds to the body, and the life to His Spirit. The diffusion of life is the work of the Holy Spirit and the fruit by which the Father is glorified is the fruit of the Spirit. Apart from Christ there is neither life nor fruit, but without the Spirit of Christ there can be neither union or abiding. Our Lord does not specify the fruit. What He emphasises is the fact that it *is* fruit and that it is fruit *directly from Himself*” (Samuel Chadwick, 1860-1932).

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Gal 5:22-23). These are *graces* of the Spirit as distinguished from the *gifts* of the Spirit, enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12, and which we hope to consider in our next. They are holy and heavenly dispositions with the conduct which results therefrom. The apostle begins with the principal characteristics of the spiritual mind, and then passes on to its operation and manifestation in personal conduct, social virtues, and practical behaviour. A threefold reason may be suggested why these spiritual graces are termed “fruit.”

First, because all grace is *derived* from the Spirit as fruit issues from the life of a plant. Second, to denote the *pleasantness* of grace, for what is more delightful than sweet and wholesome fruit? Third, to signify the *advantage* redounding to those who have the Spirit, as the owners are enriched by the fruit produced from their gardens and orchards, so believers are enriched by the fruits of holiness.

In the use of the singular number, “the fruit [rather than ‘fruits’] of the Spirit”(Gal 5:22), emphasis is placed upon the *unity* of His operations—producing one harmonious whole—in contrast from the products of the flesh, which ever tend to discord and chaos. These virtues are not like so many separate flowers in a bouquet, as the variegated petals of one lovely flower exhibiting different shades and forms. A rainbow is one, yet in it all the primary colours are beautifully blended together. These graces which the Spirit imparts to a renewed soul are distinguishable, but they are inseparable. In some believers one grace predominates more than another—as meekness in Moses, patience in Job, love in John—yet all are present and to some extent active.

Galatians 5:22-23 enumerates nine of the graces communicated by the Spirit. Some have suggested that the last eight are but varied expressions of the first. That, “Joy is love exulting, Peace is love in repose, Longsuffering is love on trial, Gentleness is love in society, Goodness is love in action, Faith is love in endurance, Meekness is love at school, and Temperance is love in discipline” (A. T. Pierson, 1837-1911). But while love is, admittedly, the greatest of all the graces, yet 1 Corinthians 13:13 shows that it is but one of several. personally, we prefer the older classification which divided the nine graces into three threes—the first three—love, joy, peace—being Godwards in their exercise; the second three—longsuffering, gentleness goodness—being exercised manwards; and the last three—fidelity, meekness, temperance—being exercised self-ward.

“Love”—the apostle begins with that which flows directly from God (Rom 5:5), and without which there can be no fellowship with Him or pleasing of Him. “Joy” in God, in the knowledge of pardon, in communion with Christ, in the duties of piety, in the hope of heaven. “Peace”—of conscience, rest of heart, tranquility of mind. “Longsuffering” when provoked and injured by others, exercising a magnanimous forbearance toward the faults and failing of our fellows. “Gentleness” rendered “kindness” in 2 Corinthians 6:6, a gracious benignity, the opposite of a harsh, crabbed, and brutal temper. “Goodness” or beneficence, seeking to help and benefit others, without expecting any return or reward. “Faith” or more accurately “faithfulness”—being trustworthy, honest, keeping your promises. “Meekness” or yieldedness, the opposite of self-will and self-assertiveness. “Temperance” or self-control—being moderate in all things, ruling one’s spirit, denying self.

“In newspaper English, the passage would read something like this—The fruit of the Spirit is an affectionate, lovable, disposition, a radiant spirit and a cheerful temper, a tranquil mind and a quiet manner, a forbearing patience in provoking

circumstances and with trying people, a sympathetic insight and tactful helpfulness, generous judgment and a big-souled charity, loyalty and reliableness under all circumstances, humility that forgets self in the joy of others, in all things self-mastered and self-controlled, which is the final mark of perfecting. This is the kind of character that is the fruit of the Spirit. Everything is in the word fruit. It is not by striving, but by abiding—not by worrying, but by trusting—not of works, but of faith” (Samuel Chadwick). And as our passage goes on to say, “Against such there is no law” (Gal 5:23)—that which the law enjoins the Spirit imparts, so that there is perfect harmony between the law and the Gospel.

But here too there is to be a concurrence between the Christian and the Spirit. Our responsibility is to cherish and cultivate our graces, and to resist and reject everything which opposes and hinders them. Fruit is neither our invention nor our product, nevertheless it requires our “diligence” as 2 Peter 1:5 plainly indicates. A neglected garden grows weeds in plenty, and then its flowers and fruits are quickly crowded out. The gardener has to be continually alert and active. Turn to and ponder Psalm 1, and see *what* has to be avoided, and *what* has to be done, if the believer is to “bringeth forth his fruit in his season.” Re-read John 15 and note the conditions of fruitfulness, and then turn the same into earnest prayer. The Lord, in His grace, make both writer and reader successful horticulturists in the spiritual realm.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

116. Outside the Camp (13:13-14)

In last month’s article, we endeavoured to make clear to the reader exactly what was “the camp” from which the apostle exhorted the Hebrews to go forth. The more accurately a term be defined, the less likelihood of its being wrongly employed. It was at this point the present writer failed in an article which appeared in an issue nearly ten years ago—many a sound sermon has been marred by heading it with the wrong text. Dwelling upon many of the incidental analogies which exist between much that now obtains in Christendom and that which marked Judaism of old, we failed to concentrate upon that which was essential and fundamental, and hence, made a wrong application of this particular term “the camp.” That which made the Judaism of Paul’s day to differ so radically from its worst state in the time of the prophets, was that it had hated, rejected, and murdered the incarnate Son of God.

It is *that* particular point, the Jews’ casting out of Christ, anathematizing Him, condemning Him to a malefactor’s death, which must guide us when seeking to identify the modern counterpart of that “camp.” There is, really, no exact replica on earth today of that Judaism which crucified the Lord Jesus—certainly neither

Romanism—blasphemous and horrible as are many of its dogmas and practices—nor the most degenerate branches of Protestantism—rotten as some of them are in doctrine and works—can rightly be designated the present-day “camp.” No, as we pointed out last month, that which most closely resembles it, that which in principle is essentially like thereto, is the secular, profane *world*. Its unregenerate and ungodly members do not profess to love Christ, the very mention of Him is hateful to them. They desire to banish Him entirely from their schemes and thoughts—except when they take His holy name in vain.

Next, we sought to show *in what sense* the Lord requires His people to go forth “outside the camp,” that is, separate themselves from the ungodly, from them who hate and revile Christ. This, as we saw, is not to be understood “literally” or physically, but metaphorically or morally. It is not a local withdrawal from the world, but a religious and spiritual one. In other words, God does not bid His people be fanatics and lead the lives of hermits. Taking refuge in monasteries and convents is the devil’s perversion of this important practical truth. No, the Christian is still left *in* the world, but he must not be *of* it. Its policy and maxims must not regulate him, its pleasures and attractions must not capture his heart, its friendship must not be sought, its politics are no concern of his. In heart and soul-interests he is a stranger here, and is to conduct himself as a pilgrim passing through this scene—“using this world, but not abusing it” (see 1Co 7:31).

Then we pointed out that in going *forth* from the camp the Christian goes *unto* Christ. It is the twofoldness of the act which the word “conversion” connotes. Yet it is not without reason that the Holy Spirit has worded our text as it is. There is a particular emphasis in it which requires to be noted. It is not, “Let us go forth therefore without the camp unto him,” but “*unto him* without the camp.” The difference is something more than verbal. It stresses the fact that *Christ Himself* must be the grand object before the heart, and then the poor baubles of this world will not possess much attraction for us. If He is not, then, though we may become aesthetes, there will be no contentment, still less joy. Our case would be like that of many of the Israelites who had “gone forth” from Egypt, yet continued to lust after its fleshpots.

To go forth unto Christ without the camp means for the believer to make a complete break from his former manner of life, to renounce everything which is opposed to Christ, to relinquish whatever would hinder communion with Him. In a word, the exhortation of our text is only another way of presenting that declaration of our Lord’s, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mat 16:24). Sin must be mortified, the flesh with its affections and lusts crucified, the world forsaken, and the example which Christ has left us diligently followed. So, then, going forth unto Him outside the camp is not a single act, done once for all at conversion, but an *habitual* thing, a constant attitude of life. The cross must be taken up by the Christian “daily,” Luke 9:23.

Obedience to this injunction involves “bearing Christ’s reproach” (see Heb 13:13). The believer is called unto fellowship with Christ. Now, “fellowship with his sufferings” (see Phi 3:10), in the future, with His glory. That “reproach” assumes different forms and has various degrees in different locations and periods, according as God is pleased to restrain the enmity of the wicked against His people. But in every age and in every place, it has been verified that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer *persecution*” (2Ti 3:12). That “persecution,” that “reproach” of Christ, may be cruel afflictions such as the early Christians experienced, or it may take the milder form of sneers, ridicule, and ostracism, which sensitive souls feel keenly. As Christ declared, “The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (Joh 15:20). One reason why God permits this is because His people are so prone to flirt with the world, and if we will not separate from them, He often causes them to give us the cold shoulder and oppose us.

The flesh shrinks from and desires to escape such opposition. It is natural for us to want to be well thought of and nicely treated by everyone. But let the shrinking Christian call to mind what his Master endured for his sake. In the types, the sin offering was burned without the camp—far off from the holy of holies where JEHOVAH had His seat—to represent the sinner’s final separation from God, his being cast into “the outer darkness” (see Mat 8:12), there to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. And Christ endured the equivalent of *that* on the cross, during those three hours of awful darkness. He bore the fearful load of His people’s sins and was deprived of the comforts of God’s presence. For Christ it meant entering the place of distance from God, but for *us* to “go forth without the camp” means going “unto him.” For Him it entailed enduring the curse, for us it involves naught but divine blessing! Then let us cleave to Him despite the world’s scorn and stand by His cause on earth no matter what the cost to us.

But let us now consider by what means this duty of going forth unto Christ is discharged. As we pointed out in last month’s article, it is an act of *the soul* rather than of the body which is here in view. But to particularize. First, the soul of the believer goes forth to Christ *by prayer*, for real prayer is the breathing of the heart after Him and turning unto Him. Its first cry is, “Lord, save me, I perish.” There is the daily request for Him to make Himself more real to the heart, to grant us closer communion with Himself, and to remove those things which hinder the same. There is the asking Him to teach us how to draw from His fullness, to make us more obedient, to conform us more fully to His holy image. “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine” (Song 1:2) is the language of one whose heart is “going forth unto Christ outside the camp” (see Heb 13:13)—seeking from Him that which is infinitely superior to the best this poor world affords.

Second, it is the motion *of faith*. Christ is the grand object of faith, and He can only be known and enjoyed now by faith. It was so at our first conversion—it is so

throughout the entire Christian course. “The life which I now live in the flesh,” said the apostle, “I live *by the faith* of the Son of God [faith in Him], who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). When faith is inactive, there is no going forth of the soul unto Christ, no real prayer, no communion with Him. But when faith is operative the heart turns unto Him as instinctively as the needle of the compass does unto the north. When faith is sickly and listless the things of this world gain power over us—either its pleasures attract or its cares distract us. But when faith is healthy and vigorous, the soul “mounts up with wings as eagles” and “runs and is not weary.” It is *faith* which makes Christ real and precious to the soul. Then let us be more diligent in guarding against those things which weaken and quench it.

Third, going forth unto Christ outside the camp is *the act of hope*. This is the particular spiritual grace which keeps the heart of the believer from falling into abject despair. There are times when he is sorely tried and dismayed—sin rages within, the accusations of the holy law sting his conscience, and Satan tries hard to make him believe that all is lost—that having abused his privileges, sinned against much light, turned divine grace into lasciviousness, there is no remedy. So it seems to the cast-down soul. Pray he cannot, and as he reads the Scriptures, instead of finding comfort, every page condemns him. Then the Spirit applies some promise, and a little encouragement follows, but conscience still smites and he groans. Now it is that *hope* acts. Christ had mercy on the leper, the publican, the dying thief. He is full of compassion, I will cast myself afresh on His pity. So too hope looks beyond this scene—with all its disappointments, sorrows, and sufferings—and anticipates the time when we shall be “for ever with the Lord.”

Fourth, going forth unto Christ without the camp is also *the work of love*. The love of God which the Spirit sheds abroad in the hearts of the regenerate is something more than a beautiful sentiment, it is an operative principle. Love yearns for the company of the Beloved. It cannot find satisfaction elsewhere. Christ is not to be met with in worldly circles, and therefore when the heart of the believer is in a healthy state, it seeks unto its Beloved outside the camp. A word from *His* lips, a smile from *His* face, an embrace from His arms, is prized above rubies. To sit at His feet and drink from the fountain of His love, is better than heaps of silver and gold. Christ is precious to those whose sins have been removed by His blood, and their affections “go forth” unto Him—not so fervently and frequently as they should, or as they desire, nevertheless, there are seasons in the life of *every* Christian when he is permitted to lean his head upon the Saviour’s bosom. Christ’s love to His own attracts their love to Him.

Fifth, going forth unto Christ outside the camp is *the surrender of the will to Him*. There is a change of masters—service to the prince of this world is renounced and the Lordship of Christ accepted. There is an enlisting under His banner, a putting on of His uniform, a submission to His captaincy, and we act according to His will. How different is all of this from what many suppose our text

signifies! One may identify himself with those who claim to have gone forth from “all the man-made sects and systems,” and yet the heart be quite dead toward God. Or one may belong to the most orthodox church, subscribe to its doctrines, adopt their language, echo its groans, and have not a spark of grace in the heart. One may separate from all the world’s politics, pastimes, and pleasures, and have no love for Christ. There must be the exercise of faith, the stirrings of hope, the actings of love, the surrender of the will, and walking in the path of obedience, in order to meet the terms of our text.

“For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Heb 13:14). Four questions are suggested by these words. What is their relation to the preceding verse? What is signified by “no continuing *city*”? What is the “one to come” that we seek? How or in what do we seek it? That there is a close connection between verse 14 and the previous one is obvious from its opening word. Now that connection is twofold—first, verse 14 supplies two further reasons to enforce the duty specified in verse 13—additional to those implied in verses 10-12. Second, verse 14 may also be regarded as explaining and amplifying the language of verse 13.

The connection of verse 14 with verse 13 will be more apparent as we turn to the second question and consider what is signified by, “For here have we no continuing city.” Obviously, the “city” is used here metaphorically, as a figure of that which is strong and stable—it is that which provides refuge and rest to the great majority of earth’s inhabitants. “Change and decay in all around I see” said the poet. There is nothing lasting, durable, dependable in this world. In Genesis 4:17, we read that Cain “builded a city” and where is it?—destroyed thousands of years ago by the flood. Thebes, Nineveh, Babylon were all powerful and imposing cities in their day, but where are they now? They no longer exist, yea, their very sites are disputed. Such is this world, my reader, “the fashion of this world *passeth away*” (1Co 7:31), and one day “the earth also and the works that are therein shall be *burned up*” (2Pe 3:10).

The things of this earth are transitory—that which the natural man values so highly, and sells his soul to obtain, soon vanishes away. All that is mundane is unstable and uncertain—*that* is the meaning, in brief, of “here have we no continuing city” (Heb 13:14). There is however an emphasis in these words which we must not miss. It is *not* simply, “here *there is* no continuing city,” but “here *have we*” none—something which can be predicated of none but believers. True, the worldling has none in reality, but in his imagination, his plans, his affections, he has—he sets his heart upon the things of this world and acts as though he would enjoy them always, “Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names” (Psa 49:11). And how is the instability of everything mundane to affect and influence the Christian? Thus—he is to renounce them in his heart—leave “the camp”—*that* is the connection with verse 13.

“For here have we no continuing city” (Heb 13:14). “A city is the centre of men’s interests and privileges, the residence and seat of their conversation. Hereby are they freed from the condition of strangers and pilgrims, and have all that rest and security in this world they are capable. For those who have no higher aims nor ends than this world, a city is their all. Now it is not said of believers absolutely that they belonged to no city, had none that was theirs in common with other men. For our apostle himself pleaded that he was a citizen of no mean city. This is intimated, as we shall see, in the restriction of the assertion—a *continuing* city. But it is spoken on other accounts” (John Owen, 1616-1683). What those “other accounts” are we shall see presently, meanwhile we will consider the more general meaning.

In His providential dealings with them, God often gives His people painful reminders of the fact that “here have we no continuing city.” We are prone to be at ease in Zion, to fix our hearts on things below, to settle down in this world. We like to feel we are anchored for a while at least and make our plans accordingly. But God blows upon our schemes and compels us to take up the stakes of our tents, saying, “Arise ye, and depart; for *this* is not your rest: because it is polluted” (Mic 2:10). A significant word on this is found in, “As an eagle *stirreth up her nest*, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: *so* the LORD alone did lead him” (Deu 32:11-12). Ah, my reader, it is not a pleasant experience to have our earthly “nest” stirred up, to have our rest disturbed, and be obliged to change our abode, but as that is essential if the eaglets are to be taught to use their wings, so it is necessary for the Christian if he is to live as a stranger and pilgrim in this scene.

God has called His people unto fellowship with Christ, and that means something more than participating in His life and receiving His peace and joy. It also involves entering into His experiences—enduring the wrath of God alone excepted. “When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth *before* them” (Joh 10:4). That denotes two things—that we are not called to tread any path which He did not Himself traverse, and that we are to experience something of His sorrows. “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations” or “trials” (Luk 22:28). Now what was Christ’s experience in this world? Even as a child He had no rest here. His parents had to carry Him down into Egypt in order to escape the malice of Herod. Trace the record of His earthly ministry and how long do we find Him abiding in any once place? He was constantly on the move. “Jesus therefore, being *wearied with his journey*, sat thus on the well” (Joh 4:6), and in some form or other His people are required to drink from that same cup. If the Lord of Glory “had not where to lay his head” (see Luk 9:58) when in this world, shall we deem it strange that God so often disturbs our rest?

But let us consider the more specific meaning of our text. First, the Christian has no city on earth which is the centre of divine worship, whereunto it is confined, as had been the case with Judaism. Herein the apostle points another

contrast. After the Israelites had wandered for many years in the wilderness, they were brought to rest in Canaan, where Jerusalem became their grand centre, and of that city the Jews had for long boasted. But it was not to continue, for within ten years of this epistle being written, that city was destroyed. How this verse gives the lie to the pretensions of Rome! No, the Christian has something far better than an insecure and non-continuing city on earth, even the Father's house, with its many mansions, eternal in the heavens!

Second, the believer has no city on earth which supplies him with those things which are his ultimate aim—deliverance from all his enemies, an end to all his trials, an eternal resting-place. His “commonwealth” or “citizenship” is “in heaven” (Phi 3:20 R.V.). The Christian does not regard this world as his fixed abode or final home. This is what gives point to the preceding exhortation and explains the force of the opening “For” in Hebrews 13:14. The fact that everything here is unstable and uncertain should spur the Christian to go forth from the camp—in his heart renounce the world. And further, it should make him willing to “bear the reproach of Christ,” even though that involves being driven from his birthplace and compelled to wander about without any fixed residence on earth. Finally, it gives point, as we shall see, to the last clause of our text.

“But we seek one to come” (Heb 13:14). In view of what has been before us, it is quite clear that the “one,” the city, that we seek, is heaven itself, various aspects of which are suggested by the figure here used of it. It is an abiding, heavenly, everlasting “city,” which the believer seeks, and the same is referred to again and again in this epistle—in contrast from the temporal and transitory nature of Judaism—under various terms and figures. This “city” is the same as the “better and enduring substance” in heaven of Heb 10:34. It is that “heavenly country” of Heb 11:16. It is “the city of the living God” of Heb 12:22, the seat and centre of divine worship. It is the same as “those things which cannot be shaken” of Heb 12:27. It is the “kingdom which cannot be moved,” in its final form, of Heb 12:28. It is the “inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1Pe 1:4).

An earlier reference to this grand object of the believer's desire and quest was before us in “he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb 11:10). Those “foundations” are, first, the everlasting goodwill and pleasure of God toward His people, which is the basis of all His dealings with them. Second, God's foreordination, whereby He predestined His elect unto eternal glory, concerning which we are told, “The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his” (2Ti 2:19). Third, the everlasting covenant of free, rich, and sovereign grace, which God entered into with the Head and Surety of the elect, and which is “ordered in all things and sure.” Fourth, the infinite merits and purchase of Christ, for “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1Co 3:11). Fifth, the whole

being confirmed by and resting upon the immutable stability of God's promise and oath, Hebrews 6:17-20.

In addition to the few brief remarks we made upon the signification of this figure of the "city" when expounding Heb 11:10, we may note the following—bearing in mind those characteristics of a "city" which specially obtained in ancient times. First, a city was a place of safety and security, "Let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem" (Jer 35:11). In heaven there will be no wicked men to persecute, no devil to tempt. Second, a city is compact, being the concentration of numerous houses and homes. So of heaven Christ declared that in it are "many mansions" (Joh 14:2). There will dwell together forever the myriads of holy angels and the entire church of God. Third, in a city is stored all manner of provisions and needful commodities. So in heaven there is nothing lacking to minister unto the delights of its inhabitants.

Finally, as a "city" on earth is the centre of the world's interests and privileges, the resting place of travelers and those who go abroad, so heaven will be the grand terminal to the wanderings and journeyings of the Christian. His pilgrimage is ended, for home is reached. On earth he was a stranger and sojourner, but now he has reached the Father's house. There he will meet with no hardships, encounter none to whom he is a hated foreigner, and no longer have to earn his daily bread by the sweat of his brow. Unbroken rest, perfect freedom, unassailable security, congenial society, unconceivable delights, are now his portion forever. Faith then gives place to sight, hope to fruition, grace is swallowed up in glory, and we are "for ever with the Lord" (see 1Th 4:17), beholding His glory, bathing in the ocean of His love.

How the anticipation of this should make us set our affection on things above, spur us on to run the race before us, cause us to drop every weight which hinders us in running! How the consideration and contemplation of that "city" should work powerfully in us to look and long, and prepare us for the same! This brings us to ponder for a moment the meaning of "but we *seek* one to come" (Heb 13:14). This, of course, does not signify that the believer is searching after that which is unknown, but endeavouring to obtain it. It is the treading of that narrow way which leads to heaven, and that with diligence and desire, which is hereby denoted. "And God hath prepared a city of rest for us, so it is our duty continually to endeavour the attainment of it, in the ways of His appointment. The main business of believers in this world is diligently to seek after the attainments of eternal rest with God and this is the character whereby they may be known" (John Owen).

Here, then, is the *use* which the believer makes of the uncertainty and instability of everything in this world—his heart is fixed on the home above and to get safely there is his great concern. The word "seek" in our text is a very strong one. It is used in "after all these things [the material necessities of this life] do the

Gentiles seek” (Mat 6:32)—i.e., seek with concentrated purpose, earnest effort, untiring zeal. The same word is also rendered “labour” in Hebrews 4:11. The Christian deems no task too arduous, no sacrifice too much, no loss too great, if he may but “*win* Christ” (Phi 3:8). He knows that heaven will richly compensate him for all the toils and troubles of the journey which lead thither. “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out” (Rev 3:12).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

68. His Being Befriended

In working out His own eternal design, in ministering to the spiritual and temporal needs of His people, and in delivering them from their enemies, God acts as sovereign, employing subordinate agents or dispensing with them as He pleases. That He is *not* restrained by the lack of means is evident from His feeding two million Israelites in the wilderness for the space of forty years, by giving them bread from heaven, and from other signal instances recorded in His Word. Nevertheless, generally, He is pleased to make use of means in the accomplishment of His everlasting decrees. Oftentimes those means are very feeble ones, altogether inadequate in themselves for accomplishing the ends they do—to show us that their sufficiency lies in Him who deigns to make use of them. Where human agents are employed by God, their unmeetness and unworthiness is often very apparent, and this, that we may glory not in them, but in the One who condescends to place His treasure in earthen vessels. Unless this principle be clearly recognized by us, we are very apt to stumble at the manifest faults in the instruments God employs.

God has never had but one perfect Servant on this earth, and His surpassing excellency is made the more conspicuous by the numerous imperfections of all others. Yet we must not take delight in looking for or dwelling upon the blemishes of those God made use of—like unclean birds seeking carrion to feed upon. Who are we, so full of sin ourselves, that we should throw stones at others? On the other hand, the faults recorded in Scripture of those whom God used in various ways, must not be made a shelter behind which we hide, in order to excuse our own sins. It is the bearing in mind of these obvious rules which often occasions a real difficulty to the minister of God, whether his preaching be oral or written. It is his duty to use *as warnings* the faults of Biblical characters—yet, alas, in doing so, he frequently has occasion to *condemn himself*. Yet that is beneficial if it truly humbles him before God.

We are now to consider the means used by God in delivering His servant from the murderous designs of his enemies. If there had been a Jonathan in Saul’s

palace to plead his cause and give him intelligence of his father's plans, so now God raised up an Hushai at the headquarters of Absalom to render him aid and forward him notice of what was impending. Reliable messengers to carry these important tidings from him to David were present in the persons of the two priests, whom David had sent back to Jerusalem in order to there serve his interests, though they had been obliged to lodge outside the city at Enrogel, where a servant-girl communicated, in turn, with them. Yet one other link in the chain was required in order for the contact to be established. The two priests were seen as they started out on their mission, and were pursued by Absalom's men, but a protector was raised up for them and they escaped. Thus, in this one instance God made use of a prominent politician, two priests, a maid-servant, and a farmer and his wife.

"Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith. And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake unto him, saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do after his saying? if not; speak thou" (2Sa 17:5-6). Let it not be forgotten that "the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom" (2Sa 16:23). Is it not, then, truly remarkable that Absalom did not act promptly on his advise, instead of now conferring Hushai, the more so the plan propounded by Ahithophel had "pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel" (2Sa 17:4). There is only one satisfactory explanation—God had decreed otherwise! This is far more, my reader, than an incident in ancient history. It furnishes an example *of how* God regulates the affairs of nations today. Have we not witnessed individuals as devoid of all natural affections, as godless, as ruthless, as unscrupulous as was Absalom, who have *forced themselves* into the high places of national and international affairs!?

Yes, my reader, what the Holy Spirit has recorded here in 2 Samuel 17 is something of much greater importance than an episode which transpired thousands of years ago. The anointed eye may discern in and through it the light of heaven being shed upon the political affairs of earth. God governs as truly in the houses of legislature and in the secret conferences of rulers and diplomats, as He does the elements and the heavenly bodies. He it is who rules their selfish schemings and overrules the counter plans of others. It was so here in Jerusalem in the long ago. It is so, just as actually now, at London, Washington, Paris, Moscow, Berlin, and Rome. The very reason why the Spirit has chronicled our incident in the imperishable pages of Holy Writ is that God's people in all succeeding generations might know that "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan 4:17, 25, 32)—alas, that through the ignorance and unfaithfulness of the modern pulpit so many believers are now deprived of that comforting assurance.

God's Word is a *living* Word and not an obsolete history of things which took place in the far-distant past. It is to our own irreparable loss if we fail to turn its light upon the mysteries of life and the "dark places of the earth" (Psa 74:20). And surely there are no darker places than the conference chambers of politicians and international diplomats. God setteth up over the kingdom of men, "*the basest of men*" (Dan 4:17), where His claims and the interests of His people are either totally ignored or blatantly defied—yet, even *there* the Most High is supreme, and has *His* way. Only so far are they allowed to go in their evil schemings and greedy plannings. If on the one hand there is a bloodthirsty Ahithophel (a military leader), who urges the modern dictator to the shedding of innocent blood, on the other hand God raises up an Hushai (though his name may not appear in our newspapers), who restrains and checks by advising cautious delay, and *his* counsel is made (by God) to thwart or modify the more extreme measures of the former. In the day to come, we shall find that 2 Samuel 17 has often been duplicated in the politics of this world, particularly in those of Europe.

"And Hushai said unto Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time" (2Sa 17:7). Hushai was put to rather a severe test. In the first place, Absalom had already evidenced some suspicion of his bonafides, or loyalty to himself, when he first appeared on the scene (2Sa 16:17). In the second place, Ahithophel had just advanced a plan which met with general approval. And in the third place, to criticize the scheme of Ahithophel might well be to increase Absalom's suspicion against himself. But he stood his ground, and at some risk to himself, did what he could to befriend David. He came right out and boldly challenged the counsel of his rival, yet he prudently took the edge off the blow by his modification of "at this time." His language was skillfully chosen. He did not say "such a course would be downright madness," but only it "is not good"—it is unwise to employ harsher language than is absolutely necessary. Thus Absalom discovered that his counselors did not agree—it is diversity of views and policies that a balance is preserved in the affairs of human government.

"For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people" (2Sa 17:8). In these words Hushai artfully suggests that Ahithophel was seriously misjudging the ease of his task. He had lightly and presumptuously declared, "I will smite the king only" (2Sa 17:2). But *that* was not such a simple task as Ahithophel supposed. David was something more than a pasteboard monarch. He was a man of great courage and much experience in the arts of warfare. Moreover, he was accompanied by valiant warriors, who were in an angry mood over the shameful necessity of their beloved master's flight from Jerusalem, and would not stand idly by while he was slaughtered. Absalom had better pause and face the very real difficulties of the situation, for it is often a fatal mistake to underestimate the strength of an adversary. To sit down and count the cost (Luk 14:28) is always a prudent course to follow. Rash and ill-considered measures are likely to meet with

failure. But much grace is needed in this feverish age to act thoughtfully and cautiously, and not rush blindly ahead.

“Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some other place: and it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom” (2Sa 17:9-10). The fugitive king was not the type of man to seek his ease. He “will not lodge with the people,” but rather will he, as a seasoned warrior, resort to subtle strategy, and lie in a well-chosen ambush, from which he will unexpectedly spring out, and slay at least the foremost of Ahithophel’s men. And *that* would seriously prejudice Absalom’s cause, for the news would quickly go forth that David was victor in the field. The practical lesson which this points for us, is that we must not commit the folly of underestimating the strength and subtlety of our spiritual enemies, and that we must carefully consider what are the best ways and means of overcoming them. Our lusts often secretly hide themselves and then spring forth when they are least expected. Satan generally attacks us from an unlooked-for quarter. He has had far more exposure than we, and we need to tread very cautiously if he is not to gain a serious advantage over us.

“And he also that is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are valiant men” (2Sa 17:10). Hushai is here pressing upon Absalom what would inevitably follow if that should eventuate which he had mentioned in the previous verse. In case David succeeded in springing a trap and the advance guard of Ahithophel’s proposed expedition were slain, as would most probably happen when pitted against such a wily antagonist as the conqueror of Goliath, only one course would surely follow—the entire force sent against David would be demoralized. The inexperienced men Ahithophel led, though superior in numbers, would now feel they were no match for the braves in the king’s forces, and they would be utterly dismayed. That would be fatal to Absalom’s cause, as a very little reflection must make apparent. Human nature is very fickle, and men in the mass are even more easily swayed than are individuals. It takes very little to turn the tide of public opinion.

“Therefore I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person” (2Sa 17:11). This was the only logical inference to draw from the preceding premises. The “twelve thousand men” Ahithophel asked for (2Sa 17:1) were altogether inadequate for success against such a general as David and against such renowned men as he commanded. Absalom must mobilize the entire manhood of the nation and overwhelm his father by sheer force of numbers. Incidentally, observe that “as the sand that is by the sea for multitude” is a *hyperbolic* expression to denote a considerable company and is *not* to be taken at its face value. This same figure is used again in, “I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore” (Gen 22:17),

“And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude” (Jos 11:4), “And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number” (Jdg 7:12). Therefore, if Scripture is to be interpreted by Scripture, the “great multitude which no man could number” of Revelation 7:9 must be taken as a hyperbole and *not* interpreted literally.

In counseling Absalom to undertake a general mobilization, or the gathering together of an overwhelming force, Hushai was obviously “playing for time.” The longer he could induce Absalom to delay taking military action against the one he was befriending, the better would his real object be achieved. The slower Absalom was in moving, the more time would David have for putting a greater distance between himself and Jerusalem, to increase his own forces, and to select to best advantage the site for the coming conflict. The entire design of Hushai was to counter Ahithophel’s proposed, “I will arise and pursue after David *this* night” (2Sa 17:1). To further strengthen his argument, Hushai suggests that Absalom should “go to battle in thine own person” (2Sa 17:11)—take the place of honour and lead your own men. Indirectly, he was intimating that Ahithophel’s project had only his *own* ends (private revenge) and personal glory in view—note his “I will arise,” “I will come upon him,” “I will smite the king” (2Sa 17:1-2). Hushai knew well the kind of man he was dealing with and so appealed to the pride of his heart.

As we shall (D.V.) see from the sequel, it was this very detail which issued in Absalom’s losing his own life. Had he followed the counsel of Ahithophel, he would have remained in Jerusalem, but by accepting the advice of Hushai to go to battle in his own person, he went forth to his death. How true it is that God “taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong” (Job 5:13)! No doubt Absalom was priding himself in his prudence by obtaining the advice of both these experienced counselors, yet that was the very thing that led to his destruction. The suggestion of Hushai appealed to his personal vanity, and by yielding thereto, we are shown here that “Pride goeth before destruction” (Pro 16:18). If God has placed you, my reader, in humble circumstances and in a lowly position, envy not those who take the lead, and aspire not to a place of worldly dignity and carnal honours.

“So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him and of all the men that are with him there shall not be left so much as one” (2Sa 17:12). This completes the thoughts begun at the start of the preceding verse—by means of an enormous force, we shall be able to fall upon David and his followers and utterly annihilate them, neither strategy nor valour will be of any avail against such overwhelming numbers. Such counsel as this was not only calculated to appeal to Absalom himself, but also to the unthinking masses. There would be little danger

to themselves, in fact, such a plan seemed to guarantee success without any risk at all, “There is safety in numbers” would be their comforting slogan. Note Hushai’s artful use of the plural number, “So shall *we* come upon him” and “*we* will light upon him” in sharp contrast from the threefold “I” of Ahithophel.

“Moreover, if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there” (2Sa 17:13). Thus Hushai sought to close the door against every possible objection. Should David and his men take refuge in some city, and fortify it, instead of hiding in a pit or wood (2Sa 17:9), *that* would prove no obstacle to such a host as we should take against him. We will not endanger our men by seeking to force a way in, but by main force, drag the city and its people into the river—this, of course, was not to be taken seriously, but was intended to raise a laugh. It was simply designed to signify that by no conceivable means could David either defy or escape them.

“And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good [politic] counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom” (2Sa 17:14). The second half of this verse explains the first. The prudent advice of Ahithophel was rejected, and the plausible but foolish measures of Hushai were accepted—foolish because they involved so much delay. The same thing has happened scores of times in the affairs of nations and for a similar reason. Folly often prevails over wisdom in the counsels of princes and in the houses of legislators. Why? Because *God* has appointed the rejection of sound counsel in order to bring on nations the vengeance which their crimes call down from heaven. It is *thus* that God rules the world by His Providence. See that grave senator, or that sage diplomat—he rises and proposes a course of wisdom, but if God has appointed to punish the nation, some prating fanatic will impose his sophisms on the most sagacious assembly.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

6. *The Davidic*

In this article, we shall attempt little more than to point out *the connecting links* between the Siniatic and the Davidic covenants. The various covenants recorded in the Old Testament, as we have previously stated, mark the principal stages in the development of God’s purpose of mercy towards our fallen race. Each one brought to light some further aspect of truth, and that, in keeping with particular incidents in the circumstances of God’s people on earth. The covenants and the history are so intimately related that some knowledge of the one is indispensable to an understanding of the other, for each throws light upon the other. Only when the

divine covenants and the sacred history connected with them are mutually studied, can we be in a position to trace the divine wisdom in those epoch-making transactions. But in order not to extend the series unto too great a length, our review of the history must necessarily be brief and incomplete.

The statutes and ordinances given for the regulation of Israel, the covenant people, assumed a definite form sometime before the death of Moses, who, on account of his sin, was not allowed to lead the people into the promised land. In view of his removal, he was divinely instructed to select Joshua as his successor, to whose leadership the nation was entrusted in the great enterprise which lay before them. The previous life of this eminent man had supplied a suitable training for the work which was assigned to him, and his future conduct manifested qualities which evidenced him to be equal to all the exigencies of his high service. Under this administration, the conquest of Canaan was, to a large extent, successfully accomplished, and the land was divided by lot to the several tribes. On the eve of his decease he was able to say, "Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts...that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof" (Jos 23:14).

The above language (like much in Scripture) is not to be taken absolutely, as though the entire conquest of Canaan was now complete and the inheritance fully secured—the fact was otherwise. No, it is to be understood as affirming that up to this time no assistance had been withheld which their project required or that had been promised to them, and it was designed to strengthen their faith and encourage their hearts in regard to further success in its future prosecutions. Joshua had no successor, nor was any needed. Though Israel was a single nation, with common laws, under one King, yet each tribe had its own rulers, sufficient for orderly self-government and to take possession of that portion of the inheritance which had been allotted them. In some cases the land had yet to be acquired, and the tribes whose property it was were obligated to effect its conquest, whether by their own efforts, or with the aid of their fellows. All of this is sufficiently apparent from the facts of the sacred history.

After the death of Joshua, Judah, assisted by the tribe of Simeon, was the first to go up, under divine direction, to fight against the Canaanites. For a time success attended their efforts, but soon they fell into the awful sin of idolatry (Jdg 2:11-13) and divine punishment quickly followed. JEHOVAH led them into the hands of their enemies, until in pity for their affliction, He interposed for their relief. The historical account of their condition during a lengthy period is but fragmentary. The book of Judges does not give us a continuous and connected narrative, but merely relates the principal disasters in which, at different times, their transgressions involved them, and of the various means which God graciously employed for their deliverance. If the reader will consult Judges 2:12-18, he will

discover that the remainder of that book is but a series of illustrations of what is there stated.

The “Judges” were extraordinary officers raised up by God, occasionally, by special designation, yet always acting with the free concurrence of the people. While their rule in most instances extended over the whole nation, in some it seems to have been confined to particular tribes only, but so far as their commission reached, they had under God supreme authority. Usually they were the leaders in the military operations undertaken against the oppressors of Israel, though in some instances they were appointed for the suppression of disorders prevailing among the tribes themselves. Special circumstances alone determined their appointment. Their power was real, yet so far as the inspired record informs us, their habits continued simple. They had no external badge of distinction, received no emolument for their services, and enjoyed no exclusive privileges that were capable of being transmitted to the members of their several families.

The book of Judges is mainly limited to giving us a summary statement of the official acts of these men. There are considerable intervals in respect to which we have no information—possibly because those particular periods were marked by comparative peace and prosperity, during which the worship of JEHOVAH was maintained and His blessing enjoyed—of that state of things the book of Ruth supplies a pleasing illustration. Throughout the whole of this period, the Levitical institutions supplied the people with all the instruction which was necessary for their direction in divine worship and the maintenance of that fellowship with God to which they had been admitted. Nothing in the form of addition was made to the truth which, through the instrumentality of Moses, had been disclosed and placed on permanent record. Some were raised up endowed with the gift of prophecy, but they appear to have been few in number, appearing only on rare occasions, their utterances being confined to what concerned the present duty of the people.

Though no new truth was given, nor even any amplification of what had been previously revealed, yet even so, Israel then supplied a striking type of the kingdom of God as it is now revealed under the Gospel. They were a people under the immediate government of God, subject to His authority alone, bound together by ties which their relation to Him created, and enjoying the privilege of access to His mercy-seat (through their high priest) for counsel and aid in every emergency. Is it not thus, though in a true and higher sense, with the saints of this dispensation? The Lord is enthroned in their hearts, His yoke they have freely taken upon them, and whatever distinctions in other respects may exist among them, they are one in fealty to Him and unite in the practical homage which He requires. But Israel understood not their position and appreciated not their advantages. They were discontented, distrustful, stiffnecked, ever forsaking their own mercies.

In one particular respect, their outward condition remained defective. They had not yet acquired the full and peaceful possession of their inheritance. Their

enemies were still powerful and involved them in perpetual trouble. This, however, was the effect of *their own unfaithfulness*. Had they resolutely obeyed the voice of the Lord and continued in the task to which He had called them, had they in humble dependence on His power and promised grace fulfilled their instructions, they would soon have realized a state of prosperity equal to all they were warranted to expect (Psa 81:13-16). But their indolence and unbelief deprived them of blessings which were within their reach. They were unsettled. Their very worship was in a degree as yet provisional—indicated by the removal of the ark of the covenant from place to place. They were content that it should be so, being too carnal-minded to really value the peculiar constitution which it was their privilege to enjoy.

Samuel was the last of the “Judges” and from *his* time the stream of history flows on in a more continuous course. Received in answer to prayer, he was from his birth consecrated to God. The consecration was graciously accepted, and while yet a child, he became the subject of divine communications. Thus early did the Lord indicate the nature of that service in which his life was to be spent. Samuel, we are told, “grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD” (1Sa 3:19-20). At what time he publicly assumed the office of judge we are not directly informed. Probably while yet a youth, he was understood to be designed thereto, but only in mature life acknowledged in that capacity by the tribes assembled at Mizpah (1Sa 7:6).

Since Moses, no one exercised a more beneficial influence upon Israel, in every respect, than did Samuel. His administration was singularly able and prosperous. When the infirmities of age came upon him, he associated his sons with him in the office, doubtless with the concurrence of the people, but as so often follows in such a case, the arrangement did not work well. The young men were very different in character from their aged parent, and they acted accordingly, “And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment” (1Sa 8:3). The evil course they pursued seems to have been systematic and open, and was publicly felt to be all the more intolerable because of its marked contrast from the integrity which had uniformly marked the official conduct of Samuel himself.

Such scandalous conduct on the part of Samuel’s sons caused the people to be loud in their expression of dissatisfaction, which was followed by a demand for which the aged servant of God was not prepared, “Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (1Sa 8:4-5). Various considerations incline us to form the conclusion that this proposal was far from being a sudden one on the part of the people. Although Samuel was neither slow nor unsuccessful in repelling the attacks of their enemies, yet his government was, on the whole, a pacific one, such

as the condition of the people then called for. While much yet remained to be done for the complete conquest of their inheritance, they were enfeebled by unbelief and all its consequences, and therefore practically unfitted for the work assigned to them.

Time and training were required for their restoration to that state of efficiency on which, humanly speaking, their success depended. This was the result at which the administration of Samuel aimed. But there is reason to believe that this wise policy was anything but agreeable to them. However ill qualified for it, the passion for conquest had sprung up among the people. They had become dissatisfied with the occasional military efforts of the “Judges” and enamoured with the regal pomp of the surrounding nations, they formed extravagant expectations of what a vast improvement in their condition the settled rule of a race of kings would produce. This, we take it, is what led up to and lies behind the demand which they made upon Samuel in the present instance.

But that demand involved *a marked departure* from the constitution which God had established amongst them. JEHOVAH Himself was their *King*, and He had given no outward intimation that things should not continue in the observance of those simple arrangements under which their political condition had been settled, with the assurance that the Lord was ever present with them, ready to afford them the counsel and aid which they needed. Their past history, notwithstanding their deep unworthiness, had abundantly proved how promptly and graciously that assurance had been made good. But this state of privilege the people were too earthly to value. In the intention of the mass of the people, the request made to Samuel was a practical renunciation of the theocracy. The demand itself, then, was wrong, and in spirit and purpose it was still more reprehensible.

The demand presented to Samuel indicated an unreasonable dissatisfaction with the divine goodness and a rejection of the divine claims. In this light it was regarded by God Himself. The Lord said unto Samuel, “Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1Sa 8:7). That the change now desired would be ultimately sought was foreseen from the first. An intimation to that effect was given through Moses and accompanied with instructions for the guidance of the people when that event occurred. “When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, *I will set* a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt,” etc. (Deu 17:14-20).

It is to be duly noted that the terms of the above passage simply anticipated what *would* assuredly happen—they neither ordered the change itself nor

expressed approval of it. The request made by Israel to Samuel was indeed granted, yet in such a way as to demonstrate the fallacy of the expectations, which they had entertained, and to bring with it chastisement for their sin. God gave them their own desire, but mocked their vain hopes. The regal dignity was first conferred on Saul, one possessing the very qualifications which Israel desired—a man *after their own heart*. He was comely in person, commanding in appearance, just such a one as to suit their carnal tastes. To his appointment some dissatisfaction was at first shown, but this was speedily silenced by the success of his early actions, and subsequently his election was confirmed at Gilgal with the general concurrence of Israel (1Sa 11:15).

But the reign of Saul was a disastrous one. He was grievously defective in those moral and spiritual qualities indispensable to the requirements of his high position. The defects of his character soon became apparent. He proved himself to be rash, self-willed, jealous, and disobedient to the divine command. His administration was marked by injustice and cruelty. Disorder and feebleness increased towards the close of his reign, and forsaken of God, he ultimately perished on the battlefield, where the armies of Israel suffered an ignominious defeat—sorely wounded, Saul put an end to his miserable existence by taking his own life. Fearfully humiliating, then, was Israel’s punishment for their presumptuous sin. To this sad episode the words of the prophet applied, when through him God said, “I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath” (Hos 13:11).

CHRIST OUR EXEMPLAR

Two serious mistakes have been made by men in taking or not taking Christ for their example, and it is difficult to determine which is the more evil and fatal of the two. First, there have been those who held up the perfect life of the Lord Jesus before the unconverted and maintained that they must imitate the same in order to find acceptance with God. In other words, they made the emulating of Christ “the way of salvation” unto lost sinners. This is a fundamental error, which cannot be resisted too strenuously. It repudiates the total depravity and spiritual helplessness of fallen men. It denies the imperative necessity for the new birth. It nullifies the atonement, by emphasizing Christ’s flawless life at the expense of His sacrificial death. It substitutes works for faith, creature efforts for divine grace, man’s faulty doings for the Redeemer’s finished work. If the Acts and epistles are searched, it will be found that the apostles never preached the imitating of Christ as the way to obtain forgiveness of sins and secure peace with God.

But in recent generations the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme. If a century ago the example which Christ has left His people was made too much of,

our moderns make far too little of it. If *they* gave it a place when preaching to the unsaved, which Scripture does not warrant, *we* have sadly failed to press it upon Christians to the extent that Scripture requires. If they are to be blamed for misusing the example of Christ in connection with justification, we are guilty of failing to use it in connection with sanctification. While it is true that the moral perfections which Christ so illustriously displayed during His earthly sojourn are still extolled in many places, yet how rarely one now hears (or reads) of those who insist that the emulating of Christ is absolutely essential for the believer's preservation and ultimate salvation. Yea, would not the great majority of "orthodox" preachers be positively afraid to make any such assertion lest they be charged with "legality"?

The Lord Jesus Christ is not only a perfect and glorious pattern of all graces, holiness, virtue, and obedience, to be preferred above all others—but *He alone* is such. In the lives of the best of the saints, Scripture records that which it is our bounden duty to avoid, as well as that which we ought to follow, so that sometimes one is puzzled to know whether it is safe to conform unto them or not. But God has graciously supplied us with a sure rule which effectually solves that problem and if heeded by us we shall never be at a loss to perceive our duty. The holy men and women of Scripture are to be imitated by us only as far as they were themselves conformed unto *Christ*, see 1 Corinthians 11:1. The best of their graces, the highest of their attainments, the most perfect of their duties were spoiled by spots and blemishes—but in Christ is no imperfection whatever, for He had no sin and did no sin.

Christ is not only the perfect, but also the *pattern* Man, and therefore is His example suitable for *all* believers. This remarkable fact presents a feature which has not received the attention it deserves. There is nothing so distinctive in personality as racial and national characteristics. The greatest of men bear unmistakable marks of their heredity and environment. Racial peculiarities are imperishable—to the last fiber of his being Luther was German, Knox a Scot, with all his largeness of heart, Paul was a Jew. Now in sharp and blessed contrast, Jesus Christ rose above heredity and environment—nothing local, transient, national, or sectarian dwarfed His wondrous personality. Christ is the only truly catholic man. He belongs to *all* ages and is related to *all* men, because He is "the Son of man" (Mar 14:62). This it is which underlies the *universal suitability* of Christ's example to believers of all nations, who one and all may find in Him the perfect realization of their ideal.

This is indeed a miracle and exhibits a transcendent perfection in the Man Christ Jesus which is rarely pondered. How remarkable it is that the converted Englishman may find in Christ's character and conduct a pattern as well suited to him as to a saved Chinaman! His example is as appropriate for the regenerated Zulu as it is for a born-again German. The needs of Lord Bacon and Sir Isaac Newton were as truly met in Christ as were those of the half-witted youth who

said, "I am a poor sinner and nothing at all. But Jesus Christ is my all in all." How remarkable that the example of Christ is as appropriate for believers of the twentieth century as it was for those of the first, that it is as suitable for a Christian child as for his grandparent! There is nothing effeminate about Christ, yet Christian women can take Him for their example as well as may Christian men. Christ rises above *all* human limitations. He is perfect Man, and therefore is His example perfectly suited to all believers.

He is *appointed* of God for this very purpose. One end why God sent His Son to become flesh and tabernacle in the world therein was that He might set before us an example in our own nature. In Christ is One who was like unto us in all things, sin alone excepted, thereby exhibiting to us of that renewal to His image in us, of that return unto Him from sin and apostasy, and of that holy obedience which He requires of us. Such an example was needful that we might never be at a lost about the will of God in His commandments, having a glorious representation of it before our eyes, and that could be given us no otherwise than *in our own nature*. The angelic nature was not suited to set us an example of obedience, especially as to the exercise of such graces as we specially stand in need of in this world. What example could angels set us in themselves of patience in afflictions or quietness in sufferings when *their* nature is *incapable* of such things? Nor could we have had a complete and perfect example in our nature except in One who was holy and "separate from sinners."

Many are the Scriptures which present Christ as the believer's Exemplar, the principal of which are the following, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Mat 11:29)—Learn by the course of My life as well as by the word of My mouth. "When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him" (Joh 10:4)—He requires no more of us than He rendered Himself. "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (Joh 13:15). "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another *according to Christ Jesus*" (Rom 15:5). "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phi 2:5). "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus* the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb 12:1-2). "But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1Pe 2:20-21). "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1Jo 2:6).

Example is better than precept. Why? Because a precept is more or less an abstraction, whereas an example sets before us *a concrete presentation* and therefore has more aptitude to incite the mind unto imitation. The conduct of those with whom we are in close association exerts a considerable influence upon us, either for good or evil. That fact is clearly recognized in the Scriptures. For example, we are enjoined, "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a

furious man thou shalt not go: lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul” (Pro 22:24-25). It was for this reason (among others) that God commanded the Israelites to utterly destroy all the inhabitants of Canaan, so that they might not learn their evil ways and be contaminated by them (Deu 7:2-4). Contrariwise, the example of the pious exerts an influence for good—that is why they are called “the salt of the earth.”

Now it is in keeping with this principle that God has appointed the consideration of Christ’s character and conduct as *a special means* for the increase of piety in His people, so that as their hearts contemplate His holy obedience, it has a peculiar efficacy unto their growing in grace beyond all other examples. It is in the beholding of the Lord Jesus by faith that salvation comes to us, “*Look* unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isa 45:22). Christ is presented before the sinner in the Gospel, with the promise that whosoever believably looks unto Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life (Joh 3:14-15). This is a special ordinance of God and it is made effectual by the Spirit unto all who believe. In like manner, Christ is presented unto the saints as the grand pattern of obedience and example of holiness, with the promise that as they contemplate Him as such we shall be changed into His image, 2 Corinthians 3:18. Our response to that appointment of God is rewarded by a growing in piety.

