



Annual Volume

1935

STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

ARTHUR W. PINK (1886-1952)

Studies in the Scriptures

Annual Volume 1935

Vol. XIV

by Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

Contents

January

The Holy Spirit.....	1
<i>25. The Spirit Drawing (Part 1)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	3
<i>85.A Call to Steadfastness (12:3-4)</i>	
The Life of David.....	9
<i>37. His Bringing up of the Ark</i>	
Divine Guidance.....	13
<i>Part Three</i>	
The Doctrine Of Sanctification	17
<i>1. Introduction</i>	
Vainglory	21
Union and Communion	23
<i>1a. Introduction</i>	
Desires Unrealized	27
<i>By John Newton</i>	

February

The Holy Spirit.....	30
<i>25. The Spirit Drawing (Part 2)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	32
<i>86. Divine Chastisement (12:5)</i>	
The Life of David.....	38

<i>38. His Bringing up the Ark</i>	
God's Estimate of Obedience.....	42
The Sovereignty of God	42
The Divine Covenants.....	44
<i>3d. The Adamic (Continued)</i>	
The Doctrine of Sanctification	48
<i>2. Its Meaning</i>	
Following the Cloud.....	52
Union and Communion	54
<i>1b. Introduction (Completed)</i>	
Anxiety	59
March	
The Holy Spirit.....	60
<i>26. The Spirit Working Faith</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	62
<i>87. Divine Chastisement (12:5) Continued</i>	
The Life of David.....	67
<i>39. His Bringing up the Ark (Continued)</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	72
<i>3e. The Adamic (Continued)</i>	
The Doctrine of Sanctification	76
<i>3. Its Necessity</i>	
Union and Communion	80
<i>2a. Divine Union</i>	
Spiritual Oneness	85
April	
The Holy Spirit.....	89
<i>27. The Spirit Uniting to Christ</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	91
<i>88. Chastisement (12:6)</i>	
The Life of David.....	97
<i>40. His Bringing up the Ark (Contin.)</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	101
<i>3d. The Adamic (Continued)</i>	
The Doctrine of Sanctification	105
<i>4. Its Necessity (Completed)</i>	
Union and Communion	110

	<i>2b. Divine Union (Completed)</i>	
	A Personal Word	115
	Evil Speaking	116
May		
	The Holy Spirit.....	119
	<i>28. The Spirit Indwelling (Part 1)</i>	
	The Epistle to the Hebrews	121
	<i>89. Divine Chastisement (12:7-8)</i>	
	The Life of David.....	127
	<i>41. His Condemnation by Michal</i>	
	The Divine Covenants.....	131
	<i>3. The Noahic</i>	
	The Doctrine of Sanctification	135
	<i>4. Its Problem</i>	
	Union and Communion	139
	<i>2. Mediatorial</i>	
	Christ in Glory	144
June		
	The Holy Spirit.....	148
	<i>28. The Spirit Indwelling (Part 2)</i>	
	The Epistle to the Hebrews	150
	<i>90. Divine Chastisement (12:9)</i>	
	The Life of David.....	156
	<i>42. His Concern for God's House</i>	
	The Divine Covenants.....	160
	<i>3. The Noahic (Continued)</i>	
	Christ in Glory	164
	<i>(Concluded)</i>	
	Union and Communion	169
	<i>2. Mediatorial (Continued)</i>	
	A Satanic Device.....	174
	A Personal Word	176
July		
	The Holy Spirit.....	177
	<i>29. The Spirit Teaching (Part 1)</i>	
	The Epistle to the Hebrews	179

91. Divine Chastisement (12:10)	
The Life of David.....	185
43. His Deep Humility	
The Divine Covenants.....	189
3. The Noahic (Continued)	
The Doctrine of Sanctification.....	193
5. Its Solution	
Union And Communion.....	197
2. Mediatorial (Completed)	
Welcome Tidings	202
August	
The Holy Spirit.....	206
29. The Spirit Teaching (Part 2)	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	208
92. Divine Chastisement (12:11)	
The Life of David.....	214
44. His Exemplary Prayer	
The Divine Covenants.....	218
3. The Noahic (Completed)	
The Doctrine of Sanctification.....	222
5. Its Solution (Completed)	
Self-Crucifixion.....	227
Sanctified Affliction and Pride Contrasted	230
Grievances.....	233
September	
The Holy Spirit.....	236
30. The Spirit Cleansing (Part 1)	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	239
93. A Call to Steadfastness (12:12-13)	
The Life of David.....	245
45. His Conquests	
The Divine Covenants.....	249
4. The Abrahamic	
The Doctrine of Sanctification.....	253
6. Its Nature	
Crucified with Christ.....	258
Union And Communion.....	260

3. Mystical

October

The Holy Spirit.....	266
<i>30. The Spirit Cleansing (Part 2)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	269
<i>94. A Call to Diligence (12:14)</i>	
The Life of David.....	275
<i>46. His Conquests</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	279
<i>4. The Abrahamic (Continued)</i>	
The Doctrine of Sanctification.....	283
<i>6. Its Nature (Continued)</i>	
A Morning Prayer	288
An Evening Prayer	289
Perfect Peace	289
Union And Communion.....	290
<i>3. Mystical</i>	

November

The Holy Spirit.....	296
<i>31. The Spirit Leading (Part 1)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	298
<i>95. A Call to Examination (12:15)</i>	
The Life of David.....	304
<i>47. His Kindness to Mephibosheth</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	308
<i>4. The Abrahamic (Continued)</i>	
The Doctrine of Sanctification.....	312
<i>6. Its Nature (Completed)</i>	
Unpardonable Sin.....	317
Union and Communion.....	320
<i>3. Mystical (Completed)</i>	

December

The Holy Spirit.....	326
<i>31. The Spirit Leading (Part 2)</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews	329
<i>96. A Warning against Apostasy (12:16-17)</i>	
The Life of David.....	335

<i>48. His Kindness To Mephibosheth</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	339
<i>4. The Abrahamic (Continued)</i>	
The Doctrine of Sanctification.....	343
<i>7. Its Author</i>	
Union and Communion.....	348
<i>4. Federal</i>	
Our Annual Letter	353
Appendices	
<i>About Studies in the Scriptures.....</i>	<i>356</i>
Biography of A.W. Pink	358
<i>By Erroll Hulse</i>	
Chapel Library Resources	363

January

THE HOLY SPIRIT

25. The Spirit Drawing (Part 1)

We do not wish to prolong this present series of articles to an undue and wearisome length, yet on the other hand, we desire to omit nothing which has a vital and essential place in our theme. Moreover, were we to considerably condense the material which we feel ought yet to be brought in and were we to hurriedly wind up our subject, what other of more practical importance could we possibly take up? Judging from the letters which came to hand last year, there seems to be a pressing need for a clear and full exposition of the Spirit's work of grace in the souls of God's people. It is a subject which occupies a place of considerable prominence in the Scriptures—far more so than many are aware—and yet, sad to say, it is grievously neglected by most preachers and writers of today, and in consequence, the saints are to a large extent ignorant upon it.

The supernatural and special work of the Holy Spirit in the soul is that which distinguishes the regenerate from the unregenerate. The religion of the vast majority of people today consists merely in an outward show, having a name to live among men, but being spiritually dead toward God. Their religion comprises little more than bare speculative notions, merely knowing the Word in its letter; in an undue attachment to some man or party; in a blazing zeal which is not according to knowledge; or in censoriously contending for a certain order of things, despising all who do not rightly pronounce *their* particular shibboleths. The fear of God is not upon them, the love of God does not fill and rule their hearts, the power of God is not working in their souls—they are strangers to it. They have never been the favoured subjects of the Spirit's quickening operation.

“No man can come to me, *except* the Father which hath sent me *draw* him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (Joh 6:44). This emphatic and man-humbling fact is almost universally ignored in Christendom today, and when it *is* pressed upon the notice of the average preacher or “church member,” it is hotly denied and scornfully rejected. The cry is at once raised, “If that were true, then man is nothing more than a machine, and all preaching is useless. If people are *unable* to come to Christ by an act of their own will, then evangelistic effort is needless, worthless.” No effort is made to understand the meaning of those words of our Lord. They clash with modern thought, they rile the proud flesh, so they are summarily condemned and dismissed. No wonder the Holy Spirit is now “quenched” in so many places, and that *His* saving power is so rarely in evidence.

With others the supernatural agency of the Spirit is effectively shut out by the belief that *truth will prevail*—that if the Word of God be faithfully preached, souls *will be* truly saved. Far be it from us to undervalue the truth, or cast the slightest reflection on the living Word of God, yet modern ideas and present conditions demand that we plainly point out that *it is not the truth*, the Scriptures, the Gospel, which *renews the soul*, but instead, the power and operations of *the Holy Spirit*. “You may teach a man the holiest truths, and yet leave him a wretched man. Many who learn in childhood that ‘God is love,’ live disregarding, and die blaspheming God. Thousands who are carefully taught ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,’ neglect so great salvation all their days. Some of the most wicked and miserable beings that walk the earth are men into whose consciences, when yet youthful and unsophisticated, the truth was carefully instilled.

“Unmindful of this, and not considering the danger of diverting faith *from the power to the instrument*, however beautiful and perfect the instrument may be, many good men, by a culpable inadvertence, constantly speak as if the truth had an inherent ascendancy over man, and would certainly prevail when justly presented. We have heard this done till we have been ready to ask, ‘Do they take men for angels, that mere truth is to captivate them so certainly?’ Ay, and even to ask ‘Have they ever heard whether there be any Holy Spirit?’

“The belief that truth is mighty, and *by reason of its might* must prevail, is equally fallacious in the abstract, as it is opposed to the facts of human history, and to the Word of God. We should take the maxim, the truth must prevail, as perfectly sound, did you only give us a community of angels on whom to try the truth. With every intellect clear, and every heart upright, doubtless truth would soon be discerned, and when discerned, cordially embraced. But truth, in descending among us, does not come among friends. The human heart offers ground whereon it meets truth at an immeasurable disadvantage. Passions, habits, interests, ay, nature itself, lean to the side of error, and though the judgment may assent to the truth, which, however, is not always the case, still error may gain a conquest only the more notable because of this impediment. Truth is mighty in pure natures, error in depraved ones.

“Do they who know human nature best, when they have a political object to carry, trust most of all to the power of truth over a constituency, or would they not have far more confidence in corruption and revelry? The whole history of man is a melancholy reproof to those who mouth about the mightiness of truth. ‘But,’ they say, ‘truth will prevail in the long run.’ Yes, blessed be God, it will, but not because of *its own power* over human nature, but because *the Spirit* will be poured out from on high, opening blind eyes and unstopping deaf ears.

“The sacred writings, while ever leaving us to regard the truth as the one instrument of the sinner’s conversion and the believer’s sanctification, are very far from proclaiming its power over human nature, merely because it is truth. On the contrary, they often show us that this very fact will enlist the passions of mankind *against it*, and awaken enmity instead of approbation. We are ever pointed *beyond the truth* to HIM who is the Source and Giver of truth, and though we had apostles to minister the Gospel, are ever lead not to deem it enough that it should be ‘in word only, but in *demonstration of the Spirit and in power*’” (William Arthur, 1819-1901).

John the Baptist came preaching “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mar 1:4), but by what, or rather *whose* power was it, that repentance was wrought in the hearts of his hearers? It was that of the Holy Spirit! Of old it was said, “He shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias” (Luk 1:17). Now the “spirit and power of Elias [Elijah]” was that of *the Holy Spirit*, as is clear from Luke 1:15, “he [the Baptist] shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.” Similarly, it should be duly observed that, when Christ commissioned His apostles to preach in His name

among all nations (Luk 24:47), that He added, “Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, *until ye be endued with power from on high*” (v. 49). Why was the latter annexed to the former, and prefaced with a “Behold” but to teach them (and us) that there could be no saving repentance produced by their preaching, except by the mighty operations of the third person of the Godhead?

None will ever be *drawn to Christ*, savingly, by mere preaching, no, not by the most faithful and scriptural preaching. There must first be the supernatural operations of the Spirit to open the sinner’s heart *to receive* the message! And how can we expect the Spirit to work among us while *He* is so slighted, while our confidence is not in Him, but in our preaching! How can we expect Him to work miracles in our midst while there is no humble, earnest, and trustful *praying* for His gracious activities! Most of us are in such a feverish rush to “win souls,” to do “personal work,” preach, that we have no time for definite, reverent, importunate crying unto the Lord for His Spirit to go before us and prepare the soil for the seed. Hence it is that the converts we make are but “*man* made,” and their subsequent lives make it only too apparent unto those who have eyes to see that the *Holy Spirit* does not indwell them, and produce *His* fruits through them. O brethren, join the writer in contritely owning to God your sinful failure to give the Spirit His proper place.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

85.A Call to Steadfastness (12:3-4)

At first sight it is not easy to trace the thread which unites the passage that was last before us and the verses which are now to engage our attention. There appears to be no direct connection between the opening verses of Hebrews 12 and those which follow. But a closer examination of them shows they are intimately related. In verses 3-4, the apostle completes the exhortation with which the chapter opens. In verse 1, the apostle borrowed a figure from the Grecian Games, namely, the marathon race, and now in verse 4 he refers to another part of those games—the contest between the gladiators in the arena. Second, he had specified the principal grace required for the Christian race, namely, “patience” or perseverance, so now in verse 3 he is urging them against faintness of mind or impatience. Third, he had enforced his exhortation by bidding the saints to “look unto Jesus” their great exemplar, so here he calls on them to “consider him” and emulate His steadfastness.

Yet, the verses which are now before us are not a mere repetition of those immediately preceding, rather do they present another, though closely related aspect of the Christian life or “race.” In verse 1, the racers are bidden to “lay aside every weight,” and in verse 3, it is the “contradiction of sinners” which has to be endured—the former are hindrances which proceed more from *within*, the later are obstacles which are encountered from *without*. In the former case, it is the evil solicitations of the flesh which would have to be resisted. In the other, it is the persecutions of the world which have to be endured. In verse 1, it is “the sin which doth so easily

beset” or “encircle us”—inward depravity—which must be “laid aside.” In verse 4, it is martyrdom which must be prepared for, lest we yield to the “sin” of apostasy.

Now the secret of success, the way to victory, is the same in either case. To enable us to “lay aside” all that hinders from within there has to be a trustful “looking unto Jesus,” and to enable us to “endure” the oppositions encountered from without and to “strive” against inconstancy and wavering in our profession, we must thoughtfully “consider Him” who was hounded and persecuted as none other ever was. As the incentive to self-denial we are to be occupied with our great Leader, and remember how much *He* “laid aside” for us—He who was rich, for our sakes, became poor. He who was “in the form of God” divested Himself of His robes of glory and took upon Him “the form of a servant.” *We* are not called on to do something which He did not—*He* vacated the throne and took up His cross! Likewise, the chief source of comfort and encouragement when we are called upon to suffer for His sake, is to call to mind the infinitely greater sufferings which He endured for our sakes.

The more we endeavor to emulate the example which the Lord Jesus has left us, the more shall we be opposed from without. The more closely we follow Him, the greater will be the enmity of our fellow-men against us. Our lives will condemn theirs, our ways will be a perpetual rebuke to them, and they will do all they can to discourage and hinder, provoke and oppose. And the tendency of such persecution is to dishearten us, to tempt us to compromise, to ask, “What is the use?” Because of this, the blessed Spirit bids us, “Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Heb 12:3). Let the experiences through which *Christ* passed be the subject of daily contemplation. The record of His unparalleled temptations and trials, His endurance, and His victory is to be the grand source of our instruction, comfort, and encouragement. If we have grown “faint and weary” in our minds, it is because we have failed to properly and profitably “consider him.”

Supremely important is a knowledge of the Scriptures concerning the Lord Jesus. There can be no experimental holiness, no growth in grace apart from the same. Vital godliness consists in a practical conformity to the image of God’s Son. It is to follow the example which He has left us, to take His yoke upon us and learn of Him. For this, there must needs be an intimate knowledge of His ways, a prayerful and believing study of the record of His life, a daily reading of and meditating thereon. That is why the four Gospels are placed at the *beginning* of the New Testament—they are of first importance. What we have in the epistles is principally an interpretation and application of the four Gospels to the details of our walk. O that we may say with ever-deepening purpose of heart, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phi 3:8). O that we may “follow on to *know* the LORD” (Hos 6:3).

“For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Heb 12:3-4). The whole of this is a dehortation or caution against an evil, which if yielded to will prevent our discharge of the duty inculcated in verses 1-2. That which is dehorted against is “be not wearied”—give not up the race, abandon not your Christian profession. The way whereby we may fall into that evil, is becoming “faint” in our minds. The means to prevent this is the diligent contemplation of our great Exemplar.

In verses 1-2, the apostle had exhorted unto a patient or persevering pressing forward in the path of faith and obedience. In verses 3-11, he presents a number of considerations or motives to hearten us in our course, seeking particularly to counteract the enervating influence which difficulties are apt to exert upon the minds of God’s tried people. The tendency of strong and

lasting opposition and persecution is to discourage, which if yielded unto leads to despair. To strengthen the hearts of those tired Hebrews, the apostle bade them consider the case of Christ Himself. *He* encountered far worse sufferings than we do, yet He patiently “endured” them (v. 3). Then they were reminded that their case was by no means desperate and extreme—they had not yet been called to suffer a death of martyrdom. Finally, their very difficulties were the loving chastisement of their Father, designed for their profit (vv. 5-11). By what a variety of means does the blessed Spirit strengthen, stablish, and comfort tried believers!

Are you, dear reader, disheartened by the hard usage you are receiving from men, yea, from the religious world—are you fearful as you anticipate the persecutions which may yet attend your Christian profession, or are you too ready to show resentment against those who oppose you? Then “*consider him* that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself” (Heb 12:3). The connecting “For” has the force here of “moreover.” In addition to “looking unto Jesus” as your Leader and Perfecter, consider Him in His steadfastness under relentless persecution. Faith has many actings or forms of exercise. It is to reflect, contemplate, call to mind—God’s past ways with us, His dealings with His people of old, and particularly the recorded history of His beloved and incarnate Son. We are greatly the losers if we fail to cultivate the habit of devout consideration and holy meditation. The Greek word for “consider” is not the same as the one used in 3:1 and 10:24. In fact, it is a term which occurs, in this form, nowhere else in the New Testament.

The Greek word for “consider” in our text is derived from the one rendered “proportion” in Romans 12:6. It is a mathematical term, signifying *to compute* by comparing things together in their due proportions. It means—form a just and accurate estimate. “For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself” (Heb 12:3). Draw an analogy between *His* sufferings and *yours*, and what proportion is there between them! Weigh well *who* He was, the place He took, the infinite perfection of His character and deeds—and then the base ingratitude, the gross injustice, the cruel persecution He met with. Calculate and estimate the constancy of the opposition He encountered, the type of men who maligned Him, the variety and intensity of His sore trials, and the spirit of meekness and patience with which He bore them. And what are *our* trifling trials when compared with *His* agonies, or even to our *deserts*! O my soul blush with shame because of thy murmurings.

“Consider him” in the ineffable excellency of His Person. He was none other than the Lord of glory, the Beloved of the Father, the second Person in the sacred Trinity, the Creator of heaven and earth. Now, since *He* suffered here on earth, why should you, having enlisted under His banner, think it strange that you should be called on to endure a little hardness in His service! Consider His *relationship* to you—He is your Redeemer and Proprietor—is it not sufficient for the disciple to be as his Master, the servant as his Lord? If the head was spared not trial and shame, shall the members of His body complain if they be called on to have some fellowship with Him in this? When you are tempted to throw down your colours and capitulate to the enemy, or even to murmur at your hard lot, “Consider him” who when here “had not where to lay his head.”

The particular sufferings of Christ which are here singled out for our consideration are the “contradiction of sinners” which He encountered. He was opposed constantly by word and action. He was opposed by His own people according to the flesh. He was opposed by the very ones to whom He ministered in infinite grace and lovingkindness. That opposition began at His birth, when there was no room in the inn—*He* was not wanted. It was seen again in His infancy, when Herod sought to slay Him, and His parents were forced to flee with Him into Egypt. Little else is told us in the New Testament about His early years, but there is a Messianic prophecy in Psalm

88:15 where we hear Him pathetically saying, “I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up”! As soon as His public ministry commenced, and during the whole of its three years’ course, He endured one unbroken, relentless, “contradiction of sinners against himself.”

The Lord Jesus was derided as the Prophet, mocked as the King, and treated with the utmost contempt as Priest and Saviour. He was accused of deceiving (Joh 7:12) and perverting the people (Luk 23:14). His teaching was opposed, and His Person was insulted. Because He conversed with and befriended publicans and sinners, He was “murmured” at (Luk 15:2). Because He performed works of mercy on the Sabbath day, He was charged with breaking the law (Mar 3:2). The gracious miracles which He wrought upon the sick and demon-possessed were attributed to His being in league with the devil (Mat 12:23). He was regarded as a low-born fanatic. He was branded as a “glutton and winebibber” (Luk 7:34). He was accused of speaking against Caesar (Joh 19:12), whereas He had expressly bidden men to render unto Caesar what rightly belonged to him (Mat 22:21). Though He was the Holy One of God, there was scarcely anything about Him that was not opposed.

“For consider him that endured *such* contradiction” (Heb 12:3). Here is emphasized the greatness of Christ’s sufferings—“*such* contradiction”—so bitter, so severe, so malicious, so protracted—everything which the evil wits of men and Satan could invent. That word “*such*” is also added to awaken our wonderment and worship. Though the incarnate Son of God, He was spat upon, contemptuously arrayed in a purple robe, and His enemies bowed the knee before Him in mockery. They buffeted Him and smote Him on the face. They tore His back with scourgings, as was foretold by the Psalmist (Psa 129:3). They condemned Him to a criminal’s death, and nailed Him to the cross, and that between two thieves, to add to His shame. And this, at the hands of men who, though they made a great show of sanctity, were “sinners.”

Christ *felt keenly* that “contradiction,” for He was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. At the end, He exclaimed “reproach hath broken my heart” (Psa 69:20). Nevertheless, He turned not aside from the path of duty, still less did He abandon His mission. He fled not from His enemies, and fainted not under their merciless persecution, instead, He “*endured*” it. As we pointed out in our exposition of the previous verse, that word is used of Christ in its highest and noblest sense. He bore patiently every ignominy that was heaped upon Him. He never retaliated or reviled His traducers. He remained steadfast unto the end, and finished the work which had been given Him to do. When the supreme crisis arrived, He faltered not, but set his face as a flint to go up to Jerusalem (Isa 50:7, Luk 9:51).

Do you, tired reader, feel that your cup of opposition is a little fuller than that of some of your fellow Christians? Then look away to the cup which Christ drank! Here is the divine antedote against weariness—Christ meekly and triumphantly “endured” far, far worse than anything you are called on to suffer for His sake, yet He fainted not. When you are weary in your mind because of trials and injuries from the enemies of God, “consider” Christ, and this will quieten and suppress thy corrupt propensities to murmuring and impatience. Set Him before thy heart as the grand example and encouragement—example in patience, encouragement in the blessed issue, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him” (2Ti 2:12). Faith’s consideration of Him will work a conformity unto Him in our souls which will preserve from fainting.

“Lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Heb 12:3). There is no connecting “and” in the Greek. Two distinct thoughts are presented, “lest ye be wearied,” that is, so discouraged as to quit. “Faint in your mind,” states the cause thereof. The word for “weary” here is a strong one. It signifies exhausted, being so despondent as to break their resolution. In its ultimate meaning, it refers to such a state of despondency as an utter sinking of spirit, through the difficulties, trials,

opposition, and persecution encountered as to “look back” (Luk 9:62), and either partially or wholly abandon their profession of the Gospel. In other words, it is another warning against apostasy. What we are cautioned against here is the opposite of that which the Lord commended in the Ephesian church, “And for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted” (Rev 2:3)—here there *is* perseverance in the Christian profession despite all opposition.

At different periods of history God has permitted fierce opposition to break out against His people, to test the reality and strength of their attachment to Christ. This was the case with those to whom our epistle was first addressed. They were being exposed to great trials and sufferings, temptations and privations, hence the timeliness of this exhortation and its accompanying warning. Reproaches, losses, imprisonments, scourgings, being threatened with death, have a strong tendency to produce dejection and despair. They present a powerful temptation to give up the fight. And nought but the vigorous activity of faith will fortify the mind under religious persecution. Only as the heart is encouragingly occupied with *Christ’s endurance* of the “contradiction of sinners against himself,” will our resolution be strong to endure unto the end, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; *I* have overcome the world” (Joh 16:33).

“Faint in your minds” (Heb 12:3). This it is which, if not resisted and corrected, leads to the “weariness” or utter exhaustion of the previous clause. This faintness of mind is the reverse of vigour and cheerfulness. If, under the strong opposition and fierce persecution, we are to “endure unto the end,” then we must watch diligently against the allowance of such faintness of mind. There is a spiritual vigour required in order to perseverance in the Christian profession during times of persecution. Hence it is that we are exhorted, “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, *arm yourselves* likewise with the same mind” (1Pe 4:1). “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. *Wherefore take unto you* the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph 6:12-13). “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, *quit you like men*, be strong” (1Co 16:13).

Any degree of faintness of mind in the Christian results from and consists in a remitting of the cheerful actions of faith in the various duties which God has called us to discharge. Nothing but the regular exercise of *faith* keeps the soul calm and restful, patient and prayerful. If faith ceases to be operative, and our mind be left to cope with difficulties and trials in our own natural strength, then we shall soon grow weary of a *persecuted* Christian profession. Herein lies the beginning of all spiritual declension—a lack of the due exercise of faith, and that in turn is the result of the heart growing cold toward Christ! If faith be in healthy exercise, we shall say, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom 8:18), realizing that “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2Co 4:17). Ah, but *that* consciousness is only “*while we look not* at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen” (2Co 4:18).

“Consider *him*” (Heb 12:3)—there is the remedy against faintness of mind. There is the preservative from such “weariness” of dejection of spirits that we are ready to throw down our weapons and throw up our hands in utter despair. It is the diligent consideration of the Person of Christ, the *Object* of faith, the *Food* of faith, the *Supporter* of faith. It is by drawing an analogy between His infinitely sorer sufferings and our present hardships. It is by making application unto ourselves of what is to be found in Him suitable to our own case. Are we called on to suffer a

little for Him, then let our eye be turned on Him who went before us in the same path of trial. Make a comparison between what *He* “endured” and what *you* are called to struggle with, and surely you will be ashamed to complain! “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phi 2:5). Admire and imitate His meekness—weeping over His enemies and praying for His murderers!

“Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Heb 12:4). The persons here immediately addressed—the “ye”—were the Hebrews themselves. Because of their profession of Christianity, because of their loyalty to Christ, they had suffered severely in various ways. Plain reference to something of what they had already been called on to endure is made in Hebrews 10:32-34, “But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods.” Thus the Hebrew saints had been sorely oppressed by their unbelieving brethren among the Jews. It is that which gave such point to the exhortation and warning in the previous verse.

“Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” Here is the second consideration which the apostle pressed upon his afflicted brethren—not only to ponder the far greater opposition which their Saviour encountered, but also to bear in mind that their own sufferings were not so severe as they might have been, or as possibly they would yet be. It is an argument made by reasoning from the greater to the less, and from comparing their present state with that which might await them—what could be expected to sustain their hearts and deliver from apostasy when under the supreme test of death by violence if they fainted beneath lesser afflictions? We, too, should honestly face the same alternative. If unkind words and sneers make us waver now, how would we acquit ourselves if called on to face a martyr’s death!

The present state of the oppressed Hebrews is here expressed negatively, “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood.” True, they had already met with various forms of suffering, but not yet had they been called upon to lay down their lives. As Hebrews 10:32-34 clearly intimates, they had well acquitted themselves during the first stages of their trials, but their warfare was not yet ended. They had need to bear in mind that word of Christ’s, “Men ought always to pray, *and not to faint*” (Luk 18:1), and that exhortation of the Holy Spirit’s, “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, *if we faint not*” (Gal 6:9).

“Ye have not yet resisted unto blood” (Heb 12:4). The apostle here hinted to the Hebrews what might yet have to be endured by them, namely a bloody and violent death—by stoning, or the sword, or fire. *That* is the utmost which fiendish persecutors can afflict. Men may kill the body, but when they have done that, they can do no more. God has set bounds to their rage—none will hound or harm His people in the next world! Those who engage in the Christian profession, who serve under the banner of Christ, have no guarantee that they may not be called unto the utmost suffering of blood on account of their allegiance to Him, for *that* is what His adversaries have always desired. Hence, Christ bids us to sit down and count the cost (Luk 14:28) of being His disciples. God has decreed that many, in different ages should be martyred for His own praise, the glory of Christ, and the honour of the Gospel.

“Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Heb 12:4). “Sin” is here personified, regarded as a combatant which has to be overcome. The various persecutions, hardships, afflictions, difficulties of the way, in consequence of our attachment to Christ, become so many occasions and means which sin seeks to employ in order to hinder and oppose us. The Christian is called to a contest with sin. The apostle continues his allusion to the Grecian Games,

changing from the racer to the combatant. The great contest is in the believer's heart between grace and sin, the flesh and the Spirit (Gal 5:17). Sin seeks to quench faith and kill obedience. Therefore sin is to be "striven against" for our very souls are at stake. There is no place for sloth in this deadly contest, no furloughs are granted!

"Striving against sin" (Heb 12:4). That which the Hebrews were striving against was apostasy, going to the full lengths of sin—abandoning their Christian profession. Persecution was the means which indwelling depravity sought to use, to employ in slaying faith and fidelity to Christ. Their terrible wickedness was to be steadfastly resisted by fighting against weariness in the conflict. O to say with the apostle, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Act 21:13), but in order to reach *that* state of soul, there has to be a close walking with Him day by day, and a patient bearing of the minor trials. "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" (Jer 12:5).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

37. His Bringing up of the Ark

For lack of space we were obliged to omit from the preceding article a number of important points upon the closing verses of 2 Samuel 5, so we will use them here as the introduction for this one. We saw how that when the Philistines came up against David (2Sa 5:18), he inquired of the LORD what he should do (2Sa 5:19), and God responded with the gracious assurance that the enemy should be delivered into his hands, which was accordingly accomplished. Then we saw that other Philistines came up against him again (2Sa 5:22). Taking nothing for granted, David once more sought unto the Lord for divine instructions. Therein we are taught the duty of acknowledging God in *all* our ways (Pro 3:6), and His gracious readiness to grant needed light for our path, for "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for *our* learning" (Rom 15:4). The whole of that blessed incident reveals some valuable and precious lessons on the intensely practical subject of *divine guidance*.

David did not act mechanically when the Philistines came against him the second time, and do according as God had instructed him on the first occasion. Instead, he definitely inquired of Him *again*! Circumstances may *seem identical* to our dim vision, nevertheless, it is our duty and wisdom to wait upon the Lord on *all* occasions, trustfully seeking His instructions, implicitly obeying when His will is made clear to us through His Word. In no other way can victory over the lusts of the flesh and the subtle wiles of the devil be insured. As we saw in our last, the Lord *did not* give David the same answer on the second occasion as He had given him in the first. His response was quite different—the first time He said, "Go up" (2Sa 5:19). The second time He said, "Thou shalt not go up, but fetch a compass behind them" (2Sa 5:23). etc. It is at *that* point, particularly, there is important instruction for us.

On the first occasion, the Lord said unto David, “Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand” (2Sa 5:19). But on the second, He said, “Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees...that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines” (2Sa 5:23-24). That made a *greater demand* upon David’s faith, patience, and submission, than the former order did. It was humbling to the pride of the flesh not to make an open and frontal attack. It called for quite a march to circle around and get to their rear. And when he got there, he must *wait* until he heard a movement in the boughs of the mulberry trees, and waiting is much harder than rushing ahead. The lesson here is that as we grow in grace and progress in practical godliness, the Lord requires fuller and fuller submission to Himself.

“And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees” (2Sa 5:24). This was the equivalent of the word that was given to Israel at the Red Sea, as they saw the Egyptians bearing down upon them, “Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD.” (Exo 14:13). The mulberry trees could not move of themselves. David was to tarry till a breath from the Lord stirred them. He was to wait till he heard the wind (emblem of the Spirit!) stirring their leaves. He was not to go to sleep, but to remain alert for the Lord’s signal. The lesson here is, that while we are waiting for the Lord, we must diligently observe the providential motions of God, “Continue in prayer, *and watch* in the same” (Col 4:2).

“When thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that *then* thou shalt bestir thyself” (2Sa 5:24), that is, David was to *respond* to the intimation which God had graciously given him. The practical lesson for us is obvious—when the Lord has made known His will, prompt action is required. There is a time to stand still and a time to move. “Go forward” was the second word to Israel at the Red Sea. Strange as it may seem, there are many who fail at this very point. They arrive at some crisis in life, they seek unto the Lord for directions. His providential “pillar of cloud” goes before them, but they do not “bestir” themselves and follow it. It is only mocking God to ask Him for light when we respond not to what He *has* given. Listen attentively for *His* “sound of a going” and when you have heard it, act.

Observe the blessed and assuring promise which accompanied the directions to David at that time, “For then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines” (2Sa 5:24). If we carefully compare that with what is said in verse 20, it will be seen that the Lord wrought *more manifestly* on this second occasion than He did on the first. There we are simply told “and *David* smote them,” though he promptly ascribed his victory unto God. But here the Lord promised that *He* would smite the Philistines. The comforting lesson for us is, that if we duly wait upon God, implicitly obey His instructions—no matter how “unreasonable” they seem, nor how distasteful, if we diligently watch every movement of His providence, and “bestir” ourselves when His will is clear, then we may assuredly count upon Him showing Himself strong on our behalf.

There is a blessed sequel to the above incident recorded in 1 Chronicles 14:16-17, which is not mentioned in 2 Samuel, “David therefore did as God commanded him: and they smote the host of the Philistines from Gibeon even to Gazer. And the fame of David went out into all lands; and the LORD brought the fear of him upon all nations.” God will be no man’s debtor. He always rewards those who keep His commandments. He not only enabled David to vanquish the Philistines, but He also honoured the one who had honoured Him, by causing his fame to go abroad, so that all nations were afraid to attack him. And is it not equally the case now, that where

there is a soul who is fully subject to Himself, He causes even Satan to feel he is but wasting his time to assail such an one! Compare Proverbs 16:7.

The next thing we are told of David after his triumph over the Philistines is the godly concern he now evidenced for the ark. This is exceedingly beautiful, manifesting as it does the deep spirituality of our hero, and showing again the propriety of his being designated “a man after his own heart” (1Sa 13:14). David’s first thought after he was firmly seated as king over all Israel, was the enthronement in Jerusalem of the long-forgotten ark, that sacred coffer which held supreme place among the holy vessels of the tabernacle, that ark concerning which the Lord had said to Moses, “Thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And *there* I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony” (Exo 25:21-22).

That ancient symbol of the presence of the true King had passed through many vicissitudes since the days when it had been carried around the walls of Jericho. In the degenerate times of the Judges, it had been superstitiously carried into battle, as though it were merely a magical mascot, and righteously did God mock their impious expectations, “the ark of God” fell into the hands of the uncircumcised. The Philistines carried it in triumph through their cities, and then housed it in the temple of Dagon. But again JEHOVAH vindicated His honour and the ark was sent back to Israel in dismay. It had been joyfully welcomed by the inhabitants of Bethshemesh. Then, alas, unholy curiosity moved them to look within the sacred chest, and the Lord smote them “with a great slaughter” (1Sa 6:19).

The ark was then removed to the forest seclusion of Kerjath-jearim (the city or village of the woods) and placed in the house of Abinadab, where it lay neglected and forgotten for over fifty years. During the days of Saul, they “inquired not at it” (1Ch 13:3). But from his days as a youth, David was deeply exercised over the dishonour done to the Lord’s throne, “LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions: How he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the LORD, *an habitation* for the mighty God of Jacob. Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood” (Psa 132:1-6). He had resolved to establish a place where JEHOVAH’s worship could be celebrated, a house where the symbol of His presence should be fixed and communion with His people established.

Now that he was established over the kingdom of Israel, David did not forget his early vows, but forthwith proceeded to put them into execution. “Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims” (2Sa 6:1-2). No doubt it was with a full heart that David now acted, with deep longings after God, with fervent rejoicings in Him, see verse 5. No doubt he painted a bright picture, as he anticipated the blessings which would follow the ark being rightfully honoured. Alas, how his hopes were dashed to the ground! Sad indeed was the immediate sequel.

“And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on

cornets, and on cymbals. And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-uzzah (the breach of Uzzah) to this day" (2Sa 6:3-8). Some exceedingly solemn lessons are pointed in this passage, and they are recorded for *our* warning, alas that they are so widely disregarded in Christendom today.

"To bring back therefore the ark from the place of its dishonour; to bring it back again into the bosom of Israel; to make it once more that which Israel should seek unto and inquire at: and above all establish it in the citadel of Zion, the place of sovereign supremacy and strength, these were the immediate objects of David's desires. Herein he was fulfilling his office of king, in giving supremacy to God and to His truth. But the servants of God have not unfrequently to learn that the pursuit of a right end does not necessarily imply the employment of right means" (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899). This is the first thing here to take heart.

"And they set the ark of God upon a new cart." (2Sa 6:3). By so doing they were guilty of a serious error. In the fervency of his zeal, David ignored the precepts of God. The Lord had given very definite instructions as to the order which must be followed when the ark was to be moved. Through Moses JEHOVAH had said, "When the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering veil, and *cover the ark* of testimony with it: and shall put thereon the covering of badgers' skins, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and shall *put in the staves thereof*" (Num 4:5-6). The sacred ark was to be duly hidden from the gaze of the curious, but it does not appear that this detail was attended to by David! Nor was that all—"And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it" (Num 4:15), "they should bear *upon their shoulders*" (Num 7:9).

The will of God was plainly revealed—the ark was to be covered, staves were to be inserted in the rings in its ends, and it was to be carried on the shoulders of the Kohathites. Nothing had been said about placing it on "a new cart"—*that* was a human invention, and *contrary to* the instructions of the Lord. David's desire was holy, his motive was pure, but *he went about things in a wrong way*, and direful were the consequences. Now there are two ways of doing the work of the Lord, two ways of acquitting ourselves when engaged in His service—strictly following what is prescribed for us in the written Word of God, or following *our own* ideas and inclinations—or following the example of other men, which amounts to the same thing. Alas, how much more the latter is now in evidence. How often are right things being done in a wrong way!

The due order for the removing of the ark had been plainly made known by God in His written Word. JEHOVAH had given express command that the ark should be covered with the sacred curtains, committed to the charge of a divinely-selected set of men, and it *must* be carried on their "shoulders," and in no other way. That was *God's* way. To move it on a cart drawn by cattle was *man's* way. Some might think the latter was to be preferred. Some might consider it was such a "little" matter as to be of no consequence. Some might conclude that as their object was right and their motive pure, that even though they ignored *the prescribed mode* of performing the duty, they might surely count upon the divine blessing. *What the Lord thought* of their procedure is evidenced in the tragic sequel.

But how are we to account for David's serious failure to heed the commands of God? What is the explanation of the "confusion" which here attended his well-meant and praise-worthy effort? Let us go back again to the beginning of 2 Samuel 6, and read carefully its first three verses.

Notice, dear reader, a very significant *omission*. Observe closely the solemn contrast between his conduct in 2 Samuel 5:19 and 5:23, and what is said of him here. Each time the Philistines came up against him, David “inquired of the Lord,” but nothing is said of *that* now he purposed to conduct the ark unto a suitable habitation for it! Need we wonder, then, at what follows? If *God’s* blessing be not definitely sought, how can it be rightfully expected? If *prayer* does not precede and accompany our very best actions, what are they likely to amount to! If in *any* of our ways God be not “acknowledged,” be not surprised if they lead to disaster.

“And David *consulted with the captains* of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader. And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seem good *unto you*, and that it be of the LORD our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us: and let us bring again the ark of our God to us” (1Ch 13:1-3). Instead of “inquiring of the Lord,” David had conferred with his officers. There was *no need whatever* for him to “consult” with any human being, for the *will of the Lord* was already upon record! And what was the policy suggested by the “leaders”? Why, to imitate the ways of the religious world around them! The Philistine “priests” had counseled that the ark be returned to Israel upon “a new cart” (1Sa 6:2-11), and now David—under the advice of his officers, “set the ark of God upon *a new cart*” (2Sa 6:3)!

DIVINE GUIDANCE

Part Three

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (2Sa 5:19). Note well the *order* here—the promise at the close of the passage is conditional upon our meeting three requirements. First, we are to have full confidence in the Lord. The Hebrew verb for “trust” here literally means “to lean upon.” It conveys the idea of one who is conscious of feebleness turning unto and resting upon a stronger one for support. To “trust in the LORD” signifies to count upon Him in every emergency, to look to Him for the supply of every need, to say with the Psalmist, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psa 23:1). It means that we cast all our cares upon Him, drawing from Him strength day by day and hour by hour and thus proving the sufficiency of His grace. It means for the Christian *to continue* as he began—when we first cast ourselves upon Him as lost sinners, we abandoned all our own doings and relied upon His abounding mercy. Rely now on His wisdom, power, and grace.

But what is meant by “trust in the LORD *with all thine heart*”? (Pro 3:5). First, the giving unto God of our undivided confidence, not looking to any other for help and relief. Second, turning to Him with childlike simplicity. When a little one trusts there is no reasoning, but a simple taking of the parent’s words at their face value, being fully assured that his father will make good what he has said. He dwells not on the difficulties which may be in the way, but

expects a fulfillment of what is promised. So it should be with us and our heavenly Father's words. Third, it means with our *affections* going out to Him. Love "believeth all things, hopeth all things" (1Co 13:7). Thus, to trust in the Lord, "with all our heart" is *love's reliance* in believing dependence and expectation.

The second requirement is, "and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Pro 3:5), which means we are not to trust in our own wisdom or rely upon the dictates of human reason. The highest act of human reason is to disown its sufficiency and bow before the wisdom of God. To lean unto our own understanding is to rest upon a broken reed, for it has been deranged by sin. Yet many find it harder to repudiate their own wisdom than they do to abandon their own righteousness. Many of God's ways are "past finding out," and to seek to solve the mysteries of Providence is the finite attempting to comprehend the Infinite, which is not only being guilty of presumptuous sin, but is acting against our own well-being. Philosophizing about our lot, reasoning about our circumstances, is fatal to rest of soul and peace of heart.

Third, "in all thy ways acknowledge him." This means, first, we must ask God's *permission* for all that we do, and not act without His leave. Only then do we conduct ourselves as dutiful children and respectful servants. It means, second, that we seek God's *guidance* in every undertaking, acknowledging our ignorance and owning our complete dependence upon Him. "In every thing by prayer and supplication" (Phi 4:6), only so is God's lordship over us owned in a practical way. It means, third, seeking God's *glory* in all our ways, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1Co 10:31). Ah, if we only *did so*, how very different many of our "ways" would be! If we more frequently paused and inquired, Will *this* be for God's glory? we should be withheld from much sinning and from much folly, with all its painful consequences. It means, fourth, seeking God's *blessing* upon everything. Here is another simple and sufficient rule—anything on which I cannot ask *God's blessing* is WRONG.

"And he shall direct thy paths" (Pro 3:6)—meet the three conditions mentioned above and here is the sure consequence. The need for being directed by God is real and pressing. Left to ourselves we are no better off than a rudderless ship or a motor-car without a steering-wheel. It is not without reason that the Lord's people are so often termed "sheep," for no other creature is so apt to stray or has such a propensity to wander. The Hebrew word for "direct" means "to make straight." We are living in a world where everything is crooked. Sin has thrown everything out of joint, and in consequence, confusion, worse, confoundedness, abounds all around us. A deceitful heart, a wicked world, and a subtle devil are ever seeking to lead us astray and compass our destruction. How necessary it is, then, for God to "direct our paths."

What is meant by, "He shall direct thy paths"? It means, He will make clear to me *the course of duty*. Let this be firmly grasped. God's "will" always lies in the path of duty and never runs counter thereto. Much needless uncertainty and perplexity would be spared if only this principle were steadily recognised. When you feel a strong desire or "prompting" to shirk a plain duty, you may be assured it is a temptation from Satan, and not the "leading" of the Holy Spirit. For example, it is contrary to God's revealed will for a woman to be constantly attending meetings to the neglect of her children and home. It is shirking his responsibility for the husband to go off alone in the evenings, even in religious luxuriation, and leave his tired wife to wash the dishes and put the children to bed. It is a sin for a Christian employee to read the Scripture or "speak to people about their souls" during office or business hours.

The difficulty arises when it appears that we have to choose between two or more duties, or when some important change has to be made in our circumstances. There are many people who think they want to be *guided by God* when some crisis arrives or some important decision has to

be made, but few of them are prepared *to meet the requirements* as intimated in our opening paragraphs. The fact is that GOD was rarely in their thoughts before the emergency arose. Pleasing *Him* exercised them not while things were going smoothly for them. But when difficulty and trouble confronts them, when they are at their own wits end *how* to act, they suddenly become very pious, turn to the Lord, earnestly ask Him to direct them, and make *His* way plain before their face.

But God cannot be imposed upon in such a manner. Usually such people make a rash decision and bring themselves into still greater difficulties, and then they attempt to console themselves with, “Well, I *sought* God’s guidance.” Ah, my reader, *God* is not to be mocked like that. If we ignore His claims upon us when the sailing is pleasant, we cannot count upon Him delivering us when the storm comes. The One we have to do with is *holy* and He will not set a premium upon godlessness (called by many, “carelessness”), even though we howl like beasts when in anguish (Hos 7:14). On the other hand, if we diligently seek grace to walk with God day by day, regulating our ways by His commandments, then we *may* rightfully count upon His aid in every emergency that arises.

But how is the conscientious Christian to act when some emergency confronts him? Suppose he stands at the parting of the ways—two paths, two alternatives, are before him, and he knows not which to choose. *What* must he do? First, let him heed that most necessary word, which as a rule of general application is ever binding upon us, “He that believeth *shall not make haste*” (Isa 28:16). To act from a sudden impulse never becomes a child of God, and to rush ahead of the Lord is sure to involve us in painful consequences. “The LORD is good unto them that *wait for him*, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation [deliverance] of the LORD” (Lam 3:25-26). To act in haste generally means that afterward we shall repent at leisure. O how much each of us needs to beg the Lord to daily lay His cooling and quietening hand upon our feverish flesh!

Second, seek unto the Lord for Him to *empty your heart* of every wish of your own. It is impossible for us to sincerely pray, “*Thy* will be done,” until our *own* will has, by the power of the Holy Spirit, been brought into complete subjection to God. Just so long as there is secret (but real) *preference* in my heart, my judgment will be biased. While my heart is really set upon the attainment of a certain object, then I am only mocking God when I ask Him to make *His* way plain before my face, and I am sure to *misinterpret* all His providences, twisting them to fit my own desire. If an obstacle be in my path, I shall then regard it as a “testing of faith,” if a barrier be removed, I at once jump to the conclusion that God is “undertaking” for me, when instead He may be *testing*, on the eve of giving me up to my own “heart’s lusts” (Psa 81:12).

This is a point of supreme importance for those who desire their steps to be truly “ordered of the Lord.” We cannot discern *His* best for us while the heart has its own preference. Thus it is imperative that we ask God to *empty* our hearts of all personal preferences, to *remove* any secret and set desire of our own. But often it is far from easy to take *this* attitude before God, the more so if we are not in the habit of seeking grace to mortify the flesh. By nature each of us wants his own way, and chafes against every curb placed upon him. But just as a photographic plate must be a *blank* if it is to receive the impression of a picture upon it, so our hearts must be freed from their personal bias if God is to work in us “both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure” (Phi 2:13).

If you find that as you continue waiting upon God the inward struggle between the “flesh” and the “Spirit” continues, and you have *not* reached the point where you can honestly say, “Have *thine* own way, Lord,” then a season of *fasting* is in order. In Ezra 8:21, we read, “Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to

seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones.” This is written for our instruction, and even a glance at it suffices to show it is pertinent to our present inquiry. Nor is fasting a religious exercise peculiar to Old Testament times, for in Acts 13:3, we are told that before Barnabas and Saul were sent forth on their missionary journey by the church at Antioch, “When they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” There is nothing meritorious in fasting, but it expresses humility of soul and earnestness of heart.

The next thing is to humbly and sincerely acknowledge to God our ignorance, requesting Him not to leave us to ourselves. Tell Him frankly that you are perplexed and know not what to do, and that you deserve to be left in this woeful plight. But plead before Him His own promise, and beg Him for Christ’s sake to now make it good to you, “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. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering” (Jam 1:5-6). Ask Him to grant the wisdom so much needed, that you may judge rightly, that you may discern clearly what will promote your *spiritual* welfare, and therefore be most for His glory.

“Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass” (Psa 37:5). In the interval of waiting, confer not with flesh and blood. If you go to fellow-Christians for advice, most probably no two of them will agree, and their discordant counsel will only confuse you. Instead of looking to man for help, “Continue in prayer, and *watch* in the same with thanksgiving” (Col 4:2). Be on the look-out for God’s answer. Mark attentively each movement of His providence, for as a straw in the air indicates which way the wind is blowing so the hand of God may often be discerned by a spiritual eye in what are trifling incidents to others. “And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that *then thou shalt bestir thyself*: for then shall the LORD go out before thee” (2Sa 5:24).

Finally, remember that we need not only *light* from the Lord to discover unto us our duty in particular cases, but that being obtained, we also need His *presence* to accompany us, so that we may be enabled to rightly follow the path in which He bids us go. Moses realized this when he said to the Lord, “If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence” (Exo 33:15). If we have not the presence of God with us in an undertaking—that is, His approval upon it, His assistance in it, and His blessing upon it—then we shall find it a snare if not a curse to us.

As a general rule it is better for us to trouble our minds very little about “guidance”—*that* is God’s work. Our business is to walk in obedience to Him day by day. As we do so, there is wrought within us a prudence which will preserve us from all serious mistakes. “I understand more than the ancients, *because I keep thy precepts*” (Psa 119:100). The man who keeps God’s precepts becomes endowed with a wisdom which far surpasses that possessed by the sages of antiquity or the learning of philosophers. “Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness” (Psa 112:4). The upright man may experience his days of darkness, but when the hour of emergency arrives light shall be given him by God. Serve God with all your might today, and you may calmly and safely leave the future with Him. A duteous conformity to what is right shall be followed by a luminous discernment of what would be wrong.

Seek earnestly to get the fear of God fixed in your heart so that you tremble at His Word (Isa 66:2) and are really afraid of displeasing Him. “What man is he that feareth the LORD? *him shall he teach* in the way that he shall choose” (Psa 25:12). “Behold, the fear of the LORD, *that* is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding” (Job 28:28). “Then shall we know, *if* we follow on to know the LORD” (Hos 6:3). The more we grow in grace the fuller will be our knowledge of God’s revealed will. The more we cultivate the practice of seeking to please God in

all things, the more light shall we have for our path. “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Mat 5:8). If our motive be right, our vision will be clear.

“The integrity of the upright shall *guide* them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them” (Pro 11:3). The upright man will not willingly and knowingly go aside into crooked paths. The honest heart is not bewildered by domineering lusts nor blinded by corrupt motives. Having a tender conscience, he possesses keen spiritual discernment, but the crooked policy of the wicked involves them in increasing trouble and ends in their eternal ruin. “The righteousness of the perfect (sincere) shall *direct* his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness” (Pro 11:5). An eye single to God’s glory delivers from those snares in which the ungodly are taken. “Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things” (Pro 28:5). Unbridled passions and unmortified lusts becloud the understanding and pervert the judgment till men call good “evil” and evil “good” (Isa 5:20), but he who seeks to be subject to the Lord shall be given discretion.

“The LORD shall direct thy paths” (Pro 3:6). First, by His *Word*. Not in some magical way so as to encourage laziness, nor like consulting a cookery-book full of recipes for all occasions, but by warning us of the by-ways of sin and folly and by making known the paths of righteousness and blessing. Second, by His *Spirit*. Giving us strength to obey the precepts of God, causing us to wait patiently on the Lord for directions, enabling us to apply the rules of Holy Writ to the varied duties of our lives, bringing to our remembrance a word in due season. Third, by His *providences*. Causing friends to fail us so that we are delivered from leaning upon the arm of flesh, thwarting our carnal plans so that we are preserved from shipwreck, shutting doors which it would not be good for us to enter, and opening doors before us which none can shut.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

1. Introduction

In the ten articles published in last year’s Studies upon “The Doctrine of Justification” we contemplated the transcendent grace of God which provided for His people a Surety, who kept for them perfectly His holy law, and who also endured the curse which was due to their manifold transgressions against it. In consequence thereof, though in ourselves we are criminals who deserve to be brought to the bar of God’s justice and there be sentenced to death, we are, nevertheless, by virtue of the accepted service of our Substitute, not only not condemned, but “justified,” that is, *pronounced righteous* in the high courts of heaven. Mercy has rejoiced against judgment—yet not without the governmental righteousness of God, as expressed in His holy law, having been fully glorified. The Son of God incarnate, as the Federal Head and representative of His people, obeyed it, and also suffered and died under its condemning sentence. The claims of God have been fully met, justice has been magnified, the law has been made more honourable than if every descendant of Adam had personally fulfilled its requirements.

“As respects justifying righteousness, therefore, believers have nothing to do with the law. They are justified ‘freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus’ (Rom 3:24), that is apart from any personal fulfillment thereof. We could neither fulfill its righteousness nor bear its curse. The claims of the law were met and ended, once and forever, by the satisfaction of our great Substitute, and as a result we have attained to righteousness without works, i.e., without personal obedience of our own. ‘By the obedience of *one* shall many be made righteous’ (Rom 5:19). There may be indeed, and there are, other relations in which we stand to the law. It is the principle of our *new* nature to rejoice in its holiness, ‘We delight in the law of God after the inner man.’ We know the comprehensiveness and the blessedness of those first two commandments on which all the law and the prophets hang. We know that ‘love’ is the fulfilling of the law. We do not despise the guiding light of the holy and immutable commandments of God, livingly embodied, as they have been, in the ways and character of Jesus, but we do not seek to obey them with any thought of obtaining justification thereby.

“That which *has been* attained, cannot remain to be attained. Nor do we place so great an indignity on ‘the righteousness of our God and Saviour,’ as to put the partial and imperfect obedience which we render *after* we are justified, on a level with that heavenly and perfect righteousness by which we *have been* justified. *After* we have been justified, grace may and does for Christ’s sake, accept as well-pleasing our imperfect obedience, but this being a consequence of our perfected justification cannot be made a ground thereof. Nor can anything that is in the least degree imperfect, be presented to God with the view of attaining justification. In respect of this, the courts of God admit nothing that falls short of His own absolute perfectness” (B. W. Newton).

Having, then, dwelt at some length on the basic and blessed truth of justification, it is fitting that we should now consider the closely connected and complementary doctrine of sanctification. But what is “sanctification”? Is it a quality or position? Is sanctification a legal thing or an experimental? that is to say, is it something the believer has in Christ or in himself? Is it absolute or relative? by which we mean, does it admit of degree or no? is it unchanging or progressive? Are we sanctified at the time we are justified or is sanctification a later blessing? How is this blessing obtained? by something which is done for us, or by us, or both? How may one be assured he has been sanctified—what are the characteristics, the evidences, the fruits? How are we to distinguish between sanctification by the Father, sanctification by the Son, sanctification by the Spirit, sanctification by faith, sanctification by the Word?