But to get down to details—*what is involved* and comprised in the saints’ imitating of Christ? First, it necessarily presupposes that they be *already regenerate*. The hearts of His followers must be sanctified before their lives can be conformed to Him. The spirit and principle of obedience must be imparted to the soul before there can be an external imitation of Christ’s practice. This order is plainly enunciated in, “I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God” (Eze 11:19-20). One who is yet in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity has not heart for spiritual things, therefore the tree must be made good ere it can produce good fruit. We must first *live* in the Spirit and then *walk* in the Spirit (Gal 5:25). One might as well urge the Ethiopian to change his skin or the leopard his spots as call upon the unconverted to follow the example which Christ has left His people.

Second, the imitating of Christ definitely denotes that *no Christian may govern himself* or act according to his own will and pleasure. Those who are a rule unto themselves act in fearful defiance of the Most High, “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer 10:23). A man may as well feign to be his own creator as his own guide. No man has wisdom enough to direct himself. When born again we are made conscious of this fact—our proud hearts are then humbled, and our rebellious wills broken, and we feel the need of being led by Another. The cry of a converted heart is, “Lord,

what wouldest thou have be to do?” and His answer to us today is, Follow the example which I have left you—learn of Me, walk even as I walked.

Third, if this imitating of Christ clearly implies that no man may pretend to be his own master, it is equally evident that no matter how wise or how holy he is, *no Christian has the right* nor is qualified to *rule others*—Christ alone is appointed and fitted to be the Lord of His people. It is true that we read in the Word, “That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb 6:12), and “*Obey* them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account” (Heb 13:17), yet that must be taken in subordination to the *example of Christ*. The best of men are but men at the best. They have their errors and their faults and wherein they differ from Christ, it is our duty to differ from them. It is very important that we should be quite clear upon this point, for much mischief has resulted from allowing some to deprive others of a vital part of their rightful liberty.

It is not that Scripture teaches an ecclesiastical democracy—that is as far from the truth as the Romish hierarchy at the opposite extreme. God has placed rulers in the church and its members are commanded to obey the same, but their rule is administrative and not legislative—to enforce the laws of Christ and not invent rules of their own. Paul affirmed, “Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand” (2Co 1:24), and Peter declared of the elders or bishops, “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock” (1Pe 5:3). Filled with so great a measure of the Spirit of wisdom and holiness, as the apostle Paul was, yet he goes no higher than this, “Be ye followers of me, even as I *also am of Christ*” (1Co 11:1).

Fourth, the imitation of Christ plainly intimates that *true Christianity is very strict and exacting* and in nowise countenances licentiousness or the indulgence of fleshly lusts. This needs emphasising in such a day as ours, when so much looseness and laxity prevail on every hand. People suppose they may be followers of Christ and yet ignore the path which He traversed—that they may decline the unpleasant task of denying self and yet make sure of heaven. What a delusion! The vital necessity of the careful imitation of Christ utterly disallows all loose walking and rejects the claim of any to being real Christians if they heed not His holy example. Neither worldliness nor self-indulgence can find any protection beneath the wings of the Gospel. The unvarying rule which is binding upon all who claim to be His is, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2Ti 2:19)—let him either follow the example of Christ, or cease claiming to belong to Him. Let him tread the highway of holiness or all his fair words are worthless.

Fifth, the imitation of Christ necessarily implies *the blemishes of the best of men*. If the life of Christ is our pattern, then the holiest among His followers are obliged to own that they come far short of this standard of duty and that, not in a few details, but *in every respect*. The character and conduct of the Lord Jesus were

without spot or blemish, and therefore are so high above *our* poor attainments, that we are filled with shame when we measure ourselves thereby. Self-satisfied religionists may take delight in comparing themselves with others, as the Pharisee did with the publican. And deluded souls who suppose that all Christian holiness consists of is measuring up to some humanly-invented standard of perfection (or entering into some peculiar experience), may pride themselves that they have “received the second blessing” or “have the fullness or baptism of the Spirit”—yet all who honestly measure themselves by the perfections of *Christ* will find abundant cause to be humbled.

This, too, is a point of tremendous practical importance. If I place my handkerchief against a dark background it will appear spotlessly clean, but if I lay it upon some newly-fallen snow, the imperfection of its whiteness is quickly apparent. So if I compare my own experiences and life with that of certain “holiness” preachers or “victorious-life” advocates, I may rightly conclude that I compare favourably with them, but if I sincerely and diligently apply to myself the line and plummet of *Christ’s* example, then I must at once acknowledge that, like Peter of old, I am but following Him “afar off.” Surely none was more proficient in holiness and punctilious in obedience than the apostle Paul, yet, when he compared himself with Christ, he declared, “*Not* as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I *may* apprehend” (Phi 3:12).

Sixth, the imitation of Christ as our rule and pattern clearly implies *His transcendent holiness*—that His holiness is high above that of all creatures. Therefore it is the greatest of the Christian’s ambitions to be made conformed unto His image (Phi 3:10). Now Christ has a double perfection—a perfection of *being* and a perfection of *working*. His life here upon earth supplies a perfect rule for us, because there was no blot or error therein, for He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” and such an High Priest became us (Heb 7:26). Thus the conformity of professing Christians unto Christ’s example is both the test and measure of all their graces—the nearer anyone approaches to this pattern, the closer he comes unto perfection.

Finally, the Christian’s imitation of Christ, under the penalty of forfeiting his claim to any saving interest in Christ, necessarily denotes that sanctification and obedience are *the evidences of our justification* and acceptance with God. Scriptural assurance is unattainable without sincere and strict obedience. “The work of righteousness [not of loose living] shall be peace” (Isa 32:17). “We have it not *for* our holiness, but we always have it *in the way* of holiness. Let men talk what they will of the immediate sealings and comforts of the Spirit *without* any regard to holiness, or respect to obedience. Sure I am, whatever delusion they meet with in *that* way, true peace and consolation is only to be found and expected here” (John Flavel, 1630-1691, to whom we are indebted for quite a little in the above seven points).

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

13. Its Progress

As there are some who deny that there is any such thing as “progressive sanctification,” so there are others who go to an opposite extreme and contend for the attainment of “entire sanctification” in this life, teaching “sinless perfection” in the flesh. Yea, there have been and still are numbers of professing Christians who claim they have lived for so many years without the commission of any known sin. These articles would lack completeness were we to ignore this phase of the matter, and as the present stage seems to be the best one for considering this somewhat vexed question, we have decided to canvass it, ere proceeding further with our present aspect. Is it possible for a Christian to reach the point where he can live in this world without sinning?

Those who answer the above question affirmatively differ considerably among themselves as to what sin is, as to the standard and rule of holiness (i.e., what law we are now obliged to fulfill), and as to the means whereby this perfection may be attained. We will not take the space to describe all the various brands of this error, but rather concentrate upon that which is most likely to affect some of our readers. As can readily be supposed, all “perfectionists” have low and defective views of both sin and holiness. This at once appears in their designating transgressions of God’s law “mistakes of ignorance,” “infirmities,” while Romanists distinguish between “mortal and venial sins.” John Wesley taught that entire sanctification in this life consists in “a state in which perfect faith in Christ and perfect love for God fills the whole soul and governs the entire life,” so that “all inward disposition to sin as well as all outward commission of it, is excluded.”

That no man, whatever his advantages and attainments may be, does arrive at sinless perfection in this life is clearly asserted in Scripture. “Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?” (Pro 20:9). “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecc 7:20). “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal 5:17). “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after....Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended” (Phi 3:12-13). “For in many things we offend all” (Jam 3:2). “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1Jo 1:8). These divine testimonies are decisive and prove that we are utterly deceived if we suppose we are living without sin.

When, then, we read, “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not....Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1Jo 3:6, 9), it is certain the apostle did *not* affirm that every true Christian, or any one of them, is free from sin in this life, for he would not expressly contradict what he had said in this same epistle (1Jo 1:8). No, his

evident meaning is that none who is truly born of God and united by faith to Christ sins as do the unregenerate, or as he himself did before he passed from death unto life. He no longer lives in sin. He makes it not his trade and practice, rather does he now live a life devoted to Christ, though attended with much imperfection and defiled by much sin.

In like manner, those passages which speak of saints as “perfect” must be interpreted in harmony with the general tenor of Scripture. Such a verse as, “Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a *perfect* heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight” (Isa 38:3) signifies *sincerity* as opposed to hypocrisy. Accordingly such “perfection” as is mentioned in Scripture is explained as denoting *uprightness*, “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1)—elsewhere Job disclaims any pretensions to sinless perfection, “If I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse” (Job 9:20). In a number of places in the New Testament, “perfection” signifies maturity, in contrast from those who are babes and the inexperienced. He who carefully and impartially studies his Bible will discover that saints are not said to be “perfect” in any higher sense than these. Paul said emphatically, “*Not* as though I had already attained, either were already perfect,” yet immediately after he spoke of himself and others as being “perfect” (Phi 3:12, 15). He must use that term, then, in two different senses, otherwise he would contradict himself.

“First, the Scriptures never assert that a Christian may in this life attain to a state in which he may live without sin. Second, the meaning of special passages must be interpreted in consistency with the entire testimony of Scripture. Third, the language of Scripture never implies that man may here live without sin. The commands of God are adjusted to man’s responsibility, and the aspirations and prayers of the saints to their duties and ultimate privileges, and not to their personal ability. Perfection is the true aim of the Christian’s effort in every period of growth and in every act. The terms ‘perfect’ and ‘blameless’ are often *relative*, or used to signify simple genuineness. This is evident from the recorded fact.—Fourth, that all the perfect men of the Scriptures sometimes sinned—witness the histories of Noah, Job, David, Paul” (Archibald A. Hodge, 1823-1886).

“Independent of what passeth in the day in those chambers of imagery within me, were I to be judged for what takes place in the watches of the night in my sleeping hours, even in those things which some may deem involuntary and perhaps venial, yet even here I find it good to *confess guilt* before God. I know not what the advocates of sinless perfection may think of this statement. It is possible they may assert that no responsibility is attached to any supposed or real criminality in sleep. And indeed, I am not anxious to go into the inquiry, whether it be so or not. It is simply of the facts themselves for which I contend. Sure I am, that in a multitude of instances, while my body takes rest in sleep, there is another part of me, a thinking faculty, which doth not sleep, and which is not infrequently

most busily engaged in thoughts and words and actions. And indeed, at times so engaged *in evil*, as I should blush to communicate to the nearest and dearest earthly friend I have. It becomes an important question with such as those who insist upon sinless perfection to answer, *from whence* do such things arise? I stay not to determine the point as to my responsibility from them. Let that part of the subject be set aside. But it should seem to be a self-evident truth, that if evil were not within, such circumstances of evil could not be produced. They are the words of my Lord which saith, '*Out of the heart proceed* evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies' (Mat 15:19).

"Precious Lord Jesus! How can I with such views of indwelling corruption, take confidence from any inherent holiness? Should I not tremble at the very thought of Thine inspection, if my acceptance before Thee is dependent upon the least atom of worth in me? If Thy Word be 'quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow,' if this be a 'discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,' how 'naked and open must be everything' to Thy knowledge 'with whom we have to do' (see Heb 4:12-13). And should my Lord, as an almighty spiritual anatomist, cut down to the backbone of my frame, and throw open at one view the whole inward structure, shouldest Thou, great God! make bare the privy chamber of my heart, the depth of which, and the workings of which, I myself cannot explore, but where all my 'secret sins are in the light of Thy countenance'—Lord! how should I stand before Thee in the discoveries Thou wouldest make, 'whose eyes are as a flame of fire'? And can I, can any man, in the consciousness of such things, be led to advocate the cause of sinless perfection? The question rings through all the chambers of the conscience, and the walls of the heart reverberate the solemn sound, and echoes to the inquiry 'How shall man be just before God? How can he be clean that is born of a woman?' (see Job 25:4).

"When I look back to the days of old, when I consider the years of many generations, when I read the groans and self-reproaches of the greatest servants of the Most High, not in the days of their un-regeneracy, but many of them years after a saving work of grace had been wrought in their heart, I ask myself the question, did these men indeed *feel* what they have said, and under such impressions, could any one have made them believe the doctrine of sinless perfection? Nay, hath God the Holy Spirit, in the history of those faithful followers of the Lord given a single instance in all the Bible of such an one? Gracious Lord Jesus! I desire to lay low in the dust before Thy divine majesty, under a conscious sense that 'in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.' Yea, Blessed Lord, let me go softly all my days under a deep sense of it, learning more and more my own nothingness, that I may therefrom, under God, know how to value more and more Christ's fullness, suitableness, and all-sufficiency. And if the daily workings of my heart do but endear my Lord the more to me, I am content to be indeed nothing, yea, worse than nothing, so that Christ may be glorified" (Robert Hawker, 1820—a few words altered by us).

Let it be clearly understood that we are *not* advocates of sinless perfection. While it be true, blessedly true, that the law has been satisfied by the Lord Jesus for the justification of all His people, yet its righteous requirements upon us have not been abated one iota, for every Christian is under binding obligations to love the Lord with all his heart and his neighbour as himself. He is called upon to be holy in all manner of conversation, to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset him and to run the race set before him. He is commanded to mortify his members which are upon the earth, to make no provision for the flesh, to abstain from all appearance of evil, to seek the glory of God in everything which he does. Sin is never to be courted or allowed, but resisted and forsaken. The Christian is obligated to follow the example Christ has left him and walk in His steps. He is to constantly aim at sinless perfection, and forgetting all past failure, strive for a complete conformity to Christ.

Everything in us and from us which is contrary to God's holiness is criminal. Every falling short of the perfect standard He has set before us is sinful and is to be confessed by us. But it does not follow from this that any Christian has, does, or will in this life fully conform to the divine rule of duty. For that, the believer is wholly dependent upon God's sovereign grace. He is no more holy than he is made so by omnipotent operations of the Holy Spirit, and though God requires him to be perfectly holy, yet He is under no obligation, by promise or any other way, to make the Christian perfectly holy in this world. His requiring of holiness does not imply any such obligation on His part, nor has He given any promise to that effect in the new covenant. But He has promised to *preserve* His people in holiness so that they shall not apostatise, and He has promised to make them perfectly holy at their *glorification*, so that they shall never sin again for all eternity.

As to the particular degree of holiness and the particular exercises of it in each Christian, God orders it as He pleases, to answer His own all-sufficient purpose. To one there is given five talents, to another only two. The Redeemer is able to make every believer perfectly holy at his first conversion, so that he should never be guilty of another sin. And had that been the wisest and best, it had been so ordered. Remember that God's thoughts and ways are high above ours (Isa 55:8) and the wisdom of this world is foolishness with Him. We may be certain, however, that it is most wise and best that none of the redeemed *should* be perfectly holy in this life, even though we were quite unable to now see any of the reasons *why* the redeemed are still in such an imperfect state, and in so great a degree sinful, or the wise (if to us, mysterious) ends which are answered thereby. A few of these shall now be mentioned.

First, if believers were now perfectly holy, they would not be so fit to live in this disordered, sinful world. There would not be that analogy of one thing to another which is observable in all the works of God, and which is proper and wise—i.e., every creature being fitted to its particular environment—fish to water,

birds to air, etc. This is not a world suited to be the dwelling-place of immaculate beings. But it *does* furnish a suitable scene and state of discipline to form and train the redeemed for a state of perfect holiness and happiness in another world.

Second, if Christians were perfectly holy in this life, it would not be a state of trial, as it now is. Their temptations would be neither so many nor strong. Satan could not have so much power and advantage to harass them, seeking to seduce them, and their danger would not be so great and apparent. Consequently, they would not have the opportunity for the exercise of such graces as humiliation and repentance for their repeated sins, loathing themselves for the same, mortifying their lusts, longing for deliverance, and exercising faith and patience through such dark and disagreeable circumstances as now they have, and by which Christ is honoured and themselves prepared for rewards in His kingdom.

Third, such a state of imperfection is both suited and necessary to teach them more effectually, and make them feel by abundant experience the total depravity of fallen human nature, the evil character and odiousness of sin, the inconceivable and inexpressible deceitfulness and obstinacy of their own hearts, and their absolute dependence upon the sovereign grace of God to prevent their destruction and save them. Thereby are they enabled to perceive more clearly and appreciate more deeply *the atonement* which Christ has made for them and the exceeding greatness of His power which preserves such wretches. Thereby they learn such lessons to better advantage in this state of imperfection and sin than they could in a state of perfect holiness.

Fourth, the power of God is much more conspicuous and sensible in maintaining a small degree of holiness in the heart of a Christian in the midst of the opposition with which it and he is surrounded and assailed, than in making him perfectly holy at once. In this way, the weak Christian, in the midst of strong temptations and powerful enemies, constantly exercising all their cunning to devour him, is upheld by the omnipotent hand of the Redeemer, and the little spark of holiness implanted in his heart is kept alive and burning, notwithstanding there is so much within and without tending to extinguish it. This is as great and wondrous a miracle as the preservation of a spark of fire year after year in the midst of the sea. The Christian is by his very situation and experience made in some measure conscious of this, and exclaims, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2Co 12:9).

Fifth, the wondrous condescension, goodness, tender love, infinite longsufferance of the Saviour are also exercised and manifested by His constant care of believers, though they be so imperfect and sinful, and offend in many things, and are often guilty of that which in itself is sufficient to provoke Him to give them up. There is much more opportunity for Him to act out and display His grace and forbearance, than if they were perfectly holy from the time of their conversion. This was illustrated by His attitude toward the first of His New Testament disciples. What selfishness, ingratitude, stupidity, and unbelief they

manifested, yet how tenderly and patiently did He deal with them. Thus He treats *all* His disciples while in this life. They are, in measure, conscious of this, and love Him all the more for it—though they grieve bitterly over their sin and failures.

Thus the wisdom and goodness of God appear in so ordering it that no man, even the most eminent saint, shall be perfectly holy in this life, but that all the redeemed shall in this world be very imperfect and sinful, for the reasons mentioned above and the ends which are answered thereby. More might be added, yet the half cannot be discovered by us now. A clear and full view of the infinite wisdom and goodness of God in this, is reserved for the future state, when the saved shall review all the dispensations of heaven and ways of Him who is “wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working” (Isa 28:29). Should the carping objector exclaim, “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” (Rom 6:1). The answer is, “God forbid” (Rom 6:2). Nor will those considerations exert any evil influence upon those whose hearts are right toward God, rather will they be the more thankful for the few rays of light which they cast upon a dark problem.

But to turn to the more immediate aspect of our theme. Though the believer be not perfectly sanctified in this life, he *does* make progress in holiness. This is clear from our Lord’s words, “Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth *more* fruit” (Joh 15:2). Every living branch in the vine grows in grace and fruitfulness, or to express it in another way, he advances both in the work of mortification and of vivification. Most frequently such growth is likened unto that of trees (Psa 92:12; Hos 14:6, etc.), and it must be borne in mind that they grow both downwards and upwards—by the deepening of their roots and the spreading of their branches—the one unseen, the other apparent to the eye. But it is this very fact which most deeply exercises an honest heart, for so far from progress in holiness, he can perceive only retrogression—and instead of increasing fruitfulness, the decay of many of his graces.

The Christian’s growth in grace is a mystery to be apprehended by *faith* rather than by sight. Our spiritual life is maintained by faith, much more than the discerning of the increase of it. Yea, the spiritual life (strange and paradoxical as it sounds to carnal reason) is advanced *by contraries*—by falls and dissertations, and therefore is discerned by faith rather than by sense, for “faith is the evidence of things not seen.” Moreover, the Christian’s desires for grace grow larger, and his sense of want more acute (and this is a growth in itself), which hinders a perception of his progress, “There is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches” (Pro 13:7). Again—there are great differences among Christians in the matter of growth. Some are planted in a congenial soil (under an edifying ministry), but with others it is quite different. Some are more shielded from temptations. Some grow without intermission (Col 1:6), others leave their first love. Some die early and therefore God fits them for heaven the sooner. Some are

most fruitful in their early days (like Isaac), others (like Solomon) bring forth most fruit in old age.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

The History of Joseph, Genesis 37, etc.

The history of Joseph is a series of miracles of Providence. In it the hand of God, in the ruling of the world, is admirably revealed. God does His will through the voluntary actions of men, and effects His purpose as well by His enemies as by His friends, and through the disobedience and ignorance of His people, as well as through their obedience and knowledge. To account for this is beyond the reach of human intellect. Proud man tries to fathom the abyss, and when he fails, he relieves himself by denying its existence. He will not receive *both* parts of the truth, but according to his humor, will modify one of them so as to suit the other, that he may glory that he can discover the deep things of the unsearchable God. What he cannot comprehend, with him cannot be true. Will vain man never cease to strive with the Almighty? Will he never learn that the ways of the Lord are inscrutable? “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Rom 11:33).

Joseph was selected by God as one of the persons who were to be *types of Christ*, and the peculiarity of his typical resemblance required every fact in his history. Jesus was envied and hated by His brethren the Jews—Joseph, as His type in this respect, must be hated by his father’s sons. To effect this, Joseph must be the darling of his father. Was it wise, was it just, in Jacob to show so marked a preference to his son Joseph? The best child should certainly be the most esteemed, but the preference of Joseph was because he was the son of the old age of his father. Some have struggled to relieve the patriarch from this reprehension, but in vain. And there is no need to strain the Word of God, to excuse or justify Jacob in the preference. It was still more foolish to distinguish the favourite by the singularity of his dress. This could have no other tendency than to provoke the jealousy of his brethren. Yet this imprudent expression of the particularity of his father might be divinely directed as a shadow of what happened to Him who was typified by Joseph, when His robe was stripped off, and when He Himself was truly rent in pieces by the wild beasts of the forest on Mount Calvary. What Jacob believed about his darling son, was true with respect to the well-beloved Son of God, “without doubt he was torn to pieces” (Gen 37:33).

Joseph’s dreams finished what Jacob’s imprudence had first excited. But why did he *tell* his dreams? Had he not, though younger, as much wisdom to interpret his own dreams as had his brethren? If he did understand them, why did not his prudence conceal them? If their meaning was concealed from him, *why* was it

concealed? Still more strange! When he told his first dream, did he not see that his brethren understood its import? Why, then, did he childishly tell the second? Here this son of prudence, wise in youth, providentially acts in the most unguarded manner, evidently that a way might be opened for his future history.

When the moment approached which God had appointed to send Joseph to Egypt, His Providence opened the way, and put the means in motion. The sons of Jacob were feeding their flock at a distance, and it occurs to Jacob to send Joseph to visit them. Why had the sons of Jacob removed to such a distance from Hebron? why at this particular time? Because this opened a way to fulfill the Lord's purpose. Now all things concurred to bring about the predestined event. All the lines meet in this center. As soon as his brethren discovered him at the greatest distance, it instantly occurred to them to rid themselves of the object of their envy, "And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him" (Gen 37:18). Yes, to *slay* him, and He who was typified by Joseph was actually slain, but it was not God's design to give effect to this conspiracy of murder, and therefore, His Providence disappointed this part of the scheme. The heart of Rueben relented so far as to wish to prevent the death of the young man. How often are the intended deeds of blood prevented by a similar Providence! Some of the conspirators incline to mercy and God uses their sympathy to prevent the execution. Jesus was to be buried in the heart of the earth—Joseph, His type, was cast into a pit—and the voice of prophecy speaks of the sufferings of Jesus as a sinking into a miry pit. But Jesus was to rise from the dead soon after His burial and Joseph was drawn alive out of the pit in which he was placed by the cruelty of his brethren.

Jesus was to be sold—Joseph must be sold to represent Him in this part of His sufferings. Jesus was to be sold by Judas, one of His brethren, one of His disciples—Joseph must then be sold by Judah, one of his brethren. Jesus was to be carried into Egypt, the typical house of bondage, because He took on Him the sins of the Israel of God—Joseph, therefore, must be carried as a slave into Egypt. But how is he to go to Egypt? Divine Providence has a conveyance in readiness and a messenger waiting to receive the exile. Just as his brethren had let down Joseph into the pit, and had sat down to eat and drink, they "lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt" (Gen 37:25). What brought them at this critical moment? and why were they Ishmeelites? As Ishmael himself mocked Isaac—and this by the apostle Paul is interpreted as typifying the children of the flesh of Abraham persecuting his children of promise—so, here, the Ishmeelites for a like reason are the persons who sold Joseph to the Egyptians. The Jews, the carnal seed of Abraham, delivered Jesus to the Gentiles to be crucified. "And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither" (Gen 39:1).

In the person who bought Joseph, we see the direction of Providence. Joseph might have come into Egypt, and remained in it through life, without an opportunity of rising, to his destined dignity. How many thousands might have been his purchasers! How did it happen that an officer of the king of Egypt, even the officer of the guard, was the purchaser of Joseph? Yet Joseph came immediately into the house of Potiphar.

In the house of Potiphar, the Providence of the Lord protected Joseph and obtained for him the unbounded confidence of his master. But this prosperity must be interrupted. Joseph must go to prison, and from prison to court. To bring this to pass, divine Providence employed the wickedness of his mistress. In prison he found favour and that prison, providentially, was the one in which the king's prisoners were bound. The circumstance was the occasion of his deliverance and exaltation. After Joseph was imprisoned, it happened that two of Pharaoh's servants that served about his person, were cast into the same prison. What a chance! The whole matter was of the Lord. This made Joseph known, at the proper time, to the king of Egypt. Jesus died between two malefactors, one of whom He saved, the other He suffered to perish in his sins. Joseph was imprisoned with two criminals, one of whom, by his interpretation of dreams, he saved, the other being hanged. Mark the providential circumstance in the forgetfulness of the chief butler. Joseph requested him to remember him before his master. But for two full years the chief butler forgot Joseph. Why was this? Had he made immediate application, and delivered him, Joseph would not now be at hand to interpret Pharaoh's dream, and accomplish all that the Lord had appointed for him. Joseph, without doubt, would have returned to his country. The chief butler, by the overruling Providence of God, forgot Joseph, but now the case was providentially brought to his mind, at the time when it served the purpose of God.

Jesus, after the suffering of death, was exalted, as Ruler over all worlds—Joseph, as a figure of this, was exalted over all Egypt. Joseph provided bread for Israel in their extremity—Jesus was the Bread of Life to the true Israel of God. The children of Israel must be slaves in Egypt, to represent the natural slavery in which all the children of God are from the Fall of Adam, and this is the means that God appointed to bring them there. The famine obliged them to seek food in Egypt and this was the means of bringing them into the land of bondage. God, by His Providence, guides the affairs of this world, and in all things effects His eternal purpose. And all things work together for good to them who love God and are called according to His purpose—their very afflictions are sent in love and in mercy.

From the history of Joseph, we may see that the same thing may be from man, in one point of view, and from God, in another—and that what man may do sinfully to the injury of the people of God, God may effect through them for the good of His people. It is man's work, yet it is, in another view, God's work. How it is God's work the ingenuity of man cannot point out, the intellect of man cannot

discover. But that the same thing is of man and of God, the divine testimony forbids us to doubt. “But as for you,” says Joseph to his brethren, “ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Gen 50:20).—*Alexander Carson*, 1776-1844.

“LOVE TO ALL THE SAINTS”

“How should I regard Christians who ‘follow not with us?’” a young believer may ask. Well, how would that Great-Heart, the apostle Paul, have regarded them? Are they not children of God? Hearts may agree, although heads differ, and God sees grace when we see none. If you think that these people have less light than you, their need is a claim upon your help—and believe it or no, they can teach *you* something! Be on your guard against viewing them with suspicion or contempt. You are made of exactly the same flesh and blood as they are and the same grace is at work in them as in you. God loves persons rather than places.

You may not find every believer very approachable, but try to cultivate spiritual fellowship with *all* God’s people by dwelling upon the big things that all true Christians hold in common. In this way you will help to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). Be a living link of fellowship between believers. Sympathy is better than criticism. Disbelieve those who have no faith in their fellow Christians. Do not take the world’s side against God’s people.

Each group or school of thought has its own emphasis and sometimes its own phraseology. Don’t attach too much importance to pious phrase—the same truth can be expressed in different ways. We should learn to welcome *all* the truth, through whatever channel it may come to us. And the gifts of Christ are for *all* His people.—E. Adams.

N.B. The above emphasizes one aspect of the truth which some extremists need to take to heart. There is a happy medium between refusing to walk with “those in error” and declining to have fellowship with any who fail to pronounce all our shibboleths.



September

THE SPIRIT ENDOWING

From the *graces* which the Spirit works in God's children, we turn now to consider the *gifts* which He bestows upon God's servants. This brings us to a comprehensive subject, and instead of devoting two brief papers thereto, a series of lengthy articles might well be written thereon. We can but here single out one or two aspects of it—those which we consider most need our attention today. Broadly speaking, the fundamental principle underlying this branch of our theme may be expressed thus—when God calls any to the performance of special work in His service, He equips them by the gifts of His Spirit. For example we read, “The LORD hath called by name Bezaleel...and he hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; and to devise curious works, to work in gold” etc. (Exo 35:30-32).

Now just as men erred grievously concerning the *being* of God, grossly misrepresenting Him by images, and just as there have been the most horrible errors respecting the *person* of the Mediator, so there has been fearful confusion upon the *gifts* of the Spirit—in fact, it is at this point there pertains the most serious mistakes with regards to Him. Men have failed to distinguish between His extraordinary and His ordinary gifts, and have sought to generalize what was special and exceptional. Urging the rank and file of professing Christians to *seek* “power from on high,” the “baptism of the Spirit,” or His “filling for service,” the wildest extravagancies have been fostered and the door has been opened wide for Satan to enter and delude the souls and wreck the bodily health of thousands of people.

It was well said by John Owen (1616-1683) nearly three centuries ago that, “The great *deceit* and *abuse* that hath been in all ages of the church under the pretence of the name and work of the Holy Spirit, make the thorough consideration of what we are taught concerning them exceedingly necessary.” The most signal gift of the Spirit for the benefit of His people in Old Testament times was that of *prophecy*. The prophets were men who spoke in the name and by the authority of God, giving forth a divinely inspired message from Him. It is not surprising, then, that many pretended unto this gift who were never inspired by the

Holy Spirit, but rather were filled by a lying spirit, the devil making use of them to accomplish his own designs, see 1 Kings 22:6-7; Jeremiah 5:31, etc. Those facts are recorded for *our warning!*

This same gift of prophecy occupied a prominent place in the early days of the Christian dispensation, before the New Testament was written. The Gospel was at first declared from the immediate revelation of the Spirit, preached by His direct assistance, made effectual by His power, and accompanied in many instances by outward miraculous works, the whole of which is designated “the ministration of the spirit” (2Co 3:8). Those extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit were then so obvious and so acknowledged by all Christians, that those who wished to impose and deceive found no more successful method than by claiming to be themselves immediately inspired by the Spirit. Consequently we find such warnings given by God as, “Despise not prophesyings. *Prove* all things; hold fast that which is good” (1Th 5:20-21), “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you” (2Pe 2:1), “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but *try* the spirits whether they are of God” (1Jo 4:1).

In order to preserve the church in truth and peace during those primitive times, and safeguard them from being imposed upon by the false prophets whilst there was a real communication of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit (whereby the more occasion was afforded for charlatans to pretend unto the possession of them), God graciously endowed some of His people with the gift of “*the discerning of spirits*” (1Co 12:10). The saints were thereby provided with some who were enabled in extraordinary manner to judge and determine those who claimed to be specially endowed by the Spirit, but when the extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit ceased, this particular gift was also withdrawn, so the Christians are now left with *the Word alone* by which to measure and try all who claim to be the mouthpiece of God.

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was *confirmed* unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with *signs and wonders*, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost” (Heb 2:3-4). This passage makes known to us God’s *design* in the miraculous gifts of the Spirit at the beginning of this dispensation. They were for the purpose of confirming the *preached* Word—for none of the New Testament had then been written! They were for the establishing of the Gospel, not to beget and strengthen faith, but to cause unbelievers to listen to the truth—compare 1 Corinthians 14:22, 24-25.

In 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, we are supplied with a list of those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit which then obtained—we use the word “extraordinary” in contrast from His ordinary gifts, or those which obtain in all ages and generations. “For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another

prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues” (1Co 12:8-10). It will be noted that just as “the *fruit* of the Spirit” is divided into nine graces (Gal 5:22-23), so “the *ministration* of the Spirit” (see 1Co 12:5) is here described under nine distinct gifts. A very few words must now suffice upon them.

“The word of wisdom” (1Co 12:8) was a special gift bestowed upon the apostles (hence it heads this list of gifts) for the defense of the Gospel against powerful adversaries, *see* Luke 21:15! “The word of knowledge” was a special gift bestowed on all then called of God to preach the Gospel—it supernaturally qualified them to expound divine mysteries without protracted study and lengthy experience, *see* Acts 4:13! “To another faith” (1Co 12:9), a special gift which enabled its possessor to trust God in any emergency and to boldly face a martyr’s death, *see* Acts 6:5. The “gifts of healing” (1Co 12:9) and “the working of miracles” (1Co 12:10) are seen in their exercise by the apostles in the Acts. “To another prophecy” (1Co 12:10) or immediate inspiration and revelation from God. Upon “tongues” and their “interpretation” we shall have more to say in our next.

Now that all of these special impulses and extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were *not intended* to be perpetuated throughout this Christian dispensation, and that they have long since ceased, is clear from several conclusive considerations. Their non-continuance is hinted at in Mark 16:20, by the *omission* of Christ’s “and, lo, I am with you *alway*, even unto the end of the age” (Mat 28:20). So too by the fact that God did *not* give faith to His servants to count upon the same throughout the centuries—it is unthinkable that the intrepid Reformers and the godly Puritans failed to appropriate God’s promise if any had been given to that effect. “Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is *knowledge*, it will *vanish away*” (see 1Co 13:8). The apostle *cannot* there be contrasting heaven with earth, for those on high possess *more* “knowledge” than we have, so the reference *must be* to the cessation of the miraculous gifts of 1 Corinthians 12. The qualifying language “which *at the first* began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us...with signs and wonders” (Heb 2:3-4) points in the same direction, and clearly implies that those supernatural manifestations had even then *ceased*. Finally, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 proves conclusively that there is now no need for such gifts as prophecy and tongues—we are “thoroughly furnished” by the now complete Canon of Scripture.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

117. The Christian’s Sacrifices (13:15-16)

The verses which are now to engage our attention are closely related with those which immediately precede, as is intimated by the “therefore.” The links of

connection may be set forth thus. First, “We have an altar” (v. 10)—what *use* are we to make of it? The answer is, offer sacrifice thereon. Second, Jesus has sanctified His people “with his own blood” (v. 12)—what is to be their *response*? The answer is, draw nigh to God as joyous worshippers. Third, we must go forth unto Christ “without the camp” (v.13)—what then is to be our *attitude* towards those who despise and reject Him? The answer is, not one of malice, but benevolence, doing good unto all as we have opportunity and occasion. Such, in brief, is the relation between our present portion and its context.

Calvin suggested, we believe rightly, that the apostle here anticipated an objection which might have been made against what he had previously advanced. In saying that Jesus “suffered without the gate” (v. 12), plain intimation was given that God had done with, abandoned Judaism as such. In bidding Hebrew believers to go forth unto Christ “without the camp,” the Holy Spirit signified they must now turn their backs upon the temple and its services. But this presented a serious difficulty—all the sacrifices—those of thanksgiving as well as those of expiation—were inseparably connected with the temple system, therefore it followed that if the temple was to be deserted, the sacrifices also must have ceased. It was to meet this difficulty, and to make known the superior privileges of Christianity, that the apostle penned our text.

If the Christian were debarred from offering any sacrifice to God, then he would occur an inferior position and be deprived of a privilege which the Jews of old enjoyed, for sacrifices were instituted for the purpose of *celebrating God’s worship*. The apostle therefore shows that another kind of sacrifice remains for us to offer, which is no less pleasing to God than those which He appointed of old, even the praise of our lips. Here we are taught what is the legitimate way of worshipping God under the new covenant, which presents another striking contrast from that which obtained under the old. As our “altar” is not one of wood or stone, brass or gold, but Christ Himself, so our “sacrifices” are not the fruits of the ground or the firstlings of our herds, but the adoration of our hearts and the devotion of our lives. The contrast, then, is between the outward and ceremonial and the inward and spiritual.

The Jews offered to God a slain lamb each morning and evening, and on certain special days bullocks and rams, but the Christian is to present unto God a *continual* sacrifice of thanksgiving. This brings before us a most interesting and blessed subject, namely, those sacrifices of the Christian with which God is well-pleased. The first of these was mentioned by David, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: *a broken and a contrite heart*, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psa 51:17). “When the heart mourns for sins God is better pleased than when the bullock bleeds beneath the axe. ‘A broken heart’ is an expression implying deep sorrow, embittering the very life. It carries in it the idea of all but killing anguish in that region which is so vital as to be the very source of life. A heart crushed is, to God, a fragrant heart. Men condemn those who are contemptible in their own

eyes, but the Lord seeth not as man seeth. He despises what man esteems and values that which they despise. Never yet has God spurned a lowly, weeping penitent” (Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892).

John Owen pointed out that there were two things in connection with the Old Testament sacrifices—the *slaying* and shedding of the blood of the beast, and then the actual *offering* of it upon the altar. Both of these were required in order to the completing of a sacrifice. On the other hand, the mere killing of the animal was no sacrifice unless its blood was placed upon the altar. And on the other hand, no blood could be presented there to God until it had been actually shed. Corresponding to these, there is a twofold spiritual sacrifice in connection with the Christian profession. The first is what has just been made reference to in the paragraph above—the broken heart and contrite spirit of the believer. That signifies evangelical repentance and mortification, or the crucifixion of the flesh, which is the Christian’s first sacrifice, answering to the death of the beast before the altar.

The second sacrifice which the believer presents unto God is his offering of *Christ* each day. This is done by an act of *faith*—which is ever preceded by repentance, just as we must feel ourselves to be desperately sick before we send for the physician. As the awakened sinner is convicted of sin and mourns for it before God, pride and self-righteousness are subdued, and he is able to appreciate the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the (elect) world. Christ appears to him as exactly suited to his case and need. He perceives that He was wounded for his transgressions and bruised for his iniquities. He perceives that Christ took his place and endured the penal wrath of God on his behalf. Therefore does he now lay hold of Him by faith and present the atoning sacrifice of Christ to God as the alone ground of his acceptance. And as he begins, so he continues. A daily sense of defilement leads to a daily pleading of Christ’s blood before the throne of grace. There is first the *appropriating* of Christ and then the *presenting* of Him to God as the basis of acceptance.

Now it is this laying hold of Christ and the offering of Him to God in the arms of faith which correspond to the second thing in connection with the tabernacle (and temple) sacrifices of old. As the fire fell upon the oblation placed upon the altar, incense was mingled therewith, so that the whole yielded a “sweet savour unto God.” Just as the mere slaying of the animal was not sufficient—its blood must be laid upon the altar and fragrant incense be offered therewith, so the Christian’s sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart will not by itself secure the favour of God. Essential as repentance is it cannot purchase anything from God. The broken heart must lay hold of Christ, exercise faith in His blood (Rom 3:25), and *plead His merits before God*. Only then will our sacrifice of a contrite spirit be a “sweet smelling savour” unto Him.

The third sacrifice which the Christian presents unto God is *himself*. “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 an act of *consecration*. It is the recognition and acknowledgement that I am no longer my own, that I have been bought with a price, that I am the purchased property of another. Hence, of the primitive saints we read that they “first gave their own selves to the Lord” (2Co 8:5), surrendering themselves to His sceptre, taking upon themselves His yoke, henceforth to live to His glory—that as they had formerly served sin and pleased self, now they would serve God and seek only His honour. As Christ gave Himself for us, we now give ourselves back again to Him. Hereby alone can we know that we are saved, not only by believing in Christ for the forgiveness of sins, but by yielding ourselves up to His government, as living sacrifices for His use.

The fourth sacrifice of the Christian is that mentioned in our text, namely, “the fruit of our lips” (Heb 13:15), but before taking up the same, let us say a few words on *the order* of what has now been before us. There can be no acceptable sacrifice of praise until we have offered ourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, for as Psalm 115:17 declares, “The *dead* praise not the LORD.” No, those who are yet in their sins cannot praise God, for they have no love for Him and no delight in Him. The heart must first be made right before it is attuned to make melody unto Him. God accepts not the lip service of those whose hearts are estranged from Him. Of old He complained, “This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me” (Isa 29:13), and as Christ affirmed “*in vain* they do worship” Him (Mat 15:9). Such hypocrisy is hateful to Him.

Nor can any man yield himself acceptably to God until he has *believingly embraced Christ*. No matter how willing I am to live honestly in the future, satisfaction must be made for the debts contracted in the past, and nothing but the atoning work of Christ can satisfy the just demands which the law has against us. Again, how can I serve in the King’s presence unless I be suitably attired? And nothing short of the robe of righteousness which Christ purchased for His people can gratify God’s holy eye. Again, how could God Himself accept from me service which is utterly unworthy of His notice and that is constantly defiled by the corrupt nature still within me, unless it were presented in the meritorious name of the Mediator and cleansed by His precious blood? We must, then, accept *Christ’s* sacrifice before God will accept *ours*—God’s rejection of Cain’s offering is clear proof thereof.

Equally evident is it, yet not so clearly perceived today by a defectively-visioned Christendom, that no sinner can really accept Christ’s sacrifice until his heart be broken by a felt sense of his grievous offences against a gracious God, and until his spirit be truly contrite before Him. The heart must be emptied of sin before there is room for the Saviour. The heart must renounce this evil world before a holy Christ will occupy it. It is a moral impossibility for one who is still in love with his lusts and the willing servant of the devil to appropriate Christ and

present Him to God for His acceptance. Thus, the order of the Christian's sacrifices is unchanging. First, we bow in the dust before God in the spirit of genuine repentance. Then we appropriate Christ in His gracious provision and present Him to God for the obtaining of His favour. Then we yield ourselves to Him unreservedly as His purchased property, and then we render praise and thanksgiving for His amazing grace toward us.

"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Heb 13:15). This is *an exhortation to duty*, by way of inference from what was declared concerning the Redeemer and the sanctification of the people by His sufferings. Therein we are shown what use we are to make of our altar, namely, offer sacrifice. The worship which the Christian presents unto God is the sacrifice of praise. Nothing is more pleasing unto Him, and nothing is more honouring to Him, than the praise of a renewed heart. Has He not declared, "Whoso offereth praise *glorifieth* me" (Psa 50:23). How thankful for that statement should those believers be who feel themselves to be poor and feeble. Had God said, whoso shall create a world, or even shall preach wonderful sermons and be a successful winner of souls, or whoso shall give a huge sum of money to missions, they might well despair. But "whoso offereth praise" opens a wide door of entrance to every believer.

And have not the redeemed abundant cause *for* praising God! First, because He has granted them a vital and experimental knowledge *of Himself*. How the excellencies of God's being, character, and attributes thrill, as well as awe, the souls of the saints! Glance for a moment at Psalm 145, which is entitled a "Psalm of praise." David begins with, "I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised" (Psa 145:1-3). In the verses that follow, one perfection of God after another passes in review and stirs the soul to adoration. His "mighty acts" (v. 4), the "glorious honour of thy majesty" (v. 5), His "greatness" (v. 6), His "great goodness" and "righteousness" (v. 7), His "full of compassion" and "great mercy" (v. 8), His "power" (v. 11), the "glorious majesty of his kingdom" (v. 12), His everlasting "dominion" (v. 13), His providential blessings (vv. 14-17), His dealings in grace with His own (vv. 18-19), His preserving them (v. 20). No wonder the Psalmist closed with, "My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever" (v. 21).

If the Psalms be full of suitable petitions for us to present unto God in prayer, and if they contain language well-fitted for the lips of the sobbing penitent, yet they also abound in expressions of gladsome worship. "Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding" (Psa 47:6-7). What vehemency of soul is expressed there! Four times over in one verse the Psalmist called upon himself (and us) to render praise unto the Lord, and not merely to utter it, but to "*sing*" the

same out of an overflowing heart. In another place, the note of praise is carried yet to a higher pitch, “Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and *shout for joy*, all ye that are upright in heart” (Psa 32:11). Not in any formal and perfunctory manner is the great God to be praised, but heartily, joyously, merrily. “Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious” (Psa 66:2). Then let us offer Him nothing less than glorious praise.

The “therefore” of our text intimates an additional reason why we should praise God—because of *Christ* and His so great *salvation*. For our sakes, the Beloved of the Father took upon Him the form of a servant and was made under the law. For our sakes, the Lord of Glory entered into unfathomable depths of shame and humiliation, so that He cried, “I am a worm, and no man” (Psa 22:6). For our sakes, He bowed His back to the cruel smiter and offered His blessed face to those who plucked off the hair. For our sakes, He entered into conflict with the prince of darkness and the pains of death. For our sakes, He endured the awful curse of the law and for three hours was forsaken by God. No Christian reader can reverently contemplate such mysteries and marvels without being stirred to the depths of his soul. And then, as he seeks to contemplate what the shame and sufferings of Christ have secured for him, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (1Co 9:15), must be the fervent exclamation of his heart.

And observe well, dear reader, how God has allotted to Christ the position of chief honour in connection with our subject. “By *him* (the One mentioned in (Heb 13:15) therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God.” As the Lord Jesus Himself declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Joh 14:6). The saints can no more draw nigh unto God apart from Christ, than the sinner can. We are as dependent upon His mediation to render our *worship* acceptable to God, as we were at first for obtaining the *forgiveness* of our sins. As our great High Priest, Christ is the “Minister of the sanctuary” (Heb 8:2). He meets us, as it were, at the door of the heavenly temple, and we place our spiritual sacrifices in His hands, that He may, in the sweet fragrance of His merits and perfections, present them for God’s acceptance. “Another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should *offer it with* the prayers of all saints” (Rev 8:3).

At every point God has made us dependent upon Christ, the Mediator. Only *by Him* can we offer acceptable sacrifices unto God. First, because it is through Christ’s bloodshedding, and that alone, that our *persons* have been sanctified, or made acceptable to God—note how in Genesis 4:4, JEHOVAH had respect first to Abel himself and then to his offering! Second, because it is through Christ’s atonement, and that alone, that a new and living *way* has been opened for us into God’s presence, see Hebrews 10:19-21. Third, because He bears “the iniquity of the *holy things*” (fulfilling the type in Exo 28:38), that is, through His perfect oblation our imperfect offerings are received by God. His merits and intercession

cancel their defects. Fourth, because as the Head of the church, He ministers before God on behalf of its members, *presenting their worship* before Him. Thus, “by him” signifies, under His guidance, through His mediation, and by our pleading His merits for acceptance with God.

What has just been before us supplies further proof of what was pointed out in an earlier paragraph, namely, that it is impossible for the *unregenerate to worship God acceptably*. “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD” (Pro 15:8). And why? Not only because he is utterly sinful in himself, but because there is no Mediator to come between him and God. This is brought out strikingly in the Old Testament types. Not a single “song” is recorded in the book of Genesis. In Eden, our first parents were fitted to sing unto their Creator, and join the angels in ascribing glory and thanksgiving to the Lord. But after the fall, sinners could only praise on the ground of *redeeming grace*, and it is not until Exodus is reached that we have the grand type of *redemption*. That book opens with Israel in Egypt, groaning and crying in the house of bondage. Next, the Pascal lamb was slain, Egypt was left behind, the Red Sea was crossed, and on its farther shore they looked back and saw all their enemies drowned, “*Then sang Moses and the children of Israel*” (Exo 15:1). Praise, then, is on the ground of redemption.

“By him therefore let us *offer* the sacrifice of praise” (Heb 13:15). Every word of Holy Writ is inspired of God, and throughout, its language is chosen with divine discrimination. Therefore it behooves us to carefully *weigh* each of its terms, or we shall miss their finer shades of meaning. Here is a case in point—it is not, “let us *render* praise unto God,” but “let us *offer* the sacrifice of praise.” Christ has made His people “kings and priests unto God” (Rev 1:6), and here they are called upon to exercise their priestly functions. Thus we are instructed to make a right use of our “altar” (Heb 13:10). We are not only partakers of its privileges, but we are to discharge its duties, by bringing our sacrifices thereto. The same aspect of truth is seen again in 1 Peter 2:5, where we read that believers are “an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God *by Jesus Christ*.” Yes, offered “unto God” and not to angels or saints, and acceptable “by Jesus Christ,” and not the Virgin Mary!

This particular expression, “let us *offer a sacrifice* of praise to God,” not only emphasises the fact that in their worship believers act in priestly capacity, but it also signifies that we now have the *substance* of what was shadowed forth by the Levitical rites. It also denotes that the Christian ought to be as particular and diligent in the discharge of his evangelical duties as the Jew was in the performing of his ceremonial obligations. As *he* was required to bring any offering that was without physical defect, so *we* must bring to God the very best that our hearts can supply, “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and *all* that is within me, bless his holy name” (Psa 103:1). Content not thyself with offering to God a few formal

utterances of thanksgiving, still less hurry through thy worship as a task you are glad to get finished, but strive after reality, fervency, and joy in the same.

When the worshipping Israelite approached the tabernacle or temple, he did not come empty-handed, but brought with him a thank-offering. Then “let *us* offer the sacrifice of praise to God” (Heb 13:15). When the saints come together for public worship, it should be not only for the object of having their empty vessels filled and their hungry souls fed, but with the definite purpose of *offering to God* that which will please Him. The more closely we walk with God, and the more intimate be our communion with Him, the easier the performance of this pleasant duty. The more we delight ourselves in the Lord and regale our souls by the contemplation of His perfections, the more spontaneous, fervent, and constant, will be our worship of Him. The more we cultivate the habit of seeing God’s hand in everything, and are grateful to Him for temporal blessings, the more will the spirit of thanksgiving possess our hearts and find expression in songs of praise.

This sacrifice of praise is here designated “the fruit of our lips” (Heb 13:15), which is a quotation from Hosea 14:2, where backsliding Israel vows that in return for God’s receiving them graciously, they would render to Him “the calves of their lips”—the Hebrew word for “calves” being the same as for “praise.” The expression, “fruit of our lips” may at first strike us as strange, but a little reflection will reveal its propriety. Isaiah 6:5-6 serves to open its meaning. By nature our “lips” are unclean, “Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness” (Rom 3:13-14). But by God’s applying to us the virtues of Christ’s atonement, our lips are *cleansed*, and should henceforth be used in praising Him. “Fruit” is a living thing—the product of the Holy Spirit. When, through backsliding, the heart has cooled toward God and the music of joy has been silenced, cry unto Him, “O Lord, *open* thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise” (Psa 51:15).

This “sacrifice of praise” is to be offered unto God not merely on the Sabbath, but “*continually*.” Have we not more cause to praise God than to pray? Surely, for we have many things to thank Him for, which we never ask for. Who ever prayed for His election, to have godly parents, for their care of us in helpless infancy, for their affection, for their faithfulness in training us the way we should go! Does not God daily heap upon us favours beyond that we are able to ask or think? Therefore we should be more in praising God than in petitioning Him. “*With thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God” (Phi 4:6), as, is it not our failure in the former which explains why we are so often denied in the latter? “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col 4:2)—“with thanksgiving” is as much a command as is the “continue in prayer.”

“It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High” (Psa 92:1). Yes, it is not only glorifying to God, but it is beneficial to the soul. To cultivate the habit of praising God will preserve the

believer from many evils. The trials of life are more cheerfully borne if the spirit of thankfulness to God be kept lively in the heart. A man cannot be miserable while he is joyful, and nothing promotes joy so much as a heart constantly exercised in praising God. The apostles forgot their smarting backs in the Philippian dungeon as they “sang praises unto God” (Act 16:25). The happiest soul we have ever met was a Sister in a London attic (before the days of old-age pensions), who had neither eaten meat or fruit nor had a glass of milk for years past, but was continually praising the Lord.