Is there any difference between sanctification and holiness? if so, what? Are sanctification and purification the same thing? Does sanctification relate to the soul or the body, or both? What position does sanctification occupy in the *order* of divine blessings? What is the connection between regeneration and sanctification? What is the relation between justification and sanctification? Wherein does sanctification differ from glorification? Exactly what is the place of sanctification in regard to *salvation*—does it precede or follow, or is it an integral part of it? Why is there so much diversity of opinion upon these points, scarcely any two writers treating of this subject in the same manner? Our purpose here is not simply to multiply questions but to indicate the manysidedness of our present theme, and to intimate the various avenues of approach to the study of it.

Diversive indeed have been the answers returned to the above questions. Many who were ill-qualified for such a task have undertaken to write upon this weighty and difficult theme, rushing in where wiser men feared to tread. Others have superficially examined this subject through the coloured glasses of creedal attachment. Others, without any painstaking efforts of their own, have

merely echoed predecessors who they supposed gave out the truth thereon. Though the present writer has been studying this subject off and on for upwards of twenty-five years, he has felt himself to be too immature and too unspiritual to write at length thereon, and even now, it is (he trusts) with fear and trembling he essays to do so. May it please the Holy Spirit to so guide his thoughts that he may be preserved from everything which would pervert the truth, dishonour God, or mislead His people. Brethren, pray for us.

We have in our library discourses on this subject and treatises on this theme by over fifty different men, ancient and modern, ranging from hyper-Calvinists to ultra-Arminians, and a number who would not care to be listed under either. Some speak with pontifical dogmatism, others with reverent caution, a few with humble diffidence. All of them have been carefully digested by us and diligently compared on the leading points. The present writer detests sectarianism (most of all in those who are the worst affected by it, while pretending to be opposed to it), and earnestly desires to be delivered from partizanship. He seeks to be profited from the labours of all, and freely acknowledges his indebtedness to men of various creeds and schools of thought. On some aspects of *this* subject he has found the Plymouth Brethren much more helpful than the Reformers and the Puritans.

The great importance of our present theme is evidenced by the prominence which is given to it in Scripture—the words “holy, sanctified” etc., occurring therein hundreds of times. Its importance also appears from the high value ascribed to it. It is the supreme glory of God, of the unfallen angels, of the church. In Exodus 15:11, we read that the Lord God is “glorious in holiness”—that is His crowning excellency. In Matthew 25:31, mention is made of the “holy angels,” for no higher honor can be ascribed them. In Ephesians 5:26-27, we learn that the church’s glory lieth not in pomp and outward adornment, but in holiness. Its importance further appears in that *this* is the aim in all God’s dispensations. He elected His people that they should be “holy” (Eph 1:4). Christ died that He might “sanctify” His people (Heb 13:12). Chastisements are sent that we might be “partakers of his holiness” (Heb 12:10).

Whatever sanctification be, it is the great promise of the covenant made to Christ for His people. As Thomas Boston (1676-1732) well said, “Among the rest of that kind, it shines like the moon among the lesser stars—as the very chief subordinate end of the covenant of grace, standing therein next to the glory of God, which is the chief and ultimate end thereof. The promise of preservation, of the Spirit, of quickening the dead soul, of faith, of justification, of reconciliation, of adoption, and of the enjoyment of God as our God, do tend unto it as their common centre, and stand related to it as means to their end. They are all accomplished to sinners on design *to make them holy*.” This is abundantly clear from, “The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life” (Luk 1:73-75). In that “oath” or covenant, sworn to Abraham as a type of Christ (our spiritual Father—Heb 2:13), His seed’s serving the Lord in holiness, is held forth as the *chief* thing sworn unto the Mediator—the deliverance from their spiritual enemies being a means to that end.

The supreme excellency of sanctification is affirmed in Proverbs 8:11, “For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.” Everyone who has read the Book of Proverbs with any attention must have observed that Solomon means by “wisdom” *holiness*, “and by ‘folly’ *sin*; by a wise man a saint, and by a fool a sinner. ‘The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools’ (Pro 3:35). Who can doubt whether by ‘the wise’ he means *saints*, and by ‘fools’ *sinners*! ‘The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom’ (Pro 9:10), by which he means to assert that true ‘wisdom’ is true piety or real holiness.

Holiness, then, is ‘better than rubies,’ and all things that are to be desired are not to be compared with it. It is hard to conceive how the inestimable worth and excellency of holiness could be painted in brighter colours than by comparing it to rubies—the richest and most beautiful objects in nature” (Nathanael Emmons, 1745-1840).

Not only is true sanctification an important, essential, and unspeakably precious thing, it is wholly *supernatural*. “It is our duty to enquire into the nature of evangelical holiness, as it is a fruit or effect in us of the Spirit of sanctification, because it is abstruse and mysterious, and undiscernible unto the eye of carnal reason. We say of it in some sense as Job of wisdom, ‘Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof...And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding’ (Job 28:20-23, 28). This is that wisdom whose ways, residence, and paths, are so hidden from the natural reason and understandings of men.

“No man, I say, by mere sight and conduct can know and understand aright the true nature of evangelical holiness, and it is, therefore, no wonder if the doctrine of it be despised by many as an enthusiastical fancy. It is of the things of the Spirit of God, yea, it is the principal effect of all His operation in us and towards us. And ‘the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God’ (1Co 2:11). It is by Him alone that we are enabled to ‘know the things that are freely given to us of God’ (1Co 2:12) as this is, if ever we receive anything of Him in this world, or shall do so to eternity. ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,’ the comprehensions of these things is not the work of any of our natural faculties, but ‘God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit’ (1Co 2:9-10).

“Believers themselves are oft-times much unacquainted with it, either as to their apprehension of its true nature, causes, and effects, or at least, as to their *own interests* and concernment therein. As we know not of ourselves, the things that are wrought in us of the Spirit of God, so we seldom attend as we ought unto His instruction of us in them. It may seem strange indeed, that, whereas, all believers are sanctified and made holy, that they should not understand nor apprehend what is wrought in them and for them, and what abideth with them, but alas, how little do we know of ourselves, of what we are, and whence are our powers and faculties even in things natural. Do we know how the members of the body are fashioned in the womb?” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

Clear proof that true sanctification is wholly supernatural and altogether beyond the ken of the unregenerate, is found in the fact that so many are thoroughly deceived and fatally deluded by fleshly imitations and Satanic substitutes of real holiness. It would be outside our present scope to describe in detail the various pretensions which pose as Gospel holiness, but the poor Papists, taught to look up to the “saints” canonized by their “church,” are by no means the only ones who are mislead in this vital matter. Were it not that God’s Word reveals so clearly the power of that darkness which rests on the understanding of all who are not taught by the Spirit, it would be surprising beyond words to see so many intelligent people supposing that holiness consists in abstinence from human comforts, garbing themselves in mean attire, and practicing various austerities which God has never commanded.

Spiritual sanctification can only be rightly apprehended from what God has been pleased to reveal thereon in His Holy Word, and can only be experimentally known by the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit. We can arrive at no accurate conceptions of this blessed subject except as our thoughts are formed by the teaching of Scripture, and we can only experience the

power of the same as the Inspirer of those Scriptures is pleased to write them upon our hearts. Nor can we obtain so much as a correct idea of the meaning of the term “sanctification” by limiting our attention to a few verses in which the word is found, or even to a whole class of passages of a similar nature. There must be a painstaking examination of *every* occurrence of the term and also of its cognates, only thus shall we be preserved from the entertaining of a one-sided, inadequate, and misleading view of its fullness and manysidedness.

Even a superficial examination of the Scriptures will reveal that holiness is *the opposite of sin*, yet the realisation of this at once conducts us into the realm of mystery, for how can persons be sinful and holy at one and the same time? It is *this* difficulty which so deeply exercises the true saints. They perceive in themselves so much carnality, filth, and vileness that they find it almost impossible to believe that *they* are HOLY. Nor is the difficulty solved here, as it was in justification, by saying, Though we are completely unholy in ourselves, we *are* holy *in Christ*. We must not here anticipate the ground which we hope to cover in future articles, except to say, the Word of God clearly teaches that those who have been sanctified by God *are* holy *in themselves*. The Lord graciously prepare our hearts for what is to follow.

*“Without one thought that’s good to plead,
O! What could save us from despair
But this, though we are vile indeed,
The Lord our righteousness is there.”*

VAINGLORY

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves” (Phi 2:3).

Vainglory is specially a sin of “spiritual” people. True, we see in the fops (dudes) of the world a glory which is empty and vain. We see people placing an utterly foolish value on their birth, education, reputation, and place in society. But this is to be expected of people who reject Christ’s view of things. It is sad enough, in all conscience, to see men and women who were made for the glory of God, consenting to be devotees of a glory that is hollow, empty, and shallow. But what shall we say when we find people who call themselves after the name of the rejected and despised Man of sorrows, secretly glorying in the vanities of life?

This vainglory is a very subtle thing. How frequently do we glide into a subdued and hidden sense of superiority over others, because grace has reached us! Have you never heard a preacher speaking to sinners as from a superior pedestal, his very tones showing that he thinks himself superior to his audience? Now, is the matter righted by his saying, as he often does, that he does not want to give the impression that he thinks himself to be on a higher and worthier plane than his listeners. The very words echo back on him with a hollow and empty sound—he shows so palpably that he feels his superiority, in spite of his disclaimer. What a vainglory it is for a man who has been lost in sin to think well of himself because Another pitied him in his way and

stooped to bless and deliver him! There is great danger in “giving testimony” in a meeting, of secretly doing so with vainglory. Some people even magnify their past sinfulness in order to attract the attention to their changed life. I remember a man doing this and adding, with complaisance, “I’m a miracle of grace!” Personally, I thought he was a miracle of vainglory.

The Holy Spirit does not usually work alongside of the man who draws attention to himself. If you want people to get their eyes fixed on you—your superior sanctity, your wit, your ready speech, your eloquence, your dramatic power, or your logic, then do not expect the Holy Spirit to help you in this business. He is bent on bringing glory to CHRIST, *and not to the preacher*. It is a very low thing to glory in your natural gifts. “What hast thou that thou didst not *receive*?” (1Co 4:7). What gift of yours did you create? And if every power you possess is the result of the beneficence of another, why should you glory as if you deserved the praise? Of course, if you really did create your own beauty, intellect, powers of speech, then you ought to be praised and glorying in yourself is not vain. But did you create these capacities? All you had to do with these things was to cultivate them, and God will never deny any true worth that is due to your credit in this direction.

But strange to say, there are more subtle regions of vainglory than those already mentioned. Reference need not to be made to those who can only rejoice in the advance of their own church or branch of work, and who feel jealous when others are used of God. Such vainglory is beneath contempt. But amongst those who seek to walk before God without rebuke, there may creep in a spirit of vainglory. A little holy inner circle becomes consciously, or more often unconsciously, formed. Others are supposed not to be saved so “high up,” they are not “so fully Spirit-filled,” or perhaps they are not so utterly self-less.

Now, nothing would so shock these people as to be told they had become formed into a little inner circle, and virtually said to other estimable Christians who were living up to their light, “Stand thou on that side, for I am holier than thou.” They would be shocked if you were to tell them that their actions plainly denote that the spirit of vainglory is lurking like a canker beneath the surface of their lives—yes, deeper than their consciousness possibly.

I have seen this spirit creep into the lives of those who have been walking very near to God, and in one way or another God has dealt with it. When He could, apparently, take no softer way, He has allowed some development of spiritual life in another circle—bringing in a new line of things. Those who had gradually come to regard themselves as *the* people, now saw their deficiency. It was a very humbling revelation. And now, in turn, those who had been used to break up the little inner circle which had become self-righteous, become themselves a little proud, and a spirit of “spiritual” superiority begins to possess them. And so it goes on.

My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Can we not all take a low place before God, for, “If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he *deceiveth himself*” (Gal 6:3). Let nothing be done through vainglory. Not one of us has anything to boast of. And let us remember that nothing—I say it thoughtfully—nothing is *so hateful to God* as the spirit that says of another, “Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou.” Those who say this by their actions and spirit of isolation and superiority, are a smoke in the nostrils of our Lord. The moment we say, “God, I thank thee, I am not as other men” (Luk 18:19), we become Pharisees. Our true place is to say, “God be merciful to me, the sinner” (Luk 18:13)—Dudley Kidd, 1863-1921.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow, by His abounding goodness there will be a credit balance for 1934, [remember this was written by Brother Pink for the *January, 1935* issue] but at the time of printing this issue we are unable to state the exact amount.—A.W. Pink

UNION AND COMMUNION

1a. Introduction

The present writer has not a doubt in his mind that the subject of *spiritual union* is the most important, the most profound, and yes, the most blessed of any that is set forth in the sacred Scriptures. And yet, sad to say, there is hardly any which is now more generally neglected. The very expression “spiritual union” is unknown in most professing Christian circles, and even where it is employed it is given such a protracted meaning as to take in only a fragment of this precious truth. Probably its very profundity is the reason why it is so largely ignored in this superficial age. Yet there are still a few left who are anxious to enter into God’s best and long for a fuller understanding of the deep things of the Spirit, and it is, principally, with these in mind that we take up this present series.

There are three principal unions revealed in the Scriptures which are the chief mysteries and form the foundation of our most holy faith. First, the union of three divine Persons in one Godhead—having distinct personalities, being co-eternal and co-glorious, yet constituting one JEHOVAH. Second, the union of the divine and human natures in one Person, Jesus Christ, Immanuel, being God and man. Third, the union of the church to Christ, He being the Head, they the members, constituting one mystical body. Though we cannot form an exact idea of any of these unions in our imaginations, because the depth of such mysteries is beyond our comprehension, yet it is our bounden duty to believe them all, because they are clearly revealed in Scripture, and are the necessary foundation for other points of Christian doctrine. Hence it is our holy privilege to prayerfully study the same, looking unto the Holy Spirit to graciously enlighten us thereon.

The most wonderful thing of all, and yet the greatest mystery, in the natural world, is a *union*, namely, that conjunction which God has made between mind and matter, the soul and the body. What finite intelligence would or could have conceived of the joining together of an immaterial spirit and a clod of clay! What so little alike as the soul and an organized piece of earth! Who had ever imagined such a thing as animate and thinking dust! or that a spirit should be so linked with and tied to a carnal body that while *that* is preserved in health, *it* cannot free itself! And yet there *is* a union, a real union, a personal union, between the soul and the body. But that is only a *natural* mystery, and falls immeasurably below the *sacred* mystery of the union between human beings and the Lord of glory.

The Scriptures have much to say upon the union which exists between Christ and His people. “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you” (Joh 14:20). “He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1Co 6:17). “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones...This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph 5:30, 32). What an astonishing thing it is that there should be a union between the Son of God and worms of the earth!—infinitely more so than if the king of Great Britain had married the poorest and ugliest woman in all his realm. How immeasurable is the distance between the Creator and the creature, between deity and mortal man! How wonderful beyond words that sinful

wretches should be made one with Him before whom the seraphim veil their faces and cry, “Holy, holy, holy!”

“The union of Christ to His people is an amazing subject. It is an eternal union. It is a union made known and enjoyed in time. It is a union which will be openly and manifestatively declared in all its glory and perfection in the latter day. It is a grace union. It is also a glory union. As it is the foundation of all the gracious actings of Christ towards His church in a time state, so it is of all the glory He will put on His church and communicate unto His people at the last day. I cannot but lament we are most of us so great strangers to these important and heavenly truths. Depend on it, *we are great losers hereby*. The people of God lose much because they neglect truths of the greatest importance. In the present day they are too neglectful of important truths. They are willingly ignorant of them.

“We treat the Scriptures in the present day as though the less we know of the deep things of God, so much the better. Alas! alas! this, let us think of it as we may, is to cast contempt on God Himself. Nor will it serve to say we do not so mean or intend. It is a matter of fact, we are too neglectful of those divine truths and doctrines which concern the glory of Christ. The ancient and glorious settlements of grace are too little in our thoughts. It is sensibly felt, and by some very expressively confessed and acknowledged, that the influences of the Holy Spirit are very greatly suspended. Yet *the cause* is overlooked. Most assuredly one grand reason why we have so little of His sacred presence with us, and His power and influence manifested amongst us may be laid to the account of neglecting to preach supernatural, spiritual truth, and the mysteries of the everlasting Gospel” (S. E. Pierce, 1812).

The vital importance of this subject of the union of the church to Christ may be clearly seen from the place which it occupies in the High Priestly prayer of Christ. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may *be one*; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee” (Joh 17:20-21). Our Lord here began His prayer for the whole body of His people by speaking of the union which they had with Him and His Father in Him, and He spends the verses which follow in expressing the blessings which follow as the fruits thereof. We are *not* to conceive that Christ here prayed for a union *to be* brought about or obtained. No, for it *was* established from all eternity. Rather was He praying that His beloved might be blest with the clear knowledge of it, so that they might enjoy all the benefits of the same in their own souls.

“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may *be one*, even as we are one” (Joh 17:22). This subject of the union between Himself and the elect was truly sweet and blessed to the heart of Christ. He knew that the knowledge and use of it is of great value and service to His people, therefore did He speak of it again and again that His saints in all ages might receive the knowledge of it into their minds and enjoy in their hearts the blessings contained in it. And my readers, if Christ Himself esteemed this truth of union with Himself as a foundation truth, *we* should learn to think of it so also. We should bring ourselves unto the closest and prayerful study of the same, for by it our faith and hope are sustained and kept in exercise on God our Saviour.

“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may *be one*, even as we are one” (Joh 17:22). This petition is the very centre of Christ’s prayer, expressing the supreme desire of the Saviour’s mind towards His redeemed. It summed up the uttermost longing of His heart toward them. The union about which He prayed is such that thereby the Father and the Son dwell in us and we in them. It is such that the elect are so joined unto God and His Christ that it is the

very highest union which the elect are capable of. It is the chiefest and greatest of all blessings, being the foundation from which all others proceed.

“I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect *in one*” (Joh 17:23). A great variety of blessings are set before us in the Gospel. Salvation is an unspeakable one, yet not so great as our union to the Person of Christ. If we had not been united to Christ, He had not been our Saviour. It was because we stood eternally related to Him that He was most graciously pleased to undertake for us. The grace of justification is an unspeakable blessing, yet not so great as that of union, because the effect can never be equal to the cause which produces it. To be *in Christ* must exceed all the blessings which flow *from* Him which we have or ever shall partake of, either on earth or in heaven. Communion with Christ is unspeakably blessed, yet not so great as *union*, for our union is the foundation of all communion. It is the greatest of all those super-creation “spiritual blessings” (Eph 1:3) which the Father bestowed on the church before sin entered the universe. It is the fruit of God’s eternal love to His people.

Union with Christ is the foundation of all spiritual blessings, so that if there had been no *connection with* Him, there could be no regeneration, no justification, no sanctification, no glorification. It is so in the natural world—adumbrating the spiritual. Sever one of the members from my physical body, and it is dead—only by its union with my person does it partake of life. “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1Co 1:9). The word “fellowship” signifies such a co-partnership between persons that they have a joint interest in one and the same enjoyment which is common between them. Now this fellowship or communion with Christ is entirely dependent upon our *union with* Him, even as much as the branch’s participation of the sap and juice is dependent upon its union and coalition with the stock of the tree. Take away union, and there can neither be communion nor communication.

As it is for Christ’s sake that God bestows upon His people all the blessings of salvation, so according to His eternal constitution those blessings could only be enjoyed in a state of communion with Him. The varied character of that communion it will be our joy to unfold, as the blessed Spirit is pleased to enable us, in the articles which follow. But the foundation of that vital, spiritual, and experimental union which the saints have with their Beloved in a time state and which they will enjoy forever in heaven, was laid by God in that mystical union which He established between the Mediator and His elect before the foundation of the world, when He appointed Him to be the Head and they the members of His body, when God gave Christ to them and gave them to Christ in everlasting marriage.

In consequence of God’s having given the church to Christ in marriage before the foundation of the world, He says to His people, “I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies” (Hos 2:19). “Thy maker is thine husband” (Isa 54:5). And therefore does the church exclaim, “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Song 2:16). “Consider the closeness and intimacy of the union between Him and them, and let this encourage thee to lean and live on Him by faith. It is far more intimate and dear than the union between husband and wife among men, for they are indeed ‘one flesh,’ but He is ‘one body’ and ‘one spirit’ (1Co 6:20) with His spouse. He is in *them*, and they are *in Him*. And by virtue of this intimate union, thou hast a title to Him and to His whole purchase (Ebenezer Erskine, 1680-1754).

In consequence of this eternal marriage-union between Christ and His church there is a communion of names. In Jeremiah 23:6, we read, “And this is his name whereby *he* shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and in Jeremiah 33:16, we are told, “And this is

the name wherewith *she* shall be called, The LORD our righteousness”—this by virtue of her oneness with Him. So again in 1 Corinthians 12:12, the church is actually designated “the Christ,” while in Galatians 3:16 and Colossians 1:24, the Head and His church forming one body are conjointly referred to as “Christ.” Hence when Saul of Tarsus was assaulting the church, its Head protested, “Why persecutest thou *me*?” (Act 9:4). But what is yet more remarkable, we find the Lord Jesus given the name of His people. In Galatians 6:16, the church is denominated, “the *Israel* of God,” while in Isaiah 49:3, we hear God saying *to the Mediator*, “Thou art my servant, O *Israel*, in whom I will be glorified”!

Unspeakably precious is this aspect of our wonderful subject. In Colossians 3:12, Christians are exhorted to, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies.” Each of those titles are given to the saints because of their *union with Christ*. They are “the elect of God” because *He* is God’s “Elect” (Isa 42:1). They are “holy” because conjoined to God’s “Holy One” (Psa 16:10). They are “beloved” because married to Him of whom the Father says, “This is my beloved Son” (Mat 3:17). Again, we are told that God “hath made *us kings and priests*” (Rev 1:6), which is only because we are *united to Him* who is “the King of kings” and the “great High Priest.” Is Christ called “the Sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2)? So we are told, “Then shall the righteous shine forth *as the sun* in the kingdom of their Father” (Mat 13:43)! Does the Redeemer declare, “I am the rose of Sharon” (Song 2:1)? Then He promises of the redeemed, “The desert [their fruitless state by nature] shall rejoice, and blossom *as the rose*” (Isa 35:1)—the only two occasions the “rose” is mentioned in Holy Writ!

The union between Christ and His church is so real, so vital, so intimate that God has never viewed the one apart from the other. There is such an indissoluble oneness between the Redeemer and the redeemed, such an absolute identification of interest between them, that the Father of mercies never saw them apart. He never saw Christ *as “Christ”* without seeing His mystical body. He never saw the church apart from its Head. Therefore the Holy Spirit has delighted to emphasize this wondrous and glorious fact in many Scriptures. In connection with Christ’s birth we read, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same” (Heb 2:14). Further, we are told, “In whom also *ye* are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision *of Christ*” (Col 2:11)—His actual circumcision was our mystical circumcision. At His baptism, Christ was “numbered *with* the transgressors,” and hence, speaking as the Representative of the entire election of grace, He said, “Thus it becometh *us* [not simply “Me”] to fulfill all righteousness” (Mat 3:15).

We are told that when the Saviour was nailed to the tree “our old man is *crucified with him*” (Rom 6:6). We are told that when He expired at Calvary “if one died for all, then were all dead” (2Co 5:14). We are told that when He was revived, we were quickened *together with Christ* (Eph 2:5). He did not rise again as a single and private person, but as the Head of His church, “Ye then be risen *with Christ*” (Col 3:1). Nor is that all—in Ephesians 2:6 we are told, “And hath raised us up together, and made us *sit together* in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” O how surpassingly wonderful is the Christian’s oneness with Christ, “Because *as he is, so are we* in this world” (1Jo 4:17). When Christ appears in glory it will not be alone, “Then shall ye also appear *with him* in glory” (Col 3:4).

*“One in the tomb; one when He rose;
One when He triumph’d o’er His foes;
One in heaven He took His seat,
While seraphs sang all hell’s defeat.*

*With Him, their Head, they stand or fall,
Their Life, their Surety, and their All.”*

DESIRES UNREALIZED

By John Newton

“Ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal 5:17). This is a humbling, but a just account of a Christian’s attainments in the present life, and is equally applicable to the strongest and to the weakest. The weakest need not say less, the strongest will hardly venture to say more. The Lord has given His people a desire and will aiming at great things—without this they would be unworthy the name of Christians, but they cannot do as they would. Their best desires are weak and ineffectual, not absolutely so (for He who works in them to will, enables them *in a measure to do* likewise), but in comparison with the mark at which they aim. So that while they have great cause to be thankful for the desire He has given them, and for the degree in which it is answered, they have equal reason to be ashamed and abased under a sense of their continual defects, and the evil mixtures which taint and debase their best endeavours. It would be easy to make out a long list of particulars which a believer would do if he could, but in which, from first to last, he finds a mortifying inability. Permit me to mention a few, which I need not transcribe from books, for they are always present to my mind.

He would willingly enjoy God in prayer. He knows that prayer is his duty, but in his judgment, he considers it likewise as his greatest honour and privilege. In this light he can recommend it to others, and can tell them of the wonderful condescension of the great God, who humbles Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, that He should stoop so much lower, to afford His gracious ear to the supplications of sinful worms upon earth. He can bid them expect a pleasure in waiting upon the Lord, different in kind, and greater in degree, than all that the world can afford. By prayer, he can say, You have liberty to cast all your cares upon Him that careth for you. By one hour’s intimate access to the throne of grace, where the Lord causes His glory to pass before the soul that seeks Him, you may acquire more true spiritual knowledge and comfort than by a day or week’s converse with the best of men, or the most studious perusal of many folios—and in this light he would consider it and improve it for himself. But, alas! how seldom can he do as he would. How often does he find this privilege a mere task, which he would be glad of a just excuse to omit! And the chief pleasure he derives from the performance is to think that his task is finished. He has been drawing near to God with his lips, while his heart was far from Him. Surely this is not doing as he would, when (to borrow the expression of an old woman here) he is dragged before God like a slave, and comes away like a thief.

The like may be said of reading the Scriptures. He believes them to be the Word of God. He admires the wisdom and grace of the doctrines, the beauty of the precepts, the richness and suitableness of the promises, and therefore, with David, he accounts it preferable to thousands of

gold and silver, and sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. Yet while he thus thinks of it, and desires that it may dwell in him richly, and be his meditation night and day, he cannot do as he would. It will require some resolution to persist in reading a portion of it every day, and even then his heart is often less engaged than when reading a pamphlet. Here again his privilege frequently dwindles into a task. His appetite is vitiated, so that he has but little relish for the food of his soul.

He would willingly have abiding, admiring thoughts of the person and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Glad is he, indeed, of those occasions which recall the Saviour to his mind, and with this view notwithstanding all discouragements, he perseveres in attempting to pray and read, and waits upon ordinances. Yet he cannot do as he would. Whatever claims he may have to the exercise of gratitude and sensibility towards his fellow creatures, he must confess himself mournfully ungrateful and insensible towards his best Friend and Benefactor. Ah! what trifles are capable of shutting out of our thoughts, of whom we say, He is the Beloved of our souls, who loved us, and gave Himself for us, and whom we have deliberately chosen as our chief good and portion. What can make us amends for the loss we suffer here? Yet surely if we could we would set Him always before us. His love should be the delightful theme of our hearts. "From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve." But though we aim at this good, evil is present with us. We find we are renewed but in part, and have still cause to plead the Lord's promise, to take away the heart of stone, and give us a heart of flesh.

He would willingly acquiesce in all the dispensations of divine providence. He believes that all events are under the direction of infinite wisdom and goodness, and shall surely issue in the glory of God and the good of those who fear Him. He doubts not but the hairs of his head are all numbered—that the blessings of every kind which he possesses were bestowed upon him, and are preserved to him by the bounty and special favour of the Lord whom he serves—that afflictions spring not out of the ground, but are fruits and tokens of divine love, no less than his comforts—that there is a needs-be, whenever for a season he is in heaviness. Of these principles he can no more doubt of what he sees with his eyes, and there are seasons when he thinks they will prove sufficient to reconcile him to the sharpest trials. But often when he aims to apply them in an hour of present distress, he cannot do what he would. He feels a law in his members warring against the law in his mind, so that, in defiance of the clearest convictions, seeing as though he perceived not, he is ready to complain, mummer, and despond. Alas! How vain is man in his best estate! How much weakness and inconsistency, even in those whose hearts are right with the Lord! And what reason have we to confess that we are unworthy, unprofitable servants!

It were easy to enlarge in this way, would paper and time permit. But blessed be God we are not under the law, but under grace, and even these distressing effects of the remnants of indwelling sin are overruled for good. By these experiences the believer is weaned from self, and taught more highly to prize and more absolutely to rely on Him, who is appointed unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The more vile we are in our own eyes, the more precious He will be to us, and a deep repeated sense of the evil of our hearts is necessary to preclude all boasting, and to make us willing to give the whole glory of our salvation where it is due. Again, a sense of these evils will, when hardly anything else can do it, reconcile us to the thoughts of death, yea make us desirous to depart that we may sin no more, since we find depravity so deep rooted in our nature, that, like the leprous house, the whole fabric must be taken down before we can be freed from its defilement. Then, and not till then, we shall be able to do the thing that we would—when we see Jesus we shall be transformed into His image, and have done with sin and sorrow forever. (1772).

N.B. It is not to be understood from the above article that the experience of the Christian is one of constant or total defeat. On the other hand, no Christian enjoys a course of uninterrupted victory. Nor does the above article portray the experience of a backslider, for when a Christian lapses into a backslidden state, his desires and efforts are far below the level of what was here described by Mr. Newton. Just as in the natural world all days are not bright and fair, so it is in our present spiritual life—there is light and shade, brightness and gloom, ups and downs, songs and groans, praisings and confessions. No Christian perfectly realizes his own aspirations. The “perfect day” has not yet dawned.—A.W.P.

February

THE HOLY SPIRIT

25. The Spirit Drawing (Part 2)

The renewed heart is moved and melted when it contemplates the Holy Saviour having our iniquities imputed to Him and bearing “our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24). But how rarely is it considered, that it is little less wonderful for the *Holy Spirit* to exercise Himself with *our sins* and hold them up to the eyes of our understanding. Yet this is precisely what He does. He rakes in our foul hearts and makes us conscious of what a stench they are in the nostrils of an infinitely pure God. He brings to light and to sight the hidden and hideous things of darkness and convicts us of our vile and lost condition. He opens to our view the “horrible pit” in which by nature we lie, and makes us to realize that we are fit for nothing but the everlasting burnings. O how truly marvelous that the Third Person of the Godhead should condescend to stoop to *such* a work as that!

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me *draw* him” (Joh 6:44). No sinner ever knocks (Mat 7:7) at His door for mercy, by earnest and importunate prayer, until Christ has first knocked (Rev 3:20) at his door by the operations of the Holy Spirit. As the Christian now loves God “because *he first* loved” him (1Jo 4:19), so he sought Christ, because Christ first sought him (Luk 19:10). Before Christ seeks us, we are well-content to lie fast asleep in the devil’s arms, and therefore does the Lord say, “I am found of them that *sought me not*” (Isa 65:1). When the Spirit first applies the word of conviction, He finds the souls of all men as the angel found the world in Zechariah 1:11, “All the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.” What a strange silence and midnight stillness there is among the unsaved! “There is *none* that seeketh after God” (Rom 3:11).

It is because of failure to perceive the dreadful condition in which the natural man lies that any difficulty is experienced in seeing the imperative need for the Spirit’s *drawing power* if he is to be brought out of it. The natural man is so completely enslaved by sin and enchained by Satan that he is unable to take the first step toward Christ. He is so bent on having his own way and so averse to pleasing God, he is so in love with the things of this world and so out of love with holiness, that nothing short of Omnipotence can produce a radical *change of heart* in him so that he will come to hate the things he naturally loved, and love what he previously hated. The Spirit’s

“drawing” is the freeing of the mind, the affections, and the will, from the reigning power of depravity. It is His emancipating of the soul from the dominion of sin and Satan.

Prior to that deliverance, when the requirements of God are pressed upon the sinner, he, in every case, *rejects* them. It is not that he is averse from being saved from hell—for none *desire* to go there—but that he is unwilling to “*forsake*” (Pro 28:13; Isa 55:7) his idols—the things which hold the first place in his affections and interests. This is clearly brought out in our Lord’s parable of “The Great Supper.” When the call went forth, “Come for all things are now ready,” we are told, “They *all* with one consent began to make excuse” (Luk 14:18). The meaning of that term “excuse” is explained in what immediately follows. They preferred other things. They were unwilling to *deny* themselves. They would not relinquish the competitive objects—the things of time and sense (“a piece of ground,” “oxen,” “a wife”) were their all-absorbing concerns.

Had nothing more been done by “the servant”—in this parable, the Holy Spirit—all had *continued* to “make excuse” unto the end—that is, all had gone on cherishing their idols, and turning a deaf ear to the holy claims of God. But the Servant was commissioned to “bring in hither” (Luk 14:21), yea, to “*compel* them to come in” (Luk 14:23). It is a holy compulsion and not physical force which is there in view—the melting of the hard heart, the wooing and winning of the soul to Christ, the bestowing of faith, the imparting of a new nature, so that the hitherto despised One is now desired and sought after, “I *drew* them with cords of a man, [using means and motives suited to a rational nature] with *bands of love*” (Hos 11:4). And again, God says of His people, “with *lovingkindness have I drawn thee*” (Jer 31:3).

Even after the elect have been quickened by the Spirit, a further and distinct work of His is needed to *draw* their hearts to actually close with Christ. The work of *faith* is equally His operation, and therefore is it said, “We having [*received* not “exercised!”] the *same* Spirit of faith” (2Co 4:13), i.e., “the same” as Abraham, David, and the other Old Testament saints received, as the remainder of the verse indicates. Hence, observe the careful linking together in Acts 6:5, where of Stephen we read that, he was “a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost”—full of “faith,” *because* filled with the Spirit. So of Barnabas we are told, “He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith” (Act 11:24). Seek to realize more definitely, Christian reader, that spiritual faith is the gift of the Spirit, and that *He* is to be thanked and praised for it. Equally true is it that we are now entirely dependent upon Him to call it into exercise and act.

The Divine Drawer is unto God’s people “the spirit of grace and of supplications” (Zec 12:10)—of *grace*, in making to their smitten consciences and exercised hearts a wondrous discovery of the rich grace of God unto penitent rebels—of *supplications*, in moving them to act as a man fleeing for his life, to seek after divine mercy. Then it is He leads the trembling soul to Calvary, “before whose eyes Jesus Christ” is now “evidently [plainly] set forth, crucified” (Gal 3:1), beholding the Saviour (by faith) bleeding for and making atonement for his sins—more vividly and heart-affectingly than all the angels in heaven could impart, and hence it follows in Zechariah 12:10, “They shall *look upon* me whom they have pierced.” Then it is that their eyes are opened to see that, hitherto, had been hidden from them, namely the “fountain opened...for sin and for uncleanness” (Zec 13:1), into which they are now moved to plunge for cleansing.

Yes, that precious “Fountain” has to be *opened to us*, or experimentally, we discern it not. Like poor Hagar, ready to perish from thirst, knowing not that relief was near to hand, we—convicted of our fearful sins, groaning under the anguish of our lost condition—were ready to despair. But as God opened Hagar’s eyes *to see* the “well,” or “fountain” (Gen 21:19), so the Spirit of God now opens the understanding of the awakened soul to see Christ, His precious blood, His all-sufficient righteousness. But more—when the soul is brought to see the Fountain or

Well, he discovers it is “deep” and that he has “nothing to draw with” (Joh 4:11). And though he looks in it with a longing eye, he cannot reach unto it, so as to wash in it. He finds himself like the “impotent man” of John 5—desirous of “stepping in,” but utterly without strength to do so. Then it is that *the Holy Spirit* applies the atonement, “sprinkling the conscience,” effectually granting a realization of its *cleansing* efficacy. See Acts 15:8-9; 1 Corinthians 6:11—it is Christ’s blood, but the Spirit must apply it.

And when the awakened and convicted soul has been brought to Christ for cleansing and righteousness, *who is it* that brings him to the Father, to be justified by Him? Who is it that bestows freedom of access unto Him from whom the sinner had long been absent in the “far country”? Ephesians 2:18 tells us, “for through him [Christ, the Mediator] we both [regenerated Jews and Gentiles, Old and New Testament saints alike] have access *by one Spirit* unto the Father.” Ah, dear reader, it was naught but the secret and invincible operations of the blessed Spirit which caused you—a wandering prodigal—to seek out Him whom before you dreaded as a “consuming fire.” Yes, it was none other than the Third Person of the Holy Trinity who drew you with the bands of love, and taught you to call God “Father” (Rom 8:15)!

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

86. Divine Chastisement (12:5)

The grand truth of divine chastisement is inexpressibly blessed, and one which we can neglect only to our great loss. It is of deep importance, for when Scripturally apprehended it preserves from some serious errors by which Satan has succeeded (as “an angel of light”) in deceiving and destroying not a few. For example, it sounds the death-knell to that wide-spread delusion of “sinless perfectionism.” The passage which is to be before us unmistakably exposes the wild fanaticism of those who imagine that, as a result of some “second work of grace,” the carnal nature has been eradicated from their beings, so that, while perhaps not so wise, they are as pure as the angels which never sinned, and lead lives which are blameless in the sight of the thrice holy God. Poor blinded souls—such have not even experienced a *first* “work of divine grace” in their souls, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1Jo 1:8).

“My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb 12:5-6). How plain and emphatic is that! God *does* find something to “rebuke” in us, and uses the rod upon *every one* of His children. Chastisement for sin is a family mark, a sign of sonship, a proof of God’s love, a token of His Fatherly kindness and care. It is an inestimable mercy, a choice new-covenant blessing. Woe to the man whom God chastens not, whom He suffers to go recklessly on in the boastful and presumptuous security which so many now mistake for faith. There is a reckoning to come of which he little dreams. Were he a *son*, he would be chastened for his sin. He would be brought to repentance and godly sorrow, he would with grief of heart confess his backslidings, and then be blest with pardon and peace.

The truth of divine chastisement corrects another serious error which has become quite common in certain quarters, namely, that God views His people so completely in Christ that He sees no sin in them. It is true, blessedly true, that of His elect it is stated, “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel” (Num 23:21), and that Christ declares of His spouse, “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee” (Song 4:7). The testimony of Scripture is most express that in regard to the justification or acceptance of the *persons* of the elect, they are “complete in him”—Christ (Col 2:10), “accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:6)—washed in Christ’s blood, clothed with His righteousness. In *that* sense, God sees no sin on them, none to punish. But we must not use that precious truth to set aside another, revealed with equal clearness, and thus fall into serious error.

God *does* see sin in His children and chastises them for it. Even though the non-imputation of sin to the believer (Rom 4:8) and the chastisement of sin in believers (1Co 11:30-32) were irreconcilable to human reason, we are bound to receive *both* on the authority of Holy Writ. Let us beware lest we fall under the solemn charge of Malachi 2:9, “Ye have not kept my ways, but have been *partial* in the law.” What could be plainer than this, “I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail” (Psa 89:27-33). Five things are clearly revealed there. Christ Himself is addressed under the name of “David.” Second, His children *break* God’s statutes. Third, in *them* there is “iniquity” and “transgression.” Fourth, God *will* “visit” their transgression “with the rod!” Fifth, yet will He not cast them off.

What could express more clearly the fact that God *does* see sin in believers, and that He *does* chastise them for it? For, be it noted, the whole of the above passage speaks of believers. It is the language, not of the law, but of the Gospel. Blessed promises are there made to believers in Christ—the unchanging lovingkindness of God, His covenant-faithfulness toward them, His spiritual blessing of them. But “stripes” and the “rod” are there promised too! Then let us not dare to separate what God has joined together. How do we know anything concerning the acceptance of the elect in Christ? The answer must be, Only on the testimony of Holy Writ. Very well, from *the same* unerring testimony we also know that God chastises His people for their sins. It is our imminent peril that we reject either of these complementary truths.

The same fact is plainly presented again in Hebrews 12:7-10, “If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.” The apostle there draws an analogy from the natural relationship of father and child. Why do earthly parents chastise their children? Is it not for their *faults*? Can we justify a parent for chastening a child where there was no fault, nothing in him which called for the rod? In that case, it would be positive tyranny, actual cruelty. If the same be not true *spiritually*, then the comparison must fall to the ground. Hebrews 12 proves conclusively that, if God does not chastise me then I am an unbeliever, and I sign my own condemnation as a bastard.

Yet is very necessary for us to point out, at this stage, that *all* the sufferings of believers in this world are *not* divine rebukes for personal transgressions. Here too we need to be on our guard against lopsidedness. After we have apprehended the fact that God *does* take notice of the iniquities of His people and use the rod upon them, it is so easy to jump to the conclusion that when we see an afflicted Christian, God must be visiting His displeasure upon him. That is a sad and serious error. Some of the very choicest of God's saints have been called on to endure the most painful and protracted sufferings. Some of the most faithful and eminent servants of Christ have encountered the most relentless and extreme persecution. Not only is this a fact of observation, but it is plainly revealed in Holy Writ.

As we turn to God's Word for light on the subject of suffering among the saints, we find it affirmed, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all" (Psa 34:19). Those "afflictions" are sent by God upon different ones for various reasons. Sometimes for the *prevention* of sin. The experience of the beloved apostle was a case in point, "And *lest* I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, *lest* I should be exalted above measure" (2Co 12:7). Sometimes sore trials are sent for the testing and strengthening of our *graces*, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (Jam 1:2-3). Sometimes God's servants and people are called on to endure fierce persecution for a confirmatory testimony to the truth, "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Act 5:41).

Yet here again we need to be much on our guard, for the flesh is ever ready to *pervert* even the holy things of God, and make an evil use of that which is good. When God is chastening a Christian for his sins, it is so easy for him to suppose such is *not* the case, and falsely comfort himself with the thought that God is only developing his graces, or permitting him to have closer fellowship with the sufferings of Christ. Where we are visited with afflictions *personally*, it is always the safest policy to assume that God has a controversy with us, humble ourselves beneath His mighty hand, and say with Job, "Show me *wherefore* thou contendest with me" (Job 10:2), and when He *has* convicted me of my fault, to penitently confess and forsake it. But where *others* are concerned, it is not for us to judge—though sometimes God reveals the cause to His *servants* (Amo 3:7).

In the passage which is to be before us, the apostle presents a third consideration why heed should be given unto the exhortation at the beginning of Hebrews 12, which calls to patient perseverance in the path of faith and obedience, notwithstanding all the obstacles, difficulties, and dangers which may be encountered therein. He now draws a motive from the nature of those sufferings considered in the light of *God's end in them*—all the trials and persecutions which He may call on His people to endure are *necessary*, not only as testimonies to the truth, to the reality of His grace in them, but also as chastisements which are required by us, wherein God has a blessed design toward us. This argument is enforced by several considerations to the end of verse 13. How we should admire and adore the consummate wisdom of God which has so marvelously ordered all, that the very things which manifest the *hatred* of men against us are evidences of *His love* toward us! How the realization of this should strengthen patience!

O how many of God's dear children have found, in every age, that the afflictions which have come upon them from a hostile world were soul-purging medicines from the Lord. By them they have been bestirred, revived, and mortified to things down here, and made partakers of God's holiness, to their own unspeakable advantage and comfort. Truly wondrous are the ways of our

great God. Hereby doth He defeat the counsels and expectations of the wicked, having a design to accomplish by their agency something which they know not of. These very reproaches, imprisonments, stripes, with the loss of goods and danger of their lives, which the world opposed to their ruin, *God*, at the same time, makes use of their refining consolation and joy. Truly He makes “the wrath of man” to “praise thee” (Psa 76:10). O that our hearts and minds may be duly impressed with the wisdom, power, and grace of Him who bringeth a clean thing out of an unclean.

“In all these things is the wisdom and goodness of God, in contriving and effecting these things to the glory of His grace, and the salvation of His church, to be admired” (John Owen, 1616-1683). But herein we may see, once more, the imperative need for *faith*—a God-given, God-sustained, spiritual, supernatural FAITH. Carnal reason can see no more in our persecutions than the malice and rage of evil men. Our senses perceive nothing beyond material losses and painful physical discomforts, but faith discovers *the Father’s* hand directing all things. Faith is assured that all proceeds from His boundless *love*. Faith realizes that He has in view *the good of our souls*. The more this is apprehended by the exercise of faith, not only the better for our peace of mind, but the readier shall we be to diligently apply ourselves in seeking to learn God’s lessons for us in every chastisement He lays upon us.

The opening “And” of Hebrews 12:5 shows the apostle is continuing to present motives to stir unto a perseverance in the faith, notwithstanding sufferings for the same. The first motive was taken from the example of the Old Testament worthies (v. 1). The second, from the illustrious pattern of Jesus (vv. 2-4). This is the third—the Author of these sufferings—our Father—and His loving design in them. There is also a more immediate connection with verse 4 pointed by the “And”—it presents a tacit rebuke for being ready to faint under the lesser trials, wherewith they were exercised. Here he gives a reason how and why it was they were thus making that reason the means of introducing a new argument. The reason why they were ready to faint was their inattention to the direction and encouragement which God had supplied for them—our failure to appropriate God’s gracious provisions for us is the rise of all our spiritual miscarriages.

The Hebrew Christians to whom this epistle was first addressed were passing through a great fight of afflictions, and miserably were they acquitting themselves. They were the little remnant out of the Jewish nation who had believed on their Messiah during the days of His public ministry, plus those Jews who had been converted under the preaching of the apostles. It is highly probable that they had expected the Messianic kingdom would at once be set up on earth, and that they would be allotted the chief places of honour in it. But the millennium had not begun, and their own lot became increasingly bitter. They were not only hated by the Gentiles, but ostracised by their unbelieving brethren, and it became a hard matter to them to make even a bare living. Providence held a frowning face. Many who had made a profession of Christianity had gone back to Judaism and were prospering temporally. As the affliction of the believing Jews increased, they too were sorely tempted to turn their backs upon the new faith. Had they been wrong in embracing Christianity? Was high heaven displeased because they had identified themselves with Jesus of Nazareth? Did not their sufferings go to show that God no longer regarded them with favour?

Now it is most blessed and instructive to see how the apostle met the unbelieving reasoning of their hearts. He appealed to *their own Scriptures*, reminding them of an exhortation found in Proverbs 3:11-12, “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him” (Heb 12:5). As we pointed out so often in our exposition of the earlier chapters of this

epistle, at every critical point in his argument the apostle's appeal was to the written Word of God—an example which is binding on every servant of Christ to follow. That Word is the final court of appeal for every controversial matter, and the more its authority is respected, the more is its Author honoured. Not only so, but the more God's children are brought to turn to it for instruction, the more will they be built up and established in the true faith. Moreover, "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). It is to them alone we must turn for solid comfort. Great will be our loss if we fail to do so.

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh *unto you*" (Heb 12:5). Note well the words we have placed in italics. The exhortation to which the apostle referred was uttered over a thousand years previously, under the Mosaic dispensation, nevertheless the apostle insists that it was addressed equally unto the *New Testament* saints! How this exposes the cardinal error of modern "dispensationalists," who seek to rob Christians of the greater part of God's precious Word. Under the pretense of "rightly dividing" the Word, they would filch from *them* all that God gave to His people prior to the beginning of the present era. Such a devilish device is to be steadfastly resisted by us. All that is found in the Book of Proverbs is as much God the Father's instruction to *us* as are the contents of the Pauline epistles! Throughout that book God addresses us individually as "My *son*," see 2:1, 3:1, 4:10, 5:1, etc. Surely that is quite sufficient for every spiritual mind—no laboured argument is needed.

The appositeness of Proverbs 3:11-12 to the case of the afflicted Hebrews gave great force to the apostle's citing of it here. That passage would enable them to perceive that *their* case was by no means unprecedented or peculiar, that it was in fact no otherwise with them it had been with others of God's children in former ages, and that long before the Lord had graciously laid in provision for their encouragement, "My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a Father the son in whom he delighteth" (Pro 3:11-12). It has ever been God's way to correct those in whom He delights, to chastise His children, but so far from that salutary discipline causing us to faint, it should strengthen and comfort our hearts, being assured that such chastening proceeds from His *love*, and that the exhortation to perseverance in the path of duty is issued *by Him*. It is the height of pride and ingratitude not to comply with *His* tender entreaties.

But the apostle had to say to the suffering Hebrews, "Ye have *forgotten* the exhortation." To forget God's gracious instruction is at least an infirmity, and with it they are here taxed. To forget the encouragements which the Father has given us is a serious fault. It is expressly forbidden, "beware lest thou forget the LORD" (Deu 6:12). It was taxed upon the Jews of old, "They soon forgot his works...They forgot God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt" (Psa 106:13, 21). Forgetfulness is a part of that corruption which had seized man by his fall. All the faculties of his soul have been seriously injured—the memory, which was placed in man to be a treasury in which to lay up the directions and consolations of God's Word, has not escaped the universal wreckage. But that by no means excuses us. It is a *fault* to be striven and prayed against. As ministers see the occasion, they are to stir up God's people to use means for the strengthening of the memory—especially by the formation of the habit of holy *meditation* in divine things.

Thus it was with the Hebrews, in some measure at least—they had "forgotten" that which should have stood in good stead in the hour of their need. Under their trials and persecutions, they ought, in an especial manner, to have called to mind that divine exhortation of Proverbs 3:11-12 for their encouragement. Had they believingly appropriated it, they had been kept from fainting. Alas, how often we are like them! "The want of a diligent consideration of the provision that God

hath made in the Scripture for our encouragement to duty and comfort under difficulties, is a sinful forgetfulness, and is of dangerous consequence of our souls” (John Owen).

“Which speaketh unto you as unto children” (Heb 12:5). It is very striking indeed to observe the tense of the verb here. The apostle was quoting a sentence of Scripture which had been written a thousand years previously, yet he does not say “which *hath* spoken,” but “which *speaketh* unto you”! The same may be seen again in that sevenfold exhortation of Revelation 2 and 3, “He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit *saith* (not “said”) unto the churches.” The Holy Scriptures are a living Word, in which God speaks to men in every generation. Holy Writ is not a dumb or dead letter. It has a voice in it, ever speaking of God Himself. “The Holy Spirit is always present in the Word, and speaks in it equally and alike to the church in all ages. He doth in it speak as immediately to us, as if we were the first and only persons to whom He spake. And this should teach us, with what *reverence* we ought to attend to the Scriptures, namely, as to the way and means whereby *God Himself* speaks directly to us” (John Owen).

“Which speaketh unto you as unto *children*” (Heb 12:5). The apostle emphasizes the fact that God addresses an exhortation in Proverbs 3:11, to “My son,” which shows plainly that His relation to the *Old Testament* saints was that of a Father to His children. This at once refutes a glaring error made by some who pose as being ultra-orthodox, more deeply taught in the Word than others. They have insisted that the Fatherhood of God was never revealed until the Son became incarnate, but every verse in the Proverbs where God says, “My son,” reveals their mistake. That the Old Testament saints were instructed in this blessed relationship is clear from other passages, “Like as a father pitieth his children, *so the LORD* pitieth them that fear him” (Psa 103:13). This relation unto God is by virtue of their (and our) union with Christ—*He* is “the Son,” and being one with Him, members of His body, they were “sons” too.

This precious relationship is the ground of the soul’s confidence in God. “If God speaks to them as to *children*, they have good ground to fly to God as to a Father, and in all time of need to ask and seek of Him all needful blessings (Mat 7:11), yea, and in faith to depend on Him for the same (Mat 6:31-32). What useful things shall they want? What hurtful thing need such to fear? If God deal with us as with *children*, He *will* provide for them every good thing, He will protect them from every hurtful thing, He will hear their prayers, He will accept their services, He will bear with their infirmities, He will support them under all their burdens, and assist them against all their assaults. Though through their own weakness, or the violence of some temptation, they should be drawn from Him, yet will He be ready to meet them in the mid-way, turning to Him—instance the mind of the Father of the prodigal towards him” (William Gouge, 1575-1653).

We have already covered so much space in introducing the general subject of divine chastisement, and in examining the first half of Hebrews 12:5, that we must defer our comments upon the remaining portion of that verse (D.V.) till our next article, for it is much too important to condense into a couple of paragraphs.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

38. His Bringing up the Ark

Our principal design in this David-series of articles is to emphasize the fact that the Old Testament is far, far more than an historical record of events which happened thousands of years ago, and to make it manifest that every part of God's Word is full of important truth which is urgently needed by us today. The business of a Bible teacher is twofold—to give an accurate *interpretation* of the meaning of Holy Writ, and to make *application* of its contents to the hearts and lives of his hearers or readers. By “making application,” we mean, the pointing out and the pressing upon ourselves of the practical lessons which each passage contains, seeking to heed its warnings, appropriate its encouragements, obey its precepts, and put in a claim to its promises. Only thus does it become a living and profitable Word *to us*.

The first verses of 2 Samuel 6 record an incident which needs to be prayerfully laid to heart by everyone whom God has separated unto His service. It chronicles a most blessed action on the part of David, who had in view naught but the honour and glory of the Lord. But alas, that action was sadly marred by permitting the fervency of his zeal to ignore the precepts of God. He was anxious that the long-neglected and dishonoured ark should be suitably housed in Zion. His desire was good and his motive was pure, but his execution of the same met with the open displeasure of the Lord. It is not sufficient to have a worthy purpose and a proper spirit. God's work must be performed *in the right way*, that is, according to the rules of His prescribing, anything other than that is but a species of self-will.

There seems to be a great many in Christendom today who are desirous of doing good, but they are exceedingly lax and careless in the mode and manner their desires are carried out. They act as though the means used and the methods employed mattered little or nothing, so long as their aim and end is right. They are creatures of impulse, following the dictates of mere whim and sentiment, or imitating the example of others. They seem to have no concern for *God's standard*, study not His Word diligently to discover what laws and rules the Lord has given for the regulation of our conduct in His “service.” Consequently, they are governed by the flesh, rather than the Spirit, so that it frequently happens that they do good things *in a wrong way*, yea, in a manner directly opposed to *God's way* as revealed in His Word.

There are many “church officers” who are anxious to see the pews occupied and their treasury well-filled, and so, “socials,” “ice-cream suppers,” and other worldly attractions are employed to draw the crowd. There are many preachers who are anxious to hold the young people, and so “athletic clubs,” “social entertainments,” are introduced to secure that end. There are many evangelists who are anxious to “make a good show,” secure “results,” and be able to herald so many hundreds of “converts” at the close of their “campaigns,” and so fleshly means are used, high pressure methods are employed to bring this about—“decision cards,” the “sawdust trail,” the “penitent form” are called in to their aid. There are many Sunday School teachers who are anxious to hold the interest of their class, and so “prizes” are given, “picnics” are arranged, and other devices are resorted to.

Apparently it does not occur to these “leaders” to *challenge* their own actions, to weigh them in “the balances of the sanctuary,” to inquire how near or how far they measure up to the divine standard. So long as such means and methods seem right *to them*, or are in general vogue in other “churches,” and so long as they appear to “succeed,” nothing else matters. But in a coming day, GOD is going to ask of them, “Who hath required *this* at your hands?” (Isa 1:12)! None of the devices mentioned by us above have one particle of Scriptural authority to warrant their use, and it is *by the Scriptures* that each of us will yet be *judged*! All things must be done “according to the pattern” (Heb 8:5; Exo. 25:40) with which God has furnished us, and woe will it yet be unto us if we have disregarded *His* “pattern” and substituted another of our own.