Mary was offering to God a sacrifice of praise when she exclaimed, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luk 1:46-47). That was no mechanical act, but the spontaneous outburst of a heart delighting itself in the Lord. It is not enough that the believer should *feel* adoring emotions in his soul—they must be expressed by his mouth—that is one reason why the sacrifice of praise is defined in our text as “the fruit of our *lips*” (Heb 13:15). Verbal, articulated praise, is what becomes those who have received the gift of speech, that is why the saints of all ages have expressed their worship in holy songs and psalms. None of us sing as much as we should—how often the worldling shames us! Then let us say with David, “I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High” (Psa 9:1-2).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

69. His Stay at Mahanaim

We have seen how God made use of Hushai, David’s friend, to defeat the counsel which Ahithophel had proposed to Absalom. This meant a short breathing space was afforded the fugitive king. Hushai at once took steps to acquaint his master with his success (2Sa 17:15-16). The two priests who served as messengers were obliged to take refuge in a farmer’s house at Bahurim, hiding in a well, which his wife covered—how many strange and unexpected places have sheltered the servants of God from their enemies only the day to come will fully reveal. Incidentally, let us note how this episode teaches us that so far from acting rashly and presumptuously, we should always avail ourselves of any lawful means which a merciful Providence supplies for us. True faith never leads to fanaticism or fatalism, but moves us to act with prudence and with good judgment.

It was well that the two messengers had taken this precaution, for they were pursued and tracked to the place where they were hiding, but through the woman’s prevarication their enemies were sent on a false trail. “And it came to pass, after they [the pursuers] were departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David, and said unto David, Arise, and pass quickly over the water: for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against you. Then David arose, and all the people

that were with him, and they passed over Jordan: by the morning light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over *Jordan*” (2Sa 17:21-22). “This was a remarkable instance of God’s providential care over His servant and his friends, that not one was lost, or had deserted, out of the whole company. And he was in this a type of Christ, who loses none of His true followers” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). For the Antitype see John 18:8-9.

It was at this time, most probably, that David wrote the 42nd and 43rd Psalms. They were composed at a season when he was deprived of the benefit and blessing of the public means of grace. This loss he felt keenly (Psa 42:4), but hoping in God and earnestly supplicating Him, he looked forward to the time when he would be again permitted to enter His holy courts with joy and thanksgiving (Psa 43:3-4). These Psalms bring before us in a most blessed way the exercises of soul through which David passed at this season, and the persevering efforts he made to retain his hold upon God. They show us that though a fugitive, pressed almost beyond endurance by sore trials, nevertheless he maintained his intercourse with the Lord. They reveal the grand recourse which the believer has in every time of trouble—something to which the poor worldling is a complete stranger—namely, the privilege of unburdening his heart unto One who is of tender mercy, great compassion, and who has promised to sustain (Psa 55:22) when we cast our burden upon Him.

The first two verses of Psalm 42 express the deep longing of a spiritual heart for communion with God in the house of worship. It is only when deprived of such privileges that we come to value them as we should—just as a parched throat is the one which most relishes a glass of water. In verse 3, he tells the Lord how keenly he had felt the mocking jibes of his blasphemous foes. Then he recalls the vivid contrast from previous experience, when he, though king, had gone with the multitude to the tabernacle and joined in celebrating God’s praise. Challenging himself for his despondency, he seeks to raise his spirits. But soon dejection returns and he cries “O my God, my soul is cast down within me” (v. 6). Then it was he added, “therefore will I *remember thee* from the land of *Jordan*, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar,” yes, though cut off from the public means of grace, though plagued with sore trials, he will not forget his best Friend.

In the remaining verses, we find the psalmist freely unburdening himself to God. As Spurgeon said, “It is well to tell the Lord how we feel, and the more plain the confession the better. David talks like a sick child to his mother and we should seek to imitate him.” So closely is the 43rd Psalm connected with the one preceding, that in one or two of the older manuscripts they are coupled together as one. That it was written during the same period is evident from verses 1-2. In it we find David begging God to undertake for him, to “plead his cause against an ungodly nation,” to “deliver him from the deceitful and unjust man”—the reference being to Ahithophel or Absalom, or both. He is distressed at his own despondency and unbelief, prays for a fresh manifestation of the divine presence

and faithfulness (v. 3), asks for such a deliverance as would permit his return to God's house, and closes with an expression of assurance, that, in the end, all would turn out well for him (v. 4).

"And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father" (2Sa 17:23). Unspeakably solemn is this. What a contrast is here presented. In the preceding verse we see the temporal deliverance of David and all his men. Here we behold his chief enemy flinging himself into eternal destruction by his own mad act. Significantly enough "Ahithophel" signifies "the brother of a fool," and none exhibit such awful folly as those who are guilty of self-murder. Ahithophel did not commit this unpardonable crime on the spur of the moment, but with full deliberation, journeying to his own home to accomplish it. Nor was he bereft of his senses, for he first duly settled his affairs and arranged for the future of his family before destroying himself.

But *why* should Ahithophel have proceeded to such desperate measures? Ah, my reader, there is something here which needs to search *our* hearts. That upon which he had *chiefly doted* was now turned to ashes, and therefore he no longer had any further interest in life—his household "gods" were, so to speak, stolen from him, his "good thing" was gone, and therefore his temple lay in ruins. Hitherto his counsel was regarded "as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God" (2Sa 16:23), but the advice of Hushai was now preferred before his. The high esteem in which he had been held for his political acumen, his wisdom in the affairs of state, were everything to him, and when Absalom passed his advice (2Sa 17:14), it was more than the pride of his heart could endure. To be slighted by David's usurper meant that he was now a "back number"—to be thus treated before the people was too humiliating for one who had long been lionized by them.

Do we not behold the same Satanic egotism in Saul? When Samuel announced to him that the Lord had rejected him from being king, what was his response? Why, this, "Then he said, I have sinned: yet *honour me now*, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and *before Israel*" (1Sa 15:30). Ah, it was the praise of man, and not the approbation of God, which meant everything to him. Thus it was with Ahithophel. An intolerable slur had been cast upon his judgment and his proud heart could not endure the idea of having to play second fiddle to Hushai. What point this gives to that exhortation, "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jer 9:23-24). Observe the justice of God in suffering Ahithophel to come to such an end. He plotted the violent death of David, and

now was fulfilled that word “his mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate” (Psa 7:16).

O that we may really take this to ourselves, so that we honestly examine our hearts, and ascertain upon what it is, really, chiefly set. What did anything avail Haman, while Mordecai sat at the gate, is another illustration of the same evil principle. What a solemn lesson all of this reads to us! Have we, my reader, some earthly idol—be it riches, honour, fame, or even a loved one—around which the tendrils of the soul are so entwined that if *it* be touched, our very *life* is touched? If it be taken away, is life for us no longer worth living? Where is our ruling passion fixed? On what is it centered? Is it some object of time and sense, or One who is eternal and immutable? What “treasure” are we laying up day by day? Is it one that the hand of man or the hand of death may soon take from us, or that which is “eternal in the heavens”? Seek to answer these questions in the presence of the Lord Himself.

“Then David came to Mahanaim” (2Sa 17:24). This was one of the cities of the Levites in the tribe of Gad (Jos 13:26-28). What sacred memories were associated with this place we may discover by a reference to Genesis 32:1-2. It was at this very place that Jacob had stopped on his return from sojourning so long with Laban. He was on his way toward the unwelcome meeting with Esau. But it was there that “the angels of God met him” (Gen 32:1)! With faith’s discernment, Jacob perceived that this was “a token for good” from the Lord, “and when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim” (Gen 32:2) or “two hosts”—if God were for him, who could be against him! It was *this* place, then, that David now made his headquarters, where he increased his forces, and gathered together an army with which to oppose the rebels.

By this time, the first force of the disaster had spent itself, and when David had succeeded in getting his forces safely across the Jordan, on the free uplands of Bashan, his spirits rose considerably. The 42nd and 43rd Psalms reflect the struggle which had taken place within him between despair and hope, but as we have seen, the latter eventually triumphed. Now that Mahanaim was reached, he determined to make a definite stand. No doubt the sacred memories associated with this place served to further hearten him, and when the news reached him of Ahithophel’s defection from Absalom and his subsequent suicide, he had good ground to conclude that the Lord was not on the side of his enemies. As the time went on, it became increasingly evident that the leaders of the rebellion were lacking in energy, and that every day of respite from actual fighting diminished their chances of success, as the astute Ahithophel had perceived.

“And Absalom passed over Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him....so Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead” (2Sa 17:24, 26). At last the perfidious Absalom proceeds to carry out his vile designs. Not content with having hounded his fond parent from Jerusalem, and driven him to the utmost corner of

his kingdom, nothing will satisfy him but removing David from the world itself. See to what fearful lengths Satan will lead one who is fully yielded to his sway. He was guilty of high treason. With eager mind and brutal heart he determined to deprive his father of his life. His awful conspiracy had now reached its consummation. He set his army in battle array against David. He was willing to play the part of fratricide, to stain his hands with the blood of a loving father who had been too long-suffering with him.

“And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab: which Amasa was a man’s son, whose name was Ithra an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruiah Joab’s mother” (2Sa 17:25). Joab the commander-in-chief of Israel’s army (1Ch 20:1), had remained loyal to his master, so that Absalom had perforce to appoint a new general to take charge of his forces. The wicked are not allowed to have everything their own way—divine Providence generally puts a cog in their wheel. There is some difficulty in deciphering the details of this verse, as the marginal readings intimate. The one selected by Absalom as captain of his host was, originally, “Jether an *Ishmaelite*” (1Ch 2:17), who had seduced the half-sister of David—suitable character for the present position! Later, he was known as “Ithra an Israelite” (2Sa 17:25), Matthew Henry suggesting that he had become such by “some act of state—naturalized.” Such a selection on the part of Absalom was fully in accord with his own rotten character.

“And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah, of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim, brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse, and honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat: for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness” (2Sa 17:27-29). Here the scene changes again, and from the malice of David’s foes our attention is directed to the kindness of his friends. What vivid contrasts these chapters abound in! And is it not thus in all earthly life? How can it be otherwise in a world which is ruled by Satan, but overruled by God?

There is something striking and touching in connection with each of the three men mentioned here, who brought such a lavish present to David. Shobi was the brother of him, concerning whom David had said, “I will *shew kindness* unto Hanun the son of Nahash” (2Sa 10:2) so, with the measure he had meted out to this Gentile, it is measured to him again. Ah, has not God promised that he who watereth others, shall himself be watered! “Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar” (2Sa 17:27) was the man who had given shelter to Mephibosheth. The king had relieved him of this trust by giving Mephibosheth a place at his own table, and now Machir shows his gratitude by providing for David’s table. Concerning “Barzillai,” we read that he was “a very aged man, even four score years old” (2Sa

19:32), yet he was not too aged to now minister unto David's needs. He will come before us again (D.V.) in the sequel.

Let this pleasing incident be contemplated in the light of David's prayers, recorded in Psalms 42 and 43. This was a most evident answer from God, who did not forget His servant in this hour of his emergency. Once again a kind Providence moved different ones to befriend the fugitive king and his forces. Weary from their long march, ill-provisioned for what lay before them, bountiful supplies are now freely given to them. As Matthew Henry pointed out, "He did not put them under contribution, did not compel them to supply him, much less plunder them. But in token of their dutiful affection to him, their firm adherence to his government, and their sincere concern for him in his present straits, of their own good will, they brought in plenty of all that which he had occasion for. Let us learn hence to be generous and open-handed, according as our ability is, to all in distress, especially great men, to whom it is most grievous, and good men, who deserve better treatment."

How often it falls out that God moves strangers to comfort His people when they are denied it from those much nearer to them. There is a law of compensation which is conspicuously exemplified in the divine government of human affairs. A balance is strikingly preserved between losses and gains, bitter disappointments and pleasant surprises. If a heartless Pharaoh determines to slay the children of the Hebrews, his own daughter is constrained to care for Moses. If Elijah has to flee from Palestine to escape the fury of Ahab and Jezebel, a widow at Zarephath is willing to share her last meal with him. If the parents of Jesus Christ were poverty stricken, wise men from the East come with a gift of "gold," which made possible their flight and sojourn in Egypt. If a man's foes be those of his own household, friends are raised up for him in the most unexpected quarters. Let us not, then, dwell unduly upon the former, and let us not fail to be grateful and return thanks for the latter.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

6. The Davidic

How mysterious and yet how perfect are the ways and works of "the Lord God omnipotent" (Rev 19:6)! He makes all things subservient to His own glory, so directing the affairs of earth as to promise His own gracious designs. Though He be in no sense chargeable with the sins of the creature, yet He maketh "the wrath of man" to praise Him (Psa 76:10). A striking, solemn, and yet blessed illustration of this appears in that incident of Israel's history which we are now considering, namely, their discontent at having JEHOVAH Himself for their King, and their demand for a human monarch, that they might be like the heathen nations surrounding them (1Sa 8:5). This was most evil and wicked on their part, and as

such, highly displeasing unto the Lord, who bade Samuel “protest solemnly unto them” (1Sa 8:9). This was followed by God’s chastening them by Saul, whose reign was a most disastrous one for Israel.

So much for the *human* side, but what of the *divine*? The change now produced in the political constitution of Israel, though sinful in its origin and disastrous in its immediate effects, was in divine mercy overruled to disclose some new aspects of the divine purpose towards our fallen world. It became the means of unfolding by a fresh series of types the future exaltation of the Messiah, the nature and extent of His kingdom, and the beneficial effects of His administration. When the rejection of Saul was definitely intimated, steps were quickly taken under divine direction, in the choice of his successor, and in this instance the carnal views of the people were in nowise consulted. God chose a man *after His own heart*—one whom His grace had prepared, and who in his *official* character, unlike Saul, would pay implicit deference to every intimation of the divine will.

But before we take a closer view of David himself, let us add a further word to the above upon what brought about the institution of the kingly office in the constitution of Israel. As we have seen, it was a *sin* for the people to seek a king, yet it was *of the Lord* that they sought one. This is a deep mystery, yet its underlying principle is being constantly exemplified. God accomplishes His holy counsels by the free actions of sinful men. According to God’s sovereign purpose, Saul must be made king of Israel, yet in bringing this to pass only the working of natural laws was employed. From the human side, it was because the sons of Samuel were corrupt in judging and in consequence the people had asked for a king. Had those sons been of the same calibre as their father, the people had been satisfied, and no king had been requested. It was by His ordinary providential control that God brought this to pass.

In nowise was the divine holiness compromised—the divine decree was accomplished, yet the people acted freely, and the guilt of their action was justly visited upon them. It may be asked, “Why did not Providence prevent this occasion of sin to His people? Why did His Providence lay this stumblingblock before them? If God designed to give them a king, why did He not give them a king in a way that would have presented them with no occasion of rejecting Himself as King? God designed to show that rebellion was in them, and His Providence manifests this, even in the way of fulfilling His own purposes, which coincided with theirs. Here is *sovereignty*” (Alexander Carson, 1776-1844). Yes, and here is also infinite *wisdom*, that can bring to pass His own foreordination without doing any violence to the responsibility of man, that can guide his evil inclinations, without any complicity therein. But to return to our more immediate inquiry.

At the time David was selected to be the successor of Saul, he was in the bloom of youth. The youngest son of his father’s house. Although the intimation given of the high honour awaiting him was too distinct to be missed, it did not

produce any injurious effects upon him. He continued to serve Saul as if he had been wholly ignorant of what God had designed. He was not puffed up with his prospects, nor did he give any intimation of a selfish ambition. He never presumed to anticipate by any effort of his own the fulfillment of the divine purpose, but left it entirely with God to effect the same in His own time and way. From Saul himself he received sufficient provocation to have tempted him to pursue an opposite course, but he quietly submitted to God's sovereignty and waited for Him to make good His promise. Well may we seek grace to emulate such becoming meekness and patience.

In due time, God fulfilled His word. On the death of Saul, the tribe of Judah anointed David king at Hebron (2Sa 2:4), and seven years later every hindrance having been providentially removed, all the other tribes concurred in his election (2Sa 5:3). During the early part of his reign, the attention of David was directed to suppressing the assaults of the Philistines and other enemies. His military operations were most successful, and the foes of Israel were humbled and subdued. On the establishment of peace throughout his kingdom, David's thoughts were directed to the removal of the ark, which had hitherto been migratory, to a settled place in Jerusalem. That city, in its entire extent had recently come into his possession, and had been chosen as the royal residence and the seat of divine worship. The conquering of the promised land, through the divine blessing on his administration, was now in a great measure completed, and David concluded that the time was ripe for him to erect a fixed and permanent habitation for the worship of JEHOVAH.

He formed the resolution to build a house for the Lord, and made known the same unto the prophet Nathan, by whom he was at first encouraged. But though God approved the thought of David's heart, He would not permit him to give effect to his intentions. That particular honour was reserved for his son and successor, Solomon, although he was not then born. The reason for this is expressly stated. God said to him, "Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight" (1Ch 22:8). This statement does not mean that the wars in which David had engaged were unauthorized and sinful. On the contrary, they were undertaken by divine orders, and their success was often secured by signal manifestations of God's interposition. But that aspect of the divine character revealed in those events was different from that which worship mainly disclosed, therefore, there had been an evident incongruity in one who had shed so much blood erecting a house for the God of mercy and grace.

By the intended house of prayer, symbolic instruction was designed to be conveyed, and in order to that end, there was required a condition of peace in association with its erection. Accordingly, Nathan was sent to David to prohibit the accomplishment of his design. The divine message, however, was accompanied with the most striking assurance of the favour of God toward

himself. After reminding David of the humble condition from which he had been taken to be ruler over Israel, and of the invariable proofs of the divine presence and blessing which had attended all his enterprises, the prophet declared, “The LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever” (2Sa 7:11-16).

It is pitiable that any should raise a quibble that because there is no express mention here of any “covenant” being made, therefore we are not warranted in so regarding this event. It is true we have no formal account of any being offered in connection with it, no express figurative ratification of it, such as we find attending every similar transaction of which mention is made in Scripture. But the silence observed on this point is no proof that no such formality took place. The legitimate inference rather is that those observances were so customary on such occasions, and were so well-understood, as to make any specific allusion to them here quite unnecessary. However, that it *was* a true covenant is evident from the distinct and frequent mention of it under this very designation in other passages.

That the great transaction narrated in 2 Samuel 7 *was* thus regarded by David himself as a “covenant” is clear from his own declaration, “Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting *covenant*, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire” (2Sa 23:5). When was it that God made this “everlasting covenant” with David, if not in the place which we are now considering? But what is still more to the point, the Lord Himself refers to the same as a “covenant,” as we may see from His response to Solomon’s prayer, “If thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments; then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have *covenanted with David* thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel” (2Ch 7:17-18). With these statements before us, we cannot doubt that this divine transaction with David was a true covenant, even though there is no formal record of its ratification.

That the Davidic covenant constituted another of those remarkable revelations which at different times distinguished the history of the Jewish people, a cursory examination of its contents is sufficient to show. Like every similar transaction which occurred during the Old Testament era, it has certain typical aspects, which were the figures of higher spiritual blessings. Those had special reference to David and his family. He was, for instance, assured that the temple should be built by his

immediate successor, and that his family was destined to occupy a prominent place in the future history of Israel, and that the regal dignity conferred upon him should be perpetuated in his descendants so long, at least, as they did not by their sins forfeit the earthly advantages those secured to them. Those temporal promises were the ground on which the covenant rested, and were the elements which expanded into richer spiritual blessings in the distant future.

Viewed in relationship to the more *spiritual* results, David affirmed that the covenant was “ordered in all things, and sure” (2Sa 23:5). Against every possible contingency provision was made—nothing should ever prevail to defeat the fulfillment of those promises. Even the sins of the individuals of his race, though they would certainly meet with righteous punishment, and might terminate in the ruin of those who committed them, and in the permanent depression of the family, as in fact they did, would not annul them. It is with these *higher* aspects of the Davidic covenant we shall be chiefly concerned. From them we may gather the true nature of the solemn engagements it contained and estimate the addition made by it to the sum of revealed truth—the increased light which it shed on the scheme of divine mercy, then in the course of disclosure.

The substance of the information conveyed by this covenant had reference to the exaltation, kingdom, and glory of *the Messiah*. Hints of a similar kind, though few, obscure, and isolated, are certainly to be found in the previous portions of Scripture, the most striking of which is the intimation given through Jacob, that “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be” (Gen 49:10). But those hints were then, and up to the time of David, very imperfectly, if at all, understood, even by the most spiritually-minded people. They do not seem to have attracted notice. Now, however, they were concentrated in and amplified with far greater distinctness through the promises of the Davidic covenant. For the first time *the regal dignity of the Messiah* was exhibited, which, especially when enlarged by the later prophetic representations, the Jews were not slow to interpret in accord with their carnal ideas.

Thus far all has been, comparatively, plain sailing, but when we come to the actual interpretation of the promises made to David in 2 Samuel 7, real difficulty is encountered. Those which relate particularly to the *ultimate* design of the covenant require a much closer examination, and when attempting it (D.V.) a reference to other passages treating of the same subject will be essential. But before entering these deeper waters, let it be pointed out that, by the terms of this covenant a further and distinct limitation was given as to *the actual line* from which the promised seed should spring. In the progress of divine revelation, the channel through which the future Deliverer should issue, was, at successive periods, considerably narrowed. Though this has often been traced out by others, it is too important and interesting for us to ignore.

The first prediction, recorded in Genesis 3:15, was couched in the most general form, simply intimating that the Vanquisher of the serpent would assume humanity, though supernaturally. On the destruction of the old world, the promise was renewed to Noah, together with an intimation that it would be through Seth its fulfillment should take place (Gen 9:27). Further step forward was taken when Abraham was chosen as the progenitor of Him in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. His descendants, in the time of Isaac, on whom the promise was entailed, were, however, so numerous that no definite view could be taken as to the precise quarter from which its fulfillment might be looked for. Subsequently, the tribe of Judah was indicated, but this being one of the most numerous of the tribes, the same indefiniteness, though in a less degree, would exist as to the particular family on whom this honour was to be conferred.

Time rolled on and now the family of David was selected as the medium through which the promise was to take effect. To that family the longings of all who looked for the Hope of Israel was henceforth restricted, and greater facility was thereby afforded for obtaining the requisite proof of the claims of the Messiah when He should appear. Thus, by a succession of steps God defined the course through which His gracious purpose would be wrought out, and with increasing distinctness concentrated the attention of the faithful towards the true direction in which the divine promise would be realized—the last limitation possessing a definiteness to which none of the others could lay claim.

N.B. In these two articles, we have followed closely John Kelly in his work (1861) on “The Divine Covenants.”

CHRIST OUR EXEMPLAR

“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1Pe 2:21). We have seen that not only is the perfect life of Christ a suitable pattern of holiness for His people to imitate, but that God has expressly *appointed* it for that very purpose. This in order that we may have a sure rule to walk by—the law of God translated into concrete terms and its requirements set before us by a personal representation and also for the purpose of humbling our proud hearts—by revealing to us how far short we come of measuring up to God’s standard of righteousness. Furthermore, God has appointed that the example of Christ should be followed by His people in order that His Son might be honoured by them, in order to distinguish His followers from the world and in order that they should evidence the reality of their profession. The imitating of Christ, then, is not optional, but obligatory.

But at this point a very real difficulty confronts those who are sincerely seeking grace to heed this divine appointment—in what particular respects and

details are we to regard Christ as our Exemplar? All things recorded of Him in Holy Writ are for our instruction, but not for our imitation. There were some things which Christ did *as God*, as for example, when He wrought *miracles*, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work....For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will” (Joh 5:17, 21). “But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house” (Mat 9:6)—even the apostles never performed such deeds in their own name or by their own power. Again—*as Mediator*, Christ performed *works of merit*, thereby making expiation for the sins of His people and “bringing in everlasting righteousness” for them, thus obtaining their justification and reconciliation, so now His intercession secures their preservation. Now no mere man can do anything meritorious, for at best we are all “unprofitable servants.” The Romanists, who are merit-mongers, are grievous offenders here.

Even *as Man*, Christ performed extraordinary acts which are not for our emulation. His fasting for forty days and nights, His walking upon the waters, His spending a whole night in prayer (Luk 6:12)—we do not read in Scripture of anyone else doing so—are cases in point. So, too, He performed certain temporary works which pertained to the time in which He lived, which are not for our imitation, such as His being circumcised, keeping the Passover, etc. Wherein, then, is Christ to be imitated by us? First, in all those *moral duties* which pertain to all men at all times, which are neither extraordinary nor temporary, comprehended in the loving of God with all our hearts and our neighbours as ourselves. Second, in such duties as belong to a *like calling*—as the child obeying its parents (Luk 2:49), the citizen paying his taxes (Mat 17:27), the minister of the Gospel diligently (Luk 8:1) and faithfully (Heb 3:2) discharging his office. Third, in all such works as have *like reason* and occasion for the doing of them, Matthew 12:12, John 8:59, etc.

In addition to those three general rules, we may repeat here what we said in our “Sanctification” article. The believer’s conformity to Christ corresponds to *the states* through which He passed. The man Christ Jesus first entered a state of humiliation before God rewarded Him by bringing Him into a state of exaltation. And therefore has God ordered that, in this, the members shall resemble their Head—they are called upon to endure suffering before they enter into the promised glory. The disciples of the Lord Jesus have to experience a measure of opposition, persecution, hatred, affliction, and they do so for their hope of a better life to come. In that, they do but follow “the captain of their salvation,” who was made “perfect through sufferings” (Heb 2:10). Had not God declared, “If we be dead with him [Christ], we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him” (2Ti 2:11-12)? That order is inescapable, “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (2Co 4:10).

In like manner, the Christian is to be conformed unto *the special acts of Christ's mediation*, which are His death and resurrection. These are of paramount consideration, for they are not only a pattern proposed to our meditation, but they possess a great influence upon our dying to sin and living unto holiness. This is evidenced from the fact that those effects of grace in us are ascribed to those acts of Christ's mediation which carry most correspondence with them. Thus our mortification is ascribed to Christ's crucifixion (Gal 2:20), our vivification to His rising unto life (Phi 3:10), and our heavenly-mindedness to His ascension (Phi 3:20), so that all of those chief acts of Christ are verified in His people. We die *to* sin as Christ died *for our* sins.

But in descending to more specific details, it is in Christ's *graces* we are to be conformed unto Him. All the graces and virtues of the Spirit were represented in their grandest glory and brightest lustre in His life here on earth. First, the purity and *holiness of His life* is proposed as a glorious pattern for the saints to imitate, "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1Jo 3:3). Before enlarging upon this, let us point out wherein Christ is unique and beyond our imitation. He was *essentially* holy in His being, for He is "the holy one of God." He entered this world immaculate, pure from the least stain of pollution, therefore it was said to His mother, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee" (Luk 1:35). Again—He was *effectually* holy, for He makes others holy, for by His sufferings and blood there is opened a fountain "for sin and for uncleanness" (Zec 13:1). He is also *infinitely* holy, as He is God, and no measure can be set upon His holiness as Mediator, for He received the Spirit without measure (Joh 3:34). In these particulars He is inimitable.

Notwithstanding the above exceptions, the holiness of Christ is presented as a pattern for us. He was truly and *sincerely* holy, without fiction or pretense. When the prince of this world scrutinized Him he could find no defect in Him (Joh 14:30-31). He was pure gold throughout. The Pharisee may pretend to be holy, but it is only in outward appearance. Now the Christian's holiness must be genuine, sincere, without simulation. Christ was *uniformly* holy—at one time and place as well as another. The same even tenor of holiness ran through the whole of His life from first to last—so should it be with His followers, "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1Pe 1:15). Alas, what inconsistencies we have to bemoan—one part of our life heavenly, another earthly!

Christ was exemplary holy—a pattern to all that came near Him, so that even those sent to arrest Him had to return to their masters and say "never man spake as this man" (Joh 7:46). And we are to imitate Him in this respect. The Thessalonian saints were commended, because they "were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad" (1Th 1:7-8). Let none go out of your company, Christian reader, without

being either convicted or edified. Christ was *strictly* holy, “Which of you convicteth me of sin?” was His challenge. The most observing and unfriendly eye could pick no flaw in His actions. It is our duty to imitate Christ in this, too, “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phi 2:15).

Second, *the obedience of Christ* to His Father’s will is a pattern for the Christian’s emulation, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...(who) became obedient unto death” (Phi 2:5, 8). Now Christ’s obedience was free and *voluntary*, not forced and compulsory. “Then said I, Lo, I come...I delight to do thy will, O my God” (Psa 40:7-8). Nor did He waver, later, when suffering so grievously in the discharge of that will, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life” (Joh 10:17). So the Christian is to follow the steps of Christ, doing nothing grudgingly and counting not God’s commands to be grievous. Our *obedience* must be rendered cheerfully if it is to be acceptable. Christ’s obedience was unreserved and *entire*, declining no part of His Father’s will. See His perfect submission in Gethsemane. Here, too, he has left us an example—we are to do the most unpleasant task which God assigns us. Happy the Christian who can say with the apostle, “for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Act 21:13).

The obedience of Christ was *entirely disinterested*. It was wrought for no self ends, but for the glory of God, “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (Joh 17:4). Christ sought not honour of men, but the great desire of His soul was, “Father, glorify *thy* name” (Joh 12:28). This quality must also characterize our obedience, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Phi 2:4). The streams of Christ’s obedience flowed from the fountain of *love to God*. “But that the world may *know that I love the Father*; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do” (Joh 14:31). Let this also be true of us, for loveless obedience is of no value in the sight of God. The obedience of Christ was *constant*, continuing unto His very last breath. A being not weary in well-doing is required of us, “Be thou faithful unto death” (Rev 2:10).

Third, *the self-denial* of Christ is the pattern for the believer, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mat 16:24). Though there is to be a resemblance, there can be no exact equivalent. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor” (2Co 8:9). Who can gauge what Christ, for the glory of God and the love which He bare to the elect, gave up for us? How utterly trivial in comparison is the greatest sacrifice we are called upon to make! Christ was under *no obligation* whatever to deny Himself for us, but He has placed us under the strongest obligations to deny ourselves for His sake. Though under no obligation, He denied Himself *readily*, making no objection to the severest part of

it. Then let it not be said of us, “For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s” (Phi 2:21). Let not self be loved, petted, pitied, pampered, and indulged—rather renounce and mortify it, and make the pleasing and glorifying Christ your only business.

Fourth, *the activity and diligence* of Christ in fulfilling the work of God committed unto Him was a pattern for all believers to imitate. It is said of Him that, “He went about doing good” (Act 10:38), and what a glorious work He accomplished in so short a time!—a work which will be celebrated to all eternity by the praises of the redeemed. It was a work upon which His heart was intently set, “*My meat* is to do the will of him that sent me.” It was a work under which He never fainted, despite the greatest discouragements and opposition. The very shortness of the time provoked Him to the greatest diligence, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (Joh 9:4). He improved all opportunities and occasions—granting Nicodemus an interview at night, preaching the Gospel to the woman at the well when He was exhausted from His journey. Nothing displeased Him more than to be dissuaded from His work. “Get thee behind me, Satan” (Mar 8:33), He said to Peter when that apostle said, “spare thyself, Lord” (Mat 16:22).

Shall His followers, then, trifle their lives away in vanity? Shall we be slothful when He was so diligent? How great an honour God has placed on us by calling us to His service. Steadfastness in the work of obedience is our greatest security in the hour of temptation, “The LORD is with you, while ye be with him” (2Ch 15:2). Diligence in prosecuting holiness is the way to get more, Luke 18:8. Graces grow by being *used*. Spiritual acts lead to spiritual habits. Talents faithfully employed are rewarded by an increase thereof. Diligence in the work of God is the direct way to an assurance of the love of God, 2 Peter 1:5-10. Diligence in obedience is the greatest security against backsliding. Coldness leads to carelessness, carelessness to negligence, negligence to apostasy. The more diligent we are in serving God, the more we become like Christ.

Fifth, *the inoffensiveness* of the life of Christ on earth is an excellent pattern for all His people. He injured none and never gave occasion for any to be justly hurt at Him. He was not only holy, but “harmless.” He waived His own personal rights in order to avoid the giving of offense, as in the case of the tribute money, Matthew 17:27. When He was reviled, He “reviled not again” (1Pe 2:23). So circumspect was our Saviour that though His enemies sought occasion against Him, they could not find any, John 19:4. Let us, then, earnestly seek grace that we may imitate this blessed excellency of His life, that we may obey God’s command, and be “blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke” (Phi 2:15). The honour of Christ, whose name we bear, is bound up in our deportment. The rule which He has laid upon us is, “Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Mat 10:16).

Sixth, the *humility and meekness* of Christ is proposed by Himself as a pattern for His people’s imitation, “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Mat

11:29). He abased Himself, by taking upon Him the form of a servant. He stooped to the lowest office, by washing the disciple's feet. When He presented Himself to Israel as their King, it was in humiliation, riding upon the back of an ass, "Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, *meek*, etc." (Mat 21:5). He declared, "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Mat 20:28). He condescended to the lowest of men, eating with "publicans and sinners" (Mat 9:11). In all of this, He has left us an example to follow. O to be "clothed with humility" (1Pe 5:5) and thereby evidence our conformity unto Christ!

Pride has no part of one who professes to be a follower of the Lord Jesus. It not only betrays lack of communion with Christ, but woeful ignorance of self. Nothing is so provoking to God and more quickly estranges the soul from Him, "Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off" (Psa 138:6). Pride is not only utterly inconsistent with the complaints we make of our corruptions, but it presents a serious stumbling block to the children of God. Be not ambitious of the world's *great ones*, but content yourself as one of Christ's *little ones*. Learn humility at His feet. Evidence it in your apparel and deportment, 1 Peter 3:3. Display it in cultivating fellowship with the poorest of the flock, Romans 12:16. Show it by speaking of and comporting yourself as "less than the least of all saints" (Eph 3:8).

Seventh, *the contentment* of Christ in a low and mean condition in this world is an excellent pattern for His people's imitation. His portion here was a condition of deepest poverty and contempt. The child of lowly parents, born in a manger. So deprived of the comforts of this world that, much of His time, He had nowhere to lay His head. So poor that He had to borrow a penny for the purpose of pointing to its superscription. Yet He never murmured or complained. Nay, so far from it, so perfectly content was He with God's appointments that He declared, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places" (Psa 16:6). Under the most degrading and painful sufferings, He never resisted nor repined, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter" (Isa 53:7). "O that in this also the poorest Christians would imitate their Saviour, and learn to manage an afflicted condition with a contented spirit. Let there be no complaints, or foolish charging of God heard from you, whatever straits or troubles He brings unto you.

"The meanest and most afflicted Christian is owner of many rich, invaluable mercies, Ephesians 1:3; 1 Corinthians 3:23. Is sin pardoned and God reconciled? then never open your mouths any more. You have many precious promises that God will not forsake you in your straits, Hebrews 13:5. Your whole life has been an experience of the faithfulness of God to His promises. How useful and beneficial all your afflictions are to you! they purge your sins, wean you from the world and turn to your salvation. Then, how unreasonable must your discontentedness at them be! The time of your relief and full deliverance from all your troubles is at hand. The time is but short that you shall have any concernment

about such things. Your lot falls by *divine* direction upon you, and bad as it may be, it is much easier and sweeter than the condition of Christ in this world was. Yet He was contented, and why not you?" (John Flavel, 1630-1691, to whom we are indebted for much in the above seven points).

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

13. Its Progress

At the close of last month's article, we pointed out that the present aspect of our subject is one which deeply exercises many of God's people. It is with the desire to remove some of their difficulties and to throw light upon their problems that we devote a further paper thereto. Let us begin by mentioning several things which do *not* denote progress in personal and practical holiness. First, growth in grace is not an advancing in *outward profession* and ostentation, so that men shall "think of me above" what I am indeed (2Co 12:6), but in inward and substantial godliness. When the roots of a tree do not strike deeper into the earth, yet its branches continue to spread, that is not true *growth*, for a strong wind will blow it over. Many people in Christendom are like that—there is a great spreading abroad outwardly and a plentiful show of leaves, but the fruits of vital piety are lacking.

Second, progress in holiness consists not in an increase of *gifts* or enlarged abilities for public service, but an increase in graces. The Corinthians grew fast in gifts, so that they were enriched "in all utterance, and in all knowledge...so that ye came behind in no gift" (1Co 1:5, 7). Nevertheless, the apostle told them that they were but "babes" and "carnal" (1Co 3:1, 3). And therefore did he point out to them "a more excellent way" (1Co 12:31), which (as chapter 13 shows) was the presence and exercise of *true grace*, even love to God and love to our brethren, an ounce of which is of more real worth than a ton of gifts, for "though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass" (1Co 13:1). Ah, my reader, you may not be able to pray in public as some do, you may lack their readiness of speech when talking of divine things, you may not be sought after to occupy positions of prominence in the church, but if you have a tender conscience, an honest heart, a gentle spirit, a forbearing disposition, you have that which is far more valuable than any gifts for public use.

Third, an increase in fruitfulness is not to be measured by the *success* we have in our service to the Lord. If He has called you to preach the Gospel, and you now obtain fewer souls for your hire than was the case in former years, that is not (necessarily) to be taken as a proof of your spiritual decay. It is true that the conversion of souls under the labours of the apostles is called "fruit" by Christ Himself (Joh 15:16), and it is also true that God generally makes the most use of those whose hearts and lives are the holiest. Yet it was through no recorded failure

on his part that John the Baptist must “decrease” that Christ might “increase.” Older ministers are often required to give place to younger ones, but this is not because of a decay of grace in them. If the minister’s heart be large in its desires and he is faithful in his endeavours to do good, God will reckon more fruit to him than to others who are less faithful but more successful.

Fourth, growing in grace and the bringing forth of more fruit is not to be measured by the largeness or smallness of those *opportunities* we have for the doing of more or less good. Some that have the most grace are often stationed in isolated places and are largely unknown to their fellow Christians. Some have larger opportunities when they are young and less when old, and yet they bring forth more fruit before God than formerly, because He accepts the will for the deed. The public labours of the Baptist were ended when he was cast into prison, yet he brought forth precious fruits by not envying Christ because He secured *his* disciples, but rejoiced that the work of God went forward—more grace was expressed therein than in many sermons. So Paul spent much of his later life in prison, yet the fruit he brought forth there was quite as valuable as his preaching.

Fifth, increasing holiness is not to be measured by our *inward comforts* and joy, but rather by the more substantial qualities of faith, obedience, humility, and love. Very often it happens that the fragrant blossoms of ravishments fall off when the fruits of meekness, patience, and lowliness come on. What matters it though the gloss wear off, if the material be strong and substantial? Young Christians grow like new instruments—they have more varnish than the old, but they are not so sweet and mellow in sound. Often the decrease of joy is a means of increase of sincerity—lack of peace causes more exercise of faith, just as the taking away of floats compels the beginner to swim. One that has the assistance of floats and the stream with him, appears to swim as well as another with more experience and strength, but remove the floats from him and pit him against the stream, and his progress is not so swift, yet is it more sure.

Sixth, there is great danger of being deceived over *inward affections*, for even when they be drawn out unto Christ, yet their appearance may be greater than the reality. So often in a young Christian there is warm affection, yet much of self in it—great zeal, yet not a little of the energy of the flesh. He enters into duties more eagerly at first, but more spiritually later. New objects being set before him draw out after them the old nature as well as the principle received at regeneration. It was thus with Israel of old. They were obedient to Moses’ call, and sang JEHOVAH’s praises after their deliverance at the Red Sea, yet it was not long before the mixed multitude lusted after the fleshpots of Egypt, and only the spiritual were satisfied with the heavenly manna. When fire is first kindled there is more smoke, but after the flames come that control all into a narrower compass, the fire hath more heat in it. The believer’s affections become purer, less mixed with the vapours of self-love as he grows in grace.

Seventh, we must not seek to determine our progress in holiness by any *one* grace or the performance of any particular duty, but take in the entire extent and latitude of character and conduct. One who has grown much in grace may be less in some kinds of duties than he was when a babe in Christ. Probably we then spent most of our available time in praying, reading, and meditating. Because we spend *less* time in them now, that is no proof of our spiritual decay. There are *other* duties to be performed which in earlier days were neglected, but are now made conscience of. To have more time available for prayer and reading is most delightful to a spiritual soul, yet the faithful discharge of business or domestic responsibilities is more profitable to others and more pleasing to God, if He has so appointed them. The mother who is faithful in the home honours God just as truly and fully as the most self-sacrificing missionary.

But let us turn now to the positive side and note some of the indications in and characters of an increase in holiness. First, we grow when we are led on to exercise *new* graces, and so “add” one to another, as 2 Peter 1:5-7 enjoins. As our knowledge of Scripture increases, affections are awakened answerable to the truths newly discovered to us. At first the Christian does not exercise all the graces of the new man, though all are in him. As in the natural, we first live a life of semi-consciousness, then one governed by the physical senses, and then one of reason, it is much the same in the spiritual. There are various “grades” or “standards” which Christians go through, as children at school rise from inferior to the higher. First we are placed under the law and have heart exercises awakened by its requirements, then under the Gospel other affections are stirred into activity.

Second, we are increasing in holiness when the same graces *advance*, as when the Christian’s love grows “fervent” (1Pe 4:8). Faith at first is like a tiny mustard seed, but afterwards it develops into a tree. An awakened sinner often casts himself upon Christ much as a drowning man clutches at a passing spar. Later, he has a more intelligent perception of His suitability and worth, until he attains unto “full assurance of faith” (Heb 10:22). Thus in godly sorrow—when from mourning for sin because it is contrary to God’s holiness—we go on to mourning over sin as grieving to Him who loves us, we are growing in grace. So when we have more strength to resist temptations. So in prayer—when our petitions are more for spiritual blessings than for material mercies, when we learn to plead with God in a Scriptural manner, when we pray much for others.

Third, we are increasing in holiness when the duties we perform and the fruits we bear are more *ripe*, that is, more spiritual, and less juicy, that is, emotional. Though they grow now in size or number—we pray not more nor longer—yet they are more holy, or more savoury and solid. It is a mistake to measure spiritual growth by the *multitude* of our performances. God prizes quality far more highly than He does quantity. When one is sick or aged, he is obliged to be less in active duties, but increased spirituality in those he *can* engage in, more than makes up for this. One short prayer put up in faith, with a broken heart, is in God’s sight more

fruit than a long one or a day spent in formal fasting, in the same sense that the “widow’s mite” was more than all the other gifts cast into the treasury.

Fourth, an increase of holiness is indicated by the soul’s becoming more firmly *rooted in Christ*, and this makes the fruits more acceptable unto God. By being more rooted in Christ, we mean the believer’s living more out of himself and in Christ. At our conversion we were emptied of self-righteousness, and as we grow in grace we become emptied of our strength, wisdom, abilities, so that we recognize with increasing clearness that without Him we can do *nothing*. So of our service. “Not I, but Christ in me” is our ready acknowledgement. Consequently when “growth in grace” is mentioned, “and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 3:18) is at once added by way of explanation, for there can be no real growing in grace except as we increase in the vital and experimental knowledge of Christ. As to “worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Phi 3:3) are the surest signs of grace, so of genuine growth.

Fifth, the more we bring forth fruit *in season*, the more fruit we may be said to bear, for it is the timeliness of them which enhances their value. In the natural, fruit which is *forced* by artificial means is never so wholesome as that which is ripened normally by the sun. There is a time for everything. To be studying the Bible when I should be taking needful recreation, to be praying when I should be discharging other duties, to regale myself by happy fellowship with other Christians when I ought to be visiting the sick, or attending to the public means of grace when home duties plainly call for my attention, is to bring forth *untimely* fruit. So to rebuke when I should comfort, or comfort when I should rebuke, “A word *fitly* spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Pro 25:11). In Psalm 1:3, the righteous man is said to bring forth fruit “in his season.” Young Christians are often set on good works by the devil which they are not yet qualified to perform.

Sixth, when we grow more *constant* in performing duty, more *even* in a godly course, and more settled in our spiritual affections, it is a sure sign that we are growing. Youth is more unstable than maturity, more given to change. The young believer is more influenced by his emotions than his judgment, and therefore more easily carried away by religious excitement—and more quickly discouraged when things go wrong. The development of patience and perseverance is a clear mark of spiritual growth. To go by fits and starts, to be much in duties for a while and then almost abandon them, to be on a mountain top one day and down in the valley the next, is a character of immaturity and weakness. But being not weary in well-doing in the face of opposition, to continue pressing forward despite many failures, to go on seeking grace notwithstanding many refusals, denotes growth.

Seventh, we may be said to be increasing in holiness when, although difficulties increase and opportunities lessen, we *continue faithfully* therein. An orchard which produces fruit in a cold and uncongenial season, though it be less in

quantity and quality, is really for it (relatively) to yield more than if the year had been a warm and propitious one. The Lord takes into account the times and circumstances in which our lot is cast, “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy *patience*” (Rev 2.2). Fidelity to Christ means far more in such an evil day as ours than if we were in the midst of a heaven-sent revival. Little is regarded by God as much as when His child has had to stand almost alone, when his strictness has been almost universally scoffed at by modern religionists.

Our object in this article is to resolve a case of conscience, rather than handle the subject of spiritual growth in either a doctrinal or hortatory manner. Instead of discoursing upon progressive holiness in general, or seeking to urge believers thereto, we have sought to indicate, both negatively and positively some of the marks of growth in grace that an exercised soul might be able to discern more clearly his actual condition. It is most important that we should be able to judge rightly of our case and not flatter ourselves on the one hand, nor deprecate ourselves on the other. Some are more tempted to the former, others to the latter. It is easy to make a mistake and jump to a wrong conclusion. As in the physical realm, many suffering from insidious diseases suppose they are healthy, while others who are sound and vigorous imagine they are ill, so it is spiritually.

Whilst it is the duty and privilege of the Christian to ascertain what progress divine grace is enabling him to make in his spiritual course, and to be assured he is not a fruitless branch of the vine, yet God does *not* intend that he should be satisfied with his attainments or fall in love with himself. Far from it—rather is it His design that he should live more and more out of himself, upon Christ. And it is for this reason that He suffers the most spiritual of His people to be constantly plagued by indwelling sin, and sees to it that they are kept continually busy in fighting the weeds that are ever threatening to crowd out the flowers and fruit in the garden of their souls. Should they become at all self-complacent, He will soon stain their pride by withholding the dews of His Spirit, and then their graces speedily wilt and wither. In such a case they are hard put to perceive any fruit at all.

In addition to all that has been said above, let it be pointed out that subsequent growth in grace is not nearly so apparent to our senses as first conversion is. That is a radical change from death unto life, from being brought out of darkness unto God’s marvelous light, from no grace at all to the beginnings of grace in us, whereas that which follows is renewing of the life already received, additions of light, and further degrees of grace. To be translated out of a prison to a kingdom as Joseph was, would affect him far more than to have a new kingdom added to him later, as Alexander had. The very newness of grace in the first instance makes a much stronger impression upon the heart and understanding than do the later additions of it. When one takes up any art or science, growth is prompt, because everything we read thereon is novel. Whereas later, the same things are met with

again and again, and that which is new is harder to discover, though now he learns more perfectly what he previously knew.

Again—time must be allowed for growth and the discovery of it. “When for the time ye ought to be teachers” (Heb 5:12) implies that a sufficient space had elapsed for them to have passed the infantile stage. The sun’s rising is slow and by degrees, so that its progress cannot be perceived till after its motion for an hour or so. Let it be remembered that things most excellent have the slowest development—bulrushes, and the weaker kind of plants, shoot up swiftly, but oaks and other more solid trees grow very slowly. Moreover, there are great differences in the pace of growth even among the same specie of trees or animals. So it is spiritually. God has appointed the measure of growth in all His people, yet they are brought to the fullness in very different times and ways.

Growth in mortification is evidenced by our denying self more and more, by the things of this world making less of an appeal upon us, and by a steadier and more regular watching over our hearts. Such work is new to us at first, and the putting forth of unaccustomed efforts is always more taxing than actions we are used to, but as the habit is formed, the strain is not noticed so much. Moreover, an increase of spiritual (not intellectual) light exhibits filthy corners in the heart hitherto unsuspected. Consequently, the farther one proceeds with God the more *spiritual* his conflict becomes. When the believer resists not only the grosser worldly and fleshly lusts, but also makes conscience of pride, self-confidence, impatience, unworthy motives, the weakness of his faith, and the sparseness of his love, then is he indeed growing in grace.

Growth in vivification is evidenced in further supplies of grace and the effects they produce. It may be asked whether every new degree of grace affects the whole of our souls, or if it be confined to one faculty? The answer is the former, for as every new degree of light (as the sun rises) shines throughout the whole hemisphere, so new grace is diffused throughout the entire man—understanding, conscience, affections, and will—just as it did at our conversion. But may not one grace grow more than the other? Growth in our bodies is proportionate, one member together with another. So our graces all languish or thrive together. But some graces are *exercised* more, and so *abound* more—just as though our two arms both grow, yet through employing the right one more constantly, it becomes stronger than the left.

It may be of interest to inquire whether this increase in grace be only by the normal and spontaneous development of the graces, or by a new addition to them? The latter. Just as a cloth comes out a deeper colour each time it be dipped in the dye. Every new degree of grace is by a fresh act of creation put forth by God. Therefore when David, being fallen, prayed for an increase of grace, he cried, “*Create* in me a clean heart, O God” (Psa 51:10). He who begins the work, by the same power, perfects it. Every new degree of grace is called a fresh conversion, “when thou art converted” said Christ to Peter (Luk 22:32), who was converted

already. It is God who “giveth the increase” (1Co 3:7). Yet, as pointed out in previous months, our concurrence is required. (For much in the above we are indebted to Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680).

CHRIST DESPISED

“He is despised and rejected of men” (Isa 53:3). For the special benefit of young preachers, we propose to sermonize this text, though in as simple and homely a manner as possible, trusting that it may please the Lord to speak through it to some unsaved readers, for we dare not assume that all who take this magazine have really been born again.

Our text forms part of one of the Messianic predictions, in which God made know long beforehand the treatment which His Son should receive when He became incarnate. The prophecy of Isaiah was in the hands of the Jews seven hundred years before the Lord Jesus was born at Bethlehem, yet so exactly did it describe what befell Him that it might well have been written by one of the apostles. Therein is supplied one of the incontrovertible proofs of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, for only One who knew the end from the beginning could have thus written history beforehand.

It might well have been supposed that the advent to earth of such a One as the Lord of Glory would meet with a warm welcome and reverent reception, the more so in view of His appearing in human form, going about doing good. Since He came not to judge, but to save—since His mission was one of grace and mercy, since He ministered to the needy and healed the sick, will not men gladly receive Him? Many would naturally think so, but in so thinking they overlook the fact that the Lord Jesus is “the *Holy One*,” and none but those who have in their hearts the principle of holiness can appreciate ineffable purity. Such an assumption as the one we have just mentioned ignores the solemn fact of *human depravity*—the heart of fallen man is “desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9). How can the Holy One appear attractive to those who are full of sin!?

Nothing so clearly evidences the condition of the human heart, and so solemnly demonstrates its corruption, as its attitude toward the Christ of God. There is much recorded against man in the Old Testament Scriptures, as for example in Psalm 14:1-4. Yet dark as is the picture there drawn of fallen human nature, it fades into insignificance before what the New Testament sets before us. “The carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom 8:7), and never was this so frightfully patent as when He was manifested in flesh. “If I had not come,” declared Christ, “and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin” (Joh 15:22). The appearing of Christ has fully exposed man, bringing to light as nothing else ever has the desperate wickedness of his heart.