The terrible confusion which now prevails so extensively in Christendom is no excuse whatever for us falling into line with it, “*Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*” (Exo 23:2). No matter how “peculiar” he may be thought, no matter how “unpopular” he may be because of it, *faithfulness* is what God requires from each of His servants, 1 Corinthians 4:2. And “faithfulness” means doing the work which God has appointed *in the way which He has prescribed*. Expediency may have grasped the helm, compromise may be the order of the day, principles may be valued because of their “practicability” rather than because of their *Scripturalness*, but that alters not one whit the strict discharge of the duty which the Lord requires from each of His servants. Unless that fact be clearly realized, we read in vain the solemn incident recorded in 2 Samuel 6.

The laxity which now obtains in so many professedly “Christian” circles is indeed appalling. Unconverted men are allowed to occupy positions which none but Christ’s true servants have any title to stand in. Women are allowed to speak in public before a mixed audience, in open violation of 1 Corinthians 14:34.

The “sprinkling” of a few drops of water on an infant’s head is substituted for the Scriptural immersion of believers only. Human convenience is consulted when the Lord’s death is to be remembered, and His “supper” is changed into the *morning* “breaking of bread.” Leavened bread, rather than “*this bread*” (1Co 11:27), is used to set forth the immaculate Person of the Redeemer. And if one dares to raise a voice in protest against these innovations—no matter how gently and lovingly—he is called “legalistic” and a “troubler in Israel.” But even that must not move the one who covets his *Master’s* “Well done.”

“And they set the ark of God upon a new cart” (2Sa 6:3). In so doing, David and his counselors (1Ch 13:1) committed a serious fault. They ignored the divinely appointed order and substituted their own arrangements. The Lord had given express commands in Numbers 4:5-6, 15; 7:9 as to *how* the sacred ark was to be carried when it should be moved from one place to another, and He requires unquestioning obedience to all His regulations. It is true that David was moved on this occasion with a deep concern for JEHOVAH’s honour and glory. It is true that it was the urgings of *love for Him* which prompted his noble action, but He has said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (Joh 14:15)—love must flow in the *appointed* channels. It must be *directed by* the divine precepts if it is to please its object.

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (Joh 4:24). Among other things that means, God must be worshipped according to *the pattern* He has given us in His Word. There are many Protestants who can see clearly the human inventions, superstitious innovations, and unscriptural practices of the Romanists, in their “elevation of the mass,” the vestments of their “priests,” the burning of incense, the worship of images, and the adoration of the mother of our Saviour. The unwarrantable introduction of such devices are patent to multitudes of Protestants, yet they are blind *to their own* unscriptural and antiscritptural ways!

Listen, my reader, anything we introduce into “the service of the sanctuary,” into the worship of God, for which we have no “thus saith the Lord,” is nothing but a species of “*will worship*” (Col 2:23), and must be abandoned by us.

As we pointed out in our last article, the counsel given to David by the “leaders” in Israel, was patterned after the invention of the heathen. The “priests” of the Philistines had sent back the ark on “a new cart” driven by oxen (1Sa 6). And history had repeated itself. If many of the means and methods which are now used in much so-called “divine worship” and “Christian work” were challenged, if a *reason* were demanded for their employment, the best that could be given would be, *others* are using them. But no Scriptural authority could be cited. The “leaders” in Israel might have argued that the device used by the Philistines “succeeded” and that God “blessed” their arrangements. Ah, but the Philistines had not God’s Word in their hands, but Israel had! In like manner, many now argue “God blesses” these women preachers and many other things for which we have no “thus saith the Lord.” But, as we shall see, God *cursed* Israel’s flagrant violation of His commands!

The outstanding fact which concerns us as we seek to ponder and *profit from* this solemn incident in David’s life is that *he acted without divine orders*. He introduced something into the divine worship for which he had *no* “thus saith the Lord.” And the lesson to be learned therefrom is to rigidly scrutinize our own actions—the things we do, *the way in which* we do them, the means we employ—and ask—Are these *appointed by God*? There is much *apparent* reverence and devotion among the Papists, but is it acceptable to the Lord? Ah, my readers, if very much of the “Christian service” of earnest, zealous, enthusiastic Protestants were weighed in the balance of Holy Writ, it would be “found wanting”—nor am I guiltless if found in association and fellowship with the same—no, no matter how much I protest against it all. Individual loyalty to Christ, personal obedience to His commands, is what is demanded of each one of us!

It may be thought that David was ignorant of what was recorded in Numbers 4 and 7, and so was not so seriously to blame, but the validity of such a conclusion is more than doubtful as we shall show (D.V.) in the next article. Again, it may be supposed that David considered the regulations given in the days of Moses pertained only to Israel while they were on the march in the wilderness and did not apply to his own case, but this defence of David also breaks down before a passage we hope to consider in our next. Even were the case as just supposed, his bounden duty would have been to first “ask counsel of the LORD,” and inquire, “*Whereon* shall the ark be placed?” Instead he conferred with flesh and blood (1Ch 13:1) and followed their advice.

David’s efforts proved a failure. And sooner or later all effort on the part of the “church,” or of the individual Christian, which is not strictly according to the Word of the Lord will prove a failure. It will be but “wood, hay, stubble” (1Co 3:12) in the day of divine testing and reward. God has magnified His Word above all His name (Psa 138:2), and He demands that His servants shall do all things according to the plan and manner which He has prescribed. When He commanded Moses to build the tabernacle, He bade him do so according to the “pattern” which He showed him in the mount (Exo 25:40). There was no room for human opinion or preference. And if we would serve Him *acceptably*, then we must go according to *His* way, and not ours. The right attitude for us was expressed by Peter when he said, “Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net” (Luk 5:5). He acted according to Christ’s instruction and was blest!

“And when they came to Nachon’s threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it” (2 Sa 6:6). Yes, as the marginal rendering tells us, “the oxen *stumbled*.” And do you suppose that was an accident? No, indeed, there are *no* “accidents”

in a world which is presided over by the living God. Not even a hair can fall from our head till the moment He *decreed* for it to happen. But not only is everything directed by God, but there is also a significance, a meaning, a message, in the smallest occurrences, had we but eyes to see and hearts to understand. “The oxen stumbled.” Of course they did, what else could be expected! There can be naught but “confusion” when the divine order is departed from. In the stumbling of those oxen the Lord was *making manifest* David’s disorder.

“Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it” (2 Sa 6:6). He feared it would be overthrown, and so he wished to avert such a disaster. Like David’s design in seeking an honourable habitation for the ark, Uzzah’s purpose was good, and his motive pure, but like David, he also *disregarded God’s written law*. See here one sin leading to another! See how David’s conferring with flesh and blood, following the counsel of the “leaders,” and emulating the way of the heathen, was now succeeded by the priest’s son committing an act of sacrilege. Alas, alas, how much will the present-day “leaders” in Christendom yet have to answer for, because of their setting such an evil example before others, and thus encouraging the “young people” to lightly esteem the holy and authoritative precepts of God.

“And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God” (2Sa 6:7). The Lord God will not be mocked. Plainly had He declared that, even the Kohathites, who were appointed to carry the ark by staves on their shoulders, “shall *not touch* any holy thing, *lest they die*” (Num 4:15). God not only keeps His promises, but He also *fulfills His threats*! So Uzzah found, and so will every other disregarder of His commandments yet discover.

“He, whose name is *Jealous*, was greatly offended. The sincere, the well-meaning man, having no command, nor any example for what he did, fell under JEHOVAH’s anger, and lost his life, as the reward of his officiousness. And as the Holy Spirit has recorded the fact so circumstantially, we have reason to consider it *as a warning to all*, of the danger there is in tampering with positive ordinances, and as a standing evidence that God will have His cause supported, and His appointments administered, *in His own way*. The case of Saul, and the language of Samuel, to that disobedient monarch, inculcate the same thing, ‘The people,’ said Saul to the venerable prophet, ‘took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal. And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as *in obeying the voice* of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams,’ 1 Samuel 15:21-22” (Abraham Booth, 1813).

It is solemn to recall that no divine judgment fell upon the Philistines when *they* placed the holy ark upon a cart and sent it back to Israel, but “the anger of the LORD *was* kindled against Uzzah”! How plainly this shows us that God will suffer from the world what *He will not tolerate* in His professing people who bear His holy name. That is why it will be “more tolerable” for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than it will be for divinely-enlightened, highly favoured, and loud-boasting Capernaum. The same principle will obtain when Christendom comes to be judged. Better to have lived and died in the ignorance of darkest Africa, than to have had God’s Word in our hands and set at naught its laws!

GOD'S ESTIMATE OF OBEDIENCE

“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1Sa 15:22). Two things are here placed in apposition—worshipping God and obeying God. Which of the two does *He* esteem more highly, with *which* is He most pleased? A divine answer has been given to this question—God values obedience more than anything else we can proffer Him. Do we really believe this? Do we *act* as though we did! Ah, my reader, it is not a reverent mien, a devout posture, beautiful words, liberal contributions, which the Lord requires first from us. All of these things are worthless in His sight, yea, unacceptable to Him, unless they be preceded by a definite determination and a sincere and prayerful effort to walk in obedience to His commands. We are but mocking God to come before Him as devout worshipers on the Sabbath day, if the remainder of the week we disregard His statutes and precepts. Observe carefully that the Lord gave His law to Israel (Exo 20) *before* He gave them instructions to build the tabernacle (Exo 25-31). Lawless worshipers are an offence to Him. The will must be brought into subjection unto God before the heart can worship Him acceptably. Beg Him to work in you the spirit of *obedience*.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

“I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all” (Ecc 9:11). How true is this in things that are natural! How frequently does it occur among those who seem possessed of every natural ability for certain objects, and who are placed in favourable circumstances for carrying out their projects. Yet they make no progress, for some unforeseen event transpires which destroys their hope and expectations, and lays their all in ruins. Nor can such be charged with any want of prudence, care, diligence, or any of those qualifications that are needful to their attaining a certain object. Then it may be asked, Why do not they succeed? The reply is—The Sovereignty of God interferes, baffles, defeats, and prevents their projects taking place in the way they had laid down. Man, in general, is taught that there is nothing certain, nothing real, and that he must reap the reward of his hands in labour, toil, vexation, and disappointment. And many, under these trials of the flesh, seeing all things against them, and that nothing succeeds which they take in hand, plunge themselves into suicide, and terminate their existence of disappointment in some awful manner, by (as they suppose) putting an end to the sorrows and miseries.

On the other hand, some, without any remarkable gifts, and persons of very worthless character, often succeed temporally in all that they do, “flourish like a green bay tree” (Psa 37:35). This thing Solomon saw naturally occurring among the children of men, or “under the sun.” He saw the natural prowess of strength fail in time of need. He saw the racer faint before he reached the goal. He saw that bread is not always to be obtained by the most prudent, that riches

flew away, and could not be kept, and that those honours which worldly men pursue, vanish into nothing. And therefore, speaking in a natural way, to be understood by natural men who mind earthly things, he saw that “Time and chance happeneth to them all,” or something like what men mean when they say, “If they have the good luck,” or “If they happen to be fortunate.” The words are to be understood in the sense which natural men speak, for a spiritual man knows nothing of “chance,” all that shall transpire being *ordained*, fixed, and decreed, and each individual filling up that spot, or maintaining just that position, which *predestination* has given him. The spiritual man, therefore, acknowledges a Sovereign Ruler, though too often we speak half in the language of Ashdod, instead of acknowledging a great Supreme Ordainer, for what is “providence” but *God reigning*?

But there is another sense to be taken of this remarkable passage which first arrested me at the throne of grace, as intended by the Spirit of God to describe a certain *path of experience*. If I am a real believer in the Son of God, there is no death awaiting me. What remains and is before me is open day, a scene of glory, an endless eternity of light, through the death of Christ. I say again, if I am a *real* believer in Him, for the prophet asks, “Who hath believed our report?” (Isaiah 53:1). There is a different belief required in Christ from what most will admit of. I must view my own death to sin in His death. I must see the justice of God exacting from me, in the death of Christ, the penalty due to me. And if once, in the light of the Spirit, I am favoured to behold and enjoy this, there is no more death or curse awaiting me. How blessedly is this described by John in the last two chapters of the Revelation! When faith is really exercised on Christ, it brings into the soul all those glories which are so beautifully, gloriously, and figuratively described there.

And what is said of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem? It is said that there shall be no more death, no more curse, “There shall be no night there...for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev 22:5). Now if I am living in Christ, these solemn realities are at times enjoyed in my soul, for there is no more death, because He hath poured out His soul unto death. “He died unto sin once” (Rom 6:10). And hath abolished it, destroyed it, yea, swallowed it up. No more curse for me, because He was made a curse while hanging on the tree. There is no more the midnight of nature—light everlasting has broken in, and the reigning God causes me to reign over these forever and ever—over death, as abolished, over the curse, as being removed, and enables me to follow Him who said, “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Joh 8:12). These *shalls* are precious realities enjoyed by the light of faith.

Now, then, how comes it to pass, since God has said there shall be no more death, curse, or night, that there is such a dread and fear of these, and so many are brought into bondage by them? How often are the Lord’s redeemed family brought into this state of slavery and dread! But let the Sun of righteousness arise and shine into the soul, and all is swallowed up in a moment. And thus many thousands of Israel who have feared death, shall, in their departing moments, be like their glorious Head, who, when He was pouring out His soul unto death, “cried with a *loud* voice” (Mat 27:46). So, when the frail voice of nature is sinking, a loud voice of celestial triumph bursts from the soul. But if they are suffered to go on in darkness to this point, we must leave it to the sovereign Ruler of all things, who giveth no account of any of His ways, and who has said that, “The race is *not* to the swift, *nor* the battle to the strong” (Ecc 9:11). In other words, if the Lord the Holy Comforter does not shine in with *His* light, there is no conquest, nor any prize gained.

The battle over our fears “is not to the strong,” and the ultimate victory shall not be given to any because they have been strong in the faith, but shall be given *to whom the Lord* shall in His sovereignty *see fit to give it*. Nor, on the other hand, shall it be given to those who harp so much

on the string of fears and doubts, sins and unbelief, and who think that for treading *this* gloomy path *they* shall obtain the prize. No, but the victory shall be given to that soul *whom the Lord* delights to honour by giving it. Thus, strong faith, and little faith, and scarcely any faith at all, shall “arise and shine” *when the Lord biddeth*, and HE gives the crown, the battle, the honour, the bread of life, the everlasting riches, to whosoever *He will*. Nor shall any say that *they* can claim them, have them, or enjoy them, *independent of Him*. Nor shall these blessings be given for any running, fighting, wisdom, skill, or zeal of *theirs*, for God is Sovereign in all His ways, and none shall say unto Him, “What doest thou?” But all must submit themselves to Him who does all things well, in giving the race to the lame, the victory to the weak, the bread to the hungry, the riches to the poor, the favour to the outcasts.—H.W., 1841.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

3d. The Adamic (Continued)

In the previous papers upon the Covenant of Works we have seen that, at the beginning, man was made “upright” (Ecc 7:29), which language necessarily implies a law to which he was conformed in his creation. When anything is made regular or according to rule, the rule itself is obviously presupposed. The law of Adam’s being was none other than the eternal and indispensable law of righteousness, the same which was afterwards summed up in the Ten Commandments. Man’s “uprightness” consisted in the universal rectitude of his character, his entire conformity to the nature of his Maker. The very nature of man was then fully able to respond to the requirements of God’s revealed will, and his response thereto was the righteousness in which he stood.

It was also shown that man was, in Eden, placed on probation—that as a moral being, his responsibility was tried out. In other words, he was placed under the moral government of God, and being endowed with a free will, he was capable both of obedience or disobedience—his own free choice being the determining factor. As a creature, he was subject to his Creator, as one who was indebted to God for all he was and had. He was under the deepest obligation to love Him with all his heart, and serve Him with all his might, and perfectly was he fitted so to do. Thus created, and thus qualified, it pleased the Lord God to constitute Adam the federal head and legal representative of his race. And as occupying that character and office, God entered into a solemn covenant or agreement with him, promising a reward upon the fulfillment of certain conditions.

It is true that the actual “covenant” does not occur in the Genesis record, in connection with the primordial transaction between God and man, but the facts of the case present all the constituent elements of a covenant. Brief as is the statement furnished in Genesis 2:17, we may clearly discern concentrated in it those eternal principles of truth, righteousness, and justice, which are the glory of God’s character, and which necessarily regulate His government in all spheres and in all ages. There is an avowal of His authority to govern the creature of His hands, a revelation of His will as to what He requires from the creature, a solemn threat of what would

surely follow upon his disobedience, with a clearly implied promise of reward for obedience. One test only was stipulated, by which obedience was to be formally expressed—abstinence from the fruit of the one forbidden tree.

“The covenant of works was in its nature fitted, and designed to give, and did give uninterrupted happiness, as long as its requisitions were observed. This is true throughout the whole moral universe of God, for man is not the only being under its government. It is the law of angels themselves. To their nature, no less than to man’s while in a state of holiness, it is perfectly adapted. Those of them who ‘have kept their first estate,’ (see Jude 1:6) are conformed perfectly to all its demands. They meet and satisfy them fully by love—fervent love to God, and to all their celestial associates. Heaven is pervaded consequently with the unbroken harmonies of love. And how unspeakably happy! ‘The man’ said Paul, ‘which doeth those things shall *live* by them’ (Rom 10:5). His bliss is unfading” (R. B. Howell, 1855).

God, then, entered into a covenant with Adam, and all his posterity in him, to the effect that if he obeyed the one command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he should receive as his reward an indefectibility of holiness and righteousness. Nor was that transaction exceptional in the divine dealings with our race, for God has made covenants with other men which have vitally effected their posterity—if we are spared, this will appear when we take up His covenant with Noah and Abraham. The compact which the Lord God entered into with Adam is appropriately termed “The Covenant of Works,” not only to distinguish it from the Covenant of Grace, but also because under it life was promised *on condition of* perfect obedience, which obedience was to be performed by man *in his own creature strength*.

We come now to consider *the penal sanction* of the covenant. This is contained in the words, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17). Here was made known the terrible penalty which would most certainly follow upon Adam’s disobedience, his violation of the covenant. All the blessings of the covenant would instantly cease. Transgression of God’s righteous law would not only forfeit all blessings, but would convert them into so many fountains of wretchedness and woe. The covenant of works provided no Mediator, nor any other method of restoration to the purity and bliss which was lost. There was no place given for repentance. All was irrevocably lost. Between the blessing of obedience and the curse of disobedience there was no middle ground. So far as the terms of the covenant of works was concerned, its inexorable sentence was, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17). It is to be duly noted what God here threatened was the direct consequence and immediate punishment of *sin*, to be inflicted only upon the rebellious and disobedient. That death which now seizes fallen man, is no mere natural calamity, but a penal infliction. It is not a “debt” which he owes to “nature,” but a judicial sentence which is passed upon him by the Divine Judge. Death has come in because our first parent, our federal head and representative, took of the forbidden fruit, and for no other reason. It was altogether meet to God’s authority and holy will that there should be an unmistakable connection between sin and its punishment, so that it is impossible for any sinner to escape the wages of sin, unless Another should be paid them in his stead—of which the covenant of works contained no hint.

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17), or as the margin renders it, “dying thou shalt die” That dread threat was couched in general terms. It *was not* said, “thou shalt die physically,” nor “thou shalt die spiritually,” but simply “thou shalt surely *die*.” The absence of any modifying

adverb shows that the term “death” is here taken in its widest scope, and is to be defined according to whatever the Scriptures elsewhere signify by that term. It is the very height of presumption for us to limit *what God has not limited*. Far be it from us to blunt the sharp point of the divine threat. The “dying thou shalt die”—which expresses more accurately and forcibly the original Hebrew—shows the words are to be taken in their full emphasis.

First, *corporeal* death, the germs of which are in our bodies from the beginning of our existence, so that from the moment we draw our first breath, we begin to die. And how can it be otherwise, seeing that we are “shapen in iniquity” and conceived in sin (Psa 51:5)! From birth our physical body is indisposed, and entirely unfitted for the soul to reside in eternally, so that there must yet be a separation from it. By that separation the good things of the body, the “pleasures of sin,” on which the soul so much dotes, are at once snatched away, so that it becomes equally true of each one, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb [the earth], and naked shall I *return thither*” (Job 1:21). God intimated this to Adam when He said, “Till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou *return*” (Gen 3:19)!

Second, “by death is here understood all that lasting and hard labour, that great sorrow, all the tedious miseries of this life, by which life ceases to be *life*, and which are the sad harbingers of certain death. To these things man is condemned, see Genesis 3:16-19—the whole of that sentence is founded on the antecedent threat of Genesis 2:17. Such miseries Pharaoh called by the name ‘death’ (Exo 10:17). David called his pain and anguish ‘the sorrows of death’ (Psa 116:3). By those ‘sorrows’ death binds and fastens man that he may thrust them into and confine them in his dungeon. As ‘life’ is not barely to live, but to be happy, so ‘death’ is not to depart this life in a moment, but rather to languish in a long expectation, dread and foresight, of certain death, without knowing the time which God has foreordained” (Hermann Witsius, 1636-1708).

Third, “death” in Scripture also signifies spiritual death, or the separation of the soul from God. This is what the apostle called “being alienated from the life of God” (Eph 4:18), which “life of God” illuminates, sanctifies, and exhilarates the souls of the regenerate. The true life of the soul consists of wisdom, pure love, and the rejoicing of a good conscience. The spiritual death of the soul consists in folly, evil lustings, and the rackings of an evil conscience. Therefore when speaking of those who were “alienated from the life of God,” the apostle at once added, “through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness.” Thus, the unregenerate are totally incapacitated for communion with the holy and living God.

“But I would more fully explain the nature of this (spiritual) death. Both living and dead bodies have motion. But a living body moves by *vegetation*, while it is nourished, has the use of its senses, is delighted, and acts with pleasure. Whereas, the dead body moves by *putrefaction* to a state of dissolution, and to the production of loathsome animals. And so in the soul, spiritually alive, there is motion, while it is fed, repasted, and fattened with divine delights, while it takes pleasure in God and true wisdom, while, by the strength of its love, it is carried to and fixed on that which can sustain the soul and give it a sweet repose. But a dead soul has no feeling—that is, it neither understands truth, nor loves righteousness, but wallows and is spent in the sink of concupiscence, and brings forth the worms of impure thoughts, reasonings and affections” (Hermann Witsius).

Fourth, *eternal* death is also included in Genesis 2:17. The preludes of this are the terrors of an evil conscience, the soul deprived of all divine consolation, and often an anguished sense of God’s wrath, under which it is miserably pressed down. At physical dissolution, the soul of the sinner is sent into a place of torments (Luk 16:23-25). At the end of the world, the bodies of the

wicked are raised and their souls are united thereto, and after appearing before the great white throne they will be cast into the lake of fire, there to suffer for ever and ever the “due reward of their iniquities.” The wages of sin is *death*, and that “death” there involves and includes *eternal* death is unmistakably plain from the fact that it is placed in direct antithesis with “eternal life,” Romans 6:23. The same appears again in Romans 5:21 which verse is the summing up of verses 12-20.

Let us now pause for a moment and review the ground already covered. First, we have seen the favourable and happy state in which Adam was originally created. Second, we have contemplated the threefold law under which he was placed. Third, we have observed that he stood in Eden as the federal head and legal representative of all his posterity. Fourth, we have pointed out that all the constituent elements of a formal covenant are clearly observable in the Genesis record—there was the contracting parties—the Lord God and Adam; there was the stipulation enjoined—obedience; there was the penalty attached—death upon disobedience; there was the necessary implied promise of reward—an immutable establishment in holiness and an inalienable title to the earthly paradise.

In order to follow out the logical sequence, we should, properly, examine next, the “*seal*” of the covenant, that is, the formal symbol and stamp of its ratification, but as that would call for more space than is here available, we must postpone our consideration of that until our next article (D.V.), which will conclude what we have to say upon the Adamic covenant. Instead, we will pass on to *Adam’s consent* unto the compact which the Lord God set before him. This may be inferred, first of all, from the very law of his nature—having been made in the image and likeness of God, there was nothing in him contrary to His holy will, nothing to oppose His righteous requirements, so that he *must* have readily attended.

“Adam, being holy, would not refuse to enter into a righteous engagement with his Maker, and being intelligent would not decline an improvement in his condition” (William Shedd, 1820-1894)—an “improvement” which, upon his fulfillment of the terms of the covenant, would have issued in being made *immutably* holy and happy, so that he would then have had spiritual life as *indefectible*, passing beyond all point of apostasy and misery. The only other possible alternative to Adam’s freely consenting to be a party to the covenant, would be his *refusal*, which is unthinkable in a pure and sinless being. Eve’s words to the serpent in Genesis 3:2-3 make it plain that Adam had given his word not to disobey his Maker. We quote from another who has ably handled this point:

“The *voluntary assent* of the parties, which is in every covenant. One party must make the proposition—God proposed the terms as an expression of His will, which is an assent or agreement. God’s commanding man not to eat, is His consent. As to man, it has been already observed, he could not without unreasonable opposition to his Creator’s will, refuse any terms which the wisdom and benevolence of God would allow Him to proffer. Hence we should conclude, Adam must most cheerfully accede to the terms. But this the more readily, when their nature is inspected—when he should see in them everything adapted for his advantage, and nothing to his disadvantage.

“The same conclusion we deduce from an inspection of the Scripture history. For, 1. there is not a hint at anything like a refusal on the part of Adam, before the act of violation. The whole history is perfectly consistent with the supposition that he did cheerfully agree. 2. It is evident that Eve thought the command most reasonable and proper. She so expressed herself to the serpent, giving God’s command as a reason for her abstinence. This information she must have derived from her husband, for she was not created at the time the covenant was given to Adam. We hence

infer Adam's *consent*. 3. Adam was, after his sin, abundantly disposed to excuse himself. He cast the blame upon the woman, and indirectly upon God, for giving her to him. Now most assuredly, if Adam could in truth have said, I never *consented* to abstain—I never agreed to the *terms* proposed—I have broken no pledge—he would have presented this apology for justification. But he was dumb, he offered no such apology. Can any reasonable man want further evidence of his consent? Even this may be had, if he will. 4. Look at the consequences. The penal evils *did* result, sorrow and death *did* ensue, and hence, because God is righteous, we infer the legal relations. The Judge of all the earth would not punish where there is no crime" (George Junkin, 1839).

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

2. Its Meaning

Having dwelt at some length (in last year's articles) upon the relative or legal change which takes place in the *status* of God's people at justification, it is fitting that we should now proceed to consider the real and experimental change that takes place in their *state*, which change is begun at their sanctification and made perfect in glory. Though the justification and the sanctification of the believing sinner may be, and should be contemplated singly and distinctively, yet they are inseparably connected, God never bestowing the one without the other, in fact we have no way or means whatsoever of knowing the former apart from the latter. In seeking to arrive at the meaning of the second, it will therefore be of help to examine its relation to the first. "These individual companions, sanctification and justification, must not be disjoined—under the law the ablutions and oblations went together, the washings and the sacrifices" (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677).

There are two principal effects that sin produces, which cannot be separated—the filthy defilement it causes, the awful guilt it entails. Thus, salvation from sin necessarily requires both a cleansing and a clearing of the one who is to be saved. Again, there are two things absolutely indispensable in order for any creature to dwell with God in heaven—a valid title to that inheritance, a personal fitness to enjoy such blessedness—the one is given in justification, the other is commenced in sanctification. The inseparability of the two things are brought out in, "In the LORD have I righteousness and strength" (Isa 45:24), "but of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1Co 1:30), "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified" (1Co 6:11), "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, *and to cleanse us* from all unrighteousness (1Jo 1:9).