Now let us ask and supply answer to three questions: *Who* was (and still is) “despised and rejected of men?” *Why* is He so grievously slighted? In *what way* is He scorned?

Who was so unwelcome here? We answer, first, the One who pressed upon men the absolute *sovereignty of God*. Few things are so distasteful to the proud human heart as the truth that God does as He pleases, without in anywise consulting with the creature. That He dispenses His favours entirely according to His imperial will. Fallen man has no claims upon Him, is destitute of any merit, and can do nothing whatever to win God’s esteem. Fallen man is a spiritual pauper, entirely dependent upon divine charity, and in the bestowal of His mercies God is regulated by naught but His own “good pleasure.” “Is it not lawful for me to do *what I will* with mine own?” (Mat 20:15) is His own unanswerable challenge—yet, as the context there shows, man wickedly murmurs against this.

Now the Lord Jesus came here to glorify His Father, and therefore do we find Him maintaining His crown-rights and emphasising His sovereignty. In His first message, in the Capernaum synagogue, He pointed out that though there were many widows in Israel during the days of Elijah, when there was a great famine throughout all the land, unto none of them was the prophet sent, save unto one at Zarephath. And that though there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha, none of them were healed, yet distinguishing mercy was shown unto Naaman the Syrian. The sequel was, “All they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were *filled with wrath*, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong” (Luk 4:28-29). For pressing the truth of God’s absolute sovereignty, Christ was “despised and rejected of men.”

Who was so unwelcome here? Second, *the One who upheld God’s law*. Therein is the divine authority expressed, and complete subjection thereto is required from the creature. And therefore did Christ press the demands of God’s law upon man. Said He, “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). “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Mat 7:12). But fallen men resent restraints, and want to be a law unto themselves, and their language concerning God and His Christ is, “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Psa 2:3). Because the Lord Jesus enforced the requirements of the Decalogue, He was “despised and rejected of men” (Isa 53:3). A solemn illustration of this occurs in John 7. To the Jews He said, “Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?” (Joh 7:19). And what was their response? This, “The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil” (Joh 7:20).

Who was so unwelcome here? Third, the One who *denounced human tradition* in the religious sphere. Despite the fall, man is essentially a religious creature—the image of God in which he was originally created has not been completely

destroyed. The world over, blacks and whites, reds and yellows, pay homage to gods of their own devising, and there are few things on which they are more tender than their sacerdotal superstitions. He who condemns or even criticizes the devotees of any form or order of worship, will be greatly disliked. Now Christ drew upon Himself the hatred of Israel's leaders by His denunciation of their inventions. He charged them with "making the word of God of none effect through your tradition" (Mar 7:13). When He cleansed the temple, the chief priests and scribes were "sore displeased" (Mat 21:15).

Who was so unwelcome here? Fourth, the One who *repudiated an empty profession*. Nothing so infuriated the Jews as Christ's exposure and denunciation of their vain pretensions. Being omniscient, it was impossible to impose upon Him. Being inflexibly righteous, He could not accept deceptions. Being absolutely holy, He must insist upon sincerity and reality. When they declared, "Abraham is our father," He answered, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the *works* of Abraham." When they added, "We have one Father, even God," He replied, "If God were your Father, ye would love *me*....ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." This so riled them that they exclaimed, "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a demon" (Joh 8:39-48).

On another occasion the Jews asked Him, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly" (Joh 10:24). He at once exposed their hypocrisy by saying, "I told you, and ye believed not....but ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep....My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they *follow me*" (Joh 10:25-27). So angered were they at this that they "took stones again to stone him." Men will not tolerate One who pierces their religious disguise, exposes their shams, and repudiates their fair but empty profession. It is just the same today.

Who was so unwelcome here? Fifth, the One who *exposed and denounced sin*. Ah, this explains why Christ was not wanted here. He was a constant thorn in their sides. His holiness condemned their unholiness. Men wish to go their own way, to please themselves, to gratify their lusts. They want to be comfortable in their wickedness. Therefore they resent that which searches the heart, pierces the conscience, rebukes their evil. Christ was absolutely uncompromising. He would not wink at wrong-doing, but unsparingly denounced it, in whosoever it was found. He boldly affirmed, "For judgment I am come into this world" (Joh 9:39), that is, to discover men's secret characters, to prove they are blind in spiritual things, to demonstrate they loved darkness rather than light. His person and preaching *tried* everything and everyone He came into contact with.

Why was (and is) Christ "despised and rejected of men"? First, *because He required inward purity*. Herein is the great difference between all human religions and the divine—the former concern themselves with external performances, but the latter with the source of all conduct. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1Sa 16:7). It was Christ's exposition and

enforcement of this truth which made Him so unpopular with the leaders. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is *within* the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are *within* full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but *within* ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Mat 23:25-28).

Why was Christ “despised and rejected of men”? Second, *because He demanded repentance*. “Repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mar 1:15) was His claimant call. That order is unchanging, for it is impossible to savingly believe the Gospel till the heart be contrite. Repentance is taking sides with God against ourselves. It is the unsparing judgment of ourselves because of our high-handed rebellion. It is a ceasing to love and tolerate sin, and excusing ourselves for the commission of it. It is a mourning before God because of our transgressions of His holy law. And therefore did Christ teach, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luk 13:3), for He would not condone evil. He came to save His people *from* their sins, and not *in* them.

Why was Christ “despised and rejected of men”? Third, *because He insisted on the denial of self*, and this at two principal points, namely, the indulging and the exalting of self. All fleshly lusts are to be unsparingly mortified, and self-righteousness is allowed no place under the Gospel scheme. This was made unmistakably plain by our Lord’s teaching, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mat 16:24). Yet nothing is more contrary to the desires of the natural man, and Christ’s insistence upon these terms of discipleship causes Him to be “despised and rejected of men” (Isa 53:3).

How is Christ “despised and rejected of men”? In different ways and in varying degrees—professedly and practically, in words and in works. It is most important that this should be clearly recognized, for Satan deceives a great many souls at this point. He deludes them into supposing that, because they are not guilty of what pertains to the avowed infidel and blatant atheist, therefore they are innocent of the fearful sin of slighting and defying the Lord Jesus. Ah, my reader, the solemn fact remains that there are millions of people in Christendom who, though not atheists and infidels, yet despise and reject the Christ of God. “They profess that they know God; but *in works they deny him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Ti 1:16). That verse clearly enunciates this principle.

Because of the limited space at our disposal, we are obliged to condense this last division so that the preacher will have to develop it for himself. Christ’s *authority* is “despised” by those who disregard His precepts and commandments.

Christ's *yoke* is "rejected" by those who are determined to be lord over themselves. Christ's *glory* is "despised" by those who bear His name yet have no concern whether their walk honours Him or no. Christ's *Gospel* is "rejected" by those who, on the one hand, affirm that sinners may be saved without repenting of and turning away from their sins, and on the other hand, by those who teach that heaven may be won by our own good works.

There are some who *intellectually* reject Christ, by repudiating His claims, denying that He is God the Son, assumed a holy and impeccable humanity, and died a vicarious death to save His people from their sins. There are others who *virtually and practically* reject Christ. Just as there are those who profess to believe in the existence of God, own His power, and talk about His wondrous handiwork, yet who have not His fear upon them and are not in subjection to Him, so there are many who claim to trust in the finished work of Christ, yet their daily walk is no different from that of thousands of respectable worldlings. They profess to be Christian, yet are covetous, unscrupulous, untruthful, proud, self-willed, uncharitable—in a word, utterly unChristlike.



October

THE SPIRIT ENDOWING

These articles upon the person and work of the Holy Spirit would lack completeness if we ignored the fantastic and fanatical view which some have taken regarding 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 as the divine pattern and ideal for “the open meeting” of the local church today. We refer to those who decry a “one-man ministry” and who encourage an “any-man ministry” under the guise of allowing the Spirit full freedom to move and use any whom Christ has “gifted.” It is insisted that here in 1 Corinthians 14, we behold different ones endowed with various gifts taking part in the same meeting, yet strange to say these very people readily acknowledge that the gift of tongues has *ceased*—but this very chapter prescribes *how that gift* was and was not to be used!

Now in the first place, there is not a single statement in all the New Testament that the practice which obtained at *Corinth* prevailed generally in other churches of that day, still less that the assemblies of the saints in all generations were to be patterned after *their* order. Rather is there much to show that what obtained at Corinth was *not* the regular mode established by Christ and His apostles. The fact is that not only were the conditions at Corinth merely *transitory and exceptional*, but they were *fraught with much evil*. In no other church of apostolic days was there such disorder and carnality. “Gifts” were valued there more highly than grace, knowledge than love, and the consequence was that the possessors of those miraculous gifts, by their pride and forwardness, neutralized whatever good those gifts accomplished. The reason for that is not far to seek—they had no governing head or heads and no divinely authorized teacher or teachers. The *absence of elders* made them like an army without officers or a school without masters. Where all were equal, none would submit—where all wanted to teach, none would learn.

So far from the Corinthian church supplying a pattern for all others to follow, it stands before us *a most solemn warning* and sample of what ensues when a company of Christians is left without a divinely qualified leader. The most terrible laxity of discipline obtained—one member was living in adultery with his father’s second wife (1Co 5:1), while others were getting drunk at the Lord’s table (1Co

11:21). Those fearful sins (which would not be tolerated today in any Christian church worthy of the name) were winked at, because the assembly was split into parties through want of a controlling head (an under-shepherd of Christ), and because the sinning members belonged to the majority, the minority was powerless.

Besides the fearful laxity of discipline, the grossest irregularities prevailed at their public meetings for the worship of God. There was neither unity, order, edifying ministry, nor decorum. One had his “psalm,” another his “doctrine,” another his “tongue,” another his “revelation,” and yet another his “interpretation” (1Co 14:26)—which is mentioned by the apostle *not* by way of commendation, but as a *rebuke* for their disorder, as is quite evident from the final clause of that verse, as also from verse 40, carefully compare the opening words of verses 15 and 26! As another has said, “Here, then, all were charged, as it were, to the muzzle, and each wanting to have the *first* say, the *longest* say, and the *loudest* say. They did not wish to edify, but to show off.”

Now it was in view of *such* a situation that the apostle was moved of God to pen 1 Corinthians 14, in order to correct these abuses and to lay down rules for the regulation of those who possessed the extraordinary gifts of prophesying and speaking in tongues. But this very fact at once *overthrows* that theory which has been built on an erroneous conception of this chapter! Not only is there not a single statement elsewhere in the New Testament that the Holy Spirit *is the President over assemblies*, or that He is ever present in any other sense than that He dwells in individual believers, but 1 Corinthians 14 itself is very far from teaching that the Spirit presides over the local church, and requires those who have been “gifted” by Christ to wait on Him, and be governed entirely by His inward promptings. Surely it is perfectly obvious that inward promptings of the Spirit render quite needless such rules and regulations as are given here!

To affirm that “the spirits of the prophets are subject *to the prophets*” (1Co 14:32), that is, their “gift” of prophecy is under the prophet’s *own control*, is a vastly different thing from saying that the prophets were to be *subject to the Holy Spirit*! No matter how strong was the impulse to speak, he could not rightly defy the command given, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge” (1Co 14:29) under the plea that the Spirit urged him *to* speak. So again, how easy it had been for the apostle to affirm, “If the Spirit impel any one to speak in a tongue, He will move some other brother to translate,” but so far from that, he commanded, “But if there be no interpreter, let him *keep silence* in the church” (1Co 14:28), which utterly demolishes the idea that these Corinthians were being *presided over* by the Holy Spirit.

Nowhere in 1 Corinthians 15 is it stated that the Spirit conducted (or ought to conduct) their meetings, nor were the Corinthians *rebuked* for failing to look to Him for guidance. There is not a hint of their sinfulness in limiting His sovereign freedom among them! Instead, the apostle says, “*I would* that ye all spake with

tongues, *but rather* that ye prophesied” (1Co 14:5), and “*I had rather* speak five words with my understanding...than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue” (1Co 14:19), which he most certainly had *not* said if his theme here was the Spirit’s *superintendence*, for in *that* case the apostle would have gladly and entirely subjected himself to His control. Throughout the entire chapter, the apostle presents action as coming from *the side of the possessors* of the gifts and not from the side of the Spirit. It is *not*, “when ye come together the Spirit will move one to speak in a tongue, another to prophecy, etc.” No, they are bidden to use good sense, to show their love to one another by subjection, and to beware of shocking visitors (1Co 14:20, 23). But enough.

As there were *offices* extraordinary (apostle and prophets) at the beginning of our dispensation, so there were *gifts* extraordinary, and as successors were *not* appointed for the former, so a continuance was never intended for the latter. The gifts were *dependent upon the officers*—see Acts 8:14-21; 10:44-46; 19:6; Romans 1:11; Galatians 3:5; 2 Timothy 1:6. We no longer have the apostles with us, and therefore the supernatural gifts (the communication of which was an essential part of “the *signs* of an apostle,” 2Co 12:12) are absent. None but a prophet can “prophesy!” Let it be definitely noted that the “prophet” and the “teacher” are *quite distinct*, 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; Ephesians 2:20; 3:5—the one is no more, the latter still exists. A prophet was inspired by God to give out an infallible communication of His mind, 2 Peter 1:21.

Surely it is a manifest absurdity, then, to take a chapter which was given for the express purpose of regulating the exercise of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and apply it to a company today where none of those gifts exist! Furthermore, if 1 Corinthians 14 sets forth the Spirit’s superintendence of the local assembly in worship, why is it that there is *not a single mention of Him* throughout the whole of its forty verses? *That* is indeed a hard question to answer. Obviously, there has been read into it *what is not there*! But do we not still have the “word of wisdom” and “the word of knowledge”? Certainly not, they were among the spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:8, and that word “spiritual” is *not* used there in contrast from “carnal” (as is clear from 1 Co 3:1, for they were *not* spiritual in that sense), so that it *must* mean *inspired*, and “inspired” men ceased when the Canon of Scripture was closed!

It is true that the Spirit *acts today*, but it is *in secret*, and not in open manifestation as in the days of the apostles, and *by mixed agency*. The truth is taught, but not perfectly as the apostles and their delegates preached it. The best sermon now preached or article written is not a standard (as it *would be* if inspired by the Spirit), for it has blemishes in it, yet the Spirit is not responsible for them. What the Spirit does now is to bestow ordinary ministerial gifts, which the possessor must improve and develop by study and use. To “*seek power from high*” or a special “*filling of the Spirit*” is to run the serious risk of being controlled by evil spirits posing as angels of light.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

118. The Christian's Sacrifices (13:15-16)

From the eighth verse onwards (of Heb 13), the apostle is engaged in setting forth those spiritual duties of worship of which God Himself is the object. Therein a series of contrasts are drawn between what obtained under the old covenant and that which pertains to the new. The Christian's privileges greatly excel those which belonged to Judaism as such. These superior blessings have been considered by us as we have passed from verse to verse. What is before us in verse 15 supplies a further exemplification of this general principle. The Levitical rites required God's earthly people to provide material offerings, but the Christian's "sacrifices" are entirely *spiritual* in their character. The Israelite worshipper could not offer his sacrifices to God directly, but had to allow the priests to officiate for him—whereas Christians have themselves been made priests unto God, and therefore may sacrifice to Him *immediately*. The praise-sacrifices under the law were only presented at particular times and places (cf. the "feasts" of Lev 23), but the Christian may, through Christ, offer a sacrifice to God anywhere, at any time—"continually."

"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Heb 13:15). More is implied than is expressed. The language of this verse is restricted to the duties of worship and our oral praising of God therein, yet we know full well that He accepts not thanksgivings from us unless it be accompanied by what good old Matthew Henry (1662-1714) called "thanksgiving." Thus it is the *entire compass* of evangelical obedience to God which is comprehended here. Those who have been dedicated to Him by the blood of Christ are under the deepest obligations to please and honour Him. The nature of Gospel obedience consists in thanksgiving for Christ and grace by Him, and therefore the whole of it may be suitably designated "a sacrifice of praise." Gratitude and adoration are the animating principles of all acceptable service. Every act and duty of faith has in it the nature of a sacrifice to God, wherein He is well-pleased.

John Owen (1616-1683) suggests a threefold reason for the particular language in which the Christian's duty of obedience is here expressed. "1st. The great obligation that is upon us of continual thankfulness and praise to God on account of Christ's atonement. The sum and glory of our Christian profession is that it is the only way of praising and glorifying God for His love and grace in the person and mediation of Christ. 2nd. This obligation to praise succeeding in the room of all terrifying legal constraints to obedience, alters the nature of that obedience from what was required under and by the law. 3rd. Where the heart is not prepared for and disposed to this fundamental duty of praising God for the death and oblation of Christ, no other duty or act of obedience is accepted with God."

In bidding us offer the sacrifice of praise to God *continually*, two things are denoted—freedom from the limitations of time and place as were appointed under Judaism, and diligent perseverance and constancy therein. To abound in fervent praise unto God is the abiding duty of the Christian. But for that there must be the regular exercise of *faith*. Calling into question the promises of God quenches the spirit of worship—doubts snap the strings of our harps—unbelief is the deadly enemy of praise. To praise God continually requires us to be in *daily communion* with Him. It is not to be wondered at that the joy of many believers is so sickly, when we consider how little fellowship they have with the Lord. If there be so little heat around the bulb of their thermometer, how can the mercury rise higher! To praise God “continually,” we must cultivate perpetual gratitude, and surely *that* should not be difficult!

“I will bless the LORD at *all* times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Psa 34:1)—at no lower standard than that must we aim. How this meets the lament made by so many Christians. “There seems so very little I can do to express my gratitude unto the Lord.” Ah, my brother, you may not be gifted with talents to exercise in public, you may not have much money to give to God’s cause, but what is to withhold your offering unto Him a sacrifice of praise, and that “continually”? Is not this God’s due? Did Spurgeon (1834-1892) express it too strongly when he said, “Praise is the rent which God requires for the use of His mercies”? Then shall we rob God? Shall we withhold that in which He delights? Does not God give us abundant cause to praise Him “continually”?!

“To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness *every* night” (Psa 92:2). “I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being” (Psa 104:33). What a word is that for the aged and infirm Christian! Ah, dear reader, your eyes may have become so dim that you can scarcely read the sacred page any more, your strength may have become too feeble for you to walk to the house of prayer, but your *lips* can still articulate and express thanksgiving! “I will be glad and rejoice in thy *mercy*: for thou hast considered my trouble” (Psa 31:7)—rejoice in His pardoning mercy, preserving mercy, providing mercy. “Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? who can shew forth all his praise?” (Psa 106:2). Well did Goodwin (1600-1680) close his reflections upon the Psalms of praise by saying, “My brother, let us *pray for* such a heart as this, that the saints of the Old Testament may not shame us who are Christians under the New.”

It is striking to note that the Hebrew word “bara” signifies “to create,” while “barak” means “to praise,” intimating that the praising of God is the chief end of our creation. Though nothing can be added to God’s essential glory, yet praise promotes His manifestative glory, for it exalts Him before others. In this manner the angels glorify Him, for they are the choristers of heaven, trumpeting forth His praise. An old writer quaintly pointed out that believers are the “temples” of God, and when their tongues are praising Him, their spiritual “organs” are then

sounding forth. We read that the saints in heaven have “harps” in their hands (Rev 14:2), which are emblems of *praise*. Alas, that so often *our* harps are “hung on the willows” (Psa 137:2), and murmurings and complaints are all that issue from our mouths. O my reader, be more earnest and diligent in seeking for grace to enable thee to be praising God continually.

“But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb 13:16). Here is the *fifth sacrifice* which the Christian is to offer unto God, namely, that of *ministering to others*, for all the acts and duties of love may fitly be termed “sacrifices.” In the previous verse, the apostle has shown the great obligation *Godwards* which the sanctification of the church by the blood of Christ places upon its members, but here he makes known what influence it ought to have upon our conduct *manwards*. Thus, he turns from the first table of the law to the second, and insists that if redemption places us under additional obligations to love God with all our hearts, it likewise supplies added reasons why we should love our neighbours as ourselves.

The first word of verse 16 is a connective, but the commentators differ as to how it should be translated. Calvin’s (1509-1564) annotators insist it should be rendered “And.” John Owen suggested “Moreover.” Our translators preferred “But.” There is no material difference in these variants. If “but” be retained, it is *not* to be taken as exceptional, as though it introduced something adverse unto what had previously been presented. It is clearly a continuation, or an addition to the duty mentioned in verse 15. As some might think that the *entire* duty of the Christian was comprehended in rendering to God that homage and devotion to which He is justly entitled, and that while we attend to that, nothing else need concern us, the apostle *added*, “*But*”—notwithstanding the diligence required in the former duty—forget not to do good unto men and minister to their needs.

Herein we may perceive once more how carefully the Scriptures preserve the *balance* of truth at every point. The divine law is a unit, yet was it written upon *two* tablets of stone, and the one must never be exalted to the disparagement of the other. True, there is an *order* to be observed. God Himself ever has the first claim upon our hearts, time, and strength. Nevertheless our fellow-creatures, and particularly our fellow-believers, also have real claims upon us, which we must not ignore. To disregard the second table of the law, is not only to inflict an injury upon our neighbours, but it is to disobey and therefore to displease God Himself. There is an harmony in obedience, and a failure in any one point disturbs the whole, as is evident from James 2:10-11. It is for this reason, then, that our verse closes with “for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

It was at this very point that Israel failed so often under the old covenant. Instead of treating their servants considerately, they imposed upon them. Instead of ministering to the widow, they robbed her. Instead of relieving the poor, they oppressed them. Nevertheless, they were very strict in keeping up their worship of JEHOVAH! A striking example of this is recorded in the first half of Isaiah 58.

The prophet was bidden to cry aloud and spare not, but to show the people their sins. They had sought God “daily,” “forsook not his ordinances,” yea, took “delight” in approaching Him (Isa 58:2). They were diligent in “fasting,” yet God *accepted not* their worship, saying, “Is not *this* the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?” (Isa 58:6-7).

Another solemn example is found in Zechariah 7. God challenges them by asking, “When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast *unto me*, even to me?” (Zec 7:5). Then the prophet cried, “Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart” (Zec 7:9-10). What a strange anomaly human nature presents! How glaring its inconsistencies! Punctilious in the performances of public worship, yet utterly remiss in attending to private duties! Diligent and zealous in keeping the fasts and feasts of the Lord, yet regardless of the needs and cries of their destitute fellows! How is such to be accounted for? Easily—it bolsters up self-righteousness, feeds the idea that the favour of God can be purchased by the creature, and causes such Pharisees to be looked up to for their “holiness” (?) by certain superficial people.

Hence it is that the duties of benevolence, inculcated in our text, are preceded by “forget not,” intimating there is a more than ordinary proneness in professors of the Gospel to neglect them. It is *a sinful neglect* which is here prohibited. John Owen suggested four reasons or vicious habits of mind from which such forgetfulness proceeds. First, “an undue trust unto religious duties, as in many barren professors,” by which he means those who set a high value upon their religious acts and think to win heaven thereby. How many there be who contribute liberally to “the church” and yet underpay their employees and overcharge their customers!—the gifts of such are a stench in God’s nostrils.

Second, “from vain pleas and pretences against their duties attended with trouble and charge.” It is much easier and pleasanter to go to the house of prayer and sing God’s praises, than it is to enter the dwellings of the poor and personally wait upon those who are sick. It costs less to put a coin in the collection plate than it does to feed and clothe the destitute. Third, “a want of that goodness of nature and disposition which effectual grace will produce.” The spirit of Christ in the heart will produce consideration and concern for others, and counteract our innate selfishness, but where Christ is absent, the devil rules the heart. Fourth, “A want of that compassion toward sufferers, which is required of them that are still in the

body, Hebrews 13:3.” May God preserve us from all religion that hardens and produces callousness, stifling even “natural affection.”

“But to do good and to communicate forget not” (Heb 13:16). “It is the duty of Christians to express their gratitude to God for His goodness to them, through Christ Jesus, by doing good—i.e., by performing acts of beneficence—in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, relieving the distressed, and in this way communicating to their poor and afflicted brethren of the blessings Providence has conferred on them. While the terms are of that general kind as to express beneficence and the communication of benefits generally, it seems probable that the apostle had a direct reference to doing good by communicating to others *those* blessings for which they were especially bound to give thanks. It is the duty of Christians to do good to their fellow-men by communicating to them, so far as this is competent to them, those heavenly and *spiritual* blessings for which they are bound continually to give thanks to God” (John Brown, 1722-1787).

“But to do good and to communicate forget not.” That which is here inculcated is *the sacrifice of love* unto our fellows. Two words are used to set forth this duty. First, “do good” which concerns the whole course of our lives, especially with regard to others. Three things are included. First, a gracious propensity or readiness of mind thereto, “the liberal deviseth liberal things” (Isa 32:8). He does not wait till he is asked, but seeks to be on the alert and anticipate the needs of others. Second, the actual exercise of this benevolent inclination, in all those ways which will be useful and helpful, spiritually and temporally, to mankind. Idealizing and theorizing is not sufficient—there must be the acting out of good will. Third, by buying up all occasions and opportunities for the exercise of compassion and lovingkindness to others.

A spirit of philanthropy and benevolence is to be manifested by well-doing. It is not enough to *be* good, we must *do* good. “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1Jo 3:18). “Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman *was full of good works* and almsdeeds which she did” (Act 9:36). Her charitable actions are called “good works” because they were profitable and did good to others. Nor is this ministering to the wants of others to be confined unto the members of our own family or even the limits of our denomination. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto *all men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal 6:10)—therein the spirit of Christianity differs from the narrow and clannish spirit of all other religions. God does good unto all men, and we are to be emulators of him “as dear children” (Eph 5:1).

“But to do good and to communicate forget not” (Heb 13:16). Christians are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph 2:10), regeneration capacitating them thereunto. Christ gave Himself for us that we should be a people who are “zealous of good works” (Ti 2:14), for by them we honour Him and adorn our profession. No matter what self-sacrifice they entail, nor how ungrateful be the

beneficiaries, we are to be diligent and persevering in helping all we can, “But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing” (2Th 3:13). “For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” (1Pe 2:15). And even though our well-doing fails to silence the criticism of those who believe not, yea, if our perseverance therein brings down upon us increased opposition and persecution, yet it is written, “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1Pe 4:19).

The second term used here in connection with the sacrifice of charity is “communicate,” which means passing on to others what God has entrusted to us, according as their necessities do require. Literally, the Greek word signifies “having something in common with others.” It is the *actual exercise* of that pity for the poor and indigent which is required of us in the distribution of good things unto them, according to our ability. This is an important evangelical duty which the Scriptures repeatedly charge us with—the glory of God, the salvation of our souls, and the honour of our profession are highly concerned therein. It is striking to note that when he commended the Corinthians for their liberal contributions to the poor saints at Jerusalem, the apostle declared that “they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ” (2Co 9:13)—obedience to the command in our text is required by *the Gospel*!

John Owen rightly pointed out that “to be negligent herein is to despise the wisdom of God in the disposal of the lots and conditions of His own children in the world in so great variety, as He hath done always, and will always continue to do.” What light that throws on those providential dispensations of God which are often so mysterious and exercising to the hearts of many of His people! Here is an important reason intimated why God blesses a few of His saints with considerable of this world’s goods, and why many of them have scarcely any at all—it is to provide opportunity and occasion for the exercise of those graces in them which their several conditions call for. By the unequal distribution of His material mercies, the rich have opportunity for thankfulness, charity, and bounty. While the poor are called upon to exercise patience, submission, trust, and humility. Where those graces are mutually exercised, there is beauty, order, and harmony, and a revenue of glory unto God.

Christians are rarely more sensible of God’s goodness to them than when giving and receiving in a proper manner. He that gives aright feels the power of divine grace at work in his heart, and he who receives aright is very conscious of divine love and care in such supplies—God is near to both. Consequently, to be selfishly callous on the one hand, or proudly independent and scornful of charity on the other, is to impugn the wisdom of God in His disposal of the varied temporal circumstances of His people. No man is rich or poor merely of himself, but rather to occupy that place in the social order of things which God has designed unto His own glory. From what has been before us, we may see how that

many, even of those who believe not, are the temporal gainers by the death of Christ and the fruits thereof in the lives of His people.

Many and varied are *the motives* which Scripture employs to persuade the saint unto this duty of ministering unto the needy of His fellows. “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again” (Pro 19:17). Do we really believe this? Do we *act* as though we did? The Lord allows none to lose by being generous, but repays him with interest one way or another, either to him or his posterity. “He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse” (Pro 28:27)—the selfish man exposes himself to the ill-will of those whom he callously ignores and brings himself under the providential curse of God. “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law [on this matter], even his prayer shall be abomination” (Pro 28:9)—bear *that* in mind, dear reader, if you wish to have and retain the ear of God.

“Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again” (Luk 6:38). What an inducement is that! How it should stimulate unto liberality those who by nature have a miserly disposition. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat 5:16). How that should encourage us in the performing of good works! “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2Co 9:6). The writer has lived long enough to see many striking examples of both of these classes. “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about *doing good*” (Act 10:38). He was ever thinking of others and ministering to them—feeding the hungry, healing the sick, relieving the distressed, and He has left us an example that we should follow in *His* steps.

Let it be pointed out, however, that God requires us to use *discretion and discrimination* in the bestowments of charity. There is a class of shiftless idlers who are ever ready to impose upon the compassionate and generous heart, and make the benevolence of others a reason for their own indolence. It is positively wrong to encourage those who seek to subsist on the liberality of others, instead of earning their own bread. Indiscriminate giving often does more harm than good. It is our bounden duty to go to the trouble of properly investigating each case on its own merits, instead of allowing our sentiment to override our judgment. God Himself has said, “This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2Th 3:10), and it is sinful for us to *negate* that by giving money to able-bodied loafers.

“For with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb 13:16). Whatever benefits the Christian bestows on others, God regards them as done to Himself and honours them with the name of “sacrifices.” What gracious condescension on His part, that

He should dignify our worthless works as to pronounce them holy and sacred things, acceptable to Himself! Rightly, then, did Calvin point out, “When, therefore, *love* does not prevail among us, we not only rob men of their right, but God Himself, who has by a solemn sentence dedicated to Himself what He has commanded to be done to men.” How this consideration ought to stir us up to the exercise of kindness towards our neighbour. The more we do so, the more pleasure do we give unto Him to whom we are infinitely indebted. Withhold not thy hand, then, from that which delights thy God.

“For with *such* sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb 13:16). There is a twofold emphasis in the word “such.” First, it implies a contrast, denoting that God no longer required those ancient sacrifices which He had enjoined until an abrogation of the old covenant. Herein was a clear intimation that Judaism had been set aside. Second, it graciously stresses the fact that, though *we* deem our feeble praises and charitable works as too poor to be worthy of notice or mention, *God Himself* regards those very things as acts of worship that meet with His hearty approbation.

A beautiful illustration of what has just been pointed out is found in Philippians 4. The Philippian saints had sent a gift to the apostle Paul, which he not only gratefully acknowledged, but declared that the same was “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God” (Phi 4:18). “Beyond this the highest aspirations of a Christian cannot go. It is all he can wish—it is above all that he can think. To have the approbation of good men is delightful—to have the approbation of our own conscience is more delightful still. But to have the approbation of God, this is surely the highest recompense a creature can reach. This approbation is very strongly expressed in the Word, “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Heb 6:10). It will be still more illustriously displayed when the Son appears in the glory of the Father, and in the presence of an assembled universe proclaims to those who, as a token of gratitude to God for the blessings of salvation, have done good and communicated, “For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me...inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” Matthew 25:35-40” (John Brown).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

70. His Son's Death

“The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment” (Job 20:5)—often so even when measured by human and temporal standards—how much more so in the light of eternity! Alas, that our hearts are so

little affected by that unspeakably solemn consideration—a *never-ending future*—enjoyed under the blissful approbation of God or endured beneath His frightful curse. What are the smiles and honours of men worth, if their sequel be the everlasting frown of the Almighty? The pleasures of sin are but “for a season” (Heb 11:25), whereas the pleasures which are at God’s right hand are “for evermore” (Psa 16:11). Then what shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Yet how many, like Esau of old, place more value upon a mess of pottage than the blessings of heaven? How many, like Ahab, will sell themselves to do evil in order for a brief moment of pleasure or fame?

“The triumphing of the wicked is short” (Job 20:5). Yes, and so it proved with David’s wretched son. Absalom had laid his plans carefully, executed them zealously, and had carried them out without any compunction (2Sa 15:1-2, 5). He had taken a mean advantage of his father’s indisposition and had stolen the hearts of many of his subjects from him. He aspired to the kingdom and now determined to seize the throne for himself (2Sa 15:10). He had assembled his forces at Jerusalem and had the powerful Ahithophel to counsel him. He had ruthlessly determined that his father’s life must be sacrificed to his ambition and now goes forth at the head of the army to accomplish his death (2Sa 17:24). His triumph seemed to be assured, but unknown and unsuspected by himself, he was going forth to meet his own tragic but fully merited doom.

“And David numbered the people that were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them” (2Sa 18:1). As Ahithophel had foreseen, the delay of Absalom had afforded David the opportunity to greatly augment his forces. Though considerable numbers had joined the rebel, yet there must have been many scattered throughout Israel who still remained loyal to David, and as the news of the insurrection spread abroad, no doubt hundreds of them took up arms and went forth to assist their fugitive king. That his arm had, by this time, been greatly strengthened, is clear from the terms of this verse. David now proceeded to muster and marshal his reinforcements so that they might be used to the best advantage. He girded on the sword with some of the animation of early days and the light of trustful valour once more shone in his eyes.

It seems quite clear that, by this time, David had no fear of what the outcome would be of the coming conflict. He had committed his cause to God and looked forward with confidence to the issue of the impending battle. The striking answer which God had given to his prayer, that the counsel of Ahithophel might be turned to foolishness, must have greatly strengthened his faith. His language at the close of both the 42nd and 43rd Psalms (composed at this period) witness to his hope in the living God. Yet let it be duly noted that strong faith did not produce either sloth or carelessness. David acted with diligence and wisdom—marshalling his forces, putting them in good order, dividing them to best advantage, and placing them under the command of his most experienced generals. In order to ensure

success, our responsibility is to employ all lawful and prudent means. Declining to do so is presumption and not faith.

“And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab’s brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite” (2Sa 18:2). How true it is that there is nothing new under the sun. Military tactics were conducted along the same lines then as they are now. David disposed his forces into a central army, with right and left protecting flanks. “And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also” (2Sa 18:2). David was not lacking in courage, and was ready and willing to share any danger with his men. Yet we believe there was something more than bravery evidenced by these words—was he not anxious to be on the spot when the crisis arrived, so that he could protect his wayward son from the fury of his soldiers! Yes, we see here the father’s heart, as well as the king’s nobility.

“And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also” (2Sa 18:2). His desire was still upon Absalom, judging that his presence might help to shield him, for he was of too soft a heart to disown the feelings of a father, even toward one who had risen up in rebellion against him. Yet it seems to us that there was something of a deeper character which prompted David at this time. He would feign go forth himself, because he realized that it was his sin which had brought all this trouble upon the land, and he was far too noble-minded to let the risks of battle find any in the foreground but himself. Let not the reader forget what we pointed out several times in the preceding articles, namely, that it is as the humble penitent David is to be viewed throughout this connection—this it is which supplies the key to various details in these incidents.

“But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now thou art worth ten thousand of us: therefore now it is better that thou succour us out of the city” (2Sa 18:3). This is indeed beautiful. David had shown his affection for his faithful followers and now they evidence theirs for him. They would not hear of their beloved king adventuring himself into the place of danger. How highly they esteemed him! and justly so. He was not only possessed of qualities which could well command, but of those which held the hearts of those who knew him best. The deep veneration in which he was held comes out again at a later date, when he was hazarding his life in battle with the Philistines—his men swore to him saying, “*Thou* shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel” (2Sa 21:17). He was their “light”—their leader, their inspirer, their joy, the honoured and loved one, in favour with God and man.

“And the king said unto them, What seemeth you best I will do. And the king stood by the gate side, and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands” (2Sa 18:4). “He might be more serviceable to them by tarrying in the city, with a reserve of forces there, whence he might send them recruits—that may be a

position of real service, which yet is not a position of danger. The king acquiesced in their reasons and changed his purpose. It is no piece of wisdom to be stiff in our resolutions, but to be willing to hear reason, even from our inferiors, and to be overruled by their advice, when it appears to be for your own good. Whether the people's prudence had an eye to it or no, God's Providence wisely ordered it, that David should not be in the field of battle, for then his tenderness had certainly interposed to save Absalom's life, whom God had determined to destroy" (Matthew Henry).

Personally, we regard the king's acquiescence as another indication of his *chastened heart*. There is nothing that more humbles and meekens the soul as a spirit of genuine repentance, as nothing more tends to harden and swell with self-importance than the absence of it. He who is blind to his own faults and failings is unprepared to listen to the counsel of others—an unbroken will is self-assertive and impervious to either the feelings or wishes of his fellows. But David was sorrowing over his past sins, and that made him tractable and in a condition to yield to the desire of his men. As he stood at the gate, watching his army go forth to the battle of the wood of Ephraim, victory or defeat would be much the same to him. Whatever the outcome, the cause must be traced back to his *own* wrong doing. He must have stood there with a sad remembrance of that other battle, in which a devoted servant had fallen, as one murdered by his own hand (2Sa 11:24).

"And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom" (2Sa 18:5). So great was David's love for his wayward son that, even now, he sought to deliver him from the stroke of death. He knew that Absalom was an excuseless rebel, who sought his life and throne, who had proven himself to be the very incarnation of iniquitous ingratitude, of unfeeling cruelty, of unadulterated wickedness, of Satanic ambition. He was guilty of treason of the vilest sort, and his life by every law of justice was entirely forfeited. Yet in spite of all, the heart of David remained steadfast unto him. There is nothing recorded in Holy Writ which exhibits so vividly the depth and power of human affection, nothing which displays so touchingly *love for the utterly unworthy*. Therefore, is it not designed to turn our thoughts unto a higher and purer Love!?

Yes, see this aged parent, driven from his home, humiliated before his subjects, stricken to the very depths of his heart by the murderous hatred of the son whom he had forgiven and honoured, loving this worthless and devil-driven youth with an unchanged devotion, that sought to save him from his just and impending doom. Yet wonderful as this was, it provided only a faint shadow of the amazing love of Christ, which moved Him to set His heart upon "His own," even while they were totally depraved, utterly contempt, dead in trespasses and sins. God commended His love toward us by the death of His Son (Rom 5:8), and it was for the rebellious and the ungodly that He was crucified. Nor can anything ever

separate us from that love—no, “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (Joh 13:1). Verily, such love “passeth knowledge.”

“So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim” (2Sa 18:6). This statement has presented quite a problem to commentators, some going so far as to (irreverently) say there was a slip of the historian’s pen. As we have seen, both David and Absalom had crossed the Jordan and were now “in the land of Gilead” (2Sa 17:22, 26), which was on the eastward side of the river, whereas *their* territory lay wholly on the west of it. How then, ask the skeptics, could this battle be said to have taken place in “the wood of Ephraim”? Did the narrator err in his geography? Certainly not, it is the critics who display their ignorance of sacred history.

We do not have to go outside of the Scriptures in order to discover the solution to this “serious difficulty.” If we turn back to Judges 12, we discover that an attack was made by “Ephraimites” upon Jephthah in the land of *Gilead*, under pretense of a wrong being done when *they* were not invited by the latter to take part in his successful invasion of Ammon. Jephthah sought to sooth his angry assailants, but in vain. A battle was fought near “the passage of Jordan” (Jdg 12:5), and Ephraim met with fearful slaughter: in all forty-two thousand of their men being put to death. Now an event so fearful was not likely to pass away without some memorial, and what more natural than to name their grave, the Aceldama of their tribe, by this name “the wood of Ephraim” (2Sa 18:6) in the land of Gilead!

For a short while the battle was furious, but the issue was not long left in doubt—the rebels suffering a heavy defeat, “The people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men. For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country: and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured” (2 Sam. 18:7-8). “Now they smarted justly for their treason against their lawful prince, their uneasiness under so good a government, and their base ingratitude to so good a governor; and found what it was to take up arms for an usurper, who with his kisses and caresses had wheedled them into their own ruin. Now where are the rewards, the preferments, the golden days, they promise themselves from him? Now they see what it is to take counsel against the Lord and His anointed, and to think of breaking His bands asunder” (Matthew Henry).

Most evident was it on which side the Lord was. All was confusion and destruction in the ranks of the apostate. The anointed eye may discern the hand of God as manifest here as, on a former occasion, it has been at Gibeon—as there the “hailstones,” so here the “wood” devoured more than the sword. No details are given, so it is useless to conjecture whether it was pits and bogs or the wild beasts that infested those forests—sufficient that it was God Himself who fought against them—conquering them by a much smaller force than their own, and then, their being pursued by His destructive providences when they sought to escape the

sword. Nevertheless, such wholesale slaughter of Israel—in view of their surrounding enemies—was a serious calamity for David’s kingdom.

And meanwhile, what of the arch-traitor himself? Ah, he is dealt with separately, and that, in a manner which still more conspicuously displayed God’s hand—he was “made a show of openly.” “And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away” (2Sa 18:9). Those boughs, like the hands of a giant, gripped him, holding him fast either by his neck or by his luxuriant hair (2Sa 14:26). His beast continued its progress, leaving him there, as though glad to be rid of such a burden. There he was suspended, between heaven and earth, to intimate he was fit for neither. Behold the striking Providence of this, “*Cursed* is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal 3:13)! There he hung as an object of shame, filled with terror, incapable of delivering himself, unable to either fight or flee. He remained in this direful situation for some considerable time, awaiting with horror his merited doom.

Full opportunity was now afforded him to meditate upon his crimes and make peace with God. But, alas, so far as the sacred record informs us, there was no contrition on his part, nothing to intimate that he now felt unfit to either live or die. As God declared of Jezebel, “I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not” (Rev 2:21), so the life of Absalom was spared a few more hours, but no hint is given us that he confessed his fearful sins to God before being summoned into His holy presence. No, God had no place in his thoughts—as he had lived, so he died—defiant and impenitent. His father’s love, tears, and prayers were wasted on him. Absalom’s case presents to us one of the darkest pictures of fallen human nature to be met with in the whole of God’s Word.

A more melancholy and tragic spectacle can scarcely be imagined than Absalom dangling from the boughs of that tree. Deserted by his fellows, for they had one and all left him to his fate; abandoned by God, now that the cup of his iniquity was filled; a prey to remorse, for though utterly heartless and conscienceless, his thoughts now must have been of the gloomiest nature. Quite unable to free himself, he was compelled to wait, hour after hour, until someone came and put an end to his wretched life. What an unspeakably solemn object lesson is this for the young people of our day! How clearly the fearful end of Absalom demonstrated the Lord’s abhorrence of rebellion against parents! God’s Word tells us that it is *the fool* who “despiseth his father’s instruction” (Pro 15:5), and that, “Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness” (Pro 20:20), and again, “The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it” (Pro 30:17).

The sands of his hour glass had now almost run out. “And a certain man saw it, and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak” (2Sa 18:10).

This man had beheld Absalom's tragic plight, but had made no effort to extricate him, instead, he went and reported it to the general. "And Joab said unto the man that told him, And, behold, thou sawest him, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? and I would have given thee ten shekels of silver, and a girdle. And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in mine hand, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom" (2Sa 18:11-12). And here we must stop—amidst so much that is revolting—it is a welcome contrast to behold the obedience of this man to his royal master.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

6. The Davidic

We closed last month's article by pointing out the successive steps by which God gradually made known the counsels of His will which were to eventuate in the advent and incarnation of His Son. Under the Davidic covenant, the royal dignity of the Messiah was for the first time definitely revealed. It should however be pointed out that a remarkable anticipation of this was given through the inspired Song of Hannah, recorded in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. Therein we find a blessed blending of the typical with the prophetic, whereby the former pointed forward to things of a similar nature, but of higher and wider importance. In other words, typical transactions supplied the material for a prediction of something analogous yet much loftier and grander in kind. The future was anticipated by present incidents, so ordered by God as to foreshadow Gospel verities, the historical thus serving as a mold to give prophetic shape to the future things of God's kingdom.

Hannah's song was evoked, under the moving of the Holy Spirit, by the birth of Samuel. The spiritual life of Israel was then at a very low ebb. The natural barrenness which had previously characterised Hannah adumbrated the sterility of the nation Godwards. The provocation which she received from "her adversary," and which provoked her sorely (1Sa 1:6), was a figure of the contempt in which Israel was held by her foes, the surrounding nations. The feebleness of Eli and his lack of discernment, imaged the decrepitude of the religious leaders in general, "In those days; there was no open vision" (1Sa 3:1). The corruptness of Eli's sons and the readiness of the people to offer them bribes indicate clearly the sad level to which conditions had sunk. Such, in brief, is an historical outline of the situation at that time, typically featured in the items we have mentioned.

The gratitude and joy of Hannah when the Lord opened her womb, served as a suitable occasion for the Spirit to utter through her the prophetic song alluded to above. Deeply moved at having received the child of her hopes and prayers, which

she had devoted from his birth as a Nazarite to the Lord's service, her soul was stirred by a prophetic impulse and her vision enlarged to perceive that *her* experience in becoming a mother was a "sign" of the spiritual fruitfulness of the true Israel of God in the distant future. Under that prophetic impulse she took a comprehensive survey of the general scheme of God, observing that gracious sovereignty which delights to exalt the humble piety, but which pours contempt on the proud and rebellious, until in the final crescendo she exclaimed, "The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed" (1Sa 2:10).

Remarkable indeed is that language. The final words "his anointed" are literally, "his Messiah" or "Christ"! This is the first time in Holy Writ that blessed title is found in its most distinctive sense, though as we all know, it occurs hundreds of times afterwards as the synonym for the consecrated King, or head of the divine kingdom. The other expressions in the same verse, "The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces" and "the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth" show that it was of *the Messiah's kingdom* that Hannah was moved by the Holy Spirit to speak. How striking, then, is it to see that the historical features of Hannah's day possessed an undoubted typical significance, and that they formed the basis of a prophecy which was to receive its fulfillment in the distant future! This supplies a valuable key to many of the later Messianic predictions!

Any possible doubt as to the prophetic purport of Hannah's song is at once removed by a comparison of the "Magnificat" uttered by Mary at the announcement of the Messiah's birth, see Luke 1:46-55. It is indeed striking to find how the Virgin re-echoed the same sentiments and in some instances repeated the very words used by the mother of Samuel a thousand years previously. "Why should the Spirit, breathing at such a time in the soul of Mary, have turned her thoughts so nearly into the channel that had been struck out ages before by the pious Hannah? Or why should the circumstances connected with the birth of Hannah's Nazarite offspring have proved the occasion of strains which so distinctly pointed to the manifestation of the King of Glory, and so closely harmonize with those actually sung in celebration of the event? Doubtless to mark the *connection* really subsisting between the two. It is the Spirit's own *intimation* of His ultimate design in transactions long since past, and testimonies delivered centuries before—namely, to herald the advent of Messiah, and familiarize the children of the kingdom with the essential character of the coming dispensation" (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874).

The combination of typical history with prophetic utterance which we observe in Hannah's song, is seen again and again in the later Scriptures, where the predictive feature is more extended and the typical element in the transactions which gave rise to it more definite. Such is especially the case with the Messianic Psalms, which being of a lyrical character afforded a freer play of the emotions

than could be suitably introduced into more formal prophecy. But this, in turn, had its basis in the intimate connection there was between the present and the future, so that the feelings awakened by the one naturally incorporated themselves into the delineations of the other. It was the very institution of the temporal kingdom in the person and family of David which constituted both the ground and occasion of the predictions concerning Christ's future kingdom, and how beautifully the type prefigured the Antitype it will be our delight (D.V.) yet to notice.

The introduction of the royal sceptre into the hands of an Israelitish family produced *a radical change in the theocracy*, one that was calculated to draw the attention of the people more to the earthly and visible, and remove their minds from the heavenly and eternal. The constitution under which JEHOVAH, through Moses, had placed them, though it did not absolutely prohibit the appointing of a king, yet was of such a character that it seemed far more likely to suffer than be aided by the allowing of what would consist so largely of *the human* element. Till the time of Samuel it was strictly a theocracy—a commonwealth that had no recognized head but the Lord Himself, and which placed everything that concerned life and well-being under His immediate government. It was the distinguishing glory of Israel as a nation that they stood in this near relation to God, evoking that outburst of praise from Moses, “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms....Happy art thou, O Israel: *who is like unto thee*, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help” (Deu 33:27, 29).

But alas! Israel was far too carnal to appreciate the peculiar favour God had shown them, as was made evident when they sought to be like the Gentiles, by having a human king of their own. That was tantamount to saying they no longer desired that JEHOVAH should be their immediate sovereign, that they lusted after a larger measure of self-government. But this was not the only evil likely to result from the proposed change. “Everything under the old covenant bore reference to *the future* and more perfect dispensation of the Gospel, and the ultimate reason of any important feature or material change in respect to the former can never be understood without taking into account the bearing it might have on the future state and prospects of men under the Gospel. But how could any change in the constitution of ancient Israel, and especially such a change as the people contemplated, when they desired a king after the manner of the Gentiles, be adopted without altering matters in this respect to the worst?

“The dispensation of the Gospel was to be, in a peculiar sense, the ‘kingdom of heaven’ or of God, having for its high end and aim the establishment of a near and blessed intercourse between God and man. It attains to its consummation when the vision seen by St. John, and described after the pattern of the constitution actually set up in the wilderness, comes into fulfillment—when ‘the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them’ (Rev 21:3). Of this consummation it was a striking and impressive image that was presented in the original structure of the Israelitish commonwealth, wherein God Himself sustained the office of *king*, and

had His peculiar residence and appropriate manifestations of glory in the midst of His people. And when they, in their carnal affection for a worldly institute, clamoured for an earthly sovereign, they not only discovered a lamentable indifference towards what constituted their highest honour, but betrayed also a want of discernment and faith in regard to God's prospective and ultimate design in connection with their provisional economy" (Patrick Fairbairn).

In view of what has been before us, it is not to be wondered at that God manifested His displeasure at the fleshly demand for a human king, and that He declared to Samuel that the nation had thereby virtually rejected Himself (1Sa 8:7). It is but natural that we should inquire why, then, did the Lord yield to their evil desire? Ah, wondrous indeed are the ways of Him with whom we have to do—the very thing which the people, in their sin, lusted after, served to supply on a lower plain *a striking adumbration* of the nature and glory which Christ's kingdom should yet assume on a higher plane—it was the eternal purpose of God that He would ultimately entrust the rule of the universe unto the Man of His own right hand! Thus the divine procedure on this occasion supplies one of the most striking instances found in all the Old Testament of the overruling Providence of God, whereby He is able to bring a clean thing out of an unclean.

God not only averted the serious damage which Israel's demands threatened to do unto the theocracy, but He turned it to good account, in familiarizing the minds of future generations with what was designed to constitute the grand feature of the Messianic kingdom, namely, the Son of God assuming *human* nature. After the people had been solemnly admonished for their guilt in the appointing of a king after *their* worldly principles, they were permitted to raise one of their number to the throne, though *not* as an absolute and independent sovereign, but as the deputy of JEHOVAH, ruling in the name and in subordination to the will of God, and for this reason his throne was called "the throne of the LORD" (1Ch 29:23). But to render His purpose the more evident to those who had eyes to see, the Lord allowed the earthly throne to be first occupied by one who was little disposed to submit to the authority of heaven, and was therefore supplanted by another, who, as God's representative, is over thirty times called His "*servant*."