"These blessings walk hand in hand, and never were, never will be, never can be parted. No more than the delicious scent can be separated from the beautiful bloom of the rose or carnation. Let the flower be expanded, and the fragrance transpires. Try if you can separate gravity from the stone or heat from the fire. If these bodies and their essential properties, if these causes and their necessary effects, are indissolubly connected, so are our justification and our sanctification" (James Hervey, 1770).

“Like as Adam alone did personally break the first covenant by the all-ruining offence, yet they to whom his guilt is imputed, do thereupon become inherently sinful, through the corruption of nature conveyed to them from him. So Christ alone did perform the condition of the second covenant, and those to whom His righteousness is imputed, do thereupon become inherently righteous, through inherent grace communicated to them from Him by the Spirit. ‘For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ’ (Rom 5:17). How did death reign by Adam’s offence? Not only in point of guilt, whereby his posterity were bound over to destruction, but also in point of their being dead to all good, dead in trespasses and sins. Therefore, the receivers of the gift of righteousness must thereby be brought to reign in life, not only legally in justification, but also morally in sanctification” (Thomas Boston, 1690).

Though absolutely inseparable, yet these two great blessings of divine grace are quite distinct. In sanctification something is actually *imparted* to us, in justification it is only *imputed*. Justification is based entirely upon the work Christ wrought *for* us, sanctification is principally a work wrought *in* us. Justification respects its object in a legal sense and terminates in a relative change—a deliverance from punishment, a right to the reward. Sanctification regards its object in a moral sense, and terminates in an experimental change both in character and conduct—imparting a love for God, a capacity to worship Him acceptably, and a meetness for heaven. Justification is by a righteousness without us, sanctification is by a holiness wrought in us. Justification is by Christ as Priest, and has regard to the penalty of sin. Sanctification is by Christ as King, and has regard to the dominion of sin—the former cancels its damning power, the latter delivers from its reigning power.

They differ, then, in their *order* (not of time, but in their nature), justification preceding, sanctification following. The sinner is pardoned and restored to God’s favour before the Spirit is given to renew him after His image. They differ in their *design*—justification removes the obligation unto punishment, sanctification cleanses from pollution. They differ in their *form*—justification is a judicial act, by which the sinner is pronounced righteous. Sanctification is a moral work, by which the sinner is made holy—the one has to do solely with our standing before God, the other chiefly concerns our state. They differ in their *cause*—the one issuing from the merits of Christ’s satisfaction, the other proceeding from the efficacy of the same. They differ in their *end*—the one bestowing a title to everlasting glory, the other being the highway which conducts us thither.

The word “holiness” and “sanctification” are used in our English Bible to represent one and the same word in the Hebrew and Greek originals, but they are by no means used with a uniform signification, being employed with quite a varied latitude and scope. Hence it is hardly to be wondered at that theologians have framed so many different definitions of its meaning. Among them we may cite the following, each of which, save the last, having an element of truth in them. “Sanctification is Godlikeness, or being renewed after His image.” “Holiness is conformity to the law of God, in heart and life.” “Sanctification is a freedom from the tyranny of sin, into the liberty of righteousness.” “Sanctification is that work of the Spirit whereby we are fitted to be worshipers of God.” “Holiness is a process of cleansing from the pollution of sin.” “It is a moral renovation of our natures whereby they are made more and more like Christ.” “Sanctification is the total eradication of the carnal nature, so that sinless perfection is attained in this life.”

Another class of writers, held in high repute in certain circles, and whose works now have a wide circulation, have formed a faulty, or at least very inadequate definition of the word “sanctify,” through limiting themselves to a certain class of passages where the term occurs and

making deductions from only one set of facts. For example—not a few have cited verse after verse in the Old Testament where the word “holy” is applied to inanimate objects, like the vessels of the tabernacle, and then have argued that the term itself *cannot* possess a *moral* value. But that is false reasoning. It would be like saying that because we read of the “everlasting hills” (Gen 49:26) and the “everlasting mountains” (Hab 3:6) that therefore *God* cannot be “everlasting”—which is the line of logic (?) employed by many of the Universalists so as to set aside the truth of the everlasting punishment of the wicked.

Words *must* first be used of *material* objects before we are ready to employ them in a higher and abstract sense. All our ideas are admitted through the medium of physical senses, and consequently refer in the first place to external objects. But as the intellect develops, we apply those names, given to material things, unto those which are immaterial. In the earliest stages of human history, God dealt with His people according to this principle. It is true that God’s sanctifying of the Sabbath day teaches us that the first meaning of the word is “to set apart,” but to argue from this that the term *never* has a moral force when it is applied to moral agents is not worthy of being called “reasoning”—it is a mere begging of the question—as well argue that since in a majority of passages “baptism” has reference to the immersion of a person in water, it can never have a mystical or spiritual force and value—which is contradicted by Luke 12:50 and 1 Corinthians 12:13.

The outward ceremonies prescribed by God to the Hebrews with regard to their external form of religious service were all designed to teach corresponding inward duties, and to show the obligation unto moral virtues. But so determined are many of our moderns to empty the word “sanctify” of all moral value, they quote such verses as “for their sakes I sanctify myself” (Joh 17:19), and inasmuch as there was no sin in the Lord Jesus from which He needed cleansing, have triumphantly concluded that the thought of moral purification *cannot* enter into the meaning of the word when it is applied to His people. This also is a serious error—what the lawyers would call “special pleading.” With just as much reason might we insist the word “tempt” can never signify to solicit and incline to evil, because it cannot mean *that* when used of Christ in Matthew 4:1 and Hebrews 4:15!

The only satisfactory way of ascertaining the meaning or meanings of the word “sanctify” is to carefully examine *every* passage in which it is found in Holy Writ, studying its setting, weighing any term with which it is contrasted, observing the objects or persons to which it is applied. This calls for much patience and care, yet only thus do we obey that exhortation “prove all things” (1Th 5:21). That this term denotes more than simply “to separate” or “set apart,” is clear from Numbers 6:8 where it is said of the Nazarite, “All the days of his separation he is holy unto the LORD,” for according to some that would merely signify, “all the days of his separation he is *separated* unto the LORD,” which would be meaningless tautology. So again, of the Lord Jesus we are told, that He was “*holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*” (Heb 7:26), which shows that “holy” means something more than “separation.”

That the word “sanctify” (or “holy”—the *same* Hebrew or Greek term) is far from being used in a uniform sense is clear from the following passages. In Isaiah 66:17, it is said of certain wicked men, “They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine’s flesh.” In Isaiah 13:3, God said of the Medes, whom He had appointed to overthrow the Babylonian empire, “I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger.” When applied to God Himself, the term denotes His ineffable majesty, “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy” (Isa 57:15 and cf. Psalms 99:3, Hab 3:3). It also includes the thought of adorning and

equipping, “thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it” (Exo 29:36 and cf. 40:11), “anointed him, to sanctify him” (Lev 8:12 and cf. v. 30), “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, *and meet for the master’s use*” (2Ti 2:21).

That the word “holy” or “sanctify” has in many passages a reference to a *moral quality* is clear from such verses as the following, “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom 7:12)—each of these predicates are moral qualities. Among the identifying marks of a Scriptural bishop, are, that he must be “a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate” (Ti 1:8)—each of those are moral qualities, and the very connection in which the term “holy” is there found proves conclusively it means much more than an external setting apart. “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). Here the word “holiness” is used antithetically to “uncleanness.” So again in 1 Corinthians 7:14, “else were your children *unclean*; but now are they *holy*,” i.e., maritally pure.

That sanctification includes *cleansing* is clear from many considerations. It may be seen in the types, “Go unto the people, and *sanctify* them today and tomorrow, and let them *wash* their clothes” (Exo 19:10)—the latter being an emblem of the former. As we have seen in Romans 6:19 and 1 Corinthians 7:14, it is *the opposite of* “uncleanness.” So also in 2 Timothy 2:20-21, the servant of God is to *purge* himself from “the vessels to dishonour” (worldly, fleshly, and apostate preachers and churches) if he is to be “sanctified” and meet for the Master’s use.” In Ephesians 5:26, we are told that Christ gave Himself for the church, “that he might *sanctify and cleanse it*,” and that, in order that He “might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but [in contrast from such blemishes] that it should be *holy*” (v. 27). “If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh” (Heb 9:13)—what could be plainer!—ceremonial sanctification under the law was secured by a process of *purification or cleansing*.

“Purification is the first proper notion of internal real sanctification. To be unclean absolutely, and to be holy, are universally opposed. Not to be purged from sin is an expression of an unholy person, as to be cleansed is of him that is holy. This purification is ascribed unto all the causes and means of sanctification. Not that sanctification consists wholly herein, but firstly and necessarily it is required thereunto, ‘Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you’ (Eze 36:25). That this sprinkling of clean water upon us is the communication of the Spirit unto us for the end designed, I have been evinced. It hath also been declared wherefore He is called ‘water’ or compared thereunto, Verse 27 shows expressly that it is the Spirit of God which is intended: ‘I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.’ And that which He is thus in the first place promised for, is the cleansing of us from the pollution of sin, which, in order of nature, is proposed unto His enabling us to walk in God’s statutes” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

To sanctify, then, means in the great majority of instances, to appoint, dedicate or set apart unto God, for a holy and special use. Yet that act of separation is not a bare change of situation, so to speak, but is preceded or accompanied by a work which (ceremonially or experimentally) *fits* the person for God. Thus the priests in their sanctification (Lev 8) were sanctified by washing in water (type of regeneration, Titus 3:5), having the blood applied to their persons (type of justification, Rom 5:9), and being anointed with oil (type of receiving the Holy Spirit, 1 John 2:20, 27). As the term is applied to Christians it is used to designate three things, or three parts of one whole. First, the *process* of setting them apart unto God or constituting them holy, Hebrews 13:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Second, the *state* or condition of holy separation into which they are

brought, 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 4:24. Third, the personal sanctity or *holy living* which proceeds from the state, Luke 1:75; 1 Peter 1:15.

To revert again to the Old Testament types—which are generally the best interpreters of the doctrinal statements of the New Testament, providing we carefully bear in mind that the antitype is always of a higher order and superior nature to what prefigured it, as the substance must excel the shadow, the inward and spiritual surpassing the merely outward and ceremonial)—“Sanctify unto me all the firstborn...*it is mine*” (Exo 13:2). This comes immediately after the deliverance of the firstborn by the blood of the paschal lamb in the preceding chapter—first justification, and then sanctification as the complementary parts of one whole. “Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should *be mine*” (Lev 20:25-26). Here we see there was a separation *from* all that is unclean, with an unreserved and exclusive devotement *to* the Lord.

FOLLOWING THE CLOUD

“Ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price” (1Co 6:19-20). This is true of every Christian. He is no longer at his own dispose, but entirely subject to the will of his Redeemer. Doubly does this principle apply to His public servants. They are not free to lean unto their own understandings, follow their own preferences, please their relatives or fellow-Christians. Instead, they must take orders only from their Master. Even though comfortably and congenially settled, even though the blessing of the Lord be resting upon their present labours, when the Cloud of Providence moves, they are required to pull up the stakes of their tents, and follow it unhesitatingly and uncomplainingly. It is not for us to reason why—it is for us to promptly comply.

“And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up” (Exo 40:36-37). The sacred cloud which supplied special and supernatural guidance to the children of Israel in their wilderness wanderings, while possessing a deeper typical significance than we can here enter upon, was also a blessed figure of the providential and gracious direction which God affords His people now. Though not so evident and palpable as the cloud, yet unto those whose eyes are humbly and trustfully turned unto Himself, the Lord gives today just as real and definite a guidance under all their varied and perplexing circumstances.

Those who are acquainted with the details of Israel’s wilderness journeyings have seen that God called upon them to be *frequently on the move*—prefiguring the fact that in this world His saints have “no *continuing city*” (Heb 13:14). Not for long were they suffered to remain in any one place. No sooner were they comfortably placed than the Lord stirred up their nest. True, God does not treat with all of His people in the same way, yet throughout the centuries many of them

have been forcibly struck with the close analogy between their own experiences and those of Israel in the wilderness of old. Particularly has this been the case with God's official servants. The more we study the lives of the prophets, the Saviour, and the apostles, the more shall we find that they were constantly on the move.

Thus it has been with the writer and his wife during the past twenty years. Many times has the Lord required us to leave one happy camping-ground for another. Just when we thought we were permanently located, the clear call has come for us to journey to other parts. Verily God's thoughts and ways are often the very opposite of ours. The flesh desires a smooth and straight path, with lengthy periods of relaxation, but again and again the word is given "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest" (Mic 2:10). The disposing of furniture, the packing of our large library, the moving from one country to another, is a considerable undertaking, and to continue issuing the magazine without any break under such conditions is a task for which only divine wisdom and strength is sufficient. But God has never failed us, and we have abundant cause to praise Him for all the way in which He has led us.

The Lord made it very plain that the work for which He took us to the U.S.A. was completed, and that He would have the editor return to the land of his birth. From the human side of things, it seemed a foolish move to make, for nearly all our Christian friends are in America, whereas in England we are now almost unknown. Nor was there any natural inducement, for during our absence from Great Britain our beloved parents have been called home, and we have no relatives at all who know Christ. Moreover, religious conditions in England today are very far from being promising. In fact, true spirituality is probably at a lower ebb now than for over a century past. Yet these very circumstances have only provided a background for *faith*, because of them we are, by grace, the more cast back upon our never-failing God. O that we may now be enabled to trust in Him with all our hearts.

We have much cause for thanksgiving. Full journeying mercies were granted—a smooth voyage across the ocean, and all our baggage intact on reaching our destination. Cordial welcome was given us by our kind and loyal friends, the Winstones. For the present we are located in Cheltenham, how long the Lord will keep us here, we know not. Our daily prayer is that the Lord of the harvest will graciously open doors where we may minister His Word orally. There are few places where we would feel free to enter, for we dare not, even by our presence, sanction much which is now going on under the cloak of Christ's holy name. Yet it seems almost impossible to get a hearing on the outside. We have hired a room where we teach each Wednesday evening, but only a handful have assembled thus far.

The prayers of God's children are earnestly solicited. Our main work, by God's enabling, will still be the continued publication of this little monthly messenger, which reaches many of the scattered children of God who we never expect to meet down here. Nevertheless, it is our fervent longing that we may have opportunity to preach and teach by lip as well as by pen. We are neither discouraged nor cast down, far from it. Rather are we increasingly hopeful that a real and widespread revival is not far distant. O that it may please the God of all grace to grant us some part in the same. His ear is still open unto the cries of the righteous. And humble, and earnest, importunate supplication and intercession will again open the windows of heaven, as it so often has in the past.

Surely there are still left somewhere in these British Isles congregations or groups which would welcome an oral ministry along the lines of our articles, places where "*all* the counsel of God" would be welcomed. Pray that the Lord will bring us into touch with such, give us favour in their eyes, and use us to bring them into a closer walking with Himself and into the fullness of

His rich blessing. As of old, it is largely true today that God's people "are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos 4:6)—lack of faithful Gospel preaching, lack of sound doctrinal instruction, lack of practical teaching as to how they may enter into God's best for them in this life. The need is indeed great, the situation is urgent—a challenge to faith, to prayer, to believing effort.

Through thirteen years the Lord has graciously sustained us in the publication of this little magazine. Though no subscription charge is made for it, and though no one has been asked for a penny, yet during the worldwide financial depression, God has moved His stewards to send in gifts to defray its expenses, so that we have been enabled to pay every bill promptly and to obey that command, "Owe no man any thing" (Rom 13:8). We are greatly encouraged by the constant receipt of letters telling of how God has been pleased to bless different articles to the hearts and lives of one and another of His dear people. We greatly long for our coast to be enlarged, that we may have the holy privilege of feeding many more of Christ's hungry sheep. Our circulation increased substantially last year, and we are praying for a still larger addition this year. The Lord bless us, and make us a blessing.

Will new readers kindly bear with the familiar references to the editor and his wife in the above paragraphs. Many of our older readers are close personal friends which the Lord gave us in the various places at which we stopped in our journeyings. They desire to be kept informed of our movements and of God's providential dealings with us, and though we have an instinctive dislike of saying anything about ourselves, yet from time to time we yield to the loving desires of our well-wishers. Having no "office help" and composing so many articles each month, it is impracticable to write a lengthy private letter to each one of those with whom we have been closely associated in the past, so occasionally we employ these columns to supply a few news items about ourselves. One day the full record will be read out of that "Book of Remembrance" which is being kept on High. Then we shall be gathered together around the Lamb, never more to leave His presence or be separated from each other. In the meantime, let us seek to bear each other up in the arms of faith before the throne of grace. We are thankful to say that all is well with us.—A. W. and V. E. Pink.

UNION AND COMMUNION

1b. Introduction (Completed)

Union and communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit who dwells personally in the saints, is a most glorious and transcendent wonder of divine grace. Nature cannot comprehend it—carnal reason cannot grasp it—none can have the least real perception of its nature, importance, or excellency, but such as are born from above—nor can the regenerate either, except as they are divinely enlightened and supernaturally lifted up into the true knowledge and enjoyment of the same. Spiritual life, and all its activities, is beyond the ken of mere intellect, consisting as it does in communion with God Himself. The oneness of the church with Christ is a blessed reality, which none but the Spirit of God can open to the renewed mind

and give right views of it. It is His royal prerogative so to do. It is part of His official work according to the eternal settlements of grace. His work is to glorify Christ, to enthrone Him in the hearts of His blood-bought people.

Were it not that the Holy Spirit “searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1Co 2:10), and that we had the unfailing promise of Christ (which needs to be laid hold of by faith and pleaded before God) that this infallible Teacher “will guide you into all truth” (Joh 16:13), it would be the very height of presumption for us to attempt to write upon such a subject. The very profundity of our present theme has been clearly intimated by God’s designating it a “mystery.” It is remarkable that twice only in the sacred Scriptures do we read of a “*great* mystery.” Once when the reference is to that ineffable union of the human nature with the Godhead in the Person of Immanuel—“great is the mystery of godliness” (1Ti 3:16), and once when mention is made of the mystical union subsisting between Christ and His church—“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32).

To aid our finite understandings, a variety of figures and natural analogies are used to express the oneness of Christ and His people. The marriage of Adam and Eve in their unfallen state, by which they became “one flesh” (Eph 5:31) is a striking resemblance of the union between Christ and His church, for He is the Husband (Isa 54:5), she is the Spouse (Song 2:1). As Adam said of Eve, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23), so the saints are assured, “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Eph 5:30). Another resemblance or type is that of the head and members of our physical organism. In the human body, there is such an intimate relation and vital connection between the head and its members that if severed, the one could have no living existence apart from the other. Thus it is in the Body mystical—Christ is the Head, believers are the members, see 1 Corinthians 12:12, 27; Ephesians 4:15-16.

A third resemblance is that of the root and the branches. There is a union between them, otherwise how should the one convey juice and nourishment to the others. So it is with Christ and believers, “I am the vine, ye are the branches” (Joh 15:5). The same figure is found again in a number of passages in the epistles. There we read of being “*grafted in* among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree” (Rom 11:17), of being “*rooted* and built up in him” (Col 2:7). This is a blessed analogy between Christ and believers and the root and the branches, in point of union and in point of influence. The root conveys life and nourishment to the branches, so does Christ to those who are one with Him. With this resemblance we may link the simile used by our Lord, the “corn of wheat” (Joh 12:24) falling into the ground, with its embryo increase of “much fruit” wrapped up within itself.

Still another resemblance is the foundation and the building, which is found again and again in Scripture. Here too there is a *union*, for in a building all the stones and timbers being joined and fastened together upon the foundation, make but one entire structure. So it is here. The saints are “God’s building” (1Co 3:9), Christ Himself being the “foundation” of that building (v. 11). And again, we are said to be “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph 2:20). The building itself is the complement of the foundation, but remove it, and the whole superstructure topples to the ground. How blessed to be assured by God, “Behold, I lay in Zion...a *sure* foundation” (Isa 28:16). Finally, Christians are referred to as “lively [living] stones, are built up a spiritual house” (1Pe 2:5), which tells us that our union with Christ is both a mystical and a vital one.

In addition to the various figures and resemblances which God has graciously designed to employ so as to aid our feeble minds in grasping something of the mysterious and glorious union which exists between His Son and His people, there are also types in the Old Testament which

throw light thereon. A notable one is found in Exodus 28, “And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty...And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel...And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and *Aaron* shall bear *their* names before the LORD upon his two shoulders for a memorial...And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron’s forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon *his* forehead, that *they* may be accepted before the LORD” (Exo 28:2, 9, 12, 36-38). Thus was the whole Israel of God represented before JEHOVAH *in* the person of Aaron—blessed adumbration of the identification with our great High Priest. “It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments” (Psa 133:2)—figure of the Holy Spirit communicated to Christ *and* His people.

Communion with Christ is our participation with Him in the *benefits* flowing from His several offices. As in marriage, there must be a union before there can be any communion (sharing together) of estates and conditions, so before we can obtain anything *from* Christ we must first be one *with* Him, all is *in* Christ for us. “He that hath the Son hath life” (1Jo 5:12), and the term “life” sums up all spiritual blessings, just as physical “death” cuts off from all temporal mercies. We “have” the Son by God’s eternal gift to us, as He possesses us by the Father’s eternal gift of us to Him. Therefore it is written, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is *given*” (Isa 9:6)—as in marriage. God made a grant of His Son to us, and *that* included all, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him *also* freely give us all things?” (Rom 8:32).

“For we are made *partakers* of Christ” (Heb. 3:14). He and we are made one, “*joint* heirs” (Rom 8:17). “Being united *to* Christ, we are possessed of all *in* Christ, so far as is consistent with our capacities of receiving and God’s ordination and appointment in giving. Union gives us interest in the personal merits and righteousness of Christ and the benefits of His mediatory actions. They are ours to all effects and purposes, as if we ourselves had satisfied and obeyed the law. Why? because it is not in a person sundered from us. It is in our Head, in One to whom we are united by a strait bond of union (better “by a legal and vital bond of union”), therefore are they reputed as one.” (Thomas Manton, 1670).

“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1Co 1:30). To be “in Christ” is to be *united* to Him—first electively (Eph 1:4), when God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. Second, representatively (1Co 15:22), as we were in Adam. Third, vitally (2Co 5:17), as a branch in the vine. Fourth, voluntarily (Rom 8:1), by faith cleaving unto Him. Of this compound union we are taught two things here in 1 Corinthians 1:30—its origin and its effects. As to its origin, it is “of God,” He alone being the efficient cause. As to its effects, because the saints are one with Christ, they *participate* in His benefits, and so He is “made unto us wisdom” etc.

Because of our union with Christ we are “accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:6). We have the same title to enter God’s presence that Christ has, “*by his own blood* he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb 9:12), “having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest *by the blood of Jesus*” (Heb 10:19)! Because of our union with Christ we have not only a valid title or right to draw nigh unto God, but a personal *fitness*, “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath *made us meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the

saints in light” (Col 1:12). Our very life is “hid *with Christ* in God” (Col 3:3), so that before we can perish, He must perish. What is yet more blessed, the Father loves us as He loves Christ, “That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” (Joh 17:23).

“Christ is His Father’s Son, and believers are Christ’s sons, (Isa 8:18). He is the Father’s delight (Isa 42:1), they are Christ’s (Psa 16:3). He is the Father’s glory (Heb 1:3), and they are Christ’s (2Co 8:23). God is Christ’s Head (1Co 11:3), Christ is their Head (1Co 11:3). God always hears Christ (Joh 11:42), and Christ them (Joh 15:15). All power is given to Christ (Mat 28:18), and by Christ to them (Phi 4:13). God has committed all judgment to Christ (Joh 5:22), Christ makes them His assessors (1Co 6:2-3)” (David Clarkson, 1685).

The oneness of Christ and His people is manifested in intimate and precious fellowship together. The whole of Solomon’s “Song” sets forth this union and communion in a most wonderful and blessed way. Observe by what endearing terms the Saviour calls His church, “Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse” (Song 4:9)—she is His “sister” as well as His “spouse,” for by taking her into union with Himself, this brings the church into *every* relation—the saints are His “sons” (Heb 2:10), His “brethren” (Heb 2:12), and compare Matthew 12:48. The divine Bridegroom says to His wife, “*Eat*, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved” (Song 5:1), and she says, “Let my beloved come into his garden, and *eat* his pleasant fruits” (Song 4:16). There is sweet entertainment on both sides. They are mutually charmed with each other’s beauty. He says, “Behold, THOU art fair, my love” (Song 4:1), she exclaims, “My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand” (Song 5:10).

The precious intimacy of that union which exists between Christ and His people is manifested in many Scriptures. “If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, *and he with me*” (Rev 3:20). There is *mutual* communion, reciprocal affections. Christ and His saints are fond of hearing each other’s voices, “Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely” (Song 2:14). That is Christ speaking to His spouse. Her response is, “the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it” (Song 8:13). There are also mutual complaints between them, “I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love” (Rev 2:4); “LORD, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?” (Psa 88:14). O that both writer and reader may be favoured with more intimate and constant communion with the eternal Lover of our souls, “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1Pe 5:7).

Let us now seek to define and describe a little more closely the *nature* of that union which exists between Christ and His church.

1. It is *supernatural*, being altogether beyond the powers of the creature to effectuate. It is wholly of the wisdom, grace, and power of God. All the unions we have in the natural world come infinitely short of this. The union of the body and soul in man puzzles and baffles the greatest philosophers, but the union of Christ and His church is a far greater mystery—that persons so distant, so divided, should be made one, is a profundity which no finite intelligence can fully comprehend. We had known nothing whatever about it if God had not revealed it to us in His Word, and even now we discern it “through a glass darkly.”

2. It is a *real* union, not a mere theoretical or fantastic thing, a creature of the imagination. Though it cannot be perceived by our senses, nor visualized by the mind, it is not a mere theological fiction. It is plainly and expressly affirmed in many Scriptures, under a great variety of expressions, all of which are too clear to be misunderstood. As actually as the limbs of the body are united to their head, the wife to the husband, the branches to the root, so truly are the

saints united to Christ and Christ to them. Take this away and the whole of Christianity collapses. Is not the union between God the Father and God the Son a *real* one? then so is this, John 17:22—the one is as much a verity as the other.

3. It is *spiritual*. The great design and the grand aim of God in His purpose and dealings with the elect is the communication to them of the benefits of Christ—but all communication of benefits implies communion, and all communion necessarily presupposes *union* with His Person. Not that there is any confusion or transfusing of the Christian's person with Christ's Person, but a real and personal conjunction between them. That conjunction is not a gross, fleshly, corporeal union, but a mystical, spiritual, and inward one. The nature of this union is seen in the *bond* of it. It is entirely spiritual—the Spirit in Christ, faith in us. The husband and the wife are “one flesh” (Eph 5:31), but “he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1Co 6:17).

4. It is *intimate*, far closer than that existing between the branches and root of a tree, or that between husband and wife. The union between Christ and His people is so near that we know not how to conceive it, still less express it. We may borrow some light here and there from the different unions in nature, but they all, in point of nearness, fall far short of it. Believers are so united to the Lord as to be “one spirit”—what an expression is that! what could be spoken higher! so intimate is this oneness that in a coming day Christ will say, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto *me*” (Mat 25:40). So near are the saints to Christ, they are a part of Him, so that He would be *incomplete* without them—they are His “fullness” (Eph 1:23).