It was in this second person, David, that the kingly administration of Israel properly began. He was the root and foundation of the earthly kingdom—as a "kingdom"—in which the divine and the human were *officially* united, as they were ultimately to be in a hypostatic or *personal* union. Most remarkably did the shaping Providence of God cause the preparatory and typical to shadow forth the ultimate and antitypical, making the various trials through which David passed ere he reached the throne, and the conflicts in which he engaged subsequently, to prefigure throughout the sufferings, work, and kingdom of the Messiah. A whole volume might well be devoted to a full amplification of that statement, showing how, in the broad outlines, the entire history of David possessed a typical significance, so that it was really a prophetic panorama. The same principle

applies with equal force to many of his Psalms, where we find historical events turned into sacred songs, in such a way that they became *predictions* of what was to be realized by Christ *on a grander scale*.

It was in this way that what had otherwise tended to veil the purpose of God, and obstruct the principle design of His preparations under the old covenant, was made to be one of the most effective means for revealing and promoting it. “The earthly head, that now under God stood over the members of the commonwealth, instead of overshadowing His authority, only presented this more distinctly to their view, and served as a stepping-stone to faith, in enabling it to rise nearer to the apprehension of that personal indwelling of Godhead, which was to constitute the foundation and the glory of the Gospel dispensation. For occasion was taken to unfold the more glorious future in its practical features with an air of individuality and distinctness, with a variety of detail and vividness of colouring, not to be met with in any other portions of prophetic Scripture” (Patrick Fairbairn).

As an illustration of this combination of *typical history with prophecy*, we refer to the second Psalm—which we hope to consult again in a later article. It has been termed “an inaugural hymn” designed to celebrate the appointment and triumph of JEHOVAH’s King. The heathen nations are pictured as opposing (Psa 2:1-2), as vowing together that if such an appointment were consummated, they would defy it (Psa 2:3). Notwithstanding, the Most High, disdaining the threats of such puny adversaries (Psa 2:4), accomplishes His counsel. The everlasting decree goes forth that the anointed King is established on Zion, and because He is God’s own Son, He is made *the Heir* of all things, even to the uttermost limits of the earth (Psa 2:5-9). The Psalm therefore closes with a call to earth’s rulers to submit to the sceptre of the King of kings, warning them of the sure doom that would follow defiance.

Before pointing out the obvious connection of this Psalm with the life and history of David, let us carefully note the entire absence of any slavish *liberality*. In his elevation to the throne of Israel, David was *not* opposed by heathen nations and their rulers, for they probably knew little and certainly cared less about it. Again, his being anointed king certainly did *not* synchronize with his being set on the holy hill of Zion, for there was an interval of some years between them. Moreover, when he was established in the kingdom, there is no record of his pressing the claims of his dominion on other monarchs, demanding that they pay allegiance to *him*. We emphasise these points, not to suggest there is any failure in the type, but as a warning against that modern species of literalism which so often reduces the Scriptures to an absurdity.

Shall we, then, go to an opposite extreme, and say there is no real relation between this Messianic Psalm and the life and kingdom of David? Surely not. Certainly it *has*, and a relation so close that *his* experiences were the beginning of what, on a higher plane and on a larger scale, was to be accomplished in His Son and Lord. While the language there employed for celebrating the Messianic King and His kingdom rises high above the experiences which pertain to His prototype,

yet it bears the impress of them. In both alike, we see the sovereign determination on the part of God to the regal office. In each case, there is opposition of the most violent and heathenish kind to withstand that appointment—in David’s case, first on the part of Saul, and then of Abner and Ishbosheth. In each case, we behold the slow but sure removal of all the obstacles raised against the purpose of God, and the extension of the sphere of empire till it reaches the limits of the divine grant. The lines of history are parallel, the agreement between type and antitype unmistakable.

CHRIST OUR EXEMPLAR

“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1Jo 2:6). Let it be duly considered that the principle design of the apostle in this epistle is to exhibit certain signs and marks, both negative and positive, for the examination or trial of men’s claims to be Christians (see 1Jo 5:13). It is in *that* light our verse must be interpreted—the *proof* of a saving interest in Christ is our *imitation* of Him. Were this criterion faithfully insisted upon, today from the pulpit much of the empty profession now abounding would be clearly exposed. A claim is made, “He that *saith* he abideth in him,” which signifies an interest in and communion with Him. The only way in which that claim can be *established* is by *walking* as Christ walked—*following* the example He has left us.

“Every man is bound to the imitation of Christ under penalty of forfeiting his claim to Christ. The necessity of this imitation of Christ convincingly appears in divers ways. First, *from the established order of salvation*, which is fixed and unalterable. God that hath appointed the end, hath also established the means and order by which men shall attain the ultimate end. Now conformity to Christ is the established method in which God will bring many souls to glory, ‘For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren’ (Rom 8:29). The same God who hath predestinated men to salvation, hath in order thereunto, predestinated them unto conformity to Christ and this order of heaven is never to be reversed—we may as well hope to be saved without Christ, as to be saved without conformity to Christ.

“Secondly, *the nature of Christ-mystical* requires this conformity and renders it indispensably necessary. Otherwise, the body of Christ must be *heterogeneous*—of a nature different from the Head, and how monstrous and uncomely would this be! This would represent Christ to the world in an image, or idea, much like that, ‘This image’s head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and

his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay' (Dan 2:32-33). Christ, the Head, is pure and holy, and therefore very unsuitable to sensual and worldly members. And therefore the apostle in his description of Christ-mystical, describes the *members* of Christ (as they ought to be) of the same nature and quality with the Head: 'As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly; and as we have borne the image of the earthly, so we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.' That image or resemblance of Christ, which shall be complete and perfect after the resurrection, must be begun in its first draught here by the work of regeneration.

"Thirdly, this resemblance and conformity to Christ appears necessary from the communion which all believers have with Him in the same spirit of grace and holiness. Believers are called Christ's '*fellows*' or co-partners (Psa 45:7) from their participation with Him of the same Spirit. God giveth the same Spirit unto us, which He more plentifully poured out upon Christ. Now where the same Spirit and principle is, there the same fruits and operations must be produced, according to the proportions and measures of the Spirit of grace communicated, and this reason is farther enforced by the very design and end of God in the infusion of the Spirit of grace—for it is plain from Ezekiel 36:27 that practical holiness and obedience are the scope and design of that infusion of the Spirit. The very innate property of the Spirit of God in men is to elevate their minds, set their affections upon heavenly things, purge their hearts from earthly dross, and fit them for a life of holiness and obedience. Its nature also is *assimilating*, and changeth them in whom it is into the same image with Jesus Christ, their heavenly Head, 2 Corinthians 3:18.

"Fourthly, the necessity of this imitation of Christ may be argued from the design and end of Christ's exhibition to the world in a body of flesh. For though we detest that doctrine of the Socinians, which makes the exemplary life of Christ to be the whole end of His incarnation, yet we must not run so far from an error as to lose a precious truth. We say, the satisfaction of His blood was a main and principal end of His incarnation, according to Matthew 20:28. We affirm also, that it was a great design and end of the incarnation of Christ to set before us a pattern of holiness for our imitation, for so speaks the apostle, He hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps (1Pe 2:21), and this example of Christ greatly obliges believers to His imitation, 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus' (Phi 2:5).

"Fifthly, our imitation of Christ is one of those great articles which every man is to subscribe, whom Christ will admit into the number of His disciples. 'Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple' (Luk 14:27), and again, 'If any man serve me, let him follow me' (Joh 12:26). To this condition we have submitted, if we be sincere believers, and therefore are strictly bound to the imitation of Christ, not only by God's *command*, but by our own *consent*. But if we profess interest in Christ, when our hearts never consented

to follow and imitate His example, then are we self-deceiving hypocrites, wholly disagreeing from the Scripture character of believers. They that are Christ's are there described as walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

“Sixthly, *the honour of Christ* necessitates the conformity of Christians to His example, else what way is there left to stop detracting mouths, and to vindicate the name of Christ from the reproaches of the world? How can wisdom be justified of her children, except it be this way? By what means shall we cut off occasion from such as desire occasion, but by regulating our lives by Christ's example? The world hath eyes to see what we *practice*, as well as ears to hear what we *profess*. Therefore, either show the consistency between your profession and practice, or you can never hope to vindicate the name and honour of the Lord Jesus” (John Flavell, 17th Century Puritan, 1630-1691).

From all that has now been before us we may draw the following inferences. First, if all who claim a saving interest in Christ are strictly bound to imitate Him, then it follows that *Christianity is very unjustly charged* by the world with the evils and scandals of empty professors. Nothing can be more unrighteous and unreasonable, for Christianity severely censures loose and scandalous actions in all professors and therefore is *not* to be blamed for them. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Ti 2:11-12). Really, it is an argument greatly in favour of Christianity that even wicked men covet the name of it, though they only cloak their sins under it.

Second, if all professors forfeit their claim to a saving interest in Christ who endeavour not to sincerely and earnestly imitate Him in the holiness of His life, then *how small a number* of real Christians are there in the world! If flowery talking without strict walking, if common profession without holy practice, if church membership without denying self and treading the narrow way were sufficient to constitute a Christian, then a considerable percentage of earth's population would be entitled to that name. But if Christ owns none but those who follow the example that He has left, then His flock is indeed a little one. The vast majority of those who claim to be Christians have a name to live, but are dead (Rev 3:1), being such as walk after the flesh, following the course of this world, and yielding their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin (Rom 6:13). The demands of Christ are too rigid for them—they prefer the broad road where the majority are found.

Third, *what blessed times* we should witness if true Christianity once generally obtained and prevailed in the world! How it would humble the proud, meeken the self-willed, and spiritualize those that are carnal! A perverse world has often charged Christianity with being the cause of all the tumults which are in it, whereas nothing but pure Christianity, in the power of it, can cure those epidemics of evil. If the great majority of our fellows were regenerated by the Spirit and

brought to walk after Christ in holiness, living in meekness and self-denial, then would our prisons be closed—armies and navies done away with, jealousies and animosities removed, the wilderness and solitary places be glad, and the desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose. That is what constitutes the great difference between heaven and a world that lies in the wicked one—holiness is the very atmosphere of the former, whereas it is hated and banned here.

Fourth, it also follows that *real Christians are the best companions*. It is a blessed thing to consort with those who are genuinely seeking to follow the examples of Christ, for the holiness, heavenly-mindedness, and spiritual graces which were in Him, in their measure, are to be found in all true disciples of His. They show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into light. Something of the fruit of the Spirit is to be seen in all those whom He indwells. Yet it must be remembered that there is a great deal of difference between one Christian and another, and that the best is sanctified but in part. If there be something engaging and sweet, there is also that which is distasteful and bitter in the most spiritual and mature saints. This it is which gives us occasion to forbear one another in love. Nevertheless, this is most certain, that notwithstanding all their infirmities and corruptions, the Lord's people are the best companions to be found on this earth. Happy are they who are now enjoying fellowship with those in whom can be discerned the likeness of Christ.

Fifth, if no man's claim to being Christ's be warranted except so far as he is walking according to Him, then *how groundless and worthless* are the expectation of all unsanctified persons who walk after their own lusts. "None are more forward to claim the privileges of religion than those that reject the duties of it—multitudes hope to be saved by Christ, who yet refuse to be governed by Him. But such hopes have no Scripture warrant to support them—yea, they have many Scripture testimonies against them. 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God' (1Co 6:9-10). O how many thousand vain hopes are laid in the dust, and how many thousand souls are sentenced to hell by this one Scripture!" (John Flavel, 1660).

Then how it behooves those of us who profess to be Christian to be not conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. How we should strive to follow Christ's steps. *That* should be the great business of our lives, as it is the chief scope of the Gospel. If Christ has conformed Himself to us by taking upon Him our nature, how reasonable it is that we should conform ourselves to Him in a way of obedience and sanctification. He came under the law for our sakes (Gal 4:4), then the least we can do in return is to gladly take His yoke upon us. It was Christ's abasement to conform Himself to those who were infinitely beneath Him—it will be our advancement to conform ourselves to Him

who is so high above us. Surely the love of Christ must constrain us to spare no efforts to “grow up into him in *all* things” (Eph 4:15).

If we shall be conformed to Him in glory, how logical it is that we should now conform ourselves to Him in holiness. “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1Jo 3:2), like Him not only in our souls, but our bodies, too, will be transformed like unto His (Phi 3:21). What a motive is this to bring us into conformity with Christ here, especially seeing that our conformity to Him in holiness is the *evidence of* our conformity to Him in glory (Rom 6:5). The conformity of our lives to Christ is our highest excellence in this world, for the measure of our grace is to be estimated by this rule. So far as we imitate Christ, and no farther, are we of any real help and benefit to those around us. Contrariwise, the less we be conformed to Christ, the greater hindrances and stumblingblocks are we both to the saved and unsaved. What a weighty and solemn consideration is this! How it should drive us to our knees, seeking grace to become closer followers of Christ.

“That ye would *walk worthy* of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory” (1Th 2:12). By “worthiness,” the apostle had no reference to what is meritorious, but to that comeliness and decorum which befits a Christian. As Davenant (1492-1552) has pointed out, “The word ‘worthy’ as used in Scripture does not always denote an exact proportion of equality between one thing and another, but a certain suitableness and fitness which excludes inconsistency.” Now to walk worthy of God is to walk as *Christ* walked, and any deviation from that standard is a reflection upon our profession and a reproach upon Him. It is for our own peace and joy that we be conformed to Christ’s pattern. The answer of a good conscience and the smile of God’s approbation are rich compensation for denying the flesh. A comfortable death is the ordinary close of a holy life, “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace” (Psa 37:37). Then let us make every effort unto a closer following of Christ.

In drawing to a conclusion, let us seek to pen a few lines of comfort to those who are cast down by the realization of how far, far short they come to measuring up to the standard which Christ has set before them. According to the yearnings of the new nature, you *have* sincerely endeavoured to follow Christ’s example, but being weak in grace and meeting with much opposition from the flesh and temptations from the devil, you have been frequently turned aside from the holy purposes and designs of your honest hearts to the great grief and discouragement of your souls. You can heartily say with David, “O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!” (Psa 119:5), and you have tried hard and long to follow after exact holiness, “If by any means” you might attain unto it. But your efforts have been repeatedly thwarted, your aspirations dashed, and you have to cry, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?” (Rom 7:24).

First, let us assure the genuinely exercised soul that such defects in obedience do not invalidate your justification, or in any wise affect your acceptance with and

standing before God. Your justification is built *not* upon *your* obedience, but upon *Christ's*. However imperfect you are in yourself, you are “complete in him” (Col 2:10). Woe had it been to Abraham, Moses, David, Paul, if their justification had depended upon their own holiness and good works. Let not, then, your sad failures dampen your joy in Christ, but rather be increasingly thankful for His robe of righteousness which hides your filthy rags! Second, your heart-anguish over your unlikeness to Christ, instead of being a proof that you are less sanctified than those who *grieve not* over their lack of conformity to Him, evidences you are *more* sanctified than they, for it shows you are better acquainted with your heart than they are, have a deeper loathing of sin, and love God more. The most eminent saints have made the bitterest lamentation on this account, Psalm 38:4.

Third, the Holy Spirit makes an excellent use of your infirmities and turns your failures unto your spiritual advantages. By those very defects, He hides pride from your eyes, subdues your self-righteousness, causes you to appreciate more deeply the riches of free grace, and place a higher value upon the precious blood of the Lamb. By your many falls, He makes you to long more ardently for heaven and gradually reconciles you to the prospect of death. The more a holy soul is buffeted by sin and Satan, the more sincerely will he cry, “Oh that I had wings, like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest” (Psa 55:6). “O the blessed chemistry of heaven, to extract such mercies out of such miseries” (John Flavell), to make sweet flowers spring up out of such bitter roots. Fourth, your bewailed infirmities do not break the bond of the everlasting covenant—that holds firm, notwithstanding your many defects and corruptions. “Iniquities prevail against me,” said David, yet in the same breath he added, “Thou shalt purge them away” (Psa 65:3).

Fifth, though the defects of your obedience are grievous to God, yet your deep sorrows for them are well-pleasing in His sight, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psa 51:17). Sixth, your very grief is a conformity to Christ, for when here, He was the “man of sorrows” (Isa 53:3). If He suffered because of our sins, shall we not be made to weep over them? Seventh, “Though God has left many defects to humble you, yet He hath given many things to comfort. This is a comfort, that the desire of thy soul is to God and the remembrance of His name. This is a comfort, that thy sins are not thy delight as once they were, but thy shame and sorrow. This is a comfort, that thy case is not singular, but more or less the *same* complaints and sorrows are found in *all* gracious souls through the world” (John Flavell, to whom we are indebted for much of the above).

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

14. *Its Practice*

Ere seeking to open up this final phase of our many-sided subject, we had better make quite clear *the relation* between it and what has preceded. The believer possesses now a sanctification which is absolute, complete, and inalienable. He was sanctified by God the Father from all eternity, when chosen in Christ and blessed with all spiritual blessings in Him (Eph 1:3-4). He was sanctified by God the Son at the completion of His redemptive work upon the cross (Heb 13:12). He was sanctified by God the Spirit at regeneration (2Th 2:13). Now this should, and does, produce radical effects in his life, though these effects vary considerably, both in specie and degree, in different cases—which variations are, in their final analysis, to be attributed unto the sovereignty of God's grace. Looking at the same thing in another way, we may say that this grand blessing and gift which is the believer's, entails definite obligations which he is required to discharge, and those obligations are what we are about to contemplate.

The ideas of the natural man here, as everywhere, are at direct variance with God's. People, generally, suppose that holy conduct makes a saint, whereas God's way is to make saints, and then demand from them holy conduct. An attentive reading of the New Testament epistles will discover abundant confirmation of this. For example, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal 5:25). Since the Spirit has regenerated us, our responsibility is to walk in newness of life. "I therefore...beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Eph 4:1). We do not become saints by walking worthily, but because God has sanctified us in Christ Jesus, He bids us conduct ourselves suitably to such a high privilege. "Now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph 5:8). That is the divine order—an inestimable privilege is conferred, and then we are called upon to make a fitting response thereto.

As this is a point of first importance, and one which is woefully subverted in some quarters today, we beg the reader to bear patiently with us while we labour it a little further. "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1Co 1:2). As we learn from the chapters that follow, the Corinthians were in a low spiritual and moral condition, and were acting most unworthily of their high calling, nevertheless, they *were* saints, and addressed as such. They were "saints" or "sanctified ones," not because they were perfect people, but because they had been sovereignly and supernaturally called of God—yet, alas, their conduct was most unsaintly. Theirs was, indeed, an extreme case, yet, for that very reason, it forcibly illustrates the point we are now pressing. God makes saints and then He bids them avoid everything incongruous therewith, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, *as becometh saints*" (Eph 5:3).

Not only are the saints exhorted to avoid everything contrary to their high calling, but they are to cultivate all that is consonant therewith, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy [*saints*] and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering,” etc. (Col 3:12). “*Keep* thyself pure” (1Ti 5:22), not “*make* thyself pure” emphasises the same thought. “The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour *as becometh holiness*” (Ti 2:3). Their practical conduct should conform to their standing in Christ. Believers are, even now, “A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,” yet that did not hinder the apostle from saying, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you *as* strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” (1Pe 2:9, 11). Yes, it was because they *were* “strangers and pilgrims,” and not in order to become such, that they were exhorted to act accordingly.

Men, in their fancied wisdom, may conclude that it had been much more conducive to holy living, to have concealed the wondrous truth of the believer’s completeness in Christ, and have left him to struggle on, stimulated by the thought that there is much for him to do and attain unto before he is qualified to enter into everlasting glory. As, but “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1Co 3:19), and sad to say, His wisdom is foolishness to them. It is the very revelation of the exceeding riches of His grace that exerts the greatest influence upon the renewed heart. And therefore, God had not only made known the completeness of His people’s sanctification in Christ, but He uses the same to promote their spiritual purity, “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1Jo 3:3 and cf. 2Co 5:14-15).

Practical holiness is promoted by naught but the improvement or use of *evangelical* principles and motives. It is men’s misunderstanding of the true way of practical sanctification—by the exercise of faith and love—which has caused them to decline from the truth and accept the Papist, Arminian, and Antinomian errors, wherein Satan appears to their natural understandings as an angel of light. The believer’s living unto God is *not* by his own power, but by faith’s appropriation of the strength of *Christ*. Many suppose that the doctrine which we are here inculcating makes Christians careless of good works. Not so—it makes them careless of seeking to do them by their own natural power, and in a way of slavish fear, but it makes them careful of relying on the grace of God, and heartily desirous of doing that which is pleasing in His sight.

Yet that ancient objection is still made by those who imagine that the only effectual method of enforcing holiness is by telling people their ultimate salvation depends entirely on their own conduct and the determinations of their own will—supposing that to assure Christians they are already delivered from the wrath to come by their faith in Christ, thus freeing them from all terrors of hell, is to leave them without any argument or motive of sufficient force to produce practical holiness. Whereas the truth is that if Christians have no better security against the wrath to come than from their own behaviour and use of their wills, they,

conscious of the deceitfulness of sin and of their own hearts, and of all the temptations and dangers attending their course, might indeed see reason for terror and dread, but in a manner and degree far from being favourable to inculcating holiness.

It is true that fear has its place and use for the restraining of sin, yet the proper principle of true holiness is *love*, and the faith which worketh by love. But if the believer has nothing to look to for securing him against damnation but the exercise of his own will and the aids and assistance which he is free to use or neglect, then there will be cause for continual terror, such terror as hath torment, and which is altogether inconsistent with that love which is the mainspring of holiness, 1 John 4:18. How differently has the divine scheme of grace mixed and tempered things for the advancement of holiness! Though the salvation of God's people be secured upon the most solid foundation, yet there remains much for them to fear with regard to sin and its consequences, with regard to the terrible chastisements, both inward and outward, which God visits upon the iniquities of His people.

Yet the Christian has, at the same time, a sure and well-founded hope, a strong consolation, a blissful prospect, and the most attractive motives which tend to increase love to God, and to His sovereignty and holiness, and to strengthen his heart in labouring for conformity to it. Thus we may perceive the wisdom of that scheme which, while placing the curb of fear upon the unholy and unruly passions of the heart, supplies motives which contribute much to the advancement of love and strengthening of the hearts of Christians in their course. By divine grace they have the greatest cause for that love which is the source of all acceptable obedience, yet a godly fear which is subservient to that love, having its root mainly in love itself. The grace of the new covenant has provided for the promotion of good works in a manner and degree far beyond what the law of the old covenant produced.

Practical sanctification is absolutely demanded of those who are sanctified in Christ. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour....For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (1Th 4:3-4, 7). Those words, and there are many such in the New Testament, can only refer to our practical sanctification in daily life. We need to be much on guard here, lest in seeking to avoid the error of evacuating our perfect standing as God's holy ones, we fall into that other which evades the force of God's call to holiness of life. And let it be emphatically stated that the standard of practical holiness is *the holiness of God Himself*, and nothing lower. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Mat 5:48). "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1Pe1:16).

The nature and extent of this calling to practical holiness is set forth in passage after passage. "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in *all manner of conversation*" (1Pe 1:15). "Seeing then that all these things shall be

dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversations and godliness?" (2Pe 3:11). There is a special need in these days of factitious morality, and of false sentiments as to what constitutes evangelical holiness, to turn to the Word of God, that we may search and try ourselves and our ways by its unerring standard. Men, even Christian men, are ever prone to *select* virtues which they esteem, and vices which they condemn. And the selection made by each individual is too apt to consist of virtues to which he is, or imagines himself, much inclined, and of vices to which he has, or thinks he has, little or no inclination. But the holiness of God demands he does not deal with a selection of virtues and vices—He requires holiness *in everything*.

The standard of holiness which God sets before us is, like Himself, perfect, and He will not lower it a single degree to meet our infirmities. He claims the whole being and requires holiness in every thought, word, and deed. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do *all* to the glory of God" (1Co 10:31). "*Whatsoever ye do* in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col 3:17). "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God *in all things* may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1Pe 4:11). Nothing short of an all-embracing holiness will measure up to the standard God has set before us. It is not only the outward life, but the inward also which is exposed to His searching light (Heb 4:12-13). Unto all the exercises and emotions of the heart, its motives and purposes, its affections and sufferings, God presents the claims of His holiness.

It makes nothing against the Scriptures quoted above that other passages in God's Word (like Rom 7:14-25; Phi 3:12-13) just as clearly show that *none actually attain unto* God's standard in this life, that our practical holiness falls far short of the perfection to which we are called, and is so often interrupted in its progress because the medium of its action and manifestation is weak and imperfect, and is tenanted by the "flesh," which ever lusteth against the spirit. On the one hand, we must steadily decline to lower God's standard, confess the sad failure of our life and the many imperfections of our walk, no matter how humiliating this may be. It is because sinless perfectionists have such slight views of the enormity of sin, and such an inadequate conception of that holiness which God requires, that they are so easily deceived.

Christian reader, it is just because our sanctification in Christ *is* eternally complete and absolutely up to the satisfaction of God's thoughts and heart, that we are called to the pursuit of perfect holiness and are to be satisfied with nothing less. It is just because of this that we can never reach a point at which we may cease the pursuit—the goal of today must be the starting-point of tomorrow, and so till the end of our earthly pilgrimage. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb 12:14). In those words the Holy Spirit has not hesitated to predicate eternal destiny upon the presence or absence of personal holiness—not because it rests on that, but because in the new creation

there is never life, without life's action. In God's husbandry, there is never root without fruit in some measure.

Practical sanctification, or holiness of heart and life, of character and conduct, is, then, *a reflection or manifestation* of that perfect sanctification which the believer has in and through Christ. Yet it is now but a *dim* reflection at best, because obstructed by the flesh, which remains unchanged to the last. It is because of our consciousness *of the dimness* to this reflection that we so often become discouraged and distracted. A sincere soul is much troubled over his conformity to Christ and is so often made to wonder whether the root of the matter be in him at all. Let it be said, then, for the comforting of such, that holiness is more *longed after* than realized in this life, yet this statement requires to be guarded, lest those not entitled to it should draw consolation therefrom. Not a few have a vague and general wish for holiness in the abstract, while having no relish for it in the concrete and the details of what is involved in a close walking with God.

The Israelites of old were well-pleased with the abstract idea of serving the Lord and avowed their purpose of doing so. They said, "The LORD drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God. And Joshua said unto the people, *Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins*" (Jos 24:18-19). Certain of the Jews said to Christ, "Lord, evermore give us this bread" (Joh 6:34), yet when He told them what it was to have the Bread of Life, they were offended. Ah, when it comes to the actual point of treading the narrow way, of watching and striving against sin both within and without, or rowing against the stream of the flesh, of diligently using all those means which are necessary for communion with God—they falter, murmur, and do nothing.

These vague and idle wishes after holiness, which many religionists have, are but hasty and ill-considered, and not deliberate and serious. The hearing of a powerful sermon, or the reading of an impressive article produces a real but evanescent effect, and for the moment such people are quite carried away. The commendations of holiness, and the representations of its imperative necessity convinces the mind, and they assent thereto, and promise themselves they will now make the pursuit thereof their chief business. Their emotions are stirred, the Word is received willingly, and they "consecrate" themselves afresh to God. But alas, their "goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away" (Hos 6:4)—only that of which God Himself is the Author will survive the testings of time and endure for eternity.

The experience of such people is not bottomed in grace, and therefore they have no spiritual sincerity to sustain them. *Their* desires after holiness are but empty wishes, unaccompanied by diligent and laborious efforts. "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour" (Pro 21:25). It is like saying, O that I had a lovely garden, and then refused to spade, plant, and weed it. Or O that

I were in such a place, and then were too lazy to journey thither. The wishes after holiness of this class are not steady and lasting, but are quickly crowded out by lusting after other things. They are not prepared to “*buy* the truth” (Pro 23:23). But he who truly thirsts for God and yearns to be conformed to His image will put forth his utmost endeavours after the same. The language of the regenerate is, “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I *seek after*; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD [enjoy fellowship with Him] all the days of my life” (Psa 27:4).

“LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear” (Psa 10:17). How comforting is this for those lowly ones who sincerely yearn after personal holiness! Their very yearning is a prayer, which reaches the ear of Him who will not quench the smoking flax. “He *will fulfill* the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them” (Psa 145:19). And again, “The desire of the righteous *shall* be granted” (Pro 10:24). Yes, not only does God hear the spiritual desire of His distressed child, but in due time, He will fulfill it—that is a promise for *faith* to lay hold of, for its accomplishment is not in this life, but in the next. Meanwhile, our duty is defined in that word, “*Delight thyself also in the LORD*; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart” (Psa 37:4)—meditate upon His wondrous perfections, seek communion with Him, honestly endeavour to please Him.

Since God has promised to grant the desire of the righteous, how important it is that the Christian should watch against *the abatement* of his spiritual longings. If a man loses his natural appetite, his body soon languishes—so it is with the soul. True, *we* can neither give ourselves an appetite nor retain it, but we *can* do those things which will greatly impair it, and it is our responsibility to avoid whatever is injurious to our health—true alike naturally and spiritually. It is the Christian’s duty to do as those who would keep in the fire—cherish the spark, blow upon the embers, add more fuel to it. On the one hand, we must guard against those things which would chill and quench our love for God, and on the other, we must “strengthen the things which remain” (Rev. 3:2).

SPIRITUAL LIARS

“Remove from me the way of lying” (Psa 119:29). How we should be humbled by such a prayer as this, for it is evidently an appropriate one for all the Lord’s people. The fact that it is not only recorded in Holy Writ, but here in the 119th Psalm, rather than in the prayer of a particular individual on some special occasion, plainly intimates this. There is nothing in all the Old Testament of wider latitude and of more general application than the various petitions found in this Psalm—each of them is pertinent to the experiences and exigencies of *all* the

saints, and the one now before us is certainly no exception, no matter how loathe we may be to acknowledge the truth of it. Reader and writer alike are spiritual liars, guilty of dissembling before both man and God.

There are different kinds of lies—some are spoken, others are acted—some are intentional, others involuntary. We often pretend to be what we are not and are indictable with much formality. We are guilty of making promises to God which we break, of uttering penitential confessions while our hearts are hard and unaffected, of asking for spiritual blessings for which we have no felt need, or returning thanks for mercies which have made no impression upon us—and all of this is a species of abominable dissimulation. When we are convicted and made conscience of the same, we cry, “Remove from me the way of lying!” Below is a message recently sent to two dear souls who enjoy little assurance. May it please the Lord to make the same a blessing unto others of His distressed family.

“Remove from me the way of lying” (Psa 119:29). How *well-suited* is this petition to the quickened child of God, who is often made painfully conscious of how much insincerity and hypocrisy is mixed up with his worship, supplications, repentance, and thanksgivings! When an honest heart examines his religious life, reviews his prayers, and ponders his character and conduct, he perceives how little *reality* and how much dissimulation characterises all his spiritual exercises, until at times it seems that he himself and all pertaining to his solemn profession is only a *sham*. If it were not so it would be quite useless for him to pray. “Remove from me the way of lying.” Observe how strongly this is expressed—not simply “deliver me from lying,” but “the way of lying”—a regular course, a confirmed habit.

Now the very fact that *we* find this petition so well-suited to our case supplies clear evidence that we *must* be among those who are enabled to see themselves in *God’s* light, for no Satan-blinded and sin-deceived soul feels and knows himself to be a spiritual liar. Moreover, the petitions which the Spirit of truth has so graciously recorded in this 119th Psalm are most obviously neither designed for nor suited to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Should not this very consideration at least revive the spark of assurance which so often waxes dim in your breasts? Furthermore, the very fact that *you can*, from the depths of your soul, feelingly pray, “Remove from me the way of lying” is clear proof that you are *not* among those who love darkness rather than light. You *want to be* genuine with God, to be delivered from all insincerity, and this evidences an honest root amid the rank weeds and thistles of deception and formality.

Perhaps you answer, I follow you thus far, but alas, I have not the ear of God. Countless times have I confessed to Him my lack of sincerity, and begged Him, (in substance at least, if not in those identical words) to “Remove from me the way of lying” (Psa 119:29), but so far from my prayer being answered, I am conscious of *increasing unreality* in my devotions. Thank God that you *are* so conscious, dear brother and sister. If God had given you up “to a reprobate mind” (as He had

the sovereign right to do, and as He *has* countless millions of our fellow creatures), then you would be quite *unconscious* of “the deceitfulness of sin,” quite *indifferent* to the unreality of your devotions. I ask you, frankly, Is it not so? Yet, perhaps, that hardly removes your difficulty.

But this does—“Remove from me the way of lying,” like many another prayer, awaits its answer till the life to come! We were *born* in “the way of lying”—it is the very sphere in which “the flesh” lives, moves, and has its being—the way of lying ends only when the flesh itself is removed. Till then, the quickened soul is burdened, exercised, shocked, plagued, grieved by it—by the unreality and formality of his devotions—and that very grief finds expression in this prayer which is so well suited to some exercises of soul. Then step out of your mental gloom for a moment, into the warm sunshine of the clear *implications* of this verse, and thank God for having placed in your hands, yes, and put into your mouths, such a prayer as this, which, because it *is* so well suited to your case, denotes that you are *entitled* to make use of the same, which, in turn, proves *you* belong to that quickened company who are painfully aware of the plague of their own hearts.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

The Prosperity of Joseph

Can anything more clearly prove the continual and immediate agency of Providence in the affairs of this world than this account of the prosperity of the house of Potiphar for the sake of Joseph? “And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian” (Gen 39:2). The security and comfort of the man of God was not left to the operation of general laws, but “the Lord was with Joseph.” And what was the consequence of the Lord’s being with Joseph? Is not the prosperity of Joseph directly ascribed to this? The prosperity of Joseph is not left to the influence of mere foresight and arrangement in providence, but is the immediate effect of the Lord’s presence with him. Why, then, will the philosopher cruelly attempt to banish God from His people and supply His place by certain fixed laws? Whether God acts by means of His usual laws, or contrary to them, His *presence* is equally necessary to produce the effect.

Here we are taught to consider worldly prosperity as the effect of divine providence. It is so in every instance, whether it respect His people or His enemies. Means are generally employed, but these means are of providence as well as the event. Prosperity and adversity come both from God, though, in another respect, they may be the fruits of men’s own doings. But though God usually gives success to means, this is not universally the case. He sometimes

shows that His own personal presence is necessary to the result. “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep” (Psa 127:1-2).

The agency of providence was so visible in the affairs in which Joseph was concerned, that it was recognized even by his heathen master, “And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand” (Gen 39:3). Here an ignorant pagan sees what blind philosophers, calling themselves Christians, cannot see. They see no need for God’s immediate presence and operations—all things can be effected by foresight and arrangement. This is as absurd as it is wicked. Can foresight do anything? Can mere arrangement act? Is not an agent necessary to give effect to design?

Here we see, also, the reason why providence gives prosperity to His enemies—it is to fulfill some of His purposes. God prospered the affairs of Potiphar in the hands of Joseph, that Joseph might find favour with his master, as one of the steps in the process of bringing this type of Christ into prison, and then into glory. When God prospers the wicked, He has always some wise design in it. The fact neither proves that God does not conduct the affairs of men, nor that He prospers His enemies, and gives adversity to His people out of caprice. All is done in wisdom.

This fact shows us also that God considers His providence as sufficient evidence of His existence and agency. He acted in this providential way in order to produce a certain effect on Potiphar. And we see that Potiphar did understand the lesson. He saw that God was with Joseph. If so, all men will be *held accountable* for all that God hath done in His works of providence, as well as of creation.

In like manner, when Joseph went to prison, the Lord was with him, and found favour for him in the sight of the keeper of the prison. In the case of the favour of Potiphar, we are informed of the way in which God wrought on behalf of a man who knew Him not. He gave prosperity to Potiphar through the management of Joseph. But in the case of the governor of the prison, we have no information of any means employed to excite a favourable sentiment towards the prisoner. The Lord can work without means as well as with means. “But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand: because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper” (Gen 39:21-23). Whatever was the occasion of exciting the compassion of the keeper of the prison at first, the hand of providence was soon visible in the management of Joseph, and in the prosperity of the affairs under his direction, the agency of God was recognized.

Let all Christians, in places of trust, act like Joseph, and from the lowest situations, they may in the end be brought to the highest. Let them, on all occasions, not only act with the strictest fidelity, but let them discover an earnestness in the service of their employers. The most ungodly men will soon perceive that to have such persons in their employment is commonly for their advantage (Alexander Carson, 1776-1884).



November

HONOURING THE SPIRIT

It seems fitting that we should close this lengthy series of articles upon the person, office, and operations of the Holy Spirit, by dwelling upon what is due Him from those in whom He has wrought so graciously, for it is very evident that some recognition and response must be made Him by us. There is, however, the more need for us to write something thereon, because our magazine goes to quite a number who belong to a company which refrains from all direct worship of the third person in the Godhead, deeming it unscriptural and incongruous to do so. It seems strange that the very ones who claim to give the Spirit a freer and fuller place in their meetings than any branch of Christendom, should, at the same time, demur at prayer being immediately directed to Him. Yet it is so. Some of them refuse to sing the Doxology because it ends with “Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”

From time to time, one and another of our readers have written, taking exception to occasional statements made by us, such as, “What praise is due the Spirit for His grace and goodness unto us!” challenging us to point to any definite passage wherein we are bidden to worship or pray to the Spirit distinctively. First, let us point out that there are many things clearly implied in Scripture which are not formally and expressly stated, and to assert we must for that reason reject them is absurd—some have refused the canonicity of the book of Esther because the name of God is not found therein, yet His superintending Providence, His overruling power, His faithfulness and goodness, shine forth in each chapter! We build not our faith on any isolated texts, but on the Word of God as a whole, rightly and spiritually interpreted.

We have begun thus not because we are unable to find any definite statements in the Word which obviously warrant the position we have taken, but because we deemed it well to refute an erroneous principle. Even if there were no clear cases recorded of prayer and praise being offered immediately to the Holy Spirit, we should surely require some strong positive proof to show the Spirit is not to be supplicated. But where, we ask, is there anything in Holy Writ which informs us that one person in the Godhead must be excluded from the praises that we make

unto the Lord? Here we are meeting the objector on his own ground—if what we are about to advance fails to convince him, he must at least allow that he knows of no texts which refute or condemn us, no verse which warns us against rendering to the blessed Spirit that recognition and honour to which we consider He is fully entitled.

“Thou shalt fear [“worship”—Mat 4:10] the LORD thy God, and serve him” (Deu 6:13). Now the Lord our God is a Unity in Trinity, that is, He subsists in three persons who are co-essential and co-glorious. Therefore, the Holy Spirit, equally with the Father and the Son, is entitled to and must receive devout homage, for we are here commanded to render the same to Him. This is confirmed by the “holy, holy, holy,” of Isaiah 6:3, where we find the seraphim owning separately and worshipping distinctively the Eternal Three. The words that follow in verse 8, “Who will go for us?” make it quite clear that the threefold “holy” was ascribed to the Blessed Trinity. Still further confirmation is found in Acts 28:25-26, where the apostle prefaces his quotation of Isaiah 6:9 with “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet.” If, then, the angels ascribe glory and render worship to the Holy Spirit, shall we, who have been regenerated by Him, do less!?

“O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker” (Psa 95:6). Who is our “Maker”? Perhaps you answer, Christ, the eternal Word, of whom it is said, “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (Joh 1:3 and cf. Col 1:16). That is true, yet Christ is not our “Maker” (either naturally or spiritually) to the exclusion of the Holy Spirit. The third person of the Godhead, equally with the Father and the Son, is our “Maker.” In proof of this assertion we quote, “The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life” (Job 33:4). Let the reader carefully compare Job 26:13 with Psalm 33:6. Let it also be duly noted that this 95th Psalm (vv. 7-11) is quoted in Hebrews 3:7-11 and prefaced with, “Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith.” Thus not only may we worship the blessed Spirit, but here in Psalm 95:6 we are commanded to do so.

It does indeed seem strange that any professing Christian should raise any objection and question the propriety of worshipping the Spirit. Are we not to acknowledge our dependence upon and obligations unto the Holy Spirit? Surely! surely! He is as much the object of faith as is the Father and the Son. He is so in His being and perfections, His deity and personality, His offices and operations. Moreover, there are particular acts of trust and confidence to be exercised on Him. As He is God, He is to be worshipped, and that cannot be done aright without faith. We are to trust Him for His help in prayer and the discharge of every duty! We are to exercise confidence that He will complete the good work which He has begun in us. Especially should ministers of the Word look to Him for His help in and blessing upon their labours.

“Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind [Breath], prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O

breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live” (Eze 37:9). We sincerely trust that none of our readers will suppose that the Lord bade His servant to perform an idolatrous act by invoking the literal “wind.” No, a comparison of verses 9 and 10 with verse 14 shows plainly that it was the Holy Spirit Himself who was referred to—see John 3:8. Nor does this passage stand alone. In Song of Solomon 4:16, we find the spouse praying to the Spirit for renewal and revival, “Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.” She expressed her desires metaphorically, but this is what she breathed after. It is the Spirit of life, then, we should always apply to for quickening, for the enlivening and exciting of His graces in us.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

119. Christian Rulers (13:17)

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Heb 13:17). It is quite clear from the balance of the verse that its opening words have reference to religious leaders and not to civil rulers. Adolph Saphir (1831-1891), who was very far from being a “Nicolaitan” was right when he declared, “Verse 7 and 17 show that there was *a stated ministry*, that there were recognised and regular teachers and pastors in the congregation, whose gifts not only, but whose *office* was acknowledged.” It is impossible that any unprejudiced and impartial mind should attentively consider the terms and implications of these verses and come to any other conclusion. The principle of subordination is absolutely essential to the well-being of any society that is to be rightly-ordered and conducted—adumbrated even in the organization of our bodies.

In our text, the Holy Spirit sets forth the third great duty which is required in our Christian profession, on account of the sacrifice of Christ and our sanctification by His blood. Most comprehensive and all-inclusive are the exhortations found in verses 15-17. The first respects our *spiritual* obligation, Godwards, rendering unto Him that which is His due (Heb 13:15). The second respects our *social* obligation, rendering unto our needy fellows that which the requirements of charity dictate, according to our ability. The third has respect to our *ecclesiastical* obligation, rendering unto those officers in the church that submission and respect to which they are entitled by virtue of the position and authority which Christ has accorded them. This is a Gospel institution, which can only be disregarded to the manifest dishonour of the Lord and to our great loss.

Ever since the great Reformation of the sixteenth century, there have been wide differences of opinion among God's people concerning *the local church*—its

constitution, its officers, and its discipline. Even where there was oneness of mind respecting the fundamentals of the faith, godly men have differed considerably in their ecclesiastical views. Numbers of the most gifted of Christ's servants have, during the last three hundred years, written extensively upon the polity and policy of the local church, and though widely varying positions have been taken, and though each claimed to appeal to Scripture only for his authority, yet none succeeded in carrying the majority of professing Christians with him, or of persuading his opponents that *their* system was wrong.

While on the one hand, we must admire the wisdom of Him who has *providentially ordered* as great a variety of types in the ecclesiastical sphere as He has in the physical and social—which though *not a rule* for us to walk by, *is* a subject for our admiration. Yet on the other hand, we cannot but deplore that they who are united on the same foundations and agreed in all the cardinal truths of Holy Writ, should lay such emphasis upon their circumstantial differences in sentiments as to prevent the exercise of mutual love and forbearance, and instead of labouring *in concert* within their respective departments to promote the common cause of Christ, should so often vex each other with needless disputes and uncharitable censures. Far better be silent altogether than contend for any portion of the truth in a bitter, angry, censorious spirit.

No true Christian will hesitate to acknowledge that Christ Himself is the one infallible, authoritative Legislator and Governor of His church, that He is the only Lord of conscience, and that nothing inconsistent with His revealed will should be practiced, and that nothing He has definitely enjoined be omitted, by those professing allegiance to Him. But however generally acknowledged these principles are, we cannot get away from the fact that the misconstruction and misapplication of them have contributed more to divide the people of God and to alienate their affections one from the other, than any other cause that can be assigned. Surely those who are built upon the common foundation, who are led by the same Spirit, who are opposed by the same enemies, should love as brethren and bear each other's burdens. But alas! a mistaken zeal for Christ's honour has filled them with animosity against their fellow-disciples, split them into innumerable factions, and given rise to fierce and endless contentions.

We quite agree with the godly John Newton (1725-1807), when he said in his "Apologia," nearly two hundred years ago, "Men are born, educated, and called under a great variety of circumstances. Habits of life, local customs, early connections, and even bodily constitution, have more or less influence in forming their characters, and in giving a tincture and turn to their manner of thinking. So that though, in whatever is *essential* to their peace and holiness, they are all led by the same Spirit and mind the same things. In others of a *secondary* nature, their sentiments may, and often do differ, as much as the features of their faces. A uniformity of judgment among them is *not* to be expected while the wisest are defective in knowledge, the best are defiled with sin, and while the weaknesses of

human nature which are common to them all, are so differently affected by a thousand impressions which are from their various situations. They *might*, however, maintain a unity of spirit, and live in the exercise of mutual love—were it not that every party, and almost every individual, unhappily conceives that they are bound in conscience to prescribe *their own* line of conduct as a standard to which all their brethren ought to conform. They are comparatively but few who consider this requisition to be as unnecessary, unreasonable, and impracticable, as it would be to insist or expect that every man's shoes should be exactly of one size.

“Thus, though all agree in asserting the authority and rights of the Lord Jesus as King and Head of His church, the various apprehensions they frame of the rule to which He requires them to conform, and their pertinacious attachment to *their own* expositions of it, separate them almost as much from each other as if they were not united to Him by a principle of living faith. Their little differences form them into so many separate interests—and the heat with which they defend their own plans, and oppose all who cannot agree with them in a tittle, makes them forget that they are children in the same family and servants of the same Master. And while they vex and worry each other with disputations and censures, the world wonders and laughs at them.”

The position which has been taken by, perhaps, most of the leading writers, is something like this—Get away from the conflicting views of men, and *read the New Testament* prayerfully and impartially, and it will quickly be apparent that the Lord Jesus has not left such an important matter as the constitution of the churches undefined, but rather directed His apostles to leave in their writings a pattern according to which it was His will all His churches in future ages were to be formed, and (according to the particular leanings of each respective writer) that it will be seen the primitive churches were “Congregational,” “Baptists,” “Presbyterian,” or “Brethren Assemblies,” and therefore any other system or scheme is unscriptural, and a presumptuous deviation from the declared will of the Lord.

If, however, the reader cares to take the time and trouble to consult *a number of the writers* in any one of these different schools, he will find that though they are all agreed that a plain and satisfactory model of this “Congregational” church (or “Baptist,” or “Presbyterian,” or “Brethren Assembly,” as the case may be) can easily be collected and stated from a perusal of the New Testament, yet when these same writers attempt to delineate and describe that church, they *differ considerably among themselves* as to the nature and number of its officers, powers, and acts which are requisite to the constitution and administration of a Gospel church. There is very far from being that agreement *among themselves* which is certainly to be expected *if* the plan from which they profess to copy be so clearly and expressly revealed in the New Testament as to be binding upon believers in all ages.

It seems, then, that if every detail of the church's government and worship be exhibited in the Scriptures, either in the form of a precept or precedent, yet thus far God has not given sufficient skill to any one so as to enable him to collect and collate the various rules and regulations scattered throughout the Gospels, Acts, epistles, and the Revelation, and arrange them into a systematic and orderly structure. But that none really takes this principle seriously appears from their own practices. There are a number of things reported of the primitive Christians which few if any companies of Christians today make any attempt to emulate. For example, the holding of all earthly possessions in common (Act 2:4-45), greeting one another with a holy kiss (1Co 16:20), making provision for their widows when they reach the age of sixty (1Ti 5:9), or sending for the elders of the church to pray over and anoint us when we are sick (Jam 5:14)!

In reply to what has just been said, it will be pointed out that in the days of the apostles the saints were endowed with *extraordinary* gifts, and consequently there were some things practiced by them (in 1Co 14, for example) which are *not* proper of our imitation today who have not those gifts. But that very admission *surrenders* the basic principle contended for. To be told that we should study the apostolic churches for *our model*, and then to be informed that some parts of their practice were *not* designed for our emulation, is too bewildering for the ordinary mind to grasp. Moreover, *God* has not told us anywhere *which* of the primitive practices were but transient and which were not. Where, then, is the man or men qualified to draw the line and declare authoritatively in *what respects* the state of the first Christians was hindered from being a pattern for us by the extraordinary dispensations of that generation, and in what cases their actions *are binding* on us now those extraordinary dispensations have ceased?

To the above it will at once be objected—But consider the only other alternative—surely it is most unreasonable to suppose that the Lord has left His people *without* a complete church model for their guidance! Is it not unthinkable that Christ would fail His people in such a vitally important matter as to how He would have them order all the concerns of the churches which bear His name, that He would leave them in ignorance of His will, as to their constitution, officers, order of worship, discipline, etc.? If God ordered Moses to make all things in the tabernacle according to the pattern shown him in the mount, and if that pattern was so complete that every board and nail in the house of worship was definitely defined, is it believable that He has made *less* provision for His people today, now that the fullness of time has come? This argument has indeed a most plausible sound to it, and thousands have been misled thereby, but a dispassionate examination of it shows it to be unwarrantable.

In the first place, there is no promise recorded in the New Testament that He *would* do so and no statement through any apostle that such a church model *has* been provided! In the second place, the history of Christendom clearly indicates *the contrary*. Had such a model been given, it would be as clearly recognizable as

the tabernacle pattern, and all who really desired to please the Lord would have responded thereto, and in consequence, there had been *uniformity* among the true followers of Christ, instead of endless diversity and variety. But in the third place, this *proves too much*. If a divine model has been given supplying all the details for the ordering of New Testament churches and their worship, as definite and as complete as was given for the tabernacle, then we would have minute regulations concerning the size, shape, and furnishings of the buildings in which we must worship, full directions for the ministers' apparel, and so on! The *absence* of those details is clear proof that no model for the churches comparable to the divine pattern for the tabernacle has been vouchsafed us.

Then what conclusion are we forced to come to? This—a happy medium between the two alternatives suggested by most of those who have written on the subject. If on the one hand, we cannot find in the New Testament that which in any wise corresponds to the “pattern” for the tabernacle (and the minute instructions God gave for the temple), on the other hand, the Lord has not left us so completely in ignorance of His will that every man or company of Christians is left entirely to do that which is right in their own eyes. In keeping with the vastly different character of the two dispensations, the “liberty” of the Spirit (2Co 3:17) has supplanted the rigid legality of Judaism, and therefore has Christ supplied us with *general principles* (e.g., 1Co 14:26, 40), which are sufficiently broad to allow of *varied* modification when applied to the differing circumstances of His people, situated in various climes and generations—in contrast from what was prescribed for the *single nation* of Israel of old.

In the New Testament, we *are* furnished with a full revelation of all things necessary unto *salvation*, the knowledge whereof man by his own powers could never attain thereunto. Yet there is much *lacking there* on other matters which *was furnished* under the old covenant. God not only supplied Israel with the ceremonial law, which was to regulate all their church or religious life, but He also gave them a complete code of precepts for their *civil* government, and no one pretends He has done *this* for Christians! In the absence of that civil code, why should it be thought strange that God has left many minor ecclesiastical arrangements to the discretion of His servants? Unto those who are indignant at such a statement, and who are still ready to insist that the Lord has made known His will on *all* things respecting church and religious affairs, we would ask, Where does the New Testament prescribe what *marriage rites* should be used? Or the form of service for a funeral? But enough.

As Richard Hooker (1554-1600) pertinently pointed out, “He who affirms speech to be necessary among all men throughout the world, doth not thereby import that all men must necessarily speak one kind of language. Even so the necessity of polity and regiment in all churches may be held, *without* holding any *one* certain form to be necessary in them all.” This is far from granting that all the various modes of church government are *equally agreeable* to the spirit and genius

of the Gospel, or equally suited to the promotion of edification. Once again we fully agree with John Newton when he said, “In essentials I agree with them all, and in circumstances I differ no more from any of them than they differ among themselves. They all confess they are fallible, yet they all decide with an air of infallibility; for they all in their turn expect me to unite with *them*, if I have any regard to the authority and honour of the Lord Jesus as the Head of the church. But the very consideration they propose restrains me from uniting with any of them. For I cannot think that I should honour the headship and kingly office of Christ by acknowledging Him as the Head *of a party* and subdivision of His people to the exclusion of the rest.

“Every party uses fair sounding words of liberty, but when an explanation is made, it amounts to little more than this—that they will give me liberty to think as *they* think, and to act as *they* act; which to me, who claim the same right of thinking for myself and of acting according to the dictates of my own conscience, is no liberty at all. I therefore came to such conclusions as these—that I would love them all, that I would hold a friendly intercourse with them all, so far as they should providentially come in my way [and he might have added, so far as they will allow me!], but that I would stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made me free and call none of them master. In fine, that if others sought to honour Him by laying a great stress on matters of doubtful disputation, my way of honouring Him should be by endeavouring to show that His kingdom is not of this world, nor consists in meats and drinks, in pleading for forms and parties, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, and that neither circumcision is anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, and the faith which worketh *by love*.”

This is the course which the writer has obviously sought to follow for the past ten years, both in connection with this magazine and in oral ministry. But alas! notwithstanding the boasted “broadmindedness” and “liberality” of this generation, we have found everywhere we have been the ecclesiastical barriers are as impregnable today as they were a century ago, and that no church, circle, or company of professing Christians is prepared to *really* welcome into their midst (no matter what his reputation or credentials) one who is unprepared to join and limit himself to *their* party, and pronounce all their shibboleths—and that the vast majority are unwilling to read any religious publication unless it bears upon it the label of their particular denomination. No wonder that the Spirit of God is quenched and His power and blessing absent, where such an unChristlike, sectarian, bigoted and pharisaical spirit prevails.

We are not going to prescribe for others—let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. But as far as the writer is concerned, he values his Christian liberty far too highly to voluntarily shut himself up in any ecclesiastical prison, where he is excluded from fellowship with his brethren and sisters scattered abroad. Of course since sinless perfection is not to be found in any individual on earth, it is

not to be expected from any group of individuals. No one denomination or party has all the light. On the one hand, if the reader be a member of a church where unsound doctrine is preached or where no Scriptural discipline is maintained, his course is clear—Ephesians 5:11; 2 Timothy 3:5. But if on the other hand, he belongs to any evangelical church which is honestly seeking to honour Christ and where his soul is being fed, then, in our humble judgment, he will be wise to remain there and “obey them that have the rule over you” (Heb 13:17), yet let him *not* look down upon others who differ from him.

In dissenting from the popular view that the New Testament record of primitive Christianity furnishes a complete model of church government, and that the same is an authoritative rule binding upon the Lord’s people throughout the entire course of this dispensation, we are far from supposing that we shall carry with us the majority of our readers—by this time the writer ought to be sufficiently acquainted with human nature to prevent any such foolish day dreaming. And in affirming that the New Testament rather supplies us with general rules and principles, which are sufficiently elastic as to allow for *human discretion to be exercised* in the application of them to particular instances of the church’s outward conduct, we are quite prepared to face the charge that this statement is a “dangerous” one. Our reply is, that we are affirming no more than what is universally acknowledged concerning the regulation of the details of the life of *the individual believer*.

Is not the Christian daily made to cry unto God for wisdom how to act in his temporal affairs, and that because there are no specific precepts in the Word which prescribe for those particular exigencies? Is he not obliged, after prayerful deliberation, to *use his common sense* in applying the general rules of Scripture to a hundred minor details of his life? So common an occurrence is this and so universally does it obtain among the saints, that there is no need for us to enlarge upon it by illustrating the point—there is no need to *prove* what is self-evident. In view of this simple and obvious fact, why should we be the least surprised that God has ordained that His churches should follow a similar course, for what is a Gospel church but a company of individual believers in organized relationship? If, then, God has not told the individual believer at what hour he should rise on the Sabbath and how many meals he should eat that day, would he expect Him to state how long the minister’s sermon is to be, or how many hymns or psalms are to be sung?

“The Lord Christ in the institution of Gospel churches—their state, order, rule, and worship—doth not require of His disciples that in their observance of His appointments they should *cease to be men*, or forego the use and exercise of their rational abilities, according to the rule of that exercise, which is *the light of nature*. Yea, because the rules and directions are in this case to be applied unto things spiritual and of mere revelation, He giveth wisdom and prudence to make that application in a due manner, unto those to whom the guidance and rule of the

church is committed—wherefore, as unto all things which the light of nature directs us unto, with respect unto the observation of the duties prescribed by Christ in and unto the church, we need no other institution but that of the use of the *especial spiritual understanding* which the Lord Christ gives us for that end.

“There are in the Scripture *general rules* directing us in the application of natural light, unto such a determination of all circumstances in the acts of church-rule and worship, as are sufficient for their performance decently and in order. Wherefore, as was said before, it is *utterly in vain* and useless to demand express institution of all the circumstances belonging unto the government, order, and worship of the church, or for the due improvement of things in themselves indifferent unto its edification, as occasion shall require. Nor are they capable to be any otherwise stated, but as they lie in the light of nature and spiritual prudence directed by general rules of Scripture” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

Nor is this to discredit or disparage the Holy Scriptures. The Testimony of God is true, perfect, and all-sufficient *for the ends* for which it was given, but that Testimony is not honoured but dishonoured by us, if we extravagantly attribute to it that which God *never designed* for the same. Rome has erred grievously by declaring that the Scriptures are not sufficient, that “traditions” must be added if we are to have a full revelation of what is absolutely necessary for us to know in this life in order that we may be *saved* in the next. But some Protestants have gone to another extreme, taking the position that the Scriptures contain such a complete revelation of God's will for the regulation of our lives, both as individuals and as churches, that to act according to any other rule (be it the promptings of conscience or the dictates of reason) is presumptuous and sinful.

But to insist that the conduct of the church must have an express warrant from the New Testament *for every detail* of its procedure, and that to act otherwise is displeasing to the Lord, is to go much further than that which obtained even under the Old Testament. What commandment from the Lord did the Gileadites have to erect that altar spoken of in Joshua 22:10? Did not congruity of reason—the fitness of things—induce them thereto and suffice for defense of their act? What divine commandment had the women of Israel to yearly lament for Jephthah's daughter (Jdg 11:40)? What “thus saith the Lord” or scriptural precedent did Ezra have for making “a pulpit of wood” (Neh 8:4), from which he preached to the people? What divine commandment had the Jews to celebrate the feast of “Dedication” (Joh 10:22), nowhere spoken of in the law, yet solemnized by Christ Himself?! To condemn all that is “of human invention” is not only to fly in the face of the judgment of many of the wisest and most godly men, but is to go beyond what the Scriptures themselves permit.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

71. His Son's Death

In last month's article, we left Absalom caught in an oak, suspended in the air, unable to free himself. His predicament was indeed a desperate one, for all his followers had forsaken him. What was to be the sequel? David had given express instructions to his generals, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom" (2Sa 18:5). In that charge, we see expressed the weakness of a doting father, rather than the uncompromising faithfulness of a monarch. It was not for the interests of his kingdom that such an insurrectionist should be spared, for none could tell how soon he would occasion further trouble. Sentiment ought never to override the requirements of righteousness, yet often it is far from easy to perform the latter when they come into conflict with the yearnings of the former. By yielding to his paternal feelings and giving such counsel to his men, David created a difficulty which should never have been raised.

"And a certain man saw it, and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak" (2Sa 18:10). The commentators differ considerably in their estimations of what is recorded in this verse and those which immediately follow. Some criticise this man for his timidity in refusing to take matters into his own hands and rid the earth of such a wretch. Others go to an opposite extreme and blame him as a sneak for revealing the situation to Joab, knowing that he would have no scruples against killing Absalom. Personally, we consider he did the right thing in taking the middle course. It was not for him, as a private person, to fly in the face of the king's charge, and act as public executioner, nor was it the thing for him to conceal from the general-in-charge the helpless position in which the arch-enemy of David was now placed—all of which illustrates what was said at the close of the preceding paragraph.

"And Joab said unto the man that told him, And, behold, thou sawest him, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? and I would have given thee ten shekels of silver, and a girdle" (2Sa 18:11). Those words were evidently uttered rashly on the spur of the moment, for when Joab had listened to the man's reply, he did not further upbraid him. Joab failed to realize the quandary in which David's command had placed this man, or perhaps he was constitutionally incapable of appreciating the conscientious scruples which regulated others—which seems the more likely in the light of what follows. What a coarse and mercenary spirit his words betrayed! as though a monetary reward should have been sufficient inducement for any one to have slain Absalom in cold blood. One cannot expect such a gross materialist to value the finer sensibilities of others.

"And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in mine hand, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom. Otherwise I should have wrought falsehood

against mine own life: for there is no matter hid from the king, and thou thyself wouldest have set thyself against me” (2Sa 18:12-13). This unnamed man was not to be intimidated by the fierce Joab, but boldly stood his ground and frankly avowed the principles which had regulated his conduct. Though it was not a lawful command which the king had imposed upon his subjects, yet this one respected the authority of his royal master. Moreover, as he shrewdly pointed out, what advantage would he receive from the largest reward if the penalty for his action were the forfeiting of his own life? That was an argument which admitted no answer, acknowledged by Joab’s abruptly terminating the conversation under the plea of haste.

“Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak” (2Sa 18:14). Joab will come before us again (D.V.) in the chapters to follow, but this seems as good a place as any to offer some remarks upon his character. It has been rightly said that, “Among the followers and closest adherents of David, Joab was one. He was early found with David in the cave. Whilst Jonathan tarried in the court of Saul, Joab was sharing the hardships and dangers of David in the wilderness. Throughout all his subsequent dangers, he stood like a lion at his side, and if extent of outward service were regarded, David perhaps had no such servant as he. Yet in order to serve David aright, it was necessary to have respect not to his office merely, but also to appreciate the character of him who bore that office, to love him for *his own* as well as for his office sake, and above all, to remember that no real service could be rendered to David, except God were reverently regarded and reverently obeyed” (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899).

It is possible for one to serve, because of the dignity of his office, one whose excellency as an individual we have no regard for. In such an event, our service, no matter however energetic, will probably have its springs in self-interest, and its course will be marked by self-will and pride. Such indeed was the case with Joab—he was zealous in maintaining the support of David’s throne, yet he was ever alive to the maintenance of his own personal interests. He deemed it best that the crown should rest on David’s brow, because by so doing his own fortunes were furthered. No matter how definitely or plaintively David might express his desires, Joab never hesitated, when the opportunity arose, to outrage the king’s feelings or defy his will if he could thereby gain his own ends without at the same time compromising the stability of the throne. In such a course, Joab regarded neither David nor God.

No one can read carefully the sacred narrative without perceiving that in the latter years of his reign David was little more than a *nominal* king. He seems to have come thoroughly under the power of Joab, the captain of his armies. On the one hand, he was too suspicious to trust him, and on the other, too weak to dismiss him. It is both interesting and instructive to trace out *the occasion and cause*

whereby Joab established such a despotic control over his royal master. Nor is this by any means a complicated task, “David wrote a letter *to Joab*, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die” (2Sa 11:14-15). By making Joab the partner and secret agent of his guilty plot concerning Uriah, David sold himself into his hands. In that fatal letter, he forfeited his liberty, surrendering it to this unscrupulous accomplice.

By temperament, Joab was a daring and energetic man—a bold fighter in lawless times. The faction of Saul’s house was so strong that at the beginning of his reign David could scarcely call the throne his own or choose his servants according to his own pleasure. Joab was an able warrior, and though he sometimes avenged his own private quarrels at the expense of his sovereign’s honour, thereby vexing him at heart, yet he was too strongly entrenched to be displaced. Nevertheless, at that time David was not afraid to open his mouth and rebuke him for the slaying of Abner. Nay, he openly asserted his authority by *compelling* Joab to rend his clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourn before this very Abner (2Sa 3:28-31)—a most humiliating experience for one of his proud heart and which made it unmistakably manifest that David was as yet supreme in his own dominions.

Circumstances might still constrain David to employ this renowned warrior, and he had not—short as had then been his reign—yielded himself up to this imperious subject. On the contrary, as his own cause waxed stronger and stronger, and the remnant of Saul’s party dispersed, he became the king of Israel in fact as well as in name, so that his throne was established not only by law, but by public opinion too, for we are told that “whatsoever the king did pleased all the people” (2Sa 3:36). Consequently, he was now in the condition to rule for himself, and this he did, for a little later we find him appointing this officer to be the commander of his army by his *own* decision, and that simply because Joab was the one who won that rank, when it was promised by David as the reward to any individual in his host who should be the first to get up to the gutter and smite the Jebusites at the storming of Zion (2Sa 5:8).

We have only to read carefully through the eighth and tenth chapters of 2 Samuel, in which are narrated the bold achievements of David at this bright period of his life, his prowess abroad and his strong policy at home, the energy he instilled into the national character, and the respect he commanded for it throughout all the surrounding countries, to perceive that he reigned without restraint and without a rival. But then came his fearful fall, that evil sowing from which he reaped so bitter a harvest. From that point onwards, we may discern how Joab usurped by degrees an authority which he had not before. More and more he took matters into his own hands, executing or disregarding David’s orders as suited his own designs, until finally, we shall see (D.V.) he dared to conspire against his very throne and the rightful successor of his line.

An incident recorded in 2 Samuel 14 well-illustrates what we have pointed out above. There we see the hands of David tied, his efforts to free himself from his oppressor both feeble and ineffectual, and his punishment of Absalom successfully resisted, for it was Joab, through the widow of Tekoah, who clamoured for the recall of Absalom from his banishment. The suspicions of the king were aroused, for he asked, “Is not the hand of *Joab* with thee in all this?” (2Sa 14:19), nevertheless, he yielded to his will. It seems that this move on Joab’s part was without any other design than to embarrass the king and force him to do that which could only lower him in the estimation of his subjects. Certainly he had no love for Absalom as the sequel clearly shows.

During Absalom’s rebellion, Joab, as might have been expected, was loyal to the cause of David, for he had no desire to see *his* government overthrown and one of another order take its place. Joab knew full well what was in the heart of Absalom, and therefore he was prepared to resist him with all his might. He wished to have the present government of Israel continued, and that in David’s own person, yet it was out of no love to David that he now fought against Absalom. This is evident from his open defiance of the express charge which the king had given his generals, “Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom” (2Sa 18:5). But Joab heeded not, for he had lost all respect for David’s commands. Nothing could be more deliberate than his infraction of this one—probably the most imperious which had ever been laid upon him. It was not in the fury of the fight that he forgot his commission of mercy, but in cold blood he deliberately went to the place where Absalom was hanging helpless and slew him.

No, if Joab had loved David and regarded him as his friend, he had never recklessly despised the anguish of David’s heart and made him cry, “Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (2Sa 18:33). Whatever may be said about his conferring a public benefit by the removal of this reprobate ringleader, the fact remains that Joab no longer cared anything for a king *whose guilty secret he shared*. He thrust Absalom through the heart with his three darts, and then made his way, with countenance unabashed, into the chamber of his royal master, where David was lamenting the death of his son. As we shall see, the sequel is a piece with what preceded—Joab imperious and heartless—David, once so regnant, abject in spirit and tame to the lash. How had the mighty fallen! Into what public humiliation as well as personal sorrows had his deed of lust and blood now sunk him down!

“And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled every one to his tent” (2Sa 18:17). What an ending is this! hanged in a tree, abandoned by his followers, dispatched by Joab, and now his body treated with the utmost contempt. Instead of receiving the honourable burial of a king’s son, he was ignominiously dealt with as a criminal—the casting of him into a great pit intimated their valuation of his

carcass, while their laying upon him a great heap of stones signified that he ought to have been stoned to death as a rebellious son (Deu 21:18, 21).

“Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place” (2Sa 18:18). What a striking and solemn contrast do these two verses present, and what a forcible illustration do they supply of that principle, “Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased” (Luk 14:11)—so it was in the history of Haman and of Nebuchadnezzar, and such was the case here. Absalom had three sons (2Sa 14:27), but they had predeceased their father, and therefore he sought to perpetuate his memory by setting up this pillar to honour his name, by the side of which he doubtless intended that his body should be interred. Alas, how vain are some men to attract the notice of future generations, who are at no pains to seek the approbation of God. But even in death, Absalom was thwarted—“a very great heap of stones” (2Sa 18:17) as a monument to his villainy was all that marked his resting-place.

“Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now run, and bear the king tidings, how that the LORD hath avenged him of his enemies” (2Sa 18:19). Ahimaaz was the son of Zadok the priest (2Sa 15:27), who was deeply devoted to David. He was one of the two men who had endangered their lives in the king's service by bringing him tidings of Absalom's plans (2Sa 17:17-21). That he was a godly soul is intimated by the language which he used on this occasion, for instead of flattering Joab by congratulating him for his bringing the conflict to a triumphant issue, he ascribes the success to the Lord. How often God is forgotten in the flush of victory, and instead of exclaiming, “*His* right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory” (Psa 98:1), proud man attributes the defeating of his enemies to his own strength, vigilance, or skill. In such an hour, it is for the servant of God to lift up his voice and make known the truth that the glory belongs to God alone.

“And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day: but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead” (2Sa 18:20). In the light of what follows it is not easy to determine what it was that influenced Joab to refuse the request of Ahimaaz, for immediately afterward he bids another man go and tell the king what he had seen, and when Ahimaaz renewed his request, after a slight demur Joab granted it. It is possible that Joab feared for the life of Ahimaaz and considered he was too valuable a man to be thrown away, for the name of the selected messenger (“Cushi”) suggested that he was an Ethiopian—probably an African slave. Joab knew David was an impulsive and quick-tempered man, and remembered the fate which overtook the one who had bore to him the tidings of Saul's death (2Sa 1:15), and therefore he probably thought that a similar vengeance might be visited upon the one who should inform him of Absalom's death.

“Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cushie. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready?” (2Sa 18:22). The marginal renderings of this verse seem to decidedly confirm what we have just said above. The words of Ahimaaz, “But howsoever” are literally “be what may”—whatever be the risk of incurring the king’s fury, I am quite willing to face it. Joab’s, “Wherefore wilt thou, *my son*,” indicates that he held Ahimaaz in some esteem, and his “thou hast no tidings ready” is really “no tidings *convenient*,” which intimates he sought to discourage him from being the bearer of news which would be so unwelcome to David. And why, it may be asked, was Ahimaaz anxious to serve as messenger on this fateful occasion? We believe it was because he was so devoted to the king that he wished, so far as was possible, to tactfully *lighten the blow*. This he did, for instead of bluntly blurting out that Absalom had been slain he simply said, “Blessed be the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king” (2Sa 18:28).

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

6. *The Davidic*

We recently saw an article which was headed “Humility and the Second Advent,” but after reading through the same, we laid it down with a feeling of disappointment. We had hoped from its title that the writer of it (quite unknown to us) would emphasize the deep need for lowliness of heart when taking up the prophetic Scriptures. God's holy Word ought ever to be approached with great reverence and sobriety, but particularly is this the case with prophecy, for on no other subject (except it be the vexed question of church government) have God's servants differed more widely than in their views of things to come. It seems as though God had put not a little into His Word for the express purpose of staining human pride. Certainly, dogmatism ill becomes any of us where so many have erred.

We dare not say it is in a spirit of true humility that *we* now take up our pen, for the heart is very deceitful, and it generally follows that when we deem ourselves most humble, pride is at work in its subtlest form. It *is* however, with considerable diffidence that we continue these articles on the Davidic covenant, for it presents to the writer the most difficult aspect of the whole subject. Possibly this is because of his early training, for it is never an easy matter to get quite away from our first thoughts and impressions on a subject. During the years of our spiritual infancy, we heard and read nothing but the “Pre-millennial” interpretation of prophecy, and of course (as a spiritual child), we readily accepted all that our teachers said. But for the last decade, we have sought to carefully examine what

was taught us, and we have discovered that, some of it at least, was but “fairy tales.”

Common fairness compelled us to weigh the “Post-millennial” view. In doing so, we recognized a very real danger of allowing our mind to run to an opposite extreme. We are free to admit that upon a number of important points, this system of prophetic interpretation is no more satisfying to us than the “Pre,” and therefore, at the present time we are not prepared to commit ourselves to the entire position of either the one or the other. Nor does that which is known as “A-millennial” completely solve the problem. In other words, we now have no definite ideas concerning events, applying to ourselves those words of the Lord, “It is *not* for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power” (Act 1:7). But this makes it the more difficult to write on our subject, and we can do so only according to that measure of light which God has vouchsafed us, urging our readers to, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1Th 5:21).

We seem to be fully warranted in saying that what serves to divide interpreters of prophecy more than anything else is, whether its language is to be taken literally or figuratively. This, of course, opens a wide and most important field of study, into which we must not now enter. Yet we cannot forbear from pointing out that—it certainly seems to the writer—we have a most solemn warning in the Papist perversion of the Lord’s supper, of the real danger there is of wresting the Scriptures at the very time we appear to honour them (by “childlike” faith and simplicity) in taking them at their face value. If Rome’s insistence that “this is my body” means just what it says, shows us what serious results follow when mistaking the emblem for the reality which it *represents*, ought not this to serve as a very real check against the gross carnalizing of Chiliasm which literalizes what is spiritual and makes earthly what is heavenly?

The above remarks have been prompted by the promises contained in the Davidic covenant, recorded in 2 Samuel 7:11-16. In view of all that has been before us in connection with the preceding covenants, it is but reasonable to expect that this one too has *both* a “letter” and a “spirit” significance. This expectation is, we believe, capable of clear demonstration—in their primary and inferior aspects those promises respected Solomon and his immediate successors, but in their ultimate and higher meaning they looked forward to Christ and His kingdom. In the account which David gave to the princes of Israel of the divine communications he had received concerning the throne, he affirmed that God said unto him, “Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father” (1Ch 28:6). Yet the application of the same words to Christ Himself, “I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son” (Heb 1:5)—leave us in no doubt as to their deeper spiritual import.

The thrice occurrence of “for ever” in 2 Samuel 7:13, 16, *obliges* us to look beyond the natural posterity of David for the *ultimate* accomplishment of those

promises. God did indeed set the carnal seed of David upon the throne of Israel and establish his kingdom, though certainly not unto all generations. Those who have contended that this covenant of royalty guaranteed to David the occupancy of his throne by one of his own descendants until the coming of the Messiah, take a position which is impossible to defend—the facts of history flatly contradict them. David transmitted the kingdom of Israel to Solomon, and he in turn to Rehoboam, but *there* the reign of the family of David over all Israel actually (and so far as the writer perceives, *forever*) ceased. Let us enlarge upon this a little.

Rehoboam, by the haughtiness of his bearing and the cruelty of his measures, forfeited the attachment of his subjects. Ten of the tribes revolted unto Jeroboam, being completely dissevered from their brethren, and were never after recovered to their government. Thus, the reign of David's family *over all Israel* lasted, from beginning to end, at most but three generations or about a century. Over Judah alone, his descendants continued to reign for several centuries more, until, at length Nebuchadnezzar invaded and conquered the nation, destroyed Jerusalem, burned the temple, carried the people into captivity, and desolated the whole land. With this overthrow, which occurred some six centuries before the birth of Christ, *ended* the reign of David even over the tribe of Judah. His literal throne exists no more!

It is true after the Babylonian captivity, which continued seventy years, a remnant of the people returned, and for another century Judah was ruled by Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. The first of these was of the house of David, but both the others belonged to the tribe of *Levi*! None of them, however, were *kings* in any sense, but merely governed under foreign authority. During the next two centuries, Judah was governed by their high priests, all of whom pertained to the house of Aaron! Meanwhile, the nation was tributary successively to the Persians, Greeks, Egyptians, and Syrians. From the close of this period, until Judah became a Roman province under Herod, when Christ was born, the Jews were under the government of the Asmonian family, known as the Maccabees, all of whom belonged to the priestly tribe. History, then, manifestly refutes that interpretation of the Davidic covenant which asserts that it promised David that his natural seed should reign upon his literal throne until Christ appeared. We are therefore forced to seek another interpretation.

Before considering the spiritual and higher import of the divine promises in the Davidic covenant, further attention must be given to their application unto David's *natural* descendants, and particularly in connection with their *failures*. And here we cannot do better than quote from Patrick Fairbairn (1805-18784), "On that prophecy (2Sa 7:5-17), as on a sure foundation, a whole series of predictions began to be announced, in which the eye of faith was pointed to the bright visions in prospect, and in particular, to that Child of promise, in whom the succession from David's loins was to terminate, and who was to reign forever over the heritage of God. But while the appointment itself was absolute, and the original

prophecy was so far of the same character, that it indicated no suspension in the sovereignty of David's house, or actual break in the succession to his throne, David himself knew perfectly that there was an implied condition, which might render such a thing possible, and that the prophecy behooved to be read in the light of those great principles which pervade the whole of the divine economy.

"Hence, in addition to all he had penned in his Psalms, he gave forth in his dying testimony, for the special benefit of his seed, a description of the ruler, such as the Word of promise contemplated, and such as ought to have been, at least, generally realized in those who occupied the throne of his kingdom, 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God' (2Sa 23:3). Not only so, but in his last and still more specific charge, delivered to his immediate successor on the throne, he expressly rested his expectation of the fulfillment of the covenant made with him, on the faithful adherence of those who should follow him to the law and testimony of God. For after enjoining Solomon to walk in the ways and keep the statutes of God, he adds as a reason for persuading to such a course, 'that the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, *If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel*' (1Ki 2:4).

"But when this fundamental condition was violated, as it began to be in the time of Solomon himself, the prophetic word became, in a manner, responsive to the change—so that now it spoke almost in the same language respecting the house of David, which had formerly been addressed to that of Saul—'I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and give it to thy servant,' 1 Kings 11:11 compared with 1 Samuel 15:28—coupled only with the reservation that so much was still to be left to the house of David as was needed for maintaining the essential provisions of the covenant. Even this, however, appeared for a time to give way. The inveterate folly and wickedness of the royal line called for such visitations of judgment that the stately and glorious house of David, as it appears in the original prophecy, came afterwards to look like a frail tabernacle, and even this at a still future stage, has fallen prostrate to the ground—according to the figure in Amos 9:11.

"In consequence of these changes, darkness settled down on the heart of God's people, and fearful misgivings arose in their minds concerning the faithfulness of God to His covenant engagements. The painful question was stirred in their bosoms, 'Has His promise failed for evermore?' The thought even escaped from their lips, 'Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant.' The whole Psalm from which these words are taken (the 89th) is a striking record of the manner in which *faith had to struggle* with such doubts and perplexities, when the house of David was (for a time) cast down from its excellency, and God's plighted word, like the ark of His covenant, seemed to be given up into the hands of His enemies.

“God, however, vindicated in due time the truthfulness of His word, and the certainty of the result which it contemplated. The prophecy *stood fast* as regarded the grand article of its provisions—only in travelling on to its accomplishment, it had to pass through apparent defections and protracted delays, which could scarcely have been anticipated from the terms of its original announcement, and which were, in a sense, forced on it by human unbelief and waywardness. And so, within certain definite limits—those, namely, which connected the divine promise with the sphere of man’s responsibility, and bore on the time and mode of its fulfillment—it might justly be said to carry a *conditional* element in its bosom, in respect to those whom it more immediately concerned. While still, from first to last, the great purpose which it enshrined, *varied not* and continued to be, as a determinate counsel of heaven, without shadow of turning.”

We must not here anticipate too much what we hope to yet take up in detail, but in bringing this article to a close, it is pertinent to point out that, in view of what was before us in last month’s article—on the terms of Messianic prophecy being cast, more or less, in the mold of the typical history of Israel—we surely should not repeat the mistake of the carnal Jews, who expected Christ to sit on an earthly throne. When the Old Testament prediction announced that the Messiah was to occupy the throne and kingdom of David, was it not intimated that He was *to rule over God’s heritage*, and accomplish spiritually and perfectly, what His prototype did but temporally and partially, namely, bring deliverance, security, and everlasting blessing to the people of God? In view of *the divine personality* of the Messianic King and the world-wide extent of His kingdom, all of necessity rises to a *higher* plane—Immanuel’s reign must be of another order than that of the son of Jesse—spiritual, heavenly, eternal.

It should be quite obvious to those who are really acquainted with the earlier Scriptures that, in keeping with the character and times of the old covenant, any representation then made of Christ’s throne and kingdom would, in the main at least, be of a *figurative and symbolic nature*, exhibited under the veil of the typical images supplied by Israel’s commonwealth and history. It was *thus* that all the “better” things of the new covenant were shadowed forth. The immeasurable superiority of Christ’s *person* over all who were His types, compels us to look for a far grander and nobler discharge of His *offices* than which pertained unto them. It is true there is a *resemblance* between Christ as Prophet and Moses (Deut. 18:18), nevertheless the *contrast* is far more evident (Heb 3:3, 5). It is true that there is an agreement between Christ as Priest and Melchizedek and Aaron (Heb 5:1-5; 7:21), nevertheless the Antitype far excels them (Rev 5:6, etc.). So the throne He sits on and the kingdom He administers is infinitely *higher* than that David or Solomon ever occupied (Heb 2:9; 1:3). Beware of degrading the divine King to the level of human ones!

The Lord of Glory no more stood (or stands) in need of any outward enthronement or local seat of government on earth in order to prove His title to

David's kingdom, than He required any *physical* "anointing" to constitute Him Priest forever, or a material altar for the due presentation of His sacrifice to God. As another has well said, "Being the Son of the living God, and as such, Heir of all things, He possessed from the first all the powers of the kingdom, and proved that He possessed them by every word He uttered, every work of deliverance He performed, every judgment He pronounced, every act of mercy and forgiveness He dispensed, and the resistless control He wielded over the elements of nature and the realms of the dead. *These* were the signs of royalty He bore about with Him upon earth, and wonderful though they were, eclipsing in real grandeur all the glory of David and Solomon, they were still but the earlier preludes of that peerless majesty which David described from afar when he saw Him, as the Lord, seated in royal state at His Father's right hand."

THE BELIEVER'S PARADOX

"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mar 9:24). This was the honest confession of one whose faith had been put to a most severe test. It issued from a man who had a son possessed by a demon, which grievously tormented him, "Wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away" (Mar 9:18). What a sore trial was that for a tender parent! How thankful you should be, my reader, if in the sovereignty of God *you* are blest with normal and healthy children, and how sympathetic we should be toward those who have afflicted ones! No doubt this man had consulted different physicians, and perhaps had conferred with his pastor, but no relief had been obtained. What a testing of his submission to the will of God! Then he sought aid from Christ's disciples, but they had been unable to effect any cure, and "hope deferred maketh the heart sick" (Pro 13:12). Such, in brief, is the background of our text.

And now the great Physician commanded that the tormented one should be brought to Him, but we read, "And when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming" (Mar 9:20). Yes, matters generally seem to *get worse* with us when the Lord begins to take us in hand—to demonstrate that our extremity is God's opportunity to manifest His sufficiency. It was thus with the afflicted Hebrews in Egypt. The darkest hour precedes the dawn. But what a tremendous testing of this man's faith to behold his poor son foaming in agony at the Saviour's feet! "And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but *if* thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us" (Mar 9:21-22). Did the Lord Jesus indignantly

rebuke him for questioning His power, and turn away in disgust? No, for “great is his mercy.” Instead, He answered, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mar 9:23), and we are told, “And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24).

“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24). How paradoxical was this language, for it was almost, if not quite, a contradiction in terms. If this man was a genuine believer, then why should he bemoan his unbelief? Or since he bemoaned his unbelief, with what propriety could he claim to be a believer? It is like a man saying, I am hot, help thou my shivering coldness. I am strong, help my tottering weakness—for faith and unbelief are *opposites*. Ah, there are many paradoxes in the Christian life, which are quite unintelligible to the wise of this world. That man has to become a fool in order to be wise (1Co 3:18), that he has to become a pauper in order to be made rich (Mat 5:3), that he has to be made weak in order to become strong (2Co 12:10) are enigmas that proud philosophers cannot elucidate. But thank God, what remains mysterious to the wise and prudent among men, is revealed to those who are babes in His family.

Unbelief is part of *the entail of the fall*. By nature all of us are “children in whom is *no* faith” (Deu 32:20). Frightful thing is that! To have a heart which distrusts God, to have a heart which is ever prone to lean upon anyone and anything rather than upon the Lord Himself, to forsake the Fountain, and betake ourselves to “cisterns, that hold no water” (Jer 2:13). Such is fallen man. Plenty of faith in himself, faith in his fellows, till he be disillusioned and disappointed, but no faith *in God*. That it is which explains why Christ is “despised and rejected of men” (Isa 53:3), so that in the days of His flesh He cried, “O *faithless* and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you?” (Mat 17:17). This it is which accounts for the universal attitude of men toward both the law and the Gospel—they believe not the Author and Giver of them, they are destitute of faith in Him, and thus they will continue all their days unless the Holy Spirit sovereignly intervenes and performs a miracle of grace in their hearts.

Unbelief *remains* in the hearts even of the regenerate. Though God imparts to them the gift of faith, he removes not (in this life) the root of unbelief. The Heroes of Faith, whose portraits hang upon the walls of fame in Hebrews 11, experienced that solemn fact. Look at Abraham, the father of all them that believe. When famine arose in Canaan he went down to Egypt for succour, and so afraid was he to trust his wife in the hands of God, he told a half-lie by saying she was his sister. Look at Moses. Afraid to return to Egypt and confront Pharaoh after JEHOVAH had appeared to him at the burning bush and had promised the deliverance of His people (Exo 3), and later, complaining to Him because he had so evilly dealt with Israel (Exo 5:22-23). Look at David, the slayer of Goliath, yet saying in his heart, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul” (1Sa 27:1). Look at the once intrepid Elijah, fleeing in terror from Jezebel. Ah, my reader, the Holy Spirit has

delineated the characters of the saints in the colours of truth and reality, not as they ought to have been, but as they actually were.

Unbelief is *the great burden* of the saint. It grieves his soul. The man in our text *wept* over it—do you? Feign would the Christian be freed from this incubus, but the Lord does not see fit to remove it in this life. Frequently it acts like a cloud that covers the sun, for there is nothing so effectual as unbelief in hiding from us the light of God's countenance. It fetters our spiritual movements and impedes our progress. There are times when the believer fears that his unbelief will utterly sink him. Yet painful though this experience be, it is nevertheless a most hopeful and encouraging sign. It is not until God has communicated faith that any soul is *conscious of* its unbelief!—a living faith is necessary in order to recognize our dead unbelief. There must be divine light to see its existence and divine light to feel its power. Here, then, is solid comfort for those who are groaning over this burden—in your *unregenerate* days you were never *exercised over* your unbelief!

To genuinely mourn for our wicked unbelief is a sure evidence that divine life is present in the soul. Those who are strangers to God certainly do not make conscience of such matters—how can they when they are quite unconscious of the plague of their hearts! But the Christian is not only conscious of unbelief, he goes to God and makes humble and contrite *confession* of the same. Yes, it is a sense of this grievous burden which drives him to the great Physician, crying, “Lord, I believe; *help thou* mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24). A true Christian does not cloak or excuse his unbelief, but honestly acknowledges it before God. Nor does he sit still and pity himself as one who is totally impotent and without any responsibility in the matter. No, he genuinely seeks “help,” which clearly denotes he is *resisting* this enemy, but needs divine assistance. True, without Christ he can do nothing (Joh 15:5), but he *can* do all things by Christ strengthening him (Phi 4:13).

Here, then, is the solution to the difficulty and the explanation of the paradox presented by the language in our text. There are two distinct and totally different principles or “natures” indwelling the saint—faith and unbelief, and there is a continual opposition between them. They issue from the “spirit” and the “flesh,” concerning which we read, “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things which ye would” (Gal 5:17). It is this unceasing warfare between the two antagonistic principles that give rise to a *dual experience*—one moment trusting God, the next doubting Him, one moment resting upon and drawing comfort from His promises, the next having no confidence in the same. And this dual and distressing experience moves him to cry, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” Ah, my reader, if *you* are not plagued with and burdened by unbelief, if you do not humbly confess the same to God and seek His help about it, then are you of all men most miserable.

Contrariwise, as we have already said, here is that which provides real comfort for the conscience-distressed and Satan-harassed soul. How often the devil will tell

a Christian, “Your profession is an empty one. You do not belong to the Household of Faith—how can you, when filled with unbelief!?” Listen, dear friend, the man in our text was a genuine believer, yet he owned *his* unbelief, and that is *recorded* for our instruction and comfort. This is one of the plainest possible proofs that we *are* believers. No unbeliever ever shed tears over his unbelief. No empty professor ever groaned because of his questioning of God. No hypocrite is burdened by his doubts and fears. No, such are filled with carnal confidence and fleshly assurance. *They* have not had a doubt about their salvation for years past. They can exercise faith any time, as easily as you can turn a tap and make the water come, but such is not the faith of God's elect.

“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24). There are four things here claiming our attention. First, the paradox presented. This, together with its solution, we have considered above. Second, a fact affirmed. “Lord, I believe.” Third, a request preferred. “Help thou.” Fourth, a confession made. “Mine unbelief.” As it is often helpful to depart from the verbal arrangement of a text, we will do so here, and take up its several clauses in their inverse order, looking at this man's confession, then his petition for help, and then the plea by which he supported his request, “I believe.”

The confession made, “mine unbelief.” We will, very briefly, observe four things in connection with the same. First, it was an *honest* confession. This is the first thing that God requires from any praying soul—sincerity, genuineness, reality. He is not to be imposed upon by cant, nor will the mere uttering of words, however scriptural, gain His ear. Then be frank and artless in all your dealings with God, and never pretend to be what you are not. To the very end of your earthly pilgrimage, you will be (in yourself) a vile sinner, unworthy of the least of His mercies. This man did not claim to possess a faith that never wavered or boast that he was free from doubts and fears. No, he honestly *acknowledged* that the sum of his faith was frequently eclipsed by the dark clouds of unbelief. O to be delivered from all guile when approaching the throne of grace.

Second, his confession was a *humble* one. That is the next thing which God requires from the praying soul—that he strip himself of the rags of self-righteousness and come before Him as one who is sinful and needy. This is very evident from the epistle to the Laodiceans—they refused to abase themselves and take their proper place before the Lord. His charge was, “Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev 3:17). Alas, to how many professing Christians do those solemn words apply today! To all such Christ says, “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see” (Rev 3:18). It is just at this very point that the Christian is distinguished from

the hypocrite—the former humbles himself and takes his place before God in the dust, acknowledging his wicked unbelief.

Third, his confession was a *feeling* one, and this is the next thing which God requires from each praying soul, for He desires “truth [reality] in the inward parts” (Psa 51:6). It is not accurate and pious expressions, but a real sense of need in the soul which constitutes the essence of prayer. I might as well kneel down and worship gods of stone, as offer to the living God a prayer of words alone. That the confession of our text *was* a feeling one is evidenced by the fact that it was accompanied by *tears*. If the writer may be permitted to speak for his readers—Is it not at *this* point that we so often fail the worst, especially in the confessing of our sins. Alas, how little are our hearts affected by them. How mechanical and impenitent are the owning of our faults. Lord, melt our hard hearts.

Fourth, it was a *representative* confession, by which we mean it was suited to the case of all God's children. There will never come a time in this world when such language is unfitted even for those who are members of the household of faith. No matter how much God is graciously pleased to increase our faith, indwelling unbelief will still be present to struggle against it. It is just this element which renders the prayers of Scripture so pertinent to the saints of all ages. They exactly suit their case and express their sentiments. “As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man” (Pro 27:19).

Let us consider next *his petition*, for there is much in the details of this incident which affords us valuable instruction on the subject of prayer, “*help*, Lord.” First, look again at the *occasion* of it. This was an overwhelming anxiety over his afflicted son, finding relief in unburdening his heart to the Lord. And that is what all real supplication is. There is far more genuine petitioning of God in seasons of adversity than during times of prosperity, and that is the reason why many a grief-wrung ejaculation, or an inarticulate groan reaches God's ear, when many a nicely worded and carnally-admired “prayer” never reaches any higher than the ceiling of the room. Read through Psalm 107 and observe the repeated “Then”! When there is a real sense of need, a burdened soul requires no external “helps” as to what to say and how to say it—a cry spontaneously emanates from the stricken soul and wings its way to heaven.

But there was something more than the pitiful state of his son which prompted this petition. The father was conscious that his own unbelief was hindering the desired blessing (or why did he cry out for “help” against it) and *that* was unbearable. If you had to carry a basket containing some articles which weighed only a few ounces, you would never think of asking someone for a helping hand, but if you were staggering along with a load that weighed twenty or thirty pounds, you would beg assistance—unless you were too proud and independent to seek it. And so it is in heart matters. The more we make conscience of the thoughts and intents of the same, the more we are exercised over that which is disorderly and

God-dishonouring, and the more we grow in grace, the more keenly we shall feel such irregularities.

Second, consider the *spirituality* of his plea. The more spiritual the soul becomes, the more spiritual are its petitions. It is a sure mark of spiritual immaturity when relief from bodily ailments are more valued by us than deliverance from moral maladies, or when material mercies are prized above an increase of our graces. This man did not cry out, “Lord, heal my son”—that had been *natural*, but “Lord, help mine unbelief”—that was truly *spiritual*. The fact is that many of the most spiritual prayers issue from those who regard themselves as being the least spiritual—yea, who seriously doubt if they have any spirituality at all. Unspiritual souls never pray for help against unbelief. It is much to be thankful for when we are made painfully conscious of our unbelief, for thousands of church-members never are so. And it is a still greater cause for praise when we are honestly burdened thereby, and moved to pray for deliverance.

Third, its *meaning*. This man recognized that the Lord was the only one who could effectually aid him. Ah, it is a grand thing when we are brought to the point where we realize that none but God Himself can subdue the workings of this evil in us. All self-help is vain, all fellow-creatures are powerless to render any relief—they cannot relieve themselves, still less others. Then, “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall *sustain thee*” (Psa 55:22). This man definitely applied to Christ. It is indeed a blessed thing when we are so oppressed by our unbelief that we betake ourselves to the great Physician—so many groan under it, but do no more. Others hug it to themselves and get no further. “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24)—put forth Thy gracious power and subdue this God-dishonouring spirit, enable me to strive against it, suffer me not to excuse it, or to pity myself for it, and fatalistically yield to it, cause me to regard it as an evil to be hated, an enemy to be resisted, a sin to be confessed.

Fourth, mark its *comprehensiveness*. His petition was exceeding brief, yet it covered much ground. As faith is the root from which all good works proceed, so unbelief is the source of all evil. This is our master sin, “*the sin which doth so easily beset us*” (Heb 12:1). Unbelief is the cause of all our troubles and failures. This is the strategic point where Satan concentrates his forces against us and therefore it is *here* above all that we need divine *help*. “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24). Lord, I do expect Thee to undertake for me, yet I am not able to exclude all doubting. I am persuaded of Thy power and pity, but enable me to rely upon Thee more fully and constantly.

We turn now to *the plea* which accompanied this prayer for help, for so we may legitimately regard these words, “Lord, I believe.” His cry for divine assistance, accompanied by an humble confession, was made on this ground—because I believe, Lord, take pity upon me and subdue mine unbelief. To obtain the granting of our petition, it must be backed up by some valid and suitable argument. Prayer is something more than presenting a request to God. It is

pleading with Him, presenting some reason why He should grant that for which we ask. There are various pleas we may make, such as, because I am in deep need of the same, because Thou hast promised to supply it, because it will be for Thy glory to do so, for Christ's sake. This is what the Lord means when He says, "Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob" (Isa 41:21).

First, then, this plea was a *necessary* one, for God will not hear an unbeliever. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb 11:6). "Lord, I believe," not as I would do, nor as I should do, yet I deny not Thy existence, I question not the verity of Thy Word, I am persuaded Thou canst not lie, I doubt not Thy power, Thy goodness, Thy mercy. I *believe*, though feebly, haltingly, spasmodically. I appeal to Thee, O Thou Searcher of hearts. Thou seest the little spark of fire beneath the smouldering flax, the flicker of faith behind the clouds of unbelief. Ah, is it not at this point we so often fail—when presenting our petitions we must *accompany them with suitable pleas*, for then God sees we are in earnest. Study carefully Christ's prayer in John 17 and observe how each request is supported by a reason or plea—either before or after, in the words "that," "for," etc.

Second, it is an *instructive* plea. What valuable teaching is there here for those who desire to pray aright! In our ignorance and foolishness, *we* had probably concluded that such a prayer as this man made was unsuitable and unseemly—a contradiction in terms. It is recorded for our learning. One great lesson it inculcates is that we ought never to look on our graces without also viewing our infirmities. Nor should we confess our sins without also owning the Spirit's fruit in us. For example, if I am made sensible of my deep need of more humility, when asking God for the same, I should acknowledge my pride. Contrariwise, when confessing my pride, I should thank God for humbling my heart to do so. If I am begging for more patience and submission, I must confess my self-will and fractiousness, yet also thank God for making me feel my need of the opposites.

Third, it was an *acceptable* plea. God is pleased when His people own their relationship to Him, pleading that they are His children, and acknowledging the Spirit's work within. It is a false and reprehensible humility which refuses so to do. Observe the example of David, "O my God, I *trust* in thee...let not mine enemies triumph over me" (Psa 25:2). "In thee, O LORD, *do I* put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness" (Psa 31:1). "Preserve my soul; *for I am holy*: O thou my God, save thy servant that *trusteth* in thee" (Psa 86:2). Observe how Asaph pleaded with God the relationship which Israel sustained to Him, "Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old" (Psa 74:2). This is the very ground taken by our great High Priest when interceding for His people, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; *for they are thine*" (Joh 17:9). We, then, shall pray acceptably if we

plead, “Lord, I am Thine, undertake for me. I am a believer, subdue mine unbelief.”

Fourth, it was a *prevailing* plea. Of course it was—had not Christ said, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” This dear man’s petition gained the day. The Lord undertook for him and his poor son was made whole. When we really believe, the battle is half, nay nine-tenths, won. It all turns upon that. It is the prayer of faith which gains the ear and moves the hand of God. Hence, when we read of Abraham that “he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Rom 4:20), *we* should cry, “Lord, *I believe*; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24). As we read, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it *shall* be given him” (Jam 1:5), *we* should cry, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief,” for it is written, “but let him *ask in faith* nothing wavering” (Jam 1:6).

We may apply our text to those *seeking salvation*. There may be a reader of this article who is halting between two opinions. He is convinced that Christ alone can meet his needs and satisfy his soul, yet he finds it so hard to give up the world and abandon his idols. He knows full well that in Christ alone is eternal life to be found, yet Satan still has such a hold upon him that he cannot surrender to the Lord Jesus and forsake the pleasures of sin. Then come to Him and say, “Lord, I believe; *help thou* mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24). Or it may be, he feels himself to be such a godless wretch that he fears his case is hopeless—having sinned so grievously against light and privileges, he dares not venture upon the Gospel promises. Come to Christ and cry from the heart, “Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24).

Our text may be applied unto *God's providences*. The Christian can say “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psa 23:1), yet when circumstances seem to be all against him, he is unable to appropriate the blessed truth that God shall supply all his need (Phi 4:19). Fearful that he shall come to abject destitution, he is unable to fully trust the Lord. Then come to Christ and say, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” Many a one can say, I am sure that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28) means what it says, yet there are some things in his circumstances which he finds exceedingly difficult to believe will issue in real good for him. Instead of submitting to God's disposing will, he is often full of rebellion. Instead of kissing the rod, he finds himself kicking against it. Then come to Christ and say, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24).

Our text may be applied to *personal assurance*. How many a Satan-harassed believer is exclaiming, I greatly fear that I cannot be among the saved, for if I were, I surely would not sin as I do. In view of the raging of my lusts, the frequency of which they overcome my every effort to resist them, it would be presumptuous to affirm that the reigning power of sin was dethroned within *me*.

My friend, David cried, “Iniquities prevail against me” (Psa 65:3). But you say, My heart is such a sink of iniquity, I dare not claim to be regenerated. Often I do not loathe sin, nor even desire to. Ah, but it is not always thus—are not such seasons followed by contrition and confession!? Yes, you say, but right after I fall again into the mire, sometimes deeper than before. Ah, but do you *stay* there? Do you completely abandon the throne of grace? Does not a cry of distress go up from you to God? Then *continue* crying, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24). May God add His blessing to this sermon for His name’s sake.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

14. *Its Practice*

Because they have been perfectly sanctified by Christ, and because they have been made saints by the Holy Spirit, believers are called upon to lead saintly lives, that is, to yield unto God the throne of their hearts and aim at His glory in all their conduct. Therein does the *practice* of sanctification actually consist. It is the fitting response which the Christian is required to make unto the amazing grace that has been shown him. Negatively, he is to avoid everything which is contrary to and inconsistent with his high calling in Christ. Positively, he is to seek after and cultivate whatever will manifest and adorn the same. God claims the entire being, and demands holiness in every thought, word, and act. The standard of personal holiness which He has set before us is one of flawless perfection, and at this we must constantly aim.

At the close of last month’s article, we pointed out how important it is that the Christian should watch against the abatement of his spiritual longings, and avoid whatever tends to dampen his love for God and dull his appetite for spiritual things. Let us now mention some of the things which bring deadness upon the soul and greatly hinder the practice of sanctification. First, the committing of sins which have not been duly *repented* of. Where sin is not fully repented of, it is *allowed* (condoned), and therein the Holy Spirit is resisted and grieved. Consequently, He withholds both His comforts and His grace, and the believer’s strength is greatly reduced. God will not be trifled with, and when He is offended thus, He smites the heart with deadness and hardness, so that the spiritual life is much impaired and power for holy living is considerably reduced. Learn, then, to stand in awe not only of great, but smaller sins.

Second, *slackness in the performance of duties*, especially neglect of those means of grace whereby the Christian is kept healthy and fresh in living unto God. Slothfulness and carelessness more often steal in upon believers than positive outbursts and commission of sin. They are more insidious, less likely to be judged by them, and are frequent causes of deadness of heart. This sluggishness of soul is

most reprehensible, for it is a despising of the means God has appointed for our good. To expect grace from God, when we turn from the channels through which it flows, is to tempt Him or act presumptuously. To lie upon a bed of ease, and then say Christ must do it all, is a species of hypocrisy. When the spouse sleeps, Christ withdraws (Song 5:6). Grace was never intended to incite to idleness. The fact that *God* works in us is the very reason why *we* must work (Phi 2:12-13).

Third, *ingratitude* or lack of thankfulness for those spiritual benefits we have already received. God requires to have His gifts acknowledged, therefore does He often stay His hand and suspend the influences of His grace where His bounty be not owned. “Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, *abounding therein with thanksgiving*” (Col 2:7). The way to grow in faith is to be thankful for what we *have* received—and not, under a pretence of humility and modesty, deny that we have any! To bless God for the grace He has already bestowed is an effectual means of retaining it and of having more added to it. But if we are ungrateful and querulous, be not surprised if deadness and discouragement of heart come upon you.