5. It is *indissoluble*. The oneness between Christ and His church is such that it cannot be broken. All the powers of Satan cannot destroy that union. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Rom 8:35). “Ye *shall* abide in him” (1Jo 2:27). It is an inseparable, insuperable union. Death itself, though it break all other unions, does not and cannot put an end to or reach this. “Blessed are the dead which die *in* the Lord” (Rev 14:13), “absent from the body, and to be present *with* the Lord” (2Co 5:8)! And this union pertains to *all* the redeemed, the least as well as the greatest Christian, the humblest as well as the highest, is *equally* united to Christ and participates in what belongs to Him.

Union with Christ *in glory* is the goal toward which we are now moving, but at present we enjoy *experimental* union with Him in grace. But experimental union with Christ is only possible as there is a *practical* union with Him, for “can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amo 3:3). Practical union with Christ presupposes a *saving* one, whereby the heart is wedded to Christ in faith and love. That, in turn, necessitates a *vital* union, for only as quickened by the Spirit and made one with Christ can any sinner savingly believe unto Him. And that again denotes a *mystical* and eternal union, for the Spirit quickens none save those who had a covenant-oneness with Christ before the foundation of the world. Nor could there ever have been *any* union between the Creator and the creature but for the *mediatorial* union, whereby the Son united our nature to His own ineffable Person. And the foundation of *that* was the *divine* union, the three Persons in one God. The Lord willing, by His enabling, we shall seek to contemplate separately each of these unions in the articles which follow, taking them up in their inverse order.

ANXIETY

“In nothing be anxious” (Phi 4:6. R.V.) Worrying is as definitely forbidden as theft. This needs to be carefully pondered and definitely realized by us, so that we do not excuse it as an innocent “infirmity.” The more we are convicted of the sinfulness of anxiety, the sooner are we likely to perceive that it is most dishonouring to God, and strive against (Heb 12:4) it. But *how* are we to “strive against” it? First, by begging the Holy Spirit to grant us a deeper conviction of its enormity. Second, by making it a subject of special earnest prayer, that we may be delivered from this evil. Third, by watching its beginnings, and as soon as we are conscious of harassment of mind, as soon as we detect the unbelieving thought, lift up our heart to God and ask Him for deliverance from it.

The best antidote for anxiety is frequent meditation upon God’s goodness, power, and sufficiency. When the saint can confidently realize, “The Lord is my shepherd,” he must draw the conclusion, “I shall not want!” (Psa 23:1). Immediately following our exhortation is, “but in *every thing* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phi 4:6). Nothing is too big and nothing is too little to spread before and cast upon the Lord. The “with thanksgiving” is most important, yet it is the point at which we most fail. It means that *before* we receive God’s answer, we thank Him for the same. It is the confidence of the child expecting his Father to be gracious.

March

THE HOLY SPIRIT

26. The Spirit Working Faith

The principal bond of union between Christ and His people is the Holy Spirit, but as the union is mutual, something is necessary on our part to complete it, and this is faith. Hence, Christ is said to dwell in our hearts “by faith” (Eph 3:17). Yet, let it be said emphatically, the faith which unites to Christ and saves the soul is not merely a natural act of the mind assenting to the Gospel, as it assents to any other truth upon reliable testimony, but is a supernatural act, an effect produced by the power of the Spirit of grace, and is such a persuasion of the truth concerning the Saviour as calls forth exercises suited to its Object. The soul being quickened and made alive spiritually, begins to act spiritually. “The soul is the life of the body, faith is the life of the soul, and Christ is the life of faith” (John Flavel, 1630-1691).

It is a great mistake to define Scriptural terms according to the narrow scope and meaning which they have in common speech. In ordinary conversation, “faith” signifies credence or the assent of the mind unto some testimony. But in God’s Word, so far from faith—saving faith, we mean—being merely a natural act of the mind, it includes the concurrence of the will and an action of the affections. It is “with the heart,” and not with the head, that “man believeth unto righteousness” (Rom 10:10). Saving faith is a cordial approbation of Christ, an acceptance of Him in His entire character as Prophet, Priest, and King. It is entering into covenant with Him, receiving Him as Lord and Saviour. When this is understood, it will appear to be a fit instrument for completing our union with Christ, for the union is thus formed by *mutual* consent.

Were people to perceive more clearly the implications and the precise character of saving faith, they would be the more readily convinced that it is “the gift of God,” an effect or fruit of the Spirit’s operation on the heart. Saving faith is a coming to Christ, and coming to Christ necessarily presupposes a forsaking of all that stands opposed to Him. It has been rightly said that, “True faith includes in it the renunciation of the flesh as well as the reception of the Saviour. True faith admires the precepts of holiness as well as the glory of the Saviour” (James H. Thornwell, 1850). Not until these facts are recognised, enlarged upon, and emphasized by present-day preachers is there any real likelihood of the effectual exposure of the utter inadequacy of that *natural* “faith” which is all that thousands of empty professors possess.

“Now he which *stablisheth* us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God” (2Co 1:21). None but God (by His Spirit) can “stablish” the soul in all its parts—the understanding, the conscience, the affections, the will. The ground and reason why the Christian believes the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God is neither the testimony nor the authority of the church (as Rome erroneously teaches), but rather the testimony and power of the Holy Spirit. Men may present arguments which will so convince the intellect as to cause a consent, but establish the soul and conscience so as to assure the heart of the divine authorship of the Bible, they cannot. A spiritual faith must be imparted before the Word is made, *in a spiritual way*, its foundation and warrant.

The same blessed Spirit who moved holy men of old to write the Word of God, works in the regenerate a faith which nothing can shatter that that Word *is* the Word of God. The stablishing argument is by the power of God’s Spirit, who causes the quickened soul to see such a divine majesty shining forth in the Scriptures that the heart is established in this first principle. The renewed soul is made to feel that there is such a pungency in that Word that it must be divine. No born again soul needs any laboured argument to convince him of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. He has *proof within himself* of their heavenly origin. Faith wrought in the heart by the power of the Spirit is that which satisfies its possessor that the Scriptures are none other than the Word of the living God.

Not only does the blessed Spirit work faith in the written Word—establishing the renewed heart in its divine veracity and authority—but He also produces faith in the personal Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The imperative necessity for this distinct operation of His was briefly shown in a previous article upon “The Spirit Comforting,” but a little further word thereon will not here be out of place. When the soul has been divinely awakened and convicted of sin, it is brought to realize and feel its depravity and vileness, its awful guilt and criminality, its utter unfitness to approach a holy God. It is emptied of self-righteousness and self-esteem, and is brought into the dust of self-abasement and self-condemnation. Dark indeed is the cloud which now hangs over it. Hope is completely abandoned, and despair fills the heart. The painful consciousness that divine goodness has been abused, divine law trodden under foot, and divine patience trifled with, excludes the expectation of any mercy.

When the soul has sunk into the mire of despair, no human power is sufficient to lift it out and set it upon the Rock. Now that the renewed sinner perceives that not only are all his past actions transgressions of God’s law, but that his very heart is desperately wicked—polluting his very prayers and tears of contrition, he feels that he must inevitably perish. If he hears the Gospel, he tells himself that its glad tidings are not for such an abandoned wretch as he. If he reads the Word he is assured that only its fearful denunciations and woes are *his* legitimate portion. If godly friends remind him that Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost, he supposes they are ignorant of the extremities of his case. Should they urge him to believe or cast himself on the mercy of God in Christ, they do not mock him in his misery, for he now discovers that he can no more do this of himself than he can grasp the sun in his hands. All self-help, all human aid, is useless.

In those in whom the Spirit works faith, He first blows down the building of human pretensions, demolishes the walls which were built with the untempered mortar of man’s own righteousness, and destroys the foundations which were laid in self-flattery and natural sufficiency, so that they are entirely shut up to Christ and God’s *free grace*. Once awakened, instead of fondly imagining I am the man whom God will save, I am now convinced that I am the one who must be damned. So far from concluding I have any ability to even help save myself, I

now *know* that I am “without strength” and no more able to receive Christ as my Lord and Saviour than I can climb up to heaven. Evident it is, then, that a mighty supernatural power is needed if I am to come to Him who “justifieth the ungodly.” None but the all-mighty Spirit can lift a stricken soul out of the gulf of despair and enable him to believe to the saving of his soul.

To God the Holy Spirit be the glory for His sovereign grace in working faith in the heart of the writer and of each Christian reader. Thou hast attained unto peace and joy in believing, but has thou thanked that peace-Bringer?—“the Holy Ghost” (Rom 15:13). All that “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8) and that peace which “passeth all understanding” (Phi 4:7) to whom is it ascribed?—the *Holy Spirit*, it is particularly appropriated unto Him, “Peace, and joy *in the Holy Ghost*” (Rom 14:17 and cf. 1Th 1:6). Then render unto Him the praise which is His due .

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

87. Divine Chastisement (12:5) Continued

It is of first importance that we learn to draw a sharp distinction between divine punishment and divine chastisement—important for maintaining the honour and glory of God, and for the peace of mind of the Christian. The distinction is very simple, yet it is often lost sight of. God’s people can never by any possibility be *punished* for their sins, for God has already punished them at the cross. The Lord Jesus, our blessed Substitute, suffered the full penalty of all our guilt, hence it is written, “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1Jo 1:7). Neither the justice nor the love of God will permit Him to again exact payment of what Christ discharged to the full. The difference between punishment and chastisement lies not in *the nature of* the sufferings of the afflicted—it is most important to bear this in mind. There is a threefold distinction between the two.

First, *the character* in which God acts. In the former, God acts as *Judge*, in the latter as *Father*. Sentence of punishment is the act of a judge, a penal sentence passed on those who are charged with guilt. Punishment can never fall upon a child of God in this judicial sense, because his guilt was all transferred to Christ, “Who his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24). But while the believer’s sins cannot be punished, while the Christian cannot be condemned (Rom 8:33), yet he may be *chastised*. The Christian occupies an entirely different position from the non-Christian. He is a member of the family of God. The relationship which now exists between him and God is that of parent and child, and as a son, he must be disciplined for wrong-doing. Folly is bound up in the hearts of all God’s children, and the rod is necessary to rebuke, to subdue, to humble.

The second distinction between divine punishment and divine chastisement lies in *the recipients* of each. The objects of the former are His enemies, the subjects of the latter, His

children. As the Judge of all the earth, God will yet take vengeance on all His foes. As the Father of His family, God maintains discipline over all His children. The one is judicial, the other parental. A third distinction is seen in *the design* of each—the one is retributive, the other remedial. The one flows from His anger, the other from His love. Divine punishment is never sent for the good of sinners, but for the honouring of God’s law and the maintenance of His government. Divine chastisement is sent for the *well-being* of His children, “We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he *for our profit*, that we might be partakers of his holiness” (Heb 12:9-10).

The above distinctions should at once rebuke the thoughts which are so generally entertained among Christians. When the believer is smarting under the rod, let him not say, God is now punishing me for my sins. **That** can never be—*that* is most dishonouring to the blood of Christ. God is *correcting* thee in love, not smiting in wrath. Nor should the Christian regard the chastening of the Lord as a sort of necessary evil to which he must bow as submissively as possible. No, it proceeds from God’s goodness and faithfulness and is one of the greatest blessings for which we have to thank Him. Chastisement evidences our divine sonship. The father of the family does not concern himself with those on the outside, but those within he guides and disciplines to make them conform to his will. Chastisement is designed for our good, to promote our highest interests. Look beyond the rod to the all-wise hand that wields it!

Unhappily there is no word in the English language which is capable of doing justice to the Greek term here. “Paideia” which is rendered “chastening” is only another form of “paidion” which signifies “young children,” being the tender word that was employed by the Saviour in John 21:5 and Hebrews 2:13. One can see at a glance the direct connection which exists between the words “disciple” and “discipline”—equally close in the Greek is the relation between “children” and “chastening”—*son training* would be better. It has reference to God’s education, nurture, and discipline of His children. It is the Father’s wise and loving correction which is in view.

It is true that much chastisement is the rod in the hand of the Father correcting His erring child, but it is a serious mistake to confine our thoughts to this one aspect of the subject. Chastisement is by no means always God’s scourging of His refractory sons. Some of the saintliest of God’s people, some of the most obedient of His children, have been and are the greatest sufferers. Oft times God’s chastenings, instead of being retributive, are corrective. They are sent to empty us of self-sufficiency and self-righteousness. They are given to discover to us hidden transgressions, to teach us the plague of our own hearts. Or again, chastisements are sent to strengthen our faith, to raise us to higher levels of experience, to bring us into a condition of greater usefulness. Still again, divine chastisement is sent as a preventative, to keep under pride, to save us from being unduly elated over success in God’s service. Let us consider, briefly, four entirely different examples.

David. In his case the rod was laid upon him for grievous sins, for open wickedness. His fall was occasioned by self-confidence and self-righteousness. If the reader will diligently compare the two songs of David recorded in 2 Samuel 22 and 23, the one written near the beginning of his life, the other near the end, he will be struck by the great difference of spirit manifested by the writer in each. Read 2 Samuel 22:22-25, and you will not be surprised that God suffered him to have a fall. Then turn to Chapter 23, and mark the blessed change. At the beginning of verse 5,

there is a heart-broken confession of failure. In verses 10-12, there is a God-glorifying profession, attributing victory unto the Lord. The severe scourging of David was not in vain.

Job. Probably he tasted of every kind of suffering which falls to man's lot—family bereavements, loss of property, grievous bodily afflictions, came fast, one on top of another. But God's end in them all was that Job should benefit therefrom and be a greater partaker of His holiness. There was not a little of self-satisfaction and self-righteousness in Job at the beginning, but at the end, when he was brought face to face with the thrice Holy One, he abhorred *himself* (Job 42:6). In David's case, the chastisement was retributive, in Job's, corrective.

Abraham. In him we see an illustration of an entirely different aspect of chastening. Most of the trials to which he was subject were neither because of open sins nor for the correction of inward faults. Rather were they sent for the development of spiritual graces. Abraham was sorely tried in various ways, but it was in order that faith might be strengthened, and that patience might have its perfect work in him. Abraham was weaned from the things of this world, that he might enjoy closer fellowship with JEHOVAH, and become "the friend" (Isa 41:8). of God.

Paul. "And *lest* I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (2Co 12:7). This "thorn" was sent not because of failure and sin, but as a preventative against pride. Note the "*lest*" both at the beginning and end of the verse. The result of this "thorn" was that the beloved apostle was made more conscious of his weakness. Thus chastisement has for one of its main objects the breaking down of self-sufficiency, the bringing us to the end of ourselves.

Now in view of these widely different aspects—chastisements which are retributive, corrective, educative, and preventative—how incompetent are we to *diagnose*, and how great is the folly of pronouncing judgment concerning others! Let us not conclude when we see a fellow-Christian under the rod of God that he is necessarily being taken to task for his sins. Let us now consider *the spirit* in which divine chastisements are to be received. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him" (Heb 12:5).

Not all chastisement is sanctified to the recipient of it. Some are hardened thereby, others are crushed beneath it. Much depends on the spirit in which afflictions are received. There is no virtue in trials and troubles in themselves. It is only as they are blest by God that the Christian is profited thereby. As Hebrews 12:11 informs us, it is those who are are "*exercised*" under God's rod that bring forth "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." A sensitive conscience and a tender heart are the needed adjuncts.

In our text the Christian is warned against two entirely different dangers—despise not, despair not. These are two extremes against which it is ever necessary to keep a sharp look-out. Just as every truth of Scripture has its balancing counterpart, so has every evil its opposite. On the one hand, there is a haughty spirit which laughs at the rod, a stubborn will which refuses to be humbled thereby. On the other hand, there is a fainting which utterly sinks beneath it and gives way to despondency. Spurgeon said, "The way of righteousness is a difficult pass between two mountains of error, and the great secret of the Christian's life is to wend his way along the narrow valley." Let us then ponder separately the two things which the Christian is here warned against, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him" (Heb 12:5).

"The Greek word for 'despise' is no where used in the Scripture, but in this place. It signifies to 'set lightly by,' to have little esteem of, not to value anything according to its worth and use. The Hebrew word means 'to reprobate, to reject, to despise.' We render the apostle's word by

‘despise,’ which yet doth not intend a despising that is so formally, but only interpretatively. Directly to despise and condemn or reject the chastisements of the Lord is a sin that perhaps none of His sons or children do fall into. But not to esteem of them as we ought, not to improve them unto their proper end, not to comply with the will of God in them, is interpretatively to despise them” (John Owen, 1616-1683). As the point now before us is one which is of great practical importance to afflicted Christians, we will describe a number of ways in which God’s chastisements may be “despised.”

First, *by callousness*. There is a general lack of regard unto *God’s* admonitions and instructions when troubles and sufferings come upon Christians. Too often they view them as the common and inevitable ills which man is heir unto, and perceive not that *their Father* hath any special hand or design in them. Hence they are stoically accepted in a fatalistic attitude. To be stoical under adversity is the policy of carnal wisdom—make the best of a bad job is the sum of its philosophy. The man of the world knows no better than to grit his teeth and brave things out. Having no divine Comforter, Counselor, or Physician, he has to fall back upon his own poor resources. But it is inexpressibly sad when we find the child of God conducting himself as does a child of the devil.

This is what is dehorted against in our present text, “Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord” (Heb 12:5). Observe well the personal emphasis—“*thou*.” No matter how thy fellow-creatures act when the clouds of providence frown upon them, see well to it that *thou* comportest thyself as becometh a son of God. Take to heart the caution here given. Stout-heartedness and stiff-neckedness is to be expected from a rebel, but one who has found grace in the eyes of the Lord should humble himself beneath His mighty hand the moment He gives any intimation of His displeasure. Scorn not the least trials—each has instruction wrapped up in it. Many a child would be spared the rod if he heeded the parent’s *frown*! So it is spiritually. Instead of hardening ourselves to endure stoically, there should be a melting of heart.

Second, *by complaining*. This is what the Hebrews did in the wilderness, and there are still many murmurers in Israel’s camp today. A little sickness, and we become so cross that our friends are afraid to come near us. A few days in bed, and we fret and fume like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. We peevishly ask, Why this affliction? what have I done to deserve it? We look around with envious eyes, and are discontented because others are carrying a lighter load. Beware, my reader—it goes hard with murmurers. God always chastises twice if we are not humbled by the first. Remind yourself of how much dross there yet is among the gold. View the corruptions of your own heart, and marvel that God has not smitten you far more severely.

This is what is dehorted against here, “Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord” (Heb 12:5). Instead of complaining, there should be a holy submitting unto the good will of God. There is a dreadful amount of complaining among Christians today due to failure to nip this evil weed in the bud. Grumbling at the weather, being cross when things are lost or mislaid, murmuring because someone has failed to show us the respect which we consider ourselves entitled unto. *God’s hand* in these things—for nothing happens by chance under His government—everything has a meaning and message if our hearts are open to receive it—is lost sight of. That is to “despise” His rod when it is laid but gently upon us, and this it is which necessitates heavier blows. Form the habit of heeding His *taps*, and you will be less likely to receive His *raps*.

Third, *by criticisms*. How often we question the usefulness of chastisement. As Christians we seem to have little more spiritual good sense than we had natural wisdom as children. As boys we thought that the *rod* was the least necessary thing in the home. It is so with the children of God. When things go as we like them, when some unexpected temporal blessing is bestowed, we have

no difficulty in ascribing all to a kind Providence, but when our plans are thwarted, when losses are ours, it is very different. Yet, is it not written, “I form the light, *and* create darkness: I make peace, *and* create evil: I the LORD do all these things” (Isa 45:7).

How often is the thing formed ready to complain, “Why hast thou made me *thus*?” (Rom 9:20). We say, I cannot see how *this* can possibly profit my soul—if I had better health, I could attend the house of prayer more frequently; if I had been spared those losses in business, I would have more money for the Lord’s work! What good can possibly come out of this calamity? Like Jacob we exclaim, “All these things are against me” (Gen 43:36). What is this but to “despise” the rod? Shall thy ignorance challenge God’s wisdom? shall thy shortsightedness arraign omniscience? O for the grace to be as a “weaned child” (Psa 131:2).

Fourth, *by carelessness*. So many fail to mend their ways. The exhortation of our text is much needed by all of us. There are many who *have* “despised” the rod, and in consequence they have *not* profited thereby. Many a Christian has been corrected by God, but in vain. Sickness, reverses, bereavements have come, but they have not been sanctified by prayerful self-examination. O brethren and sisters, take heed. If God be chastening, “Consider your ways” (Hag 1:5), “ponder the path of thy feet” (Pro 4:26). Be assured that there is some reason for the chastening. Many a Christian would not have been chastised half so severely had he diligently inquired as to the cause of it.

“Cause me to understand wherein I have erred” (Job 6:24), “Show me wherefore thou contendest with me” (Job 10:2), express the attitude we should take whenever God’s hand is laid upon us. We are bidden “*hear ye* the rod” (Mic 6:9), that is, to pay a due regard to God’s voice in our trials and afflictions, and to correct that in our lives with which He is displeased. In chastisement God is to be viewed not only as a Father, but also as a Teacher. Valuable lessons are to be learned therefrom if we cultivate a teachable spirit. Not so to do, failure to improve them unto their proper design and to comply with the will of God in them, is to “despise” His loving reproofs. But we must turn now to the second half of our verse.

“Nor faint when thou art rebuked of him” (Heb 12:5). This word presupposes that we have not “despised” God’s chastening, but *have heeded it*—inquired as to the cause and reason of it, and have discovered He is evidencing that He is displeased with us. The learned tell us that the word for “rebuked,” both in the Hebrew and in the Greek, signifies “a reproof by rational conviction.” The conscience has been pricked, and God has discovered unto the heart that there is something in our ways—which before we took no notice of—which has convinced us of the needs-be for our present afflictions. He makes us to understand *what it is* that is wrong in our lives. We are “rebuked” in our conscience. Our response should be to humble ourselves before Him, confess the fault, and seek grace to right it, and in order to this we are cautioned against “fainting” in our minds. Let us mention several forms of this particular evil of “fainting.”

First, *when we give up all exertion*. This is done when we sink down in despondency. The smitten one concludes that it is more than he can possibly endure. His heart fails him. Darkness swallows him up. The sun of hope is eclipsed, and the voice of thanksgiving is silent. To “faint” means rendering ourselves unfit for the discharge of our duties. When a person faints, he is rendered motionless. How many Christians are ready to completely give up the fight when adversity enters their life. How many are rendered quite inert when trouble comes their way. How many by their attitude say, God’s hand is heavy upon me: I can do nothing. Ah, beloved, “sorrow not, even as others which have no hope” (1Th 4:13). “Faint not when thou art rebuked of him” (Heb 12:5). Go to the Lord about it. Recognise *His* hand in it. Remember thine afflictions are among the “all things” which work together for good (Rom 8:28).

Second, *when we question our sonship*. There are not a few Christians who, when the rod descends upon them, conclude that they are not sons of God after all. They forget that it is written, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous” (Psa 34:19), and that, we must “through *much* tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22). One says, “But if I were His child, I should not be in this poverty, misery, shame.” Listen to Hebrews 12:8, “But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.” Learn, then, to look upon trials as proofs of God’s love—purging, pruning, purifying thee. The father of a family does not concern himself much about those on the outside of his household. It is they who are within whom he guards and guides, nurtures and conforms to his will. So it is with God.

Third, *when we give way to unbelief*. This is occasioned by our failure to seek God’s support under trials, and lay hold of His promises, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psa 30:5). Sure are we to “faint” if we lose sight of the Lord, and cherish not His words of consolation. David was encouraging himself against unbelief when he took upon himself to task and said, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance” (Psa 42:5). If only *that* attitude be maintained by us, we shall be preserved from sinking when troubles come upon us.

Fourth, *when we despair*. When unbelief dominates the heart, despondency soon becomes our portion. Some indulge the gloomy fancy that they will never again get from under the rod in this life. Ah, it is a long lane that has no turning! Perhaps a reader says, “But I have prayed and prayed, and yet the dark clouds have not lifted.” Then comfort yourself with the reflection, it is always the darkest hour which precedes the dawn. Perhaps another says, “I have pleaded His promises, but things are no better with me. I thought God delivered those who called upon Him. I *have* called, but He has not delivered, and I fear He never will.” What! child of God, speak of thy Father thus? You say, He will never leave off smiting because He has smitten so long. Rather conclude, He has now smitten so long, I must soon be delivered. Fight hard, my brother, against this attitude of despair, lest your complaining or gloominess stumble others. Despise not, faint not. May divine grace preserve both writer and reader from either of these sinful extremes.

N.B. For several of the leading thoughts in the above article, we are indebted to a sermon by the late C.H. Spurgeon.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

39. His Bringing up the Ark (Continued)

As we have seen in the preceding articles, after his coming to the throne of Israel and his victories over the Philistines, David evidenced a godly concern for the holy ark, which had been so grievously and so long neglected. Zealous of the divine glory, he had resolved to establish a place where JEHOVAH’s worship should be celebrated and where the symbol of His presence should be securely housed. Accordingly, he gathered all the leaders of Israel together to bring the

sacred coffer to Jerusalem (2Sa 6:1). But alas, instead of heeding the divinely-given instructions for such an occasion and placing the ark upon the shoulders of the Levites, he followed the evil example of the heathen and placed it upon a new cart. In so doing he ignored the plainly-revealed will of God and substituted a human device. The work which David undertook was indeed a good one, his motive was pure, and his design was praiseworthy, but it was executed in a wrong way. He introduced into the divine worship that for which he had no, “Thus saith the Lord.”

David did not inquire whether *God* had any will in the matter and ask, Whereon shall the holy ark be placed? rather did he confer with flesh and blood. It was at *that* point he made his fatal mistake, and it is this which we need to take carefully to heart. Instead of consulting the Holy Scriptures, he sought counsel of men. It is true that he “consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader” (1Ch 13:1), but as Job 32:9 tells us, “Great men are not always wise,” and so it proved on this occasion. Instead of reminding David of the instructions which the Lord had given through Moses (Num 4:5-6, 15), they, apparently, advised him to follow the way of the uncircumcised (1Sa 6:7-8). By so doing, David spoilt his fair enterprise and incurred the displeasure of God. A good beginning had a bad ending because of departure from the divinely-prescribed rules of procedure.

The above incident has been recorded for our learning, especially for those of us who are engaged in the Lord’s service. It points a solemn warning. It shows the imperative need for zeal to be rightly directed, for there is “a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge” (Rom 10:2). This is a zeal to further the cause of God and bring glory unto His name, which is not regulated by that knowledge which His Word supplies. In our fervency to extend the kingdom of Christ, to spread His Gospel, to point souls unto Him, we are apt to forget His precepts, and do *His* work in *our* way. The danger is very real, and in this restless age of great activity not a few are being ensnared by this very evil. Many are so eager about the quantity of their service, they pay too little attention to the quality of it. They are anxious to be active in the Master’s vineyard, but they do not sufficiently consult His guide-book as to *how* their activities must be conducted.

David’s well-meant effort turned out a failure. The Lord manifested His displeasure. David accompanied by a large number of musicians, went before the ark, playing “on all manner of instruments” (2Sa 6:5). But when Nachon’s threshingfloor was reached, the oxen drawing the cart on which the sacred chest reposed, stumbled, and Uzzah put forth his hand to steady it. “And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God” (2Sa 6:7). A tragic check was this unto the joyous procession—one which should have produced deep heart-searchings and penitential confession of failure. Has not God said, “Provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt” (Jer 25:6). Therefore, when He *does* afflict, ought we not to inquire as to wherein we have “provoked” Him!

Though the displeasure of God was plainly manifested, yet it did not at first produce the proper effect. “And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah” (2Sa 6:8). Apparently a measure of self-complacency was at work in David’s heart over the important service he was engaged in—for honouring the ark which had been neglected for so long. Now that things had gone contrary to *his* expectations, he was disconcerted, peeved, “displeased,” or as the Hebrew word really signifies, “angry.” His anger was not a righteous indignation against Uzzah for his affronting God, but because his own plans had gone awry. His own pride was wounded. The drastic cutting off of Uzzah by divine judgment would not advance *him* in the eyes of his subjects, rather was he now humiliated before them. But the fault was his own, and he ought to have manfully shouldered the blame, and not acted like a peeved child.