Fourth, *fleshly indulgence* and flirting with the world is a great hindrance to the practice of holiness. Just so far as we gratify the flesh, we are straitened in the spirit, and to the extent that we seek comfort and satisfaction from the world, do we deprive ourselves of the grace and joy there is to be found in Christ. An immoderate use of earthly things, an inordinate affection for human objects, an unequal yoke with unbelievers, brings deadness upon the soul. How much, then, we need to make that prayer our own, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way” (Psa 119:37). The Spirit is grieved when we become addicted to vain pleasures, and therefore as sensuality increases the vitality of grace in us decays.

Other things injure the life of practical holiness, but we name only two more. *Pride* in spiritual attainments. When we take credit to ourselves for our growth in grace or victories over sin, the Spirit is grieved and His operations cease. “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (Jam 4:6). He is jealous of His honour and will not divide it with us. The garland we put upon our own heads soon withers and those gifts we become puffed up with are quickly blasted. By humiliating falls, God teaches us to ascribe all glory to Himself. *Heavy troubles*, temporal reverses, family bereavements, the loss of health dampen our spirits and retard the wheels of spiritual action. Therefore we find the Psalmist praying, “I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word” (Psa 119:107).

Probably there are not a few of our readers ready to exclaim, In the last few sentences you have placed your finger closer to the seat of *my* trouble than in any of the previous points. It is the difficulty of the way, the trying nature of my circumstances, the unsuitable environment in which I am placed that really makes it impossible for me to live a saintly life and be a fruitful Christian. Ah, my friend,

that is no valid excuse. The heavier be the pressure upon us, the more it should drive us to our knees. The deader we feel ourselves to be, the more earnest should we cry unto God for Him to quicken us. Was it not so in the case of the Psalmist? True, he was “afflicted very much,” yet he did not give way to despondency and conclude his situation was beyond relief. No, he turned unto God and sought fresh supplies of grace.

“If one is placed in circumstances quite decent and honourable, yet not conducive to holiness, where does sanctification count in one’s life?” This question was recently sent us by a reader who was much interrupted while writing us and apologized for the wording. But the thought is quite intelligible—let us express it in a variety of forms. If one be placed in circumstances where there is nothing to encourage striving after a closer walk with God, how can he expect to thrive like those who are more congenially situated? If one be obliged to work day after day among a company of the godless, and even in the home meet with opposition and ridicule, will not the fruits of the Spirit be necessarily chilled? If one has so many domestic duties to perform that there is scarcely any time available for the cultivation of personal piety, and when at night she is too exhausted to read with profit, how can one expect to grow in grace?

Let us begin our answer to these very pertinent inquiries, by affirming that there are *no* “circumstances” which are uncongenial to the cultivation and exercise of personal holiness, no environment or situation in life which is unsuitable to a close walking with God. We quite understand what is in the mind of the above questioner, and fully appreciate the force of his difficulty, but he is failing to take into account several vitally important considerations, and it is his very failure in overlooking these considerations which will make him the more surprised at the answer we have given. Well can we imagine some saying, Ah, you would not be so quick to affirm that no circumstances are uncongenial to personal holiness if *you* had to live your life as and where I am compelled to live *mine*.

Bear with us for a few moments, dear friend, and seek to weigh impartially what we now write. Take first the *divine* side of the matter. Is it not *God Himself* who regulates all our “circumstances”? Most certainly it is, for it is written, “For of him, and through him, and to him, are *all things*: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom 11:36). Then it is *God*, and not blind fate, not a fickle “fortune” (or misfortune), who has placed you in the very situation which you now occupy! He is the One who planned from all eternity the very environment which you are now in—to believe otherwise is virtual atheism! Moreover, if you are His child, then He always has in view your highest and ultimate welfare, “And we know that all things work together *for good* to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28), and that “all things” includes your unpleasant “circumstances”!

Now let us turn to *the human* side of the matter, by which we mean the *response* which you ought to make to what has just been pointed out. Your first

duty is to *exercise faith* in the above passages and recognize God's shaping hand in your present lot. Your second duty is obviously to humbly submit and *be content* with what God has appointed, and not chafe and murmur at it, for that is nothing but a species of rebellion against the providential will of God. Not only will it not help you, but it is folly to envy those whom you suppose are more favourably situated for the cultivation of holiness—*every* situation has its own (relative) disadvantage and difficulties—you little know of the temptations which the “favourably situated” ones encounter!

Your third duty is to humbly but earnestly beg God to sanctify the “circumstances” *to you*. He is able to bring food out of evil, to make a real blessing what now seems to be a serious hindrance. Nothing is too hard for God to accomplish. He can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, He can make the desert to rejoice and the wilderness blossom as the rose. He can make the feeble mighty and bring the dead to life. Surely, then, He is well able to sanctify to your soul the most trying situation, the most unpropitious environment, and make fertile to you its sterile soil. The fact is, dear reader, that that very lot you find so hard to bear only provides a suitable opportunity for you to prove the sufficiency of God's grace.

Ah, *that* is the very essence of the matter. If you definitely and diligently seek grace from God and are then enabled to be submissive, trustful, humble, patient, unmurmuring, thankful that your lot is not far worse than it is, then you *are* bringing forth the fruits of holiness! Are we not told that “a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1Pe 3:4)? Yes, valued by Him more highly than some of the showier gifts which others are permitted to exercise in the pulpit. All plants are not the same, nor do they all thrive equally well in the same kind of soil. Likewise, there is great variety in the graces of the Spirit, and *different environments* are needed for their cultivation and manifestation. Shall the fern complain because God placed it in a damp and shaded nook? Shall the water lily murmur because a pond rather than a garden be its dwelling place?

Alas, you say, how that *condemns* me! How sadly have I failed to see God's will appointing and His hand shaping my circumstances. I am almost, if not quite as blind, as the grossest skeptic. Of course I am quite familiar with the words, “All things work together for good to them that love God,” but I have never applied them to the *unpleasant* details of my life. And oh! what complaining, impatience, unbelief, rebellion, I am guilty of! Truly I am like “a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke” (Jer 31:18). I must admit how often I have envied those whose path appeared to be much smoother and easier than mine, and it *does* seem to me that if I had more leisure or a stronger body, and close contact with those who are spiritually minded, I would make better progress.

As for the third duty you mentioned, I *have* begged God to sanctify trials to my heart, to give me strength to carry the cross, to make a blessing to me those things which I find most unpleasant. O how earnestly and frequently have I besought

Him for grace to be meek and quiet, content and uncomplaining, patient and trustful. But alas, I cannot have His ear, for I often find the more I pray the more trying things become and the worse I am. I acknowledge that I am a complete failure and feel utterly discouraged. I know not what more to do, and can only cry out, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom 7:24). Tell me, is there no remedy, no relief to be obtained, no way in which I can obtain deliverance from my sinful self?

It is just at this very point that the religious quacks of the day so often obtain a hearing, and persuade distressed Christians to give a trial to *their* remedy. Struggling against the power of indwelling sin, often tripped up by Satan, brought to seriously question their regeneration, at their wit’s end to know what to do for relief, certain preachers will assure them that God has provided for just this contingency. Varying somewhat in their terms (according to the particular school they belong to), they will tell such a one whose experience we have described above that he or she has been “justified” but not yet “sanctified,” and that if “the second blessing” be sought and obtained, a tremendous difference will follow. Or the distressed one will be informed that what he needs is the “filling” or “baptism of the Spirit,” or that “the higher life,” or the victorious life” is what provides the grand panacea for all his ills.

Let us take the “second blessing” people first. This blessing is referred to by them as “entire sanctification,” “perfect love,” and “complete cleansing.” They insist that it is a second work of grace wrought in the believer, as definite and distinct as what took place at his conversion. They teach that the first blessing bestows the *pardon* of sin, whereas the second removes the *root* of sin, purifying the heart from all corruption. They claim that those who enter into this second blessing may live a life which is without spot or blemish, wholly acceptable unto God. Its leaders affirm that they are entirely delivered from evil inclinations, all inward pollutions, that temptations only come to them now from without, and that the fiery darts of the Wicked One fall harmlessly against the shield of their faith. They are pure internally and victorious externally—filled with perfect love, peace, and joy.

This second blessing is entered into by the seeking soul “laying his all upon the altar,” unreservedly consecrating himself to God. He must believe without the slightest doubting that the Lord is able and willing to perform this work of grace in him and eradicate the sinful nature from his being. He is told that just as surely as the Lord sent down fire from heaven and consumed the sacrifice which was placed upon the temple altar of old, so the Holy Spirit will now come as a flame of fire and burn up his evil propensities root and branch. He is informed that the secret of the whole thing lies in the exercise of childlike *faith*. Having placed his all upon the altar, he must be fully assured that God has accepted his sacrifice, and totally ignoring the evidence of his senses and feelings, he is to believe the great work is done, that he is now entirely sanctified, that sin has been eradicated from his

being, and he must now thank God for it and testify to his fellows that the second blessing is *his*.

What shall we say of these things? First, that they are an utter delusion, a religious mirage which mocks the weary traveler across the desert of time. They promise that which is unfulfilled and unattainable in this life. Second, they cruelly raise hopes in the heart of distressed people, the dashing of which leaves them in a far worse state than they were before. These poor souls have implicit confidence in their teachers, and carry out their instructions to the letter, and when they find the result is not what they were told, they blame themselves—for their lack of faith, etc. In the course of our experience we have met with numbers who have honestly and earnestly sought this “second blessing” of “entire sanctification,” only to meet with disappointment and then sink into abject despair. Some of them (known to us personally) ended in the madhouse, while others committed suicide. Third, such teaching is directly contrary to the Word of God, and therefore is to be shunned as a plague.

A few words now upon the “higher life” teaching. While not so extreme and pernicious as the former, it is nevertheless delusive and disappointing. There are various schools with different terms to describe *their* “blessings.” But that which is common to them all is this—God has provided something far better for His children in this life than that which merely accompanies conversion, something which if sought and received will lift them above the level occupied by so many Christians, which will deliver them from an up-and-down experience, from doubting and mourning, and make them overcoming believers. Though the “flesh” be not eradicated, they will now live constantly in the Spirit, though the sinful nature be not removed, they will have complete victory over it. Though they are yet feeble and fallible creatures, the Spirit will so fill and energize them that they shall possess wondrous “power for service” and become successful “winners of souls for Christ.”

And how is this wondrous change brought about? What must one do who is keenly desirous of entering into this blissful experience? Various answers are returned. Some say we must wait upon God and continue in earnest prayer, pleading Christ’s promise, as the disciples did the ten days preceding Pentecost. Others say at conversion we simply accepted Christ as our Saviour, and that now we must surrender to Him as “absolute Lord and Master of your life, so that never again will you question His authority, or disobey His commands.” Still others tell us that the reason why we have failed so sadly hitherto is because we have attempted to resist the devil and overcome sin in our strength, but that if we now receive Christ in His fullness, turn the battle completely over to Him, and trust Him moment by moment, we shall be more than conquerors.

What shall we say to these things? First, that they are entirely without Scriptural warrant. Where is there any record in Acts of the apostles revisiting their converts and telling them of something far better than what became theirs at

conversion? Where is there anything in the epistles (some of which were addressed to churches in a very low spiritual state!) exhorting the saints to seek a “baptism” or “anointing” of the Spirit? There is none! Second, to talk about first accepting Christ as Saviour and then surrendering to Him as Lord betrays a deplorable ignorance or perverting of the Scriptures. He must be received as Lord *before* He becomes the Saviour of any—the New Testament uniformly refers to Him as “Lord and Saviour” (2 Peter 3:2, 18), never as “Saviour and Lord!” Third, the closing sentences of the last paragraph are absurd. Where is the truly born-again soul who seeks to overcome sin in his own strength? A prayerless Christian is a contradiction in terms. The very fact that he *is* a Christian ensures that he has learned of his own powerlessness (Phi 3:3), and that he now seeks grace and help from God.

Surely if ever there were a saint who fully surrendered the throne of his heart to the sceptre of Christ, who was filled with the Spirit, and who had entered into God's best for him in this life, it was the apostle Paul. Was, then, *he* completely free from sin? Did he fully measure up to the standard of holiness God has set before us? Were there no faults and failings in his Christian life? Witness the sharp contention between him and Barnabas (Act 15:39), and remember that it always takes two to make a quarrel. Hear him acknowledging “without were fightings, within [not all was perfect peace, but] were *fears*” (2Co 7:5). Observe his vacillation in 2 Corinthians 7:8—first, determining to sharply rebuke their sin, then sorrowing because he had done so, lest their feelings had been unduly hurt, and then regretting that he had been sorry. If any reader be inclined to give ear to the errors we have mentioned above, we beseech him to candidly test them by the apostle's own experience in Romans 7:14-24 and Philippians 3:11-14.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Joseph

The *comeliness* of Joseph was a link in the chain of providence that was essentially necessary to bring about the destined end. It was this that drew the attention of his mistress and was the occasion of his being sent to prison. Accordingly, it is stated in this view by the inspired historian. Immediately before the account of her infamous attempt it is said, “Joseph was a goodly person, and wellfavoured” (Gen 39:6). Here we see not only a divine providence was immediately engaged in bringing about the imprisonment of Joseph, but that it was in the view of God even in the formation of Joseph. This comeliness was given him for the very purpose! Had Joseph been an ordinary man, he would not have

been sent to prison. Had he not been a remarkably handsome man, his virtue would not have been put to the test. Beauty, and wealth, honour, and health are all blessings of providence, for which they ought to be thankful who possess them. But they are all the occasions of trial, and without divine strength to resist, temptation may be the occasion of fall and ruin. Let every Christian, then, watch and guard against the temptations to which his providential gifts may expose him. A victory over temptation, like that of Joseph, is never to be expected, except in the strength of the faith and of the God of Abraham.

It might be supposed that if providence overrules and directs all things, the interests, and especially the characters of God's people, would always be safe and unassailed. Would any parent allow slander to exist even for a moment, or even to originate against his beloved children, if he were able to prevent it? But God's ways are not as our ways. Here we see (Gen 39:13) that instead of keeping His people from injury and the tongue of slander, it is by the means of false accusation that providence brings Joseph to prison. The man of God is aspersed with calumny, and charged with sins which he had resisted under temptation of the strongest kind. That part of his character which is the admiration of every age, was the very part in which he suffered. A character was fixed on him, remarkable for crimes of which he was not only innocent, but to which he possessed the contrary virtues in a degree beyond any instances on record. And this false accusation had a plausibility that imposed on integrity, and prevailed, without anything for a long time to counteract it, keeping him in the bondage of prison. There is no security, then, to the people of God, that their lives, their property, and their characters may not be taken away unjustly. There may be occasion when providence will open a door for any, or for all, of these calamities. But this will never be the case except it shall be for the glory of God and for the good of the suffering individual. And when in prison, Joseph was rendered comfortable by providential interference. If his character was unjustly taken away, it was restored in the fullest manner, and the virtues of his illustrious character are a perpetual record to his honour.

It is usually considered that *circumstances* are the strongest evidences, and that, when facts may be forged, circumstances are expelled. Facts, supported by circumstances, are no doubt evidence beyond just question. But circumstances should not be admitted as decisive without a full consideration of their bearing. Here (Gen 39:12) was a circumstance, apparently so strong against Joseph, that at first view it is useless for counsel to attempt to extricate him. He leaves his cloak behind him. Can there be better evidence of the fact alleged and of his guilt? Yet, when the thing is considered for a moment in a dispassionate manner, the circumstance is not quite so conclusive. No wonder Potiphar had not the coolness to weigh evidence on this occasion, but we may do it for him. Why, wife of Potiphar, did you on that occasion act so courageous a part, instead of flying for refuge to some secure part of the house? Were you more intent to secure the culprit as a prisoner than to protect yourself from his insult? What need was there that you should seize him? Could your slave escape you? or would your husband

be so incredulous as to not believe you? Joseph, you are the injured man and this is a vile woman. She is not urged by a sense of duty to punish you, but instigated by revenge to ruin you, an innocent man. And I have known, on occasions of accusations, some upright and impartial men ready, from a false interpretation of circumstances, to condemn the innocent on the evidence of false accusers. It is remarkable, that, notwithstanding the leanings of modern times to the side of mercy, there are still occasionally some instances in which the innocent suffer from a false interpretation of circumstances. When providence, in any instance, has ordained this issue, vigilance is in some way unaccountably asleep, and a strong disposition to punish flagrant injustice leads away from a cool consideration of the necessary import of circumstances. Joseph was ordered on this occasion to go to prison, therefore the deficiency in the evidence of circumstances did not occur to those who judged. No wonder that Potiphar should not be very suspicious to observe the flaw in the testimony. It is not either guilt or innocence, strictly speaking, that determines the fate of the accused at human tribunals. Innocence may be overwhelmed with calumny, and guilt may escape the keen eye of the most rigorous justice and the most conclusive evidence. The lot of the prisoner is decided *by providence*, whether he unjustly suffers or is unjustly cleared.—*Alexander Carson* (1776-1844).



December

HONOURING THE SPIRIT

This subject is (alas) new to many. Not a few seem to have been misled through a wrong understanding of that word concerning the Spirit in John 16:13, as though “He shall not speak of himself” signified He shall never occupy the saints with His own person and work, but always direct them to Christ. It is true that the Spirit is here to glorify Christ, yet *that* by no means exhausts His mission. His first work is to direct the attention of sinners to God *as God*, convicting them of rebellion against their Creator, Ruler, and Judge. Then, too, He occupies the saints with the Father—His love, grace, and providential care. But John 16:13 no more means that the Spirit does not magnify Himself than Christ’s, “I have not spoken for myself” (Joh 12:49) meant that He never occupied people with His own person—His “come unto *me*” (Mat 11:28, Joh 7:37) proves otherwise.

Others create difficulty out of the fact that, in the economy of redemption, the Spirit now occupies the place of *Servant* of the Godhead, and as such it is incongruous to *worship* Him. Such a cavil hardly deserves reply. But lest some of our readers have been misled by this sophistry, let it be pointed out that during the days of His flesh, Christ occupied the place of “servant,” the One who came here not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Nevertheless, even during that season of His humiliation we are told, “Behold, there came a leper and *worshipped* him” (Mat 8:2). And have we not read that when the wise men from the east entered the house where He was, they “fell down, and *worshipped* him” (Mat 2:11)? Thus, the fact that the Holy Spirit is the Executive of the Godhead by no means debars Him of His title to our love and homage. Some say that because the Spirit is *in* us, He is not a suitable object of worship, as the Father and Son without us. But is the Spirit within the *only* relation He sustains to us? Is He not omnipresent, infinitely above us, and as such an appropriate object of worship!?

That the Holy Spirit *is to be* publicly owned and equally honoured with the Father and the Son is very evident from the terms of the great commission, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, *and of the Holy Ghost*” (Mat 28:19). Now to be baptized in the name of the Holy Spirit is either a real act of *worship* or otherwise it would be a mere

formality—which of the two is not difficult to determine. In view of this verse, no one need have the slightest hesitation in rendering homage to the Spirit as he does to the Father and the Son. This is not a case of reasoning on our parts nor of drawing an inference, but is a part of divinely-revealed truth. If we praise and revere the Son for what He has done *for* us, shall not the Spirit be adored for what He has wrought *in* us!? The Spirit Himself loves us (Rom 15:30), by whose authority, then, are we to stifle our love for Him!?

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. *Amen*” (2Co 13:14). Here again the Holy Spirit is honoured equally with the Father and the Son—the apostles certainly did not slight Him as do some of our moderns. Let it be duly weighed that “communion” is a *mutual* thing, a giving and receiving. In our communion with the Father we receive from Him, and then return to Him love and obedience. From the Son we receive life, and acknowledge it in our praises. From the Spirit we receive regeneration and sanctification, shall we render Him nothing in return? We understand this verse to signify, “O Lord Jesus Christ, let Thy *grace* be with us, O God the Father, let thy *love* be manifested unto us, O Holy Spirit, let Thy saints enjoy much of thy *communion*.” This invocatory benediction revealed the longings of Paul’s heart unto the Corinthian saints and those longings prompted his petition on their behalf.

“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ” (2Th 3:5). What could be plainer? Here each of the three divine persons is distinguished, and the apostle prays directly *to the Lord the Spirit*—obviously “the Lord” here cannot refer to the Son, for in such case it would signify, “The Lord [Jesus] direct your hearts into...the patient waiting for Christ.” As it is the Spirit’s office to “*guide* us into all truth” (see Joh 16:13), to “*lead* us into the paths of righteousness” (see Psa 23:3), so to “direct” our hearts into the love of God and longings after Christ. He it is who communicates God’s love to us (Rom 5:5), and He it is who stirs us up to the performance of duty by inflaming our hearts with apprehensions of God’s tenderness toward us, and for this we are to pray to Him! It is just as though the apostle said, “O thou Lord the Spirit, warm our cold hearts, with a renewed sense of God’s tender regard for us, stabilize our fretful souls into a patient waiting for Christ.”

“John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness” (Rev 1:4-5). This is as much a prayer—an invocation of blessing—as that recorded in Numbers 6:24-26. The apostle John desired and supplicated God the Father (“Him who is,” etc.), God the Holy Spirit in the plenitude of His power (“the seven Spirits”), and God the Son, that the seven churches in Asia might enjoy *their* grace and peace. When I say, “The Lord *bless* you, dear brother,” I should utter empty words unless I also *pray* the Lord *to* bless you. This “grace and

peace be unto you,” then, was far more than a pleasantry or courtesy. John was making known to the saints his deep *longings* for them, which found expression in ardent supplication for these very blessings to be conferred upon them. In conclusion, let us say that every verse of the Bible which bids us “Praise the Lord” or “worship God” has reference to *each* of the Eternal Three.

“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Mat 9:38). Here is something very plain and expressive, the only point needing to be determined is, *Who is* “The Lord of the harvest”? During the days of His earthly ministry, Christ Himself sustained that office, as is clear from His calling and sending forth of the twelve, but after His ascension, *the Holy Spirit* became such. As proof thereof, we refer to “The Holy Ghost said, Separate *me* Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them....so they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed” (Acts 13:2, 4)! So again we read, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which *the Holy Ghost* hath made you overseers” (Act 20:28). It is the Holy Spirit who now appoints the labourers, equips them, assigns their work, and blesses their efforts. In 1 Corinthians 12:5 and 2 Corinthians 3:17, the Holy Spirit is expressly designated “Lord.”

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

120. Christian Rulers (13:17)

In last month’s article, we deviated from our usual custom in this series of giving a word by word exposition of the verse before us, deeming it well to first give it a topical treatment. This magazine, small as is its circulation, goes to hundreds of the Lord’s people who are found in many different branches of Christendom. Some of them are sorely perplexed by the babble of tongues which now obtains in the religious realm. The high claims so dogmatically put forth by various sects and systems, assemblies and circles of fellowship, bewilder not a few honest souls, who are desirous of doing that which is most pleasing to the Lord. It was with a desire to afford them some help on what is admittedly a most difficult and complicated subject, that according to the light which God has granted (or withheld from us), we sought to point out some of the fallacies pertaining to the leading positions taken by ecclesiastical writers.

To say that the diverse denominations, even the evangelically orthodox, cannot all be right, and therefore that among them there must be one much more closely in accord with the Scriptures than the others, sounds very feasible. Nevertheless, the writer is satisfied that, generally speaking, it has more of error than of truth in it. Comparisons are proverbially odious. As no one believer has all the graces of the Spirit equally developed in him, so no one church or denomination has all the

truth. Think of attempting to draw invidious contrasts between Andrew and Peter, Paul and John, as to which was the more like Christ! As well might one set the rose over against the lily of the valley, or wheat against oats. As 1 Corinthians 14:10 tells us, “There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and *none* of them is without signification.” So in the providence of God each particular denomination has filled a place and served a purpose in His plan concerning His cause upon earth.

Nothing is more offensive to God than creature *pride* (Pro 6:16-17), and nothing is more to be deplored among those who bear the name of Christ than that a company of them (be it large or small) shall claim “*we are the people*”—the people who meet on the most Scriptural ground, the people who adhere closest to the Word. A spirit of bigotry ill-becomes sinners saved by grace, while jealousies and contentions, enmity, and reviling, among members of the same family are most reprehensible, “The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (Jam 1:20). Differences of opinion are inevitable while we are in the flesh—permitted by God that we should have occasion to be “*forbearing one another in love*” (Eph 4:2). That form of church government which accords most closely to the New Testament, and where every detail is scrupulously correct, would be valueless in the sight of God unless it were conducted in love and its worship were “in spirit and in truth” (Joh 4:24).

Let it be attentively considered that at the dawn of Christianity the first officers of the church were immediately called by Christ (Gal 1:12), which none now are, nor have any since the decease of those who were so called at the first. *They* were endowed with extraordinary gifts and powers—but Christ has not continued to communicate such to His servants. Those original officers were blest with divine inspiration and infallible guidance, both in preaching the Gospel and appointing things necessary for the churches—which *none* can rightly pretend unto today. Those first officers had a commission giving them authority towards all the world for evangelization and over all churches for their edification—which no servant of Christ can claim today. How utterly vain, then, is the claim, either unto a “succession” of those officers or to a perfect emulation of their order of things. Nevertheless, church rulers—bishops and deacons—were to continue, as is clear from 1 Timothy 3, etc.

Now in every orderly society there must be *rulers*, and in all ages and dispensations the same have been mercifully appointed by God—Moses, Joshua, the judges and kings over Israel, are so many illustrations of this principle. It is the same in this era, nor does the presence of the Holy Spirit render unnecessary rulers in the churches. Christ is not the author of confusion, but endless confusion and turmoil is inevitable where there are no accredited and acknowledged leaders. True, the rulers Christ has instituted for His churches possess no arbitrary power, for they are themselves subordinate to Him. Their office is that of a *steward* (Ti

1:7), who is neither to lord it over the household nor to be entirely under subjection to it, but to superintend and provide for the family.

Take the chief steward or “local chamberlain,” of his majesty King George, and while it may not be strictly parallel with the position and duties of an official servant of Christ, yet there is sufficient in common for the former to help us understand the latter. While on the one hand, the “lord chamberlain” has to be regulated by certain general rules and well-established precedents, yet on the other hand, he is far more than an automaton mechanically acting according to a written code. As one qualified for his position, he is allowed considerable freedom in making many arrangements for the Royal household, nevertheless, he is *not* free to act arbitrarily or follow naught but his own preferences. No, that which regulates him is the well-being of his august master. He plans and arranges so as to please him, to promote his comfort, to serve his interests and honour. And when he is in doubt as to his procedure, consults the king to ascertain his will.

Analogous is the position occupied by the pastor of a local church. “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing” (Mat 24:45-46). Note carefully the following points in this passage. First, the use of *the singular number*—one servant for each local household! Second, that this servant is made “ruler over the” household! Third, that he is given that position for the purpose of supplying them “meat in due season,” which, in its wider signification, means to superintend all the arrangements, to care for all its members, to protect and promote their well-being. Christ does not call dolts and idiots to occupy this place, but men endowed with good common sense, to which He graciously adds spiritual wisdom and discernment.

Now the ruler of Christ’s household is neither a supreme sovereign or pope, nor a mere figurehead without freedom of action. He, in turn, is the servant, responsible to Him, there to uphold His honour, care for those who are precious in His sight, and to whom he must yet render a full account of his stewardship. Therefore, while on the one hand, he must act within the bounds of certain general rules and principles prescribed for his conduct, and must not introduce anything which would dishonour his royal Master or be inimical to His interests, yet on the other hand, he is required to use his own judgment in applying those general rules to particular cases and to make whatever minor arrangements he deems most for his Master’s glory and the good of His household. And when he is in doubt as to his right or best course, it is his privilege to plead and count upon the promise of James 1:5.

To extend our analogy one point further. As the “lord chamberlain” has other servants under him to assist in the discharge of his honourable duties, servants who co-operate with him by carrying out his instructions, so Christ has provided the pastor of a local church with deacons, and as many think, with “ruling elders”

(or where the church is a large one—as with the case with many of those in apostolic times—with fellow-pastors or “elders”), to help him in his official duties. So that when our text says “obey them that have the rule over you” (Heb 13:17) it takes in *all* the officers of the local church, whatever be the technical names they now go under. These additional church officers not only provide assistance for the chief ruler, but they also serve as a check upon him, for if they be endowed with the qualifications specified in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, they will not be a party to anything which is obviously dishonouring to Christ.

If it be true (as many students of Scripture have concluded) that the seven epistles of Revelation 2 and 3 furnish a prophetic outline of the ecclesiastical history of Christendom, then it appears that the trend of church government has passed from one extreme to another, from Nicolaitanism (Rev 2:6, 15), which signifies *the subjugation of the laity*, to Laodiceanism (Rev 3:14) which means *the domination of the laity*. Nor need this surprise us, for the same change has taken place in the political and social order. It is indeed striking to observe how close is the resemblance between them. The development of Nonconformity and the rapid spread of Independency in the religious world was quickly followed by the rebellion of the American colonies and the formation of Republics in the U.S.A. and in France. Side by side with the growth of a democratic spirit in the churches, has been the spread of “socialism” in the state, the one more and more reacting on the other.

One of the most radical and far-reaching movements of the last century was that which sought to obliterate all distinctions between the clergy and the laity, establishing a network of “assemblies” all over the English-speaking world, wherein there are (professedly) no officers, where a one-man-ministry is decried, and where the Spirit is (avowedly) free to use whom He pleases. This modern movement also claims to be founded entirely upon the Scriptures, yea, insisting that all other bodies of professing Christians are the daughters of Rome and form part of that mystical and apostate Babylon from which God commands His people to come out. This movement has also split up into scores of conflicting parties, each claiming to be the only one which truly “represents” the body of Christ on earth. But enough—let us now come to closer grips with our text.

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Heb 13:17). In these words, respect is had to the ministerial office. To bear “rule” intimates both the duty and dignity of Christ’s official servants. God has graciously appointed them to subserve His honour by maintaining decency and order in His churches, and because they are necessary and for the good of His people. To obey and submit to their spiritual leaders is what church members are here exhorted unto. In Hebrews 13 verse 7, the apostle made known the particular duties unto those of their guides who had finished their course. Here he pressed upon them their obligations toward those

who were still with them in the body. To ignore those rules or to rebel against their authority, is to despise the One who has appointed them.

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves” (Heb 13:17). It is abundantly clear from these words that in the days of the apostles there were two distinct classes among God’s people, namely, the rulers and those that were ruled, and as this is not merely a historical statement but a specific exhortation, it is equally clear that the same is binding upon Christians throughout the entire course of this dispensation. This, of course, presupposes a settled church state among them, in which the distinctive duties of each class is here distinctly defined, according to the office of the one and the obligation of the other. The duties here prescribed contain a succinct summary of all that relates to church rule and order, for all that concerns its welfare is comprised in the due obedience of the church to its rulers and their due discharge of their office.

The Greek word for “them that have the rule over you” (Heb 13:17) (“hageomai”) is rendered “chief” in Luke 22:26 and “governor” in Acts 7:10—“and he [Pharaoh] made him [Joseph] *governor* over Egypt and all his house,” which sufficiently intimates its scope. They have received power from Christ to preside over His assemblies, to declare His will and execute His laws, to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all authority and longsuffering. They have no arbitrary power except what Christ has given them, yet within the limits He has prescribed, they are *rulers*, and it is the duty of their members to obey them. “It is of equal importance that the office-bearers in a church should not aspire to a higher degree of authority, and should not be content with a lower degree of authority, that than which their Master has assigned them, and that the members of a church should equally guard against basely submitting to a tyranny which Christ has never instituted, and lawlessly rebelling against a government which He has appointed” (John Brown, 1784-1858).

John Owen (1616-1683) declared that the twofold duty enjoined here with respect to the ecclesiastical leaders has respect unto the two parts of their office, namely, teaching and ruling, “obey their teaching and submit to their rule.” While it be true that their doctrine or preaching is to be obeyed (so far as it accords with the truth), and that their authority is to be yielded unto as it respects their ordering of the church’s life, yet we rather regard the two exhortations as having *distributive* force, the second amplifying the first. The word “obey” in our text means an obedience which follows a being persuaded—the mind is first carried along with the preacher so that it believes and then the will acts—note the marginal alternative in Acts 5:36 for “obeyed” is “believed.” “And submit yourselves” seems to us to have reference unto the *spirit* in which they were to obey—obedience was not to be merely an outward act, but prompted by submissive hearts.

Thus, we take it that “obey them that have the rule over you” (Heb 13:17) is not to be restricted to their teaching (John Owen defined it), but includes their

ruling of the church as well; while the “submit yourselves” has a wider significance than yielding to their rule, referring to the spirit which was to regulate the whole of their obedience. As Calvin (1509-1564) well-expressed it, “He commands first obedience and then honour to be rendered to them. These two things are necessarily required, so that the people might have confidence in their pastors, and also reverence them. But it ought at the same time to be noticed that the apostle speaks only of those who *faithfully* performed their office, for they who have nothing but the title, nay, who use the title of pastors for the purpose of destroying the church, deserve but little reverence and still less confidence. And this also is what the apostle plainly sets forth when he says that they *watch* for their souls—a duty which is not performed but by those who are faithful rulers.”

The duty here enjoined, then, may be summed up in—cultivate an obedient, compliant, and submissive spirit unto your pastors and church officers. To “obey” and “submit” denotes such a subjection as of inferiors to superiors. It is not a servile subjection, but that reverent respect which God requires, a “submission” which issues from love, and which has for its end the honouring of those to whom honor is due. It would therefore include the doing of everything in the power of the members which would make the lot of their rulers easier and lighter, and of course, would take in the providing for their temporal sustenance. Those rulers are appointed by God, standing in His immediate stead, so that the Lord Christ declared, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me” (Joh 13:20).

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves” (Heb 13:17). It scarcely needs pointing out that those words are not to be taken absolutely, any more than are, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers” (Rom 13:1) or “As the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing” (Eph 5:24). Each of these exhortations is qualified by others. The members of a Gospel church are no more required to receive the pastor’s teaching when it be flagrantly opposed to Holy Writ, or to submit to any ruling of his which is manifestly dishonouring to Christ and injurious to His people, than they are to yield to a mandate of Nebuchadnezzar if he sets up an image to himself and commands all to fall down and worship it, or if an ungodly husband required from his wife anything contrary to the laws of nature. No, it is not a blind and implicit obedience which is here enjoined, for that should be quite contrary to the whole tenor of Gospel obedience, which is “our *reasonable* service.”

The subjection required by our text is only unto that *office* established by Christ Himself. If any usurp that office, and under cloak thereof do teach or enjoin things contrary to what Christ has instituted, then no obedience unto them is required by this command. But it is just at this point that most difficulty is experienced today. For many years past, large numbers of professing Christians have been demanding that the religious leaders should speak unto them “smooth things,” yea, prophesy unto them “deceits,” declining to listen unto what

condemned their carnal and worldly lives and refusing to heed the holy requirements of God. In consequence, He has suffered their descendants to reap the evil sowings of their fathers, by largely withholding “pastors after his own heart,” and allowing thousands of unregenerate men to occupy the modern pulpit. Instead of “obeying” and “submitting” to *them*, God requires His people to turn away from and have nothing to do with them.

The true servants of Christ are to be identified by the marks specified in 1 Timothy 3. They are men who are “apt to teach,” being qualified by the Spirit to open up the Scriptures, and apply them to the consciences and lives of their hearers. They are “not greedy of filthy lucre,” nor “covetous,” demanding a salary which would enable them to live above the level of their members, and declining to serve if there were no pay attached to it. “Not a novice,” with little or no experience in the spiritual ups and downs of God’s tried people, but one who has himself tested and proved the reliability and sufficiency of what he recommends to his hearers. He must be a man who is “not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine,” but “a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate” (Ti 1:7-8), or otherwise he could not commend what he teaches by *his own example*. The servants of Christ, then, are endued with a measure of the spirit of their Master, and it is by *that* they are to be distinguished from the false.

To refuse obedience and submission unto such, to contemptuously rail against “the one man system,” is to despise a divine institution, for the office of the “pastor” is as much the Lord’s own appointment as is the church itself, or the gifts and graces of its individual members. It is true that men will and do abuse the good gifts of God, but if some pastors are arbitrary, are not some members unruly? If there be pride in the pulpit, is there none in the pew? Alas, in this Laodicean and communistic age, when it has become the fashion to “despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities” (Jude 1:8) and when “the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable” (Isa 3:5), almost every individual considers himself qualified to judge and direct both civil and ecclesiastical rulers, to prescribe for both state and church, to scrutinize and criticize everything that is being done, and to say what ought to be done. May the Lord have mercy and subdue the turbulent ragings of pride.

“For they watch for your souls” (Heb 13:17). This is adduced as a reason why we should show proper respect unto church rulers. “The word used is peculiar unto this place, and it denotes a watchfulness with the greatest care and diligence, and that not without trouble or danger, as Jacob kept and watched the flock of Laban in the night” (John Owen). The true under-shepherds of Christ have no selfish aims, but rather the spiritual and eternal good of those who are entrusted to their care. Many a minister of the Gospel is often awake, burning midnight oil, while the members of his flock are asleep. Many a one can say, “I will very gladly spend and be spent for you” (2Co 12:15). The ministerial office is no idle one. It makes demands on heart, mind, and nervous energy, such as none other does.

Here, then, is a motive to move the members to gladly be subservient to their rulers. The more labour anyone undertakes for our sake, and the more difficulty and danger he incurs for us, the greater are our obligations to him. Such is the office of bishops or elders, and the heavier the burden they bear, the more honour they deserve. Let, then, our gratitude be evidenced by giving them that which is their due. “We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves” (1Th 5:12-13). Let us also add that young men aspiring unto the ministerial office need to think twice about entering a calling which demands ceaseless self-sacrifice, unremitting toil, and a love for Christ and His people which alone will sustain amid sore discouragements.

“They watch for your souls as they that must give account” (Heb 13:17), supplies a further motive. They are placed in a position of trust, commissioned by the Lord, to whom they are immediately responsible. They often render an account to Him now, keeping up a constant intercourse with Him, spreading before Him the state and needs of His people, seeking supplies of grace. A full and final account must be rendered of their stewardship in the day to come. Unspeakably solemn consideration is *that*, and this it is which actuates them, for they, “Watch for the souls of their church *as* they that must give account.” They bear in mind the awful warning of Ezekiel 33:5 and seek to heed the exhortations of 1 Timothy 4:16.

“That they may do it with joy, and not with grief” (Heb 13:17). Here is a further reason why church members should give to their rulers that which is due them. If on the other hand nothing is more encouraging to a pastor than for his people to be responsive and docile, it is equally true that nothing is more disheartening and saddening to him than to meet with opposition from those whose highest interests he is serving with all his might. Every Christian minister who is entitled to that designation, can, in his measure, say with the apostle, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3Jo 1:4).

“For that is unprofitable for you” (Heb 13:17), furnishes the final motive. For the members of a church to so conduct themselves as to be a constant source of grief unto their minister is to despise their own mercies. It not only prevents their receiving his instruction into their hearts, which results in their spiritual barrenness, but it also saps *his* vigour, quenches his zeal, and causes him to proceed with a heavy heart instead of with cheerfulness. What is still more solemn and serious, the Lord Himself is highly displeased, and the tokens of His favour are withdrawn, for He is very sensitive of the mistreatments of His stewards. “We cannot be troublesome or disobedient to our pastors without hazarding our own salvation” (John Calvin)—alas that such erroneous ideas of “salvation” now so widely obtain. May the Lord mercifully pardon anything in these articles displeasing to Him and graciously add His blessing to that which is acceptable.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

72. His Inordinate Grief

Man is a composite creature, possessing a soul as well as a spirit. God has bestowed upon him an emotional nature as well as a rational principle. True, in some persons the passions are much stronger, while in others the intellectual faculty is more prominent. But whichever be the case, we should seek to preserve the balance between their play and interplay. The emotions must not be allowed to run away with us, for if they do we shall be incapacitated for clear thinking and prudent acting. On the other hand, the emotions are not to be utterly crushed, or we shall degenerate into callous cynics and cold intellectual machines. There is a happy medium between epicureanism and stoicism, yet it can only be attained by constant watchfulness and self-discipline. The regular management of our unruly passion is essential if we are to obtain the mastery of them, and not be mastered by them.

Stoicism or the complete suppression of our emotions receives no countenance from the teachings of Holy Writ. How could it, seeing that the Author of Scripture is the One who has endowed us with an emotional nature! God's Word and His works do not contradict each other. Let it be remembered that it is recorded of the Perfect Man that He *wept* by the graveside of Lazarus and made lamentation over the doomed city of Jerusalem. He who created muscles in the face, which are only called into action by a hearty laugh and a tear duct for the eye, meant that each should be used in their season. They who are physically incapable of breaking out into a healthy sweat, suffer far more than those who perspire freely in hot weather—and they who weep not when a great sorrow overtakes them, incur the danger of something snapping in their brains. Laughter and tears are nature's safety valves. They ease nervous tension, much as an electric storm relieves a heavily-charged atmosphere.

Nevertheless, it remains that our emotions are to be disciplined and regulated. "Keep thy heart with all diligence" (Pro 4:23)—an essential part of the task that involves is the government of our passions and emotions—anger is to be curbed, impatience subdued, covetousness checked, grief and joy tempered. One of the things we are bidden to mortify is "inordinate affection" (Col 3:5), and that includes not only unholy lustings, but also excessive desires after lawful things. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col 3:2)—that does not mean it is wrong for us to have any love for earthly objects, but it does mean that such love is to be regulated and subordinated to divine and spiritual things. Responsibility attaches as much to our inner life as it does to our outward.

Rejoicing and merrymaking are seasonable at a wedding or a birth, while grief and lamentation are natural at the death of a loved one. Yet even on such occasions, we are required to hold our emotions within due bounds. If on the one hand, we are bidden to "rejoice with trembling" (Psa 2:11), on the other hand, we

are exhorted to “sorrow not, even as others which have no hope” (1Th 4:13). The subject is admittedly a delicate one, yet is it one of practical importance. Intemperate grief is as unjustifiable as is intemperate joy. The hand of God is to be viewed in that which occasions the one as truly as that which occasions the other—if He is the One who gives, He is equally the One who takes away—and the more the heart recognizes this, the less likely are we to overstep the bounds of propriety by yielding to uncontrolled passion.

That God takes notice of inordinate grief may be seen from the case of Samuel mourning for Saul. Samuel is one of the brightest characters of which we have recorded in Scripture, yet he failed at this point. The thought of God’s having rejected Saul from being king so moved the bowels of natural affection in the prophet that he sat up all night weeping for him (1Sa 15:11), yea, he continued mourning until the reproof of heaven stopped the torrent of his tears. “And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?” (1Sa 16:1)—had such grief been acceptable to God, He surely had not rebuked him for the same! This incident is recorded for our learning and warning.

The hour of emergency is what usually brings to light that which is to be found within us. It is not the ordinary routine of life, but *the crises* which reveal character—not that the crisis changes or makes the man, but rather that it affords opportunity to display the benefits of previous discipline or the evils of the lack of the same. Therefore it is of little or no use to bid a person control himself or herself when deeply agitated over an unusual experience, for one who has never learned to govern himself day by day, cannot begin doing so under exceptional circumstances. Here, then, is the answer to the question, How am I, especially if of a passionate nature, to *avoid* inordinate joy or sorrow? A person cannot change his disposition, but he can greatly modify it, if he will take pains to that end.

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that *ruleth his spirit* than he that taketh a city” (Pro 16:32). It is this ruling of our spirits which is the subject we are attempting to develop—the mind perceiving the needs and the will exerting itself to govern our emotions. Inordinate grief is the outcome of inordinate love, and therefore we need to watch closely over our affections and bring reason to bear upon them. We must discipline ourselves daily and control our emotions over little things, if we are to control ourselves in the crises of life. As the twig is bent, so the bough grows. The longer we allow our passions to run riot, the harder will it be to gain control of them. Much can be done by parents in training the child to exercise self-control and be temperate in all things.

Does not the reader now perceive the practical importance of what has been before us? How many there are who go entirely to pieces when some grief or calamity overtakes them. And why is this? Because they have no self-control—they have never learned to govern their emotions. But *can we* rule our spirits? Certainly, yet not in a moment, nor by spasmodic efforts, but only by the practice

of daily and *strict self-discipline*. Form the habit, then, of keeping tab on your desires, and check them immediately you find they are going out after forbidden objects. Watch your affections, and bring reason to bear upon them. See that they do not become too deeply attached to anything down here. Remember the more highly you prize an object, the more keenly will you feel the loss of it. Seek to cultivate a mild and even disposition, and when provoked, assure yourself such a trifle is unworthy of perturbation. Paul could say, “All things are lawful unto me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (1Co 6:12)—that was *his own* determination.

The pertinency of what has been before us will appear as we resume our consideration of David. The reader will remember that we last viewed him disposing of his forces, and then commanding his generals, “Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom” (2Sa 18:1-5). Two things are to be noted. First, David was under no qualms of the issue of the conflict, no fear that the battle would go against him. As we pointed out in a previous article, the 42nd and 43rd Psalms (composed at this time) show that he had overcome his despondency and doubts, and again had confidence in God. Second, we behold again the doting father—not only in referring to Absalom as “the young man” (He had had at least four children, 2Sa 14:27), but in laying such an unlawful charge upon his officers, he allowed sentiment to override the requirements of righteousness.

“And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone” (2Sa 18:24). What a pathetic picture is presented here. The aged king and tender parent anxiously waiting for news? He must have known, deep down in his heart, that the providence of God would execute that just punishment which he had been too weak to inflict upon the evil doer. Yet, doubtless, he hoped against hope that the guilty one would escape. Moreover, as he sat there with plenty of time for meditation, he must have reflected upon *his own sins*, and how they were responsible for this unhappy conflict, which seriously threatened to permanently split the nation into two opposing factions. If only we would look ahead more and anticipate the consequences of our actions, how often we should be deterred from entering upon a mad and sinful course.

“And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near. And the watchman saw another man running: and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold another man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings” (2Sa 18:25-26). Within a short time at most the king’s anxiety was to be relieved, and he would know the best or the worst. When the watchman upon the walls reported that a single runner was approaching, followed by another lone individual, David knew that his forces had not been defeated, for in that case, his men had fled before the enemy in confusion, and had come back in scattered

groups. These persons were evidently special messengers, bringing report to the king. God had prohibited the multiplying of horses in Israel, so that these couriers come on foot.

“And the watchman said, Me thinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings” (2Sa 18:27). It will be remembered that Joab had first dispatched Cushai and then had yielded to the importunity of Ahimaaz to follow him, but the latter taking a short cut and being the swifter of the two, “overran Cushai” (2Sa 18:23). Upon hearing that the son of the priest was approaching, David concluded he was the bearer of favourable news. As other writers have pointed out, this illustrates an important principle—those who bear good tidings should themselves be good men. Alas, what incalculable harm has often been wrought and the Gospel brought into contempt by the inconsistent and worldly lives of many who proclaim it. How needful it is that the servants of Christ should practice what they preach, and secure the confidence of those who hear them by a reputation for integrity and righteousness. “In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works” (Ti 2:7).

“And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king” (2Sa 18:28). Truly this was “a good man” indeed, who both feared God and honoured the king (1Pe 2:17). First, his “all is well” was to assure David that his forces had been successful. Then he rendered obeisance to his royal master and honoured God by ascribing the victory to Him. This was both pious and prudent, for his words were calculated to turn David’s mind from Absalom unto the Lord, who had so mercifully interposed to defeat his counsels. Herein is a most important lesson to be heeded by those who have to break the news of the death of a loved one—seek to direct the heart of the grief-stricken to Him in whose hands alone are “the issues from death” (Psa 68:20).

“And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king’s servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was. And the king said unto him, Turn aside, and stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still” (2Sa 18:29-30). David’s question showed he was more concerned about the welfare of his wicked son than he was over the well-being of his kingdom—that was natural no doubt, nevertheless it was a serious failure—those who serve the public are often called on to set aside their own private feelings and interests. Ahimaaz avoided giving a direct reply to the king. He was deeply attached to him, and no doubt wished to spare his feelings as far as possible; yet that did not excuse him if he resorted to prevarication. We are never justified in telling an untruth. No, not even to relieve the suspense of an anxious soul or to comfort a bereaved one.

“And, behold, Cushie came; and Cushie said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the LORD hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee. And the king said unto Cushie, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cushie answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is” (2Sa 18:31-32). The second courier now arrived and confirmed the word of Ahimaaz that the Lord had graciously undertaken for the king. His language too was pious, though not so fervent as that of the former. It was couched also in general terms, so that David had to repeat the question concerning his son. His query now received a definite reply, though the harrowing details were wisely withheld. Cushie did not mention Joab’s having thrust the three darts into Absalom’s heart, nor that his body had been contemptuously cast into a pit and covered with a great heap of stones. Instead, he merely intimated that Absalom was now safe in the grave, where he could work no more harm against the kingdom, whither Cushie loyally desired all other traitors might be.

“And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (2Sa 18:33). Gratitude that his kingdom had been delivered was completely submerged by overwhelming grief for his wayward child. Probably this was one of the most pathetic lamentations that ever issued from a stricken heart, yet its extravagance and impiety cannot rightly be extenuated. David’s inordinate affection for Absalom now found expression in inordinate grief. His passions carried him completely away, so that he spake unadvisedly, rashly, with his lips. No doubt his sorrow was made more poignant by the realization that Absalom’s soul was lost, for there is no hint whatever that he sought to make his peace with God, yet that in nowise warranted such an inconsiderate outburst.

Matthew Henry ably analyzed and summarized this sin of David’s. “He is to be blamed. 1. For showing so great a fondness for a graceless, however handsome and witty son, that was justly abandoned both of God and of man. 2. For quarreling, not only with divine providence, the disposals of which he ought silently to acquiesce in, but divine justice, the judgments of which he ought to adore and subscribe to—see how Bildad argues, ‘If thy children have sinned against him, and he hath cast them away in their transgression [thou shouldst submit] for doth God pervert judgment?’ (Job 8:3-4 and compare Lev 10:3). 3. For opposing the justice of the nation, which, as king, he was entrusted with the administration of, and which, with other public interests, he ought to prefer before any natural affection.

“4. For despising the mercy of his deliverance, and the deliverance of his family and kingdom from Absalom’s wicked designs, as if this were no mercy, nor worth giving thanks for, because it cost the life of Absalom. 5. For indulging a strong passion, and speaking unadvisedly with his lips. He now forgot his own reasoning upon the death of another child (can I bring him back again?) and his

own resolution to keep ‘his mouth as with bridle when his heart was hot within him’; as well as his own practice at other times, when he ‘quieted himself as a child that was weaned from his mother.’”

The practical warnings from this incident are obvious. David had allowed his inordinate affection for Absalom to hinder the discharge of his public duty. First, in failing to inflict the penalty of the divine law for Absalom’s murder of Ammon. Second, in allowing him to return from banishment. The claims of God must prevail over all natural inclinations—fleshly sentiment, and not a concern for God’s glory, moved David to send for his son. As chief magistrate in Israel, he condoned his grievous offences. His inordinate love terminated in this inordinate grief. How we need to watch and pray against excessive affection, the indulging of wayward children, and passionate outbursts in times of stress and strain. Doubly we need to keep a strict guard upon ourselves when that is removed from us which is very dear to us. Much grace is required to say with Job, “Blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21).

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

6. The Davidic

In last month’s article, we pointed out that in view of all which has been before us in connection with the earlier covenants, it is but reasonable to expect that the Davidic one also has both a “letter” and “spirit” signification. This expectation is, we believe, capable of clear demonstrations. In their primary and inferior aspects, the promises in 2 Samuel 7:11-16 respected Solomon and his immediate successors, but in their higher and ultimate meaning, they looked forward to Christ and His kingdom. And is not this fact evident from the immediate sequel? Does not that which is recorded in 2 Samuel 7:18-25 plainly intimate that David himself was enabled to perceive the spiritual purport of those promises, that they had to do with Christ Himself? There is not a doubt in the writer’s mind that such was the case, and we shall now endeavour to make this clear to the reader.

“Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD” (2Sa 7:18). His posture was, we think, indicative of the earnest consideration which David was giving to the message he had just received. As he pondered the divine promises and surveyed the wondrous riches of divine grace toward him, he burst forth in self-effacing and God-honouring language, “And he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?” (2Sa 7:18). Why, *his* “house” pertained to the *royal* tribe—he was the direct descendant of the prince of Judah, so that he was connected with one of the most honourable families in all Israel. Yes, but such fleshly distinctions were now held very lightly by him. “Brought me hitherto”—why he had been brought to the *throne* itself, and given

rest from all his enemies (see 2Sa 7:1). Yes, but these faded into utter insignificance before the far greater things of which Nathan had prophesied.

“And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant’s house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD? And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord GOD, knowest thy servant” (2Sa 7:19-20). Here again we see the effect which the Lord’s message had wrought upon the mind of David. “He beheld in spirit another Son than Solomon, another temple than one built of stones and cedar, another Kingdom than the earthly one, on whose throne he sat. He perceived a sceptre and a crown of which his own on Mount Zion was only feeble types—dim and shadowy manifestations” (Krummacher’s [1796-1868] “*David and the Godman*”). That the patriarch David understood the whole of those promises to receive their fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ is evident from his next utterance.

“For thy word’s sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them” (2Sa 7:21). The reference was to the *personal* Word, Him of whom it is declared, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Joh 1:1), and “according to thine own heart,” meant according to God’s gracious counsels. That David was *not* referring to God’s spoken or written Word is evident from the fact that nothing of the kind had been uttered to him before, while of the written Word there was no Scripture then extant which predicted Christ, either personal or mystical, under the similitude of a “house.” Let it be duly noted that all later references in the Scriptures to Christ under this figure are borrowed from and based upon this very passage. Unto David in vision was then given the first revelation, and hence it is that in that wondrous 89th Psalm we have other great features of it more particularly marked.

“I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have *sworn* unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah” (Psa 89:1-4). Of *that oath*, God the Holy Spirit was graciously pleased to tell the church by the mouth of Peter on the day of Pentecost, “Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up *Christ* to sit on his throne” (Act 2:30). Here, then, is the most decided and express proof that not David’s son Solomon, nor any of the seed of Adam after the flesh, but to Christ Himself, 2 Samuel 7:11-16 definitely alluded. David fully understood it so, that it was of Christ and Him alone the promises referred, and it was this which so overwhelmed his mind and moved him to burst forth with such expressions of humility.

What has just been before us supplies an illustration of the fact that all the patriarchs and saints of Old Testament times lived and died *in the faith of Christ*, “not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them” (Heb 11:13). Hence it was that by faith, with an eye to Christ, Abel offered unto God an acceptable sacrifice. Hence by faith, Noah prepared an ark, as beholding Christ set forth therein as a hiding place from the wind and a cover from the tempest. Hence too, by faith Abraham offered up his only-begotten son, expressly with an eye to the offering of God’s only-begotten Son in the fullness of time. Therefore it was that David eyed Christ in the promises of God to build him an house, in the confidence whereof he took comfort amidst all the sad circumstances of himself and his children (2Sa 23:5).

These holy men of old, and all the faithful in each generation of the church before the coming of Christ, lived in the blessed assurance of that faith. They beheld the promises afar off, yet that did not have the slightest effect in lessening their conviction in the veracity of them. Their faith gave to them a present subsistence. It substantiated and realized them, as if those saints had the fulfillment in actual possession, just as a powerful telescope will bring near to the eye objects far remote. Their faith gave as great an assurance of the reality of what God promised as though they had lived in the day when the Son of God became incarnate and tabernacled among men. In like manner, it is only by the exercise of a similar faith that we can now have a real knowledge of Christ by union and communion with Him.

Before we give further consideration to the contents of Psalm 89—which supplies a divine exposition of the promises made to David in 2 Samuel 7—we must first turn again to Psalm 2. As C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) said in his introductory remarks thereon, “We shall not greatly err in our summary of this sublime Psalm if we call it ‘The psalm of Messiah the Prince,’ for it sets forth, as in a wondrous vision, the tumult of the people against the Lord’s Anointed, the determinate purpose of God to exalt His own Son, and the ultimate reign of that Son over all His enemies. Let us read it with the eye of faith, beholding, as in a glass, the final triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ over all His enemies.”

This second Psalm is divided into four sections of three verses each. The first tells of the widespread opposition to the kingdom and government of Christ—His enemies cannot endure His yoke and they rebel against His commandments. These verses (1-3) were applied by Peter under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to the opposition which Christ met with and the indignities that He suffered at the hands of the Jews and Gentiles (see Act 4:24-27). The second section of it reveals God’s utter contempt of those who sought to thwart His purpose. He derides their foolish counsels and puny efforts, and makes known the accomplishment of His will. He does not smite them, but gallingly announces that He has performed what they sought to prevent. “While they are proposing, He has disposed the matter. JEHOVAH’S will is done, and so man’s will frets and fumes

in vain. God's Anointed is appointed and shall not be disappointed" (C. H. Spurgeon).

"Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Psa 2:6). It is the investiture of Christ in His kingly office which is here in view. Just as JEHOVAH defeated the efforts of all his enemies and set the son of Jesse on the throne, making him king in Jerusalem over all Israel, so He raised His own Son from the dead, exalted Him as Head of the church, and seated Him as victorious King upon His mediatorial throne, and therefore did the risen Redeemer declare, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Mat 28:18). Scholars tell us that "Zion" is derived from "tzun," which means "a monument raised up." Such indeed is the church of God—a monument of *grace* now, and of *glory* hereafter—raised up to all eternity. It was there that Solomon built the temple, a type also of Christ's mystical body. Hence, when we read, "The LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it" (Isa 14:32), when we hear Him saying, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation" (Isa 28:16—the Holy Spirit moving an apostle to tell the church that this is Christ, 1Pe 2:6-8), and when with the eye of faith we behold "a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads" (Rev 14:1), who can refrain from exclaiming, "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion" (Psa 65:1)?

It seems strange that any should question the fact, or shall we say, challenge the statement, that even now the Lord Jesus is King and discharging His royal office. The whole burden of the epistle to the Hebrews is the proffering of proof that He is Priest "after the order of Melchizedek," that is, Priest-King. Collateral confirmation of this is found in the statement that believers are "a royal priesthood" (1Pe 2:9), and they are so only because of their union with the antitypical Melchizedek. Christ has already been "crowned," not with an earthly or material diadem, but "with glory and honour" (Heb 2:9). He has "sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high," and therefore is He "upholding all things by the word of his power" (Heb 1:3). The "sceptre of thy righteousness" is wielded by Him (Heb 1:8), "ambassadors" have been sent forth by Him (2Co 5:20), and both men and angels are subject to Him.

Christ is the King of His *enemies* and He shall reign till He has placed the last of them beneath His feet. "Who would not fear thee, O King of *nations*?" (Jer 10:7). True, many of them do not own His sceptre, yea, some deny His very being, nevertheless He is their Sovereign, "the prince of the kings of the earth" (Rev 1:5), and this because God has already "highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Phi 2:9). This was the reward for His sufferings. The head that once was crowned with thorns, is crowned with glory now—a royal diadem adorns the mighty Victor's brow. "He hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev 19:16). Ah,

my reader, what are all the great, the mighty, and honourable men of the earth in comparison with Him who is “the *only* Potentate” (1Ti 6:15)?

Again, Christ is King *of the church*, “Thou King of *saints*” (Rev 15:3). He is King of the evil and King of the good. He is King *over* the former, He is King *in* the latter. Christ rules over the wicked by His might and power. He rules *in* the righteous by His Spirit and grace. This latter is His spiritual kingdom, where He reigns in the hearts of His own, where His sovereignty is acknowledged, His sceptre kissed, His laws heeded. This is brought about by the miracle of regeneration, whereby lawless rebels are transformed into loyal subjects. As the King of Zion, Christ exercises His royal authority by appointing officers, both ordinary and extraordinary, for His church, see Ephesians 4:11-12. It is the prerogative of the king to nominate and call those who serve him in the government of his kingdom—this Christ does. He also exerts His royal authority by ordering His officers in their governing of His subjects to teach no other things than those He has commanded (Mat 28:20). O that both writer and reader may render to Him that allegiance and fealty which are His due.

Finally, be it noted that Christ is *the Father’s* King, and this in at least three respects. First, by the Father’s *appointing*, “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me” (Luk 22:29). Christ is eminently qualified to bear the government upon His shoulder, and being infinitely dear to the Father, this honour He delighted to confer upon Him. Second, by the Father’s *investiture*, “Yet have I set *my* king upon my holy hill of Zion” (Psa 2:6). God has entrusted Christ with the sole administration of government and judgment, “And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man” (Joh 5:27). Third, because Christ rules *for* His Father, to fulfill His purpose, to glorify His name. That Christ rules for His Father is clear from, “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father” (1Co 15:24). It is the Father’s kingdom, and therefore do we pray, “Thy kingdom come” (Luk 11:1), i.e., in its fuller open manifestation—yet it is the Son’s kingdom (Col 1:16) because administered by Him.

Christ’s power as the King of Zion is absolute and universal. Alas that this is now so dimly perceived and so feebly apprehended by many of those bearing His name. Dispensationalists will have much to answer for in the coming day, for by denying His present Kingship, postponing His rule unto “the millennium,” they both rob Him of His personal honours and deprive us of precious comfort. Christ is Sovereign Supreme over all creatures. He bridles both man and demons, saying to them, as He does to the proud waves of the sea, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further. As the King of Zion, Christ has His chain about the necks of Satan and all his wicked instruments, and when they have gone their appointed lengths, they are obliged to stop. We see this in the case of Job, when the devil was permitted to harass him, he went only so far as his chain allowed. So it is now.

This royal and absolute power of Christ, He is exercising in *protecting* His church in the midst of grave and imminent dangers. A vivid portrayal of this was made unto Moses when Christ appeared to him in the burning bush—he saw the bush burning in the midst of the fire, yet it was not consumed. That represented the situation of the church in Egypt at that time—under the tyranny of most cruel taskmasters, lorded over by Pharaoh who hated them and thirsted for their annihilation. Yet under the care of Christ, He delivered them from being swallowed up by their enemies. This He has done in all ages, shielding His people when their foes threatened to swallow them up.

In the third section of Psalm 2, Christ is heard declaring His sovereign rights, with the Father's response thereto. We would recommend those who have access to the works of John Newton (1725-1807) to read his sermon on Psalm 2:9. Therein he has shown how that, since Christ's enemies will not submit to the golden sceptre of His grace, they are under His iron rod. This iron rule over them consists, first, in the certain and inseparable connection He has established between sin and misery—where the Lord does not dwell, peace will not inhabit. Second, in His power over conscience—what awful thoughts and fears sometimes awaken them in the silent hours of the night! Third, in that terrible blindness and hardness of heart to which some sinners are given up. But our space is exhausted.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

No, let us assure the spiritual reader at the outset that we are not going to waste his time nor our space by a consideration of the latest doings of Hitler [this was written in **1937**], Mussolini, and Co. “Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth” (Isa 45:9)—the child of God has nothing to do with *their* activities. It is something far more solemn than anything occurring in the political realm that we are now going to write upon, namely, *the soul-deceiving character* of most of the “Evangelism” of this degenerate and apostate generation.

It is generally recognized that *spirituality* is at a low ebb in Christendom, and not a few perceive that *sound doctrine* is rapidly on the wane, yet many of the Lord's people take comfort from supposing that the Gospel is still being widely preached and that large numbers are being saved thereby. Alas, their optimistic supposition is ill-founded and grounded in sand. If the “message” now being delivered in Mission Halls be examined, if the “tracts” which are scattered among the unchurched masses be scrutinized, if the “open air” speakers be carefully listened to, if the “sermons” or “addresses” of a “Soul-winning campaign” be analyzed—in short, if modern “Evangelism” be weighed in the balances of Holy Writ, it will be found wanting—*lacking* that which is vital to a genuine conversion, *lacking* what is essential if sinners are to be shown their need of a

Saviour, *lacking* that which will produce the transfigured lives of new creatures in Christ Jesus.

It is in no captious spirit that we write, seeking to make a man an offender for a word. It is not that we are looking for perfection, and complain because we cannot find it, nor that we criticise others because they are not doing things as *we* think they should be done. No, no, it is a matter far more serious than that. The “evangelism” of the day is not only superficial to the last degree, but it is *radically defective*. It is utterly lacking a foundation on which to base an appeal for sinners to come to Christ. There is not only a lamentable lack of proportion (the mercy of God being made far more prominent than His holiness, His love than His wrath), but there is a *fatal omission* of that which God has given for the purpose of imparting a knowledge of sin. There is not only reprehensible introducing of “bright singing,” humorous witticisms, and entertaining anecdotes, but there is a *studied omission of the dark background* upon which alone the Gospel can effectually shine forth.

But serious indeed as is the above indictment, it is only half of it—the negative side, that which is *lacking*. Worse still is that which is being retailed by the cheap-jerk evangelists of the day. The *positive content* of their message is nothing but a throwing of dust in the eyes of the sinner. His soul is put to sleep by the devil’s opiate, ministered in a most unsuspecting form. Those who really receive the “message” which is now being given out from most of the “orthodox” pulpits and platforms today are being fatally deceived. It is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but unless God sovereignly intervenes by a miracle of grace, all who follow it will surely find that the ends thereof are the ways of death. Ten of thousands who confidently imagine they are bound for heaven will get a terrible disillusionment when they awake in hell.

What is the Gospel? Is it a message of glad tidings from heaven to make God-defying rebels at ease in their wickedness? Is it given for the purpose of assuring the pleasure-crazy young people that, providing they only “believe” there is nothing for them to fear in the future? One would certainly think so from the way in which the Gospel is presented—or rather perverted—by most of the “evangelists,” and the more so when we look at *the lives* of their “converts.” Surely those with any degree of spiritual discernment must perceive that to assure such that God loves them and His Son died for them, and that a full pardon for all their sins (past, present, and future) can be obtained by simply “accepting Christ as their personal Saviour,” is but a casting of pearls before swine.

The Gospel is not a thing apart. It is not something independent of the prior revelation of God’s law. It is not an announcement that God has relaxed His justice or lowered the standard of His holiness. So far from that, when *Scripturally expounded*, the Gospel presents the clearest demonstration and the most positive proof of the inexorableness of God’s justice and of His infinite abhorrence of sin. But for Scripturally expounding the Gospel, beardless youths and businessmen

who devote their spare time to “evangelistic effort,” are *quite unqualified*. Alas that the pride of the flesh suffers so many incompetent ones to rush in where those much wiser fear to tread. It is this multiplying of novices that is largely responsible for the woeful situation now confronting us, and because the “churches” and “assemblies” are so largely filled with *their* “converts,” explains why they are so unspiritual and worldly.

No, my reader, the Gospel is very, very far from making light of sin. It reveals to us the terrible sword of His justice smiting His beloved Son in order that atonement might be made for the transgressions of His people. So far from the Gospel setting aside the law, it exhibits the Saviour enduring the curse of it. Calvary supplied the most solemn and awe-inspiring display of *God’s hatred of sin* that time or eternity will ever furnish. And do you imagine that the Gospel is magnified or God glorified by going to worldlings and telling them that they “may be saved at this moment by simply accepting Christ as their personal Saviour,” *while they are* wedded to their idols and their hearts still in love with sin? If I do so, I tell them *a lie*, pervert the Gospel, insult Christ, and turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.

No doubt some readers are ready to object to our “harsh” and “sarcastic” statements above by asking, When the question was put, “What must I do to be saved?” did not an inspired apostle expressly say, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved?” Can we err, then, if *we* tell sinners the same thing today? Have we not divine warrant for so doing? True, those words are found in Holy Writ, and because they *are*, many superficial and untrained people conclude they are justified in repeating them to all and sundry. But let it be pointed out that Acts 16:31 was not addressed to a promiscuous multitude, but *to a particular individual*, which at once intimates that it is *not* a message to be indiscriminately sounded forth, but rather a special word, to those *whose characters correspond* to the one to whom it was first spoken.

Verses of Scripture must not be wrenched from their setting, but weighed, interpreted, and applied *in accord with their context*, and *that* calls for prayerful consideration, careful meditation, and prolonged study—and it is failure at *this* point which accounts for these shoddy and worthless “messages” of this rush-ahead age. Look at the context of Acts 16:31 and what do we find? What was the occasion, and *to whom* was it that the apostle and his companion said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ”? A sevenfold answer is there furnished, which supplies a striking and complete delineation of the character of those to whom we are warranted in giving this truly evangelistic word. As we briefly names these seven details, let the reader carefully *ponder* them.

First, the man to whom those words were spoken had just witnessed *the miracle-working power of God*. “And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed” (Act 16:26). Second, in consequence

thereof, the man was deeply stirred, even to the point of self-despair, “He drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled” (v. 27). Third, he felt *the need of illumination*, “Then he called for a light” (v. 29). Fourth, his *self-complacency was utterly shattered*, for he “came trembling” (v. 29). Fifth, he took his proper place (before God)—*in the dust*, for he “fell down before Paul and Silas” (v. 29). Sixth, he showed respect and *consideration for God’s servants*, for he “brought them out” (v. 30). Seventh, then, with *a deep concern for his soul*, he asked, “What must I do to be saved?” (v. 30).

Here, then, is something definite for our guidance—if we are willing to be guided. It was no giddy, careless, unconcerned person, who was exhorted to “simply” believe, but instead, one who gave clear evidence that a mighty work of God had already been wrought within him. He was *an awakened soul* (v. 27). In *his* case, there was no need to press upon him his lost condition, for obviously he felt it. Nor were the apostles required to urge upon him the duty of repentance, for his entire demeanour betokened his contrition. But to apply the words spoken to *him* unto those who are totally blind to their depraved state and completely dead toward God, would be more foolish than placing a bottle of smelling-salts to the nose of one who had just been dragged unconscious out of the water. Let the critic of this article read carefully through the Acts and see if he can find a single instance of the apostles addressing a promiscuous audience or a company of idolatrous heathen and “simply” telling them to believe in Christ.

Just as the world was not ready for the New Testament before it received the Old, just as the Jews were not prepared for the ministry of Christ until John the Baptist had gone before Him with his call to repentance, so the unsaved are in no condition today for the Gospel till *the law* be applied to their hearts, for “by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:20). It is a waste of time to sow seed on ground which has never been plowed or spaded! To present the vicarious sacrifice of Christ to those whose dominant passion is to take their fill of sin, is to give that which is holy unto the dogs. What the unconverted need to hear about is the character of Him with whom they have to do, His claim upon them, His righteous demands, and the infinite enormity of disregarding Him and going on their own way.

The nature of Christ’s salvation is woefully misrepresented by the present-day “evangelist.” He announces a Saviour from hell, rather than a Saviour from *sin*. And that is why so many are fatally deceived, for there are multitudes who wish to escape the lake of fire who have no desire to be delivered from their carnality and worldliness. The very first thing said of Him in the New Testament is, “Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people [*not* “from the wrath to come,” but] *from their sins*” (Mat 1:21). Christ is a Saviour for those realizing something of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, who fell the awful burden of it on their conscience, so loathe themselves for it, who long to be freed from its terrible dominion—and a Saviour *for no others*. Were He to “save from hell” those who

were still in love with sin, He would be the Minister of sin, condoning their wickedness and siding with them against God. What an unspeakably horrible and blasphemous thing with which to charge the Holy One!

Should the reader exclaim, *I* was not conscious of the heinousness of sin nor bowed down with a sense of my guilt when Christ saved me, then we unhesitatingly reply, Either you have never been saved at all or you were not saved as early as you supposed. True, as the Christian grows in grace he has a clearer realization now what sin is—rebellion against God—and a deeper hatred of and sorrow for it, but to think that one may be saved by Christ whose conscience has never been smitten by the Spirit and whose heart has not been made contrite before God, is to imagine something which has no existence whatever in the realm of fact. “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Mat 9:12), The only ones who really seek relief from the Great Physician are they that are *sick of sin*—who long to be delivered from its God-dishonouring works and its soul-defiling pollutions.

Inasmuch, then, as Christ’s salvation is a salvation from sin—from the love of it, from its dominion, from its guile and penalty—then it necessarily follows that the first great task and the chief work of the evangelist is to preach upon SIN—to define what sin (as distinct from crime) really is, to show wherein its infinite enormity consists, to trace out its manifold workings in the heart, to indicate that nothing less than eternal punishment is its desert. Ah, and preaching upon *sin*—not merely uttering a few platitudes concerning it, but devoting sermon after sermon to explaining what sin is *in the light of God*—will not make him popular nor draw the crowds, will it? No, it will not, and knowing this, those who love the praise of men more than the approbation of God, and who value their salary above immortal souls, trim their sails accordingly. “But such preaching *will* drive people away!” We answer, Far better drive the people away by faithful preaching than *drive the Holy Spirit away* by unfaithfully pandering to the flesh.

The terms of Christ’s salvation are erroneously stated by the present-day evangelist. With very rare exceptions he tells his hearers that salvation is by grace and is received as a free gift—that Christ has done everything *for the sinner*, and nothing remains but for him to “believe”—to trust in the infinite merits of His blood. And so widely does this conception now prevail in “orthodox” circles, so frequently has it been dinned in their ears, so deeply has it taken root in their minds, that for one to now challenge it and denounce it as being so inadequate and one-sided as to be *deceptive and erroneous*, is for him to instantly court the stigma of being a heretic, and to be charged with dishonouring the finished work of Christ by inculcating salvation by works. Yet notwithstanding, the writer is quite prepared to run that risk.

Salvation *is* by grace, by grace *alone*, for a fallen creature cannot possibly do anything to merit God’s approval or earn His favour. Nevertheless, divine grace is not exercised at the expense of holiness, for it never compromises with sin. It is

also true that salvation is a free gift, but an *empty* hand must receive it, and not a hand which still tightly grasps the world! But it is *not* true that “Christ has done everything for the sinner.” He did not fill the sinner’s belly with the husks which the swine eat and find them unable to satisfy. He has not turned the sinner’s back on the far country, arisen, gone to the Father, and acknowledged his sins—those are acts *which the sinner himself must perform*. True, he will not be saved *for* the performance of them, yet it is equally true that he cannot be saved *without* the performance of them—any more than the prodigal could receive the Father’s kiss and ring while he still remained at a guilty distance from Him!

Something more than “believing” is necessary to salvation. A heart that is steeled in rebellion against God cannot savingly believe. It must first be broken. It is written “except ye *repent*, ye shall likewise perish” (Luk 13:3). Repentance is just as essential as faith, yea, the latter cannot be without the former, “Repented not afterward, *that ye might believe*” (Mat 21:32). The order is clearly enough laid down by Christ, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mar 1:15). Repentance is sorrowing for sin. Repentance is a heart-repudiation of sin. Repentance is a heart determination to forsake sin. And where there is true repentance grace is free to act, for the requirements of holiness are conserved when sin is renounced. Thus, it is the duty of the evangelist to cry, “Let the wicked *forsake his way*, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD [from whom he departed in Adam], and he will have mercy upon him” (Isa 55:7). His task is to call on his hearers to lay down the weapons of their warfare against God, and then to sue for mercy through Christ.

The way of salvation is falsely defined. In most instances, the modern “evangelist” assures his congregation that *all* any sinner has to do in order to escape hell and make sure of heaven is to “receive Christ as his personal Saviour.” But such teaching is utterly misleading. No one can receive Christ as Saviour while he *rejects Him as Lord*. It is true the preacher adds that the one who accepts Christ should also surrender to Him as Lord, but he at once spoils it by asserting that though the convert fails to do so, nevertheless heaven is sure to him. That is one of the devil’s lies. Only those who are spiritually blind would declare that Christ will save any who despise His authority and refuse His yoke—why, my reader, *that* would not be grace but a *disgrace*—charging Christ with placing a premium on lawlessness.

It is in His office *of Lord* that Christ maintains God’s honour, subserves His government, enforces His law, and if the reader will turn to those passages—Luke 1:46-47; Acts 5:31; 2 Peter 1:11, 2:20, 3:2, 3:18—where the two titles occur, he will find that it is always “Lord and Saviour,” and *not* “Saviour and Lord.” Therefore, those who have not bowed to Christ’s sceptre and enthroned Him in their hearts and lives, and yet imagine that they are trusting in Him as their Saviour, *are deceived*, and unless God disillusion them they will go down to the everlasting burnings with a lie in their right hand (Isa 44:20). Christ is “the author

of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey him*" (Heb 5:9), but the attitude of those who submit not to His Lordship is "*we will not have this man to reign over us*" (Luk 19:14). Pause then, my reader, and honestly face the question—are *you* subject to His will, are you sincerely endeavouring to keep His commandments?

Alas, alas, *God's* "way of salvation" is almost entirely unknown today. The *nature* of Christ's salvation is almost universally misunderstood, and the *terms* of His salvation misrepresented on every hand. The "Gospel" which is now being proclaimed is, in nine cases out of every ten, but a *perversion* of the truth, and tens of thousands, assured they are bound for heaven, are now hastening to hell, as fast as time can take them. Things are far, *far worse* in Christendom than even the "pessimist" and the "alarmist" suppose. We are not a prophet, nor shall we indulge in any speculation of what Biblical prophecy forecasts—wiser men than the writer have often made fools of themselves by so doing. We are frank to say that we know not what God is about to do. Religious conditions were much worse, even in England, one hundred and fifty years ago. But this we greatly fear, unless God is pleased to grant a real revival, it will not be long ere "*the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people*" (Isa 60:2), for the light of the true Gospel is rapidly disappearing. Modern "evangelism" constitutes, in our judgment, the most solemn of all the "signs of the times."

What must the people of God do in view of the existing situation? Ephesians 5:11 supplies the divine answer, "*Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them,*" and everything *opposed to* the light of the Word *is* "darkness." It is the bounden duty of every Christian to have no dealings with the "evangelistic" monstrosity of the day, to *withhold* all moral and financial support of the same, to attend none of their meetings, to circulate none of their tracts. Those preachers who tell sinners they may be saved *without* forsaking their idols, *without* repenting, *without* surrendering to the Lordship of Christ, are as erroneous and dangerous as others who insist that salvation is by works and that heaven must be earned by our own efforts.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

Conclusion

The doctrine of sanctification is of such vast importance, occupies so large a place in the Word of God, and is so many-sided in its scope, that we deemed it well to write thereon at length, especially as it is so little understood today. And now, after thirty-three articles, we are wondering whether we have defeated our own objective. It seemed necessary to approach the subject from various angles, to distinguish between its several parts, and to consider separately its different aspects. Having done so, perhaps we can help the reader most in this conclusion

by briefly reviewing the ground we have covered, summarizing the explanations and expositions given, and endeavouring to further clarify one or two points which may not yet be quite clear to the interested reader after which we would strongly advise those who desire to get a clear grasp of this blessed truth to *re-read* the entire series—setting aside all other reading while he does so.

Sanctification is an act of the Father, then of the Son, and then of the Holy Spirit, whereby God's people are *set apart* for His delight and glory. It is a *cleansing* of their persons so that they may be fitted for God's use—whilst it is also the *adorning* and making meet of those who are going to dwell with God forever. He not only accounts the believer holy in Christ, but He makes him so in himself, by communicating to him a principle of holiness and by the Holy Spirit's making his body His temple. The sanctification of the believer must be considered under its three tenses—he has already been sanctified, he is now being sanctified, and he will yet be fully sanctified in the future.

The sanctification of the believer is a moral quality imparted to him at regeneration, which is the same in its nature as that which belongs to the divine character. It is the image of God—lost by the first Adam, restored by the last Adam—stamped upon the heart, consisting of righteousness and holiness. It is the very antithesis of sin—as much so as light and darkness, death and life, God and the devil. As all sin is a transgression of the law, true sanctification brings its possessor into conformity to the law. Sanctification is, therefore, an integral and essential part of *salvation*, being a deliverance from the pollution and power of sin, causing its recipient to love what he once hated, and to now hate what he formerly loved.

In order to get a clear grasp of the whole subject, it is very necessary to distinguish sharply between its two principal aspects—the *positional* and *practical* holiness of the believer, that is, the *status and state* which the meritorious work of Christ has given him before God, and the *response* which this calls for from him. This vitally important distinction will be best observed by us as we view the subject under its two chief aspects—the divine inworking of holiness and the human outworking thereof. This outworking, or performance of practical holiness issues from the principle of grace received at the new birth, and proceeds along the lines of mortification and vivification or denying unto sin and living unto God.

There are two great dangers against which we must be continually on our guard—that of dwelling so much upon the believer's perfect sanctification in Christ that he has little or no concern about the cultivation of practical holiness, and that of being so occupied with the practical holiness and our failure to measure up to God's standard of the same that we lose sight of and cease to live in the joy and power of that holiness which we have in our Covenant Head. Some are more prone to the one, some to the other. It is most essential that we preserve a balance between the objective and subjective sides of the truth, yet this is far from being an easy attainment. On the one hand, the renewed soul can only enjoy real peace by

looking away from self with all its failures unto the One who has met every requirement of God for us. On the other hand, the heart can only be kept right before God as we make conscience of all known sins, judge ourselves unsparingly for them, and penitently confess the same.

Each part of our sanctification is inseparably connected with the other. The elect were first sanctified by God the Father before the foundation of the world, when by an act of His will they were blessed with all spiritual blessing in Christ and much graced in the Beloved. Second, they were sanctified by the incarnate Son of God, who, by His infinitely meritorious work has set the elect before God in all His worthiness and Surety perfections. A perfect holiness is as indispensable as a perfect righteousness in order to have access to and communion with the thrice holy God, and in Christ we have the one as truly as we have the other, for by His one offering He has perfected us forever. Yet is it absolutely necessary to mix faith therewith if we are to live in the power and enjoyment of the same, and that is not possible until we are, third, sanctified by the Spirit.

It is only by means of the Spirit's sanctifying us that we obtain personal proof that we are among the favoured number of those sanctified by the offering of Christ, for it is by His operations alone that we are capacitated to enter into the good secured for us by the Redeemer. But it is *this* aspect of our subject which presents the acutest problem to the conscience of the believer, who, conscious of such an ocean of corruption still raging within, finds it so difficult to be assured that a supernatural work of grace has been wrought in his heart. It is therefore of great importance that we should be quite clear upon this branch of our theme, and ascertain what the sanctification of the Spirit consists of, and what is not included therein—i.e., it does not involve the eradication of the carnal nature in this life.

Positionally, our sanctification by the Spirit results from our being vitally united to Christ, for the moment we are livingly joined to Him His holiness becomes ours, and our standing before God is the same as His. *Relatively*, our sanctification of the Spirit issues from our being renewed by Him, for the moment He quickens us we are set apart from those who are dead in sins. *Personally*, we are consecrated unto God by the Spirit's indwelling of us, making our bodies His temples. *Experimentally*, our sanctification by the Spirit consists in the impartation to us of a principle or "nature" of holiness whereby we become conformed to the divine law. Thus, our sanctification by the Spirit is the outcome of that supernatural operation whereby we are "created in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:10), which radically distinguishes us from the ungodly, and capacitates us to walk in faith and obedience.

In carrying on His work of grace in the believer, God does not set aside his accountability and deal with him as a mechanical automaton. No, He enforces the believer's responsibility by enlisting his cooperation and by blessing his use of the appointed means. The Christian life is a vigorous warfare, and holiness is only prompted in his heart and life by his watchfulness and alertness, striving and

contending against his spiritual foes. The life of faith and the race of holiness cannot be maintained except by diligent attention, earnest effort, and perseverance. Carelessness and slothfulness are dangerous, and if persisted in are fatal. Mortification and vivification are absolutely necessary.

Sanctification, then, is a *blessing* which the elect have received from God the Father, a blessing which includes their being eternally set apart or consecrated for His pleasure, the cleansing of them from all that would unfit, and the adorning of them with all that is necessary to make them meet for His use. It is a *gift* which they have in and through Christ—a perfect, inalienable, and eternal gift. It is a *moral quality*, communicated by the Holy Spirit, an holy principle or new nature. It is also a *duty* which God requires from us. To insist that the pursuit and practice of holiness is our obligation, in nowise clashes with God's free grace, for while it is true that we can perform no part of our duty except by divine grace, it is equally true that God's grace is given to us for no other reason than that we may rightly perform our duty. Divine grace and our obedience *are* opposed in justification (Rom 11:6), but *not* so in our sanctification (Phi 2:12-13).

If there be one verse in the New Testament which comes nearer to furnishing us with a complete outline of the essential features of our subject, perhaps it is, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Co 7:1). This is an exhortation unto the practice and performance of holiness. Four things in it are to be duly noted. First, the *basis* of the appeal, namely, the fact that God has made precious promises unto the believer—the particular reference being to those given in the closing verses of chapter 6. Second, the *task* set before us, namely, to cleanse ourselves from all that defiles, outwardly and inwardly. Third, the aim or *design* of this, namely, the effecting of holiness. Fourth, the *dynamic* for the same, namely, the fear of God. Let us enlarge a little upon these points.

The duty here enjoined is that we "cleanse ourselves," and this not in order to win God's regard for us, but because we are already His "dearly beloved." It is the response which we ought to make unto the wondrous grace which has been shown unto and bestowed upon us. The emphasis is thrown upon the Christian's responsibility and the discharge thereof. A prayerful pondering and an earnest effort to obey this call is very necessary if we are to be preserved from that deforming lopsidedness which is so prevalent in Christendom today. "Let us *cleanse ourselves* from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (2Co 7:1) *is as much a part of Holy Writ* as is "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1Jo 1:7). Yet for every time 2 Corinthians 7:1 is quoted, probably 1 John 1:7 is cited a hundred times. That ought not to be!

Sin is polluting and defiling and is no more to be tolerated by the saint than is physical filth. If we are careful to keep our bodies clean, much more diligent should we be in seeing to it that the soul be kept pure. Just so far as we entertain the idea that sinning is unavoidable, that it is an inevitable part of our daily lot,

will we lose sight of its heinousness, cease judging ourselves, and become the prey and sport of the evil one. “Awake to righteousness, and sin not” (1Co 15:34) is the standard which God has set before us, and at which we must constantly aim. We are duty bound to cleanse ourselves from all that defiles us, both inwardly and outwardly, and to keep ourselves “unspotted from the world” (Jam 1:27).

Let it be remembered that holiness *of heart* is the chief part of our conforming to the spiritual law of God, for no outward work is considered by Him as holy unless the heart be right before Him, for it is the heart which He sees and tries. Inward purity—that is, the disallowing, resisting, striving against the motions of sin within us—is absolutely necessary for maintaining external purity of practice, integrity, and righteousness. “Out of the heart are the issues of life.” What most prevails *there* is what comes forth into more or less open manifestation. When sin in general, or any lust in particular, is entertained in the heart, it will be likely, some time or other, to force an eruption. Hence the tremendous importance of “keep thy heart with all diligence” (Pro 4:23). Cleanse yourself from pride, unbelief, impatience, covetousness, an unforgiving spirit, levity, hypocrisy, everything contrary to true piety.

“Perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1) is to be the believer’s aim and design—to walk worthy of his high calling, to act consistently with his standing and state in Christ. Having been made a saint by the sovereign and effectual call of God, saintly conduct is to be his constant endeavour. Sanctified condition is both the starting point and motive of practical holiness. “Perfecting holiness” *does not mean* that the holiness which the believer now has before God is defective and incomplete and needs to be augmented by his own efforts. No indeed. He has already been “perfected forever” by the one offering of Christ (Heb 10:14). The meaning of this word “perfecting” is that we are to *carry out to its proper issue* the Gospel which is ours in Christ, and this we are to do by cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. But as this term is much misunderstood in other passages, we will add a few remarks upon it.

“But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God *perfected*” (1Jo 2:5). This expression “the love of God” is made sufficiently definite and emphatic in this epistle to forbid any thought that it could possibly refer to *our* love to Him. It is the contemplation of the wondrous love of God which furnishes the most influential motive to move us to the performance of practical holiness. But it may be asked, How can it be said that the love of God is “perfected”? Was it ever imperfect? And if it were, how could it be perfected by a believer’s keeping His Word? The answer is that by our obeying His commands *the design* of God’s love in us is reached. “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us” (1Jo 4:12). The same explanation holds good of this statement—the love of God toward us reaches its proper result and its end is accomplished in us when Christians love one another.

“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment” (1Jo 4:17-18). The R.V. more correctly renders this, “Herein is love (namely, “*the* love” spoken of in the preceding verse) made perfect with us, etc.” i.e., *has attained its end*. Verses 9 and 10 show clearly the object which the love of God had in view concerning us, and now this design is accomplished, for “because as he [Christ] is, so are we in this world” (1Jo 4:17)—we are before God in all the perfection and acceptableness of His son’s propitiation, viewed not as sinners, but as made the righteousness of God in Him. If, then, we really know and believe the love God hath to us, and see what wonders it has accomplished, the result must be “that we may have boldness in the day of judgment” (1Jo 4:17)

The fact is that in John’s epistle “the love of God” always expresses *His love* to us, and never ours to Him. Nothing but a spirit of delusion could cause any man to boast that his love for God was “perfect”—without defect in nature, manner, or degree. But the one verse which settles once for all the meaning of this term “made perfect” is, “And by works was [Abraham’s] faith made perfect” (Jam 2:22), for obviously this declaration cannot mean that the patriarch’s faith itself was thereby perfected, but rather that in his acts of obedience faith *reached its designed end* and achieved its proper result. So, in like manner, by cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit we are “perfecting holiness,” that is, God’s design in sanctifying us in Christ is now *realized*.

A word upon the *dynamic* for this task. The design of our holiness in Christ namely the cleansing of ourselves from all filthiness, is to be realized “in the fear of God.” That does not signify a servile horror of incurring His wrath, but a filial awe of His majesty and a dread of grieving Him. Alas, this is something which has well-nigh disappeared from modern religion. Fifty years ago it was a common thing to designate a believer “a God-fearing man,” but today, were one so described, the majority of professing Christians would shun him as a melancholy Puritan. The love of God has been so disproportionately emphasised, and His awe-inspiring sovereignty and holiness so ignored, that instead of His being an object to be feared, people prate about God as though they were His equals, and consequently, as the principal dynamic for it be lost, practical holiness or personal piety is now at such a low ebb everywhere.

Of the wicked it is written, “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom 3:18). They are not afraid of trifling with Him and treading His commands beneath their feet. But with the saints it is otherwise, for “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Pro 9:10) and they have been “made wise unto salvation.” “By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil” (Pro 16:6). It was so with Joseph, for when tempted to evil, he declared, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen 39:9) O to live day by day in the realization, “Thou God seest me,” for how else shall we “work out our own salvation with fear and

trembling”? Then beg God, my reader, to place His holy fear within you and to make your heart stand in awe of His majesty.

Our task is completed. Those who followed us carefully through this series of articles will have perceived that the writer felt he was sailing through deep waters, and at times much caution was needed so as to avoid being wrecked on dangerous rocks. Yet we have not, consciously, avoided any difficulty, but sought to grapple fairly with each one that was presented. How far we succeeded, the reader must decide. We have sought diligently to enforce the standard of holiness God sets before us, while we have studiously maintained that none fully measures up to it in this life—yet such failure rests wholly *on us* and is highly culpable. The fullness there is in Christ (Joh 1:16) is available for us to draw upon. The grace of God is sufficient for every need. We do not, we dare not, justify the Christian for walking, in any measure, after the flesh.

No sin is to be allowed by us. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, [and not other people!] and the truth is not in us” is among the “These things write I unto you, that ye sin not” (1Joh 1:8, 2:1). We entreat those who are panting after the perfected likeness of God’s Son, not to be deceived as to their present condition and attainments, and on the other hand, not to be discouraged because of their difficulties and defeats. The narrow way of holiness is not an easy down-slope, winding through flowery fields. It lies through an enemy’s country, and though faith may always rejoice that far more is He that is for us than all who can be against us, yet the believer cannot say in the presence of the enemy, as His Lord could, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (Joh 14:30).

We are called to ceaseless vigilance, yet faith’s fight is one in which the issue is not doubtful. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1Jo 5:4), yet this necessarily implies that the victory will be changed unto defeat if the eye be turned from the object of faith to regale itself on the proofs of victory won. Believers are to shine as lights in the world, but they only shine by *reflected* light, so that to do so they must be ever turned toward the Sun of righteousness, occupied not with their shining, but with its Source. Nothing is further from practical holiness than to *boast* of it, for the closer one walks with Christ, the more conscious will he be of his own unchristlikeness, and hang his head in shame. Keep short accounts with God. Seek to hide His Word in your heart that you may be kept from sinning. Let your chief petition be for enabling grace. Look forward to that day when your sanctification will be consummated by glorification, when you will be done with sin forever.

OUR ANNUAL LETTER

“Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye *strive together* with me in your prayers to God for me” (Rom 15:30). Though so great an apostle, yet Paul felt the need of and affectionately sought the earnest prayers of his fellow-Christians. No servant of Christ should feel ashamed, then, in soliciting the supplications of God’s people. If one so eminent, so richly endowed, so extensively used as the chief of Christ’s ambassadors longed for the intercessory cooperation of his Christian friends, how much more do we require *our* hands to be upheld. We are satisfied it is only in answer to the prayers of many readers that God has permitted this magazine to continue till now, and we are equally satisfied that it will cease once this stream of prayer dries up.

It is to be noted that Paul grounded this appeal for prayer on a three-fold basis. First, “for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake” (Rom 15:30). This was as though the apostle had said, He is my Master and I am engaged in His work. It is not my own aggrandizement, but the glory of His name, that I desire and strive for. If, then, you are concerned about the prosperity of His cause on earth, pray for me. Second, “and for the love of the Spirit.” This was as though he said, If you have experienced His love for you, and would be returning your love to Him, then be not remiss in this office of kindness. Let cooperation in earnest and fervent prayer be the fruit of that communion which we have one with another by the blessed Spirit. Third, “that I may be delivered from them that do not believe” etc. (Rom 15:31-32), that I may be preserved from all foes, and permitted to finish my course with joy.

The disparity is indeed great between the honoured apostle to the Gentiles and the unworthy editor of this magazine, yet in exact ratio to that disparity is our own *need for help*—for wisdom, for grace, for meekness, for steadfastness, for perseverance. And we would lovingly press upon our Christian friends the same motives which were employed by Paul himself. Strive in prayer for us “for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake” (Rom 15:30). It is solely for the sake of those who are members of His mystical body, and not for any self-ends, we continue publishing, for we do not take or receive a penny for our own labours. For the sake of those who are near and dear to Christ, to whom He condescends to make our articles a blessing, pray that this ministry may be *further maintained by Him*. “And for the love of the Spirit,” though in the providence of God, the editor and his wife and many of our readers are widely separated, yet in the love of the Spirit we too may meet at the throne of grace. We, too, have many enemies, who would be glad to see these “Studies” cease. Pray, then, that God will graciously thwart their efforts to bring this to pass.

The two things (from the human side) which we should most aim at and strive after in our praying are *sincerity and simplicity*. God cannot be imposed upon. He

reads the heart, and anything savouring of hypocrisy is abhorrent in His sight. Formality is at variance with the very spirit of prayer. Reality is what God requires. As for simplicity, the more unpretentious and artless our language be, the better. It is a trite statement to make, yet perhaps it needs pointing out, that father and children do not make speeches one to another, and God is the believer's *Father*. Then let us approach with all the naturalness and spontaneity of His little ones. Neither much speaking nor fine phrasing are required. Prayer is unburdening the heart, breathing forth its spiritual desires, petitioning One who delights to be inquired of, and who is ready and able to supply our every need.

But though simplicity should characterize our asking, *fervency* is to evidence our reality, “*strive* together with me in your prayers to God for me.” The word which is there employed signifies the strongest exertion, alluding to the struggles of wrestlers in the public games. It is far more than a perfunctory performance, namely, an ardent and fervent exercise of the soul. To “strive” in prayer is to stir up our graces, to cry unto God with all our heart, to be persistent and importunate. As a watch needs frequent winding, so we need to constantly “stir up ourselves” to really “lay hold of” God (see Isa 64:7). To “strive” in prayer is to wrestle against unbelief, coldness of heart, impatience, everything which is contrary to the putting forth of holy desires. The Syro-Phoenician woman (Mar 7:26) is a striking example of earnest contending in prayer.

If we are to *prevail* in prayer, we must “strive” in the same. We must put forth all that is within us, and pray with faith, fixedness, and fervour. Scripture often emphasises this note—Hannah “*poured out* her soul before the LORD” (see 1Sa 1:15), “the effectual *fervent* prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jam 5:16). But we will not say anything further on prayer for the moment, for now that we have completed the series upon the person and work of the Holy Spirit, if we are spared, the cover-page articles during 1938 will be devoted to this theme. But let it be pointed out that the genuineness of prayer is evidenced by the earnestness of our efforts to *act* in accordance with our petitions. If I am praying for more faith and am not diligent in resisting the workings of unbelief, or if I pray to be increasingly delivered from sin and yet am careless about running into the place of temptation, then I am not sincere.

So too, if I am really striving in prayer for God to bless this magazine and cause its publication to be continued, then I shall do everything in my power *to make it known to others*. That may involve a little trouble. For instance, you have a friend residing at some distance, and there is reason to believe that he or she would welcome this monthly messenger—then why not write them a letter, saying how much help you have, under God, received from its articles, urge them to read a sample copy you will loan or send them, and ask them to apply to us for it to be sent regularly to them? How are we to get into touch with hungry souls, if our readers do not “strive together” with us? Alas, how very few of those who write to

say what a blessing Studies has been to them, make real efforts to secure new readers.

We sometimes wonder how old friends will feel if in the providence of God this magazine ceased to be published. It *would* have been so long ago, had it depended upon the cooperation of three fourths of our readers. It is only because *a few* of them have gotten others interested, and also because quite a number permit us to send them two or three copies of each issue, that we have gone on till now, and we earnestly hope that *none* of them will request us to henceforth send them only one. Old readers are being called home and new ones are not taking their place. Yet there *are* still hungry souls, here and there, who would be thankful for this magazine did they but know of it. Will not *you* bring us into touch with some of them? If you desire to really rejoice our hearts, accompany your gift with the names of one or two Christian friends for us to send the Studies to (D.V.) during 1938.

Once more it is our joy to record the goodness and faithfulness of Him we serve, in that we close another year with every bill promptly paid and a nice credit balance to carry forward. Let not the annual report of this good news cause any to take it as a mere matter of course, but rather let us all seek to praise God with deeper fervour. The "Welcome Tidings" in the July issue will have indicated that we have again been the recipients of many appreciative words—how kind is the Lord in granting us such encouragements along the way. And once more we are happy to say that neither the editor nor his wife has had a day's sickness during the past twelve months—how undeserving we are of such mercies! O that our health and strength may count more for His glory, for the night will soon come when we can no longer work. We have not opened our mouth in public a single time during 1937—this is a great grief, but we seek grace to bow to God's sovereign will.

We wish to heartily thank our many dear friends for their loving and loyal support, not only by their monetary gifts, but their letters of encouragement and prayers. Only the day to come will reveal to what extent the editor and his wife were upheld by the supplications of the saints. Many times during the past year has he been conscious of the help which came from the intercession of others. Often when experiencing a difficulty while composing an article, light has been granted, and he has said to his faithful helpmate, "The Lord has responded to the cry of someone on our behalf." We trust that what has been said above will move many others to pray more definitely and diligently for this written ministry, that it may be graciously sustained by the Lord, and made increasingly fruitful to His eternal praise.

Might we also suggest that readers pray for God to grant *them* an open heart and receptive spirit? A prejudiced mind is an insuperable hindrance to our reception of the truth. We know from experience how hard it is to break away from early ideas, while we are not unmindful of the danger of grasping at (without thoroughly weighing) what is novel. Our own views upon prophecy have been

considerably modified during the last few years. We are now satisfied that there has been a great deal of carnal speculation upon future events. Pride, curiosity, love of the sensational, and fondness of the limelight are native products of the flesh, but it requires divine grace to make us sober, humble, and frank to say, “I do not know.” The very fact there was so much in fulfilled prophecy that was not rightly understood until *after* it was accomplished should check us from wild theorizings and dogmatic assertions in connections with unfulfilled prophecy.

Scripture affirms, “The coming of the Lord *draweth nigh*” (Jam 5:8), i.e., is ever getting nearer, and with *that* we should be content—no one is justified in saying, “The coming of the Lord *is* near.” Friends kindly note that we are not prepared to enter into any correspondence on the subject. If you think we err at this point, *pray for us*—as it is possible you may be wrong, pray for *yourself*. O that both writer and reader will cry from the heart, “That which I see not teach thou me” (Job 34:32). May the Lord graciously teach us experimentally and effectually, so that our lives may redound to His glory. With loving greetings and all good wishes, we remain, yours by God’s abounding 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

Other literature: 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 Calvinism¹ and Arminianism² 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.

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

¹ **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.

² **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.

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. Moody³ 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 resigned 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.

³ **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.

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."⁴

⁴ *The Life of Arthur W. Pink*, by Iain H. Murray, The Banner of Truth Trust, p 49

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.⁵ 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.

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

⁵ **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).

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 Methodism 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.”⁶

*A South African by birth, **Erroll Hulse** gave much of his life to furthering the cause of the gospel and Reformed doctrine in Africa, as well as missions around the world. Through a wide range of mission activities, conference initiatives, and editing Reformation Today magazine, Erroll served as a vital link for Chapel Library to international pastors and missionaries.*

After conversion to Christ in university, Erroll studied theology at the London Bible College and benefited from the ministry of Martyn Lloyd-Jones at Westminster. His pastorates in the UK include 23 years in Cuckfield, West Sussex, three years in Liverpool, and twenty years as Associate Pastor with a missions mandate at Leeds Reformed Baptist Church. Erroll’s life leaves a legacy of passionate prayer for the global cause of Christ, a hunger for Spirit-wrought revival, and ceaseless activity fueled by a love for Christ and the lost.

From 1970-2013, Erroll Hulse edited and wrote extensively for Reformation Today magazine, which continues today as a bi-monthly magazine featuring insightful articles relevant to the Reformed community, with news from global mission fields. Visit www.reformation-today.org for more information.

The Carey Conference is another continuing ministry of Erroll’s Reformation Today Trust. This annual conference in the United Kingdom is aimed at equipping pastors, church leaders, and their wives.

Erroll and others began the African Pastors’ Conferences in 2006 to encourage a recovery of African churches from the influx of the prosperity gospel and syncretism with traditional religions. The conferences operate as a collaborative effort of South African and Zambian Reformed Baptist churches. Reception has been enthusiastic and conferences have spread over many countries in English-speaking Africa. Churches in Africa, UK, and the USA sponsor these conferences by financially “adopting” conferences in specific locations. For more information visit www.reformation-today.org/african-pastors-conference/.

We are deeply grateful to the Lord for Erroll’s life, his fellowship in Christ, partnership in ministry, and passion for global mission endeavors.

⁶ *ibid.*

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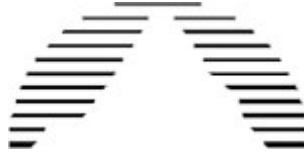
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