“And David was displeased, [“angry”] because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah” (2Sa 6:8). When the rod of God descends upon us, we are but adding sin to sin if we become enraged thereby. This is “despising” the chastening of the Lord, which is expressly forbidden (Heb 12:5). “And he called the name of the place Perez-uzzah to this day” (2Sa 6:8), which, as the margin tells us, signifies “the *breach* of Uzzah.” Thus did David memorialize the stroke of God as a warning for posterity to beware of rashness and irreverence. A solemn contrast may be seen here from what is recorded in 2 Samuel 5:20, where David changed the name of “the valley of Rephaim” unto “Baal-perazim”—“the place of *breaches*”—because “the LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies.” In the one, he was celebrating God’s goodness, in the other, he was solemnizing God’s judgment.

The conduct of David on this occasion was very deplorable, for it is highly reprehensible to be angered by any of the Lord’s dealings. But in the light of such warnings, *our* petulancy is far worse. David ought to have humbled himself beneath the mighty hand of God (1Pe 5:6), confessed his failure and corrected his fault (Pro 28:13), and owned God’s righteousness in thus taking vengeance on his inventions (Psa 99:8). By so doing he would have put the blame where it belonged, have set a good example before others, and vindicated the Lord. Instead, his pride was hurt, his temper was inflamed, and blessing was missed. Alas, how often has writer and reader failed in a similar manner. How rarely have we heeded that injunction, “Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires” (Isa 24:15). One way of doing which is to judge ourselves unsparingly and own the need of the flames to purge away our dross.

“And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?” (2Sa 6:9). The transition is very easy from sudden zeal and joy to fretfulness and dejection. We are, naturally, creatures of extremes, and the pendulum quickly swings from earnestness to indolence, from jubilation to commiseration. He who dares one day to face singlehanded the four hundred prophets of Baal, next day flees from the threat of Jezebel. He who feared not to draw his sword in the presence of armed soldiers, trembled before a maid. They who sang so heartily at the Red Sea, murmured a little later when their food-supplies gave out. Few maintain an even keel amid the varying tides of life. A measure of servile fear now possessed David, and he would not venture to bring the ark any nearer his own immediate residence, lest he too should be destroyed. That holy vessel of the tabernacle which had been the object of his veneration, now became an occasion of dread.

With the death of Uzzah a fear came over David. This exemplifies an important principle—fear always follows where faith is not in exercise. Said the prophet, “I will trust, and not be afraid” (Isa 12:2). When the timorous disciples awoke the Saviour because of their storm-tossed ship, He said, “Why are ye fearful, O ye *of little faith*?” (Mat 8:26). When a spirit of trembling seizes the heart, it is a sure sign that faith is at a low ebb. The promise is, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: *because he trusteth in thee*” (Isa 26:3). Thus, the fear of David on this occasion is easily accounted for—his faith was eclipsed. Learn this valuable lesson, dear reader—as soon as you are conscious of sinking of heart, uneasiness, or alarm, cry unto the Lord for a strengthening of your faith. Say with the Psalmist, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee” (Psa 56:3).

There is another important principle exemplified by David’s attitude on this occasion. His faith was inoperative because his *walk* was not according to the revealed will of the Lord. It is true that faith is the gift of God, and that, unaided, we cannot call it into operation after it is received. Every exercise of faith, every increase thereof, is to be ascribed unto the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit. But let it not be forgotten that *He* is the Holy Spirit, and will not put

a premium upon wrong-doing. When our ways are contrary to the Rule which we are to walk by, the Spirit is grieved. When we act in self-will, and then refuse to judge ourselves under the mark of God's displeasure, His blessed operations are withheld. Fearfulness is a sign that faith is inactive, and inactive faith is an evidence that the Spirit is grieved, and that, in turn, denotes that our walk is displeasing to God. Learn, then, dear reader, to "Consider your ways" (Hag 1:5) when conscious that faith is at a low ebb. Clean out the choked channel and the waters will flow freely again.

"And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?" (2Sa 6:9). Does it not seem strange that David should ask such a question when the Lord had given clear and definite instructions as to *how* the ark should be conducted from place to place? Stranger still, sadder far, that he would not make right the wrong which he had committed. But alas, it is not easy to condemn ourselves when we have departed from God's ways. Even though the providential smile of the Lord be changed into a frown, we are loth to humble ourselves before Him. How this reveals the "desperate wickedness" (Jer 17:9). which still remains in our hearts, and how the realization of this ought to remove pride far from us, cause us to marvel increasingly at God's longsuffering with us, and make us more patient toward our erring brethren.

"So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite" (2Sa 6:10). Instead of correcting his fault, we now see David forsaking his own mercy (Jon 2:8). The Ark was the symbol of the Lord's manifest presence, and *that* should be the one thing above all others desired and cherished by the saint. Moses was deeply conscious of this when he said, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence" (Exo 33:15). Ah, but to enjoy the manifest presence of God we must be in the path of obedience, "He that hath my commandments, and *keepeth* them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest* myself to him" (Joh 14:21). Was it not because he felt he was out of the way of subjection to God's revealed will that caused David to now abandon his purpose of bringing up the ark to Jerusalem? It was a guilty conscience which made him "afraid of the LORD."

There is a fear of God which is becoming, spiritual, excellent, but there is also a fear of God which is hurtful, carnal, worthless. The one is servile, the other filial. There is a slavish fear which springs from hard thoughts of God, and there is a holy and laudable fear which issues from lofty thoughts of His majesty. The one is a terror produced in the mind by apprehensions of evil, the other is a reverential awe of God which proceeds from right views of His infinite perfections. The one is fear of wrath, such as Adam had in Eden, when he was afraid and hid himself, and such as the demons have, who "believe, and tremble" (Jam 2:19). The other is a fear of displeasing One who is gracious, like children have to dear parents. The one is our treasure, the other our torment. The one drives from God, the other draws to God. The one leads to despair, the other to godly activities (Heb 11:7). The one is the product of a guilty conscience, the other is the fruit of an enlightened understanding.

There is a natural fear and there is a spiritual fear of God. The one hates Him, like a slave his cruel master. The other loves God, as a child respects and reveres his father. The one dreads God because of His power and wrath. The other venerates God because of His holiness and sovereignty. The one engenders to bondage, the other conduces to worship. Perfect love casts out the former (1Jo 4:18), appropriating God's promises leads to the furtherance of the latter (2Co 7:1). When we are walking with God in the light of His Word, a filial fear directs our ways; but when we depart from His statutes and a guilty conscience torments us, then a servile fear

possesses our hearts. Hard thoughts are entertained of God, and we dread His anger. The soul is no longer at ease in His presence, and instead of viewing Him as our loving Father, we shrink from Him and regard Him as a hard Master. Such was the condition of David at this time. Alarmed by the divine judgment upon Uzzah, he was afraid to have anything more to do with the ark.

“But David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite” (2Sa 6:10). That was David’s loss, but, as we shall see, it was Obed-edom’s gain. The ark was both the symbol of God’s manifested presence in the midst of Israel and a notable type of the person of the Lord Jesus. In placing of the ark in the house of Obed-edom, following the unbelief of David, there was a prophetic hint given of the Gentiles receiving what Israel failed to appreciate—so marvelously does God overrule even the failures of His people. Obed-edom was a Gittite, and the “Gittites” were *Philistines* (Jos 13:3), the inhabitants of Gath (1Ch 20:5), yet many of them were devoted to the person and interests of David (2Sa 15:18-21). Thus it was dispensationally, “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you [Jews]: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Act 13:46).

“And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months” (2Sa 6:11). After the awful death of Uzzah, and the fear of David to having anything further to do with the ark, it had scarcely been surprising had this Gittite refused to shelter the sacred coffer. As a Philistine, it is likely that he was acquainted with the trouble it had caused in the temple of Dagon (1Sa 5:2-4), and of the plague it brought upon the Ashodites (1Sa 5:6). Anxious enough were they to get rid of the ark (1Sa 6), yet now we find one of their countrymen providing a home for it in his own house. Doubtless he had been truly converted unto the Lord, and therefore esteemed whatever pertained to His worship. It is beautifully significant that his name “Obed” means *servant*, and here we find him rendering a true service unto God.

“And the LORD blessed Obed-edom, and all his household” (2Sa 6:11). Need we be surprised at this? God will be no man’s debtor, as He declared, “Them that honour me I will honour” (1Sa 2:30). It is ever so. After Laban had received the fugitive Jacob into his family, he acknowledged, “I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake” (Gen 30:27). When His servant was befriended by Potiphar, we read, “The LORD blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake” (Gen 39:5). Through giving shelter unto God’s prophet, the widow of Zarephath was rewarded by having her son restored to life (1Ki 17:23). How much more may we be sure of receiving God’s rich blessing when His dear Son—to whom the ark pointed—is given the throne of our hearts.

“And the LORD blessed Obed-edom, and all his household” (2Sa 6:11). By the indwelling Spirit the Lord has promised to manifest Himself to the believer. The presence of the Lord in our lives and in our homes is the limitless source, if we will, of divine blessing. The blessing will depend upon our *servant* attitude to that presence or Spirit. If we take the place of a true “Obed,” surrendering ourselves to His sway, the Lord will make our way prosperous. If in all things we give Christ the pre-eminence, so far from being the losers thereby, we shall be immeasurably the gainers, both now and hereafter. O may He who moved Obed to take in the ark, open our hearts to receive Christ in all His fulness.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

3e. The Adamic (Continued)

We are now to consider the *seal* which the Lord God made upon the covenant into which He entered with the federal head of our race. This is admittedly the most difficult part of our subject, and for that reason, the least understood in most circles today. So widespread is the spiritual ignorance which now prevails that, in many quarters, to speak of “the seal” of a covenant is to employ an unintelligible term. And yet the “seal” is an intrinsic part and an essential feature in the various covenants which God made. Hence, our treatment of the Adamic covenant would be quite inadequate and incomplete did we fail to give attention to one of the objects which is given a central place in the brief Genesis record. Mysterious as that object appears, light is cast on it by other passages. O that the Holy Spirit may be pleased to guide us into the truth thereon.

“And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:9). First of all, let it be said emphatically that we regard this verse as referring to two real and *literal* trees. The very fact that we are told they were “pleasant to the sight” obliges us to regard them as tangible and visible entities. In the second place, it is equally obvious from what is said of them that those two trees were *extraordinary* ones, peculiar to themselves. They were placed “in the midst of the garden,” and from what is recorded in connection with them in Genesis 3, it is clear that they differed radically from all the other trees in Eden. In the third place, we cannot escape the conclusion that those literal trees were vested with a *symbolical significance*, being designed by God to give instructions to Adam, in the same way as others of His positive institutions now do unto us.

“It hath pleased the blessed and almighty God, in every economy of His covenants, to confirm, by some sacred symbols, the certainty of His promises and at the same time to remind man in covenant with Him of his duty” (Hermann Witsius, 1636-1708). Examples of that fact or illustrations of this principle may be seen in the *rainbow* by which God ratified the covenant into which He entered with Noah (Gen 9:12-13), and *circumcision* which was the outward sign of confirmation of the covenant entered into with Abraham (Gen 17:9, 11). From these cases, then, we may perceive the propriety of the definition given by Archibald A. Hodge (1823-1886), “A seal of a covenant is an outward visible sign, appointed by God as a pledge of His faithfulness, and as an earnest of the blessings promised in the covenant.” In other words, the “seal” of the covenant is an external symbol, ratifying the validity of its terms, as the signatures of two witnesses “seal” a man’s will.

Now as we have shown in previous articles, the language of Genesis 2:17 not only pronounced a curse upon the disobedient partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but by necessary implication it announced a blessing upon the obedient non-eating thereof. The curse was *death*, with all that that involved and entailed. The blessing was a continuance and confirmation in all the felicity which man in his pristine innocence enjoyed. In His infinite condescension the Lord God was pleased to *confirm* or “seal” the terms of His covenant with Adam—contained in Genesis 2:17—by a symbolic and visible emblem ratifying the same, as He

did to Noah by the rainbow, and to Abraham by circumcision. With Adam, this confirmatory symbol consisted of “the tree of life” in the midst of the garden.

A “seal,” then, is a divine institution of which it is the design *to signify the blessings* promised in the covenant, and to give assurance of them to those by whom its terms have been fulfilled. The very name of this symbolic (yet real) tree at once intimated its design. It was “the tree of life.” Not, as some have erroneously supposed, that its fruit had the virtue of communicating physical immortality—as though anything material could do *that*. Such a gross and carnal conception is much more closely akin to the Jewish and Mahometan fables, than to a sober interpretation of spiritual things. No, just as its companion was to Adam “the tree of knowledge of good and evil”—of “good” while he preserved his integrity, and of “evil” as soon as he disobeyed his Maker—so this other tree was both the symbol and pledge of that spiritual life which was inseparably connected with his obedience.

“It was chiefly intended to be a sign and seal to Adam, assuring him of the continuance of life and happiness, even to immortality and everlasting bliss, through the grace and favour of his Maker, upon condition of his perseverance in his state of innocency and obedience” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). So far from it being a natural means of prolonging Adam’s physical life, it was a sacramental pledge of endless life and felicity being secured to him as the unmerited reward of fidelity. It was therefore an object for *faith* to feed upon—the physical eating to adumbrate the spiritual. Like all other “signs” and “seals,” this one was *not* designed *to confer* the promised blessing, but was a divine pledge given to Adam’s faith to encourage the expectation thereof. It was a visible emblem to bring to remembrance that which God had promised.

It is the fatal error of Romanists and other ritualists that “signs” and “seals” actually convey grace of themselves. Not so. Only as faith is operative in the use of them are they means of blessing. Romans 4:11 helps us at this point, “And he received the *sign* of circumcision, a *seal* of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.” Unto Abraham circumcision was both a sign and a seal—a “sign” that he had previously been justified, and a “seal” (pledge) that God would make good the promises which He had addressed to his faith. The rite, instead of conferring anything, only confirmed what Abraham already had. Unto Abraham himself circumcision was the guarantee that the righteousness of faith which he had (before he was circumcised) should come upon or be imputed unto believing Gentiles.

Thus as the “rainbow” was the confirmatory sign and seal of the covenant-promises God had made to Noah, as “circumcision” was the sign and seal of the covenant-promises God made to Abraham, so the “tree of life” was the sign and seal of the covenant-promises He had made to Adam. It was appointed by God as the pledge of His faithfulness, and as an earnest of the blessings which continued fidelity would secure. Let it be expressly pointed out that, in keeping with the distinctive character of this present antitypical dispensation—when the Substance has replaced the shadows—that though baptism and the Lord’s supper are divinely appointed ordinances, yet they are *not* “seals” unto the Christian. The “seal” of “the new covenant” is *the Holy Spirit Himself*, see 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30! The gift of the blessed Spirit is the earnest or guaranty of our future inheritance.

The references to the “tree of life” in the New Testament confirm what has been said in the above paragraphs. In revelation 2:7, we hear the Lord Jesus saying, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” Those words express a promise *of eternal life*—the perfection and consummation of holiness and happiness—couched

in such terms as obviously allude to Genesis 2:9. This is the *first* of seven promises made by Christ to the overcomer of Revelation 2 and 3, showing this immutable gift (eternal life) is the foundation of all the other inestimable blessings which Christ's victory has secured as the inheritance of those who by His grace are faithful unto death. Each victorious saint shall eat of "the tree of life"—that is, be unchangeably established in a state of eternal felicity and bliss.

"And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gen 3:22-24). This is the passage which carnal literalists have wrested to the perversion of the symbolical and spiritual significance of the "seal" of the covenant. By God's words, "lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever," they conclude that the property of that tree was to bestow *physical* immortality. We trust the reader will bear with us for mentioning such an absurdity, yet, inasmuch as it has obtained a wide hearing, a few words exposing its fallacy seem called for.

It was not the mere eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which was able *of itself* to impart any knowledge, rather was it that by taking of its fruit contrary to God's command, Adam and Eve obtained experimental acquaintance with the knowledge of evil *in themselves*, i.e., by experiencing the bitterness of God's curse, as previously, through their obedient abstinence, they had a personal knowledge of good, i.e., by experiencing the sweetness of God's blessing. In like manner, the mere eating of the tree of life could no more bestow physical immortality than feeding upon the heavenly manna immortalized the Israelites in the wilderness. Both of those trees were symbolical institutions, and by the sight of them Adam was reminded of the solemn yet blessed contents of the covenant of which they were the sign and the seal.

To suppose that the Lord God was apprehensive that our fallen parents would now eat of the tree of life and continue forever their earthly existence, is the very height of absurdity, for His sentence of death *had already* fallen upon them! What, then, did His words connote? First, had Adam remained obedient to God, he had been confirmed in a state of holiness and happiness—spiritual life would become his alienable possession, the divine pledge of which was this sacramental tree. But now that he had broken the covenant, he had forfeited all right to its blessings. It must be carefully borne in mind that by his fall Adam lost far more than physical immortality. Second, God banished Adam from Eden "lest" the poor, blinded, deceived man, now open to every error, should suppose that by eating of the tree of life, he might regain what he had irrevocably lost.

"So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gen 3:24). Unspeakably solemn is this. Thereby our first parent was prevented from profanely appropriating what did not belong to him, and thereby he was made the more conscious of the full extent of his wretchedness. His being *driven out from* the presence of the tree of life, and the guarding of the way thereto by the flaming sword, plainly intimated his irrevocable doom. Contrary to the prevailing idea, the writer believes that Adam was eternally lost. He is mentioned only once again in Genesis, where we read, "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in *his own* likeness" (Gen 5:3). He is solemnly *missing* from the witnesses of faith in Hebrews 11! He is

uniformly presented in the New Testament as the fountain-head of *death*, as Christ is of “life,” Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:22.

In its deeper significance, the tree of life was an emblem and type of Christ. “The tree of life signified the Son of God, not indeed as He is Christ and Mediator (that consideration being peculiar to *another* covenant), but inasmuch as He is the life of man in every condition, and the fountain of all happiness. And how well was it spoken by one who said that it became God from the first to represent, by an outward sign, *that Person* whom He loves, and for whose glory He has made and does make all things, that man even then might acknowledge Him as such. Wherefore Christ is called ‘the tree of life’ (Rev 22:2). What indeed He now is by His merit and efficacy, as Mediator, He would have always been as the Son of God, for, as *by Him* man was created and obtained an animal life, so, in like manner, he would have been transformed by Him and blessed with a heavenly life. Nor could He have been the life of the sinner, as Mediator, unless He had likewise been the life of man in his holy state, *as God*, having life in Himself, and being life itself” (Hermann Witsius).

Here, then, we believe was the first symbolical foreshadowment of Christ, set before the eyes of Adam and Eve in their sinless state, and a most suitable and significant emblem of Him was it. First, its very name obviously pointed to the Lord Jesus, of whom we read, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (Joh 1:4). Those words are to be taken in their widest latitude, *all* life is resident in Christ—natural life, spiritual life, resurrection life, eternal life. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phi 1:21) declares the saint—he lives *in* Christ (2Co 5:17), he lives *on* Christ (Joh 6:50-57), he shall for all eternity live *with* Christ (1Th 4:17). Second, the position it occupied, “in the midst of the garden” (Gen 2:9). Note how this detail is emphasized in Revelation 2:7, “in the midst of the paradise of God,” and “in the midst of the street” (Rev 22:2), and compare “in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb” (Rev 5:6). Christ is *the Centre* of heaven’s glory and blessedness.

Third, in its sacramental significance. In Eden the symbolic tree of life stood as the seal of the covenant, as the pledge of God’s faithfulness, as the ratification of His promises to Adam. So of the Antitype we read, “For all the promises of God in Him [Christ] are yea, and in him [Christ] Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2Co 1:20). Yes, it is in Christ that all the promises of the everlasting covenant are sealed and secured. Fourth, its attractiveness, “pleasant to the sight, and good for food” (Gen 2:9). Superlatively is that true of the Saviour—to the redeemed He is “Fairer than the children of men” (Psa 45:2), yea, “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16). And when the believer is favoured with a season of intimate communion with Him, what cause has he to say, “His fruit was sweet to my taste” (Song 2:3). Fifth, from the symbolic tree of life the apostate rebel was excluded (Gen 3:24), likewise from the antitypical tree of life shall every finally impenitent sinner be separated, “Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction *from the presence* of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2Th 1:9).

“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev 22:14). Here is the final mention of the tree of life in Scripture—in marked and blessed contrast from what is recorded in Genesis 3:22-24. There we behold the disobedient rebel, under the curse of God, divinely excluded from the tree of life, for under the old covenant no provision was made for man’s restoration. But here we see a company under the new covenant, pronounced “blessed” by God, having been given the spirit of obedience, that they might have right to enjoy the tree of life (Christ) for all eternity. That “right” is threefold—the right which divine promise has given them (Heb 5:9), the right of personal meetness (Heb 12:14), and the right of evidential credentials (Jam 2:21-25). None but those who,

having been made new creatures in Christ, *do* His commandments, will enter the heavenly Jerusalem, and be eternally regaled by the tree of life.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

3. Its Necessity

It is our earnest desire to write this article not in a theological or merely abstract way, but in a *practical* manner, in such a strain that it may please the Lord to speak through it to our needy hearts and search our torpid consciences. It is a most important branch of our subject, yet one from which we are prone to shrink, being very unpalatable to the flesh. Having been shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin (Psa 51:5), our hearts *naturally* hate holiness, being opposed to any experimental acquaintance with the same. As the Lord Jesus told the religious leaders of His day, “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light” (Joh 3:19), which may justly be paraphrased “men loved sin rather than holiness,” for in Scripture “darkness” is the emblem of sin—the evil one being denominated “the power of darkness,” as “light” is the emblem of the ineffably Holy One (1Jo 1:5).

But though by nature, man is opposed to the Light, it is written, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). To the same effect the Lord Jesus declared, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for *they* shall see God” (Mat 5:8). God will not call unto nearness with Himself those who are carnal and corrupt. “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amo 3:3). What concord can there be between an unholy soul and the thrice holy God? Our God is “glorious in holiness” (Exo 15:11), and therefore those whom He separates unto Himself must be suited to Himself, and be made “partakers of his holiness” (Heb 12:10). The whole of His ways with man exhibit this principle, and His Word continually proclaims that He is “not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee” (Psa 5:4).

By our fall in Adam, we lost not only the favour of God, but also the purity of our natures, and therefore we need to be both reconciled to God and sanctified in our inner man. There is now a spiritual leprosy spread over all our nature which makes us loathsome to God and puts us into a state of separation from Him. No matter what pains the sinner takes to be rid of his horrible disease, he does but hide and not cleanse it. Adam concealed neither his nakedness nor the shame of it by his fig-leaf contrivance—so those who have no other covering for their natural filthiness than the externals of religion rather proclaim than hide it. Make no mistake on this score—neither the outward profession of Christianity nor the doing of a few good works will give us access to the thrice Holy One. Unless we are washed by the Holy Spirit, and in the blood of Christ, from our native pollutions, we cannot enter the kingdom of glory.

Alas, with what *forms* of godliness, outward appearances, external embellishments are most people satisfied. How they mistake the shadows for the substance, the means for the end itself. How many devout Laodiceans are there who *know not* that they are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev 3:17). No preaching affects them, nothing will bring them

to exclaim with the prophet, “O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God” (Ezr 9:6). No, if they do but preserve themselves from the known guilt of such sins as are punishable among men, to all other things their conscience seems dead. They have no inward shame for anything between their souls and God, especially not for the depravity and defilement of their natures—of *that* they know, feel, bewail nothing.

“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness” (Pro 30:12). Although they had never been cleansed by the Holy Spirit, nor their hearts purified by faith (Act 15:9), yet they esteemed themselves to be pure, and had not the least sense of their foul defilement. Such a generation were the self-righteous Pharisees of Christ’s day. They were constantly cleansing their hands and cups, engaged in an interminable round of ceremonial washings, yet were they thoroughly ignorant of the fact that *within* they were filled with all manner of defilement (Mat 23:25-28). So is a generation of church-goers today. They are orthodox in their views, reverent in their demeanour, regular in their contributions, but they make no conscience of the the state of their hearts.

That sanctification or personal holiness which we here desire to show the absolute necessity of, lies in or consists of three things. First, that internal change or renovation of our souls whereby our minds, affections, and wills are brought into harmony with God. Second, that impartial compliance with the revealed will of God in all duties of obedience and abstinence from evil, issuing from a principle of faith and love. Third, that directing of all our actions unto the glory of God, by Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel. This, and nothing short of this, is evangelical and saving sanctification. The heart must be changed so as to be brought into conformity with God’s nature and will—its motives, desires, thoughts, and actions require to be purified. There must be a spirit of holiness working within so as to sanctify our outward performances if they are to be acceptable unto Him in whom “there is no darkness at all.”

Evangelical holiness consists not only in external works of piety and charity, but in pure thoughts, impulses, and affections of the soul, chiefly in that disinterested love from which all good works must flow if they are to receive the approbation of heaven. Not only must there be an abstinence from the execution of sinful lusts, but there must be a loving and delighting to do the will of God in a cheerful manner, obeying Him without repining or grudging against any duty, as if it were a grievous yoke to be borne. Evangelical sanctification is that holiness of heart which causes us to love God supremely, so as to yield ourselves wholly up to His constant service in all things, and to His disposal of us as our absolute Lord, whether it be for prosperity or adversity, for life or death, and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

This entire sanctification of our whole inner and outer man is absolutely indispensable. As there must be a change of *state* before there can be of *life*—“make the tree good, and his fruit [will be] good” (Mat 12:33)—so there must be sanctification before there can be glorification. Unless we are purged from the pollution of sin, we can never be fit for communion with God. “And there shall in no wise enter into it [the eternal dwelling place of God and His people] any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination” (Rev 21:27). “To suppose that an unpurged sinner can be brought into the blessed enjoyment of God, is to overthrow both the law and the Gospel, and to say that Christ died in vain” (John Owen, 1616-1683, Vol. 2: p. 511). Personal holiness is equally imperative as is the forgiveness of sins in order to eternal bliss.

Plain and convincing as should be the above statements, there is a class of professing Christians who wish to regard the justification of the believer as constituting almost the whole of his salvation, instead of its being only one aspect thereof. Such people delight to dwell upon the imputed righteousness of Christ, but they evince little or no concern about personal holiness. On

the other hand, there are not a few who in their reaction from a one-sided emphasis upon justification by grace through faith alone, have gone to the opposite extreme, making sanctification the sum and substance of all their thinking and preaching. Let it be solemnly realised that while a man may learn thoroughly the Scriptural doctrine of justification and yet not be *himself* justified before God, so he may be able to detect the crudities and errors of “the Holiness people,” and yet be completely unsanctified himself. But it is chiefly the first of these two errors we now desire to expose, and we cannot do better than quote at length from one who has most helpfully dealt with it.

“We are to look upon holiness as a very necessary *part of* that *salvation* that is received by faith in Christ. Some are so drenched in a covenant of works that they accuse us of making good works needless to salvation, if we will not acknowledge them to be necessary, either as *conditions to procure* an interest in Christ, or as *preparatives to fit us* for receiving Him by faith. And others, when they are taught by the Scriptures that we are saved by faith, even by faith without works, do begin to disregard all obedience to the law as not at all necessary to salvation, and do account themselves obliged to it only in point of gratitude—if it be wholly neglected, they doubt not but free grace will save them nevertheless. Yea, some are given up to such strong Antinomian delusions, that they account it a part of the liberty from bondage of the law purchased by the blood of Christ, to make no conscience of breaking the law in their conduct.

“One cause of these errors that are so contrary one to the other, is, that many are prone to imagine nothing else to be meant by ‘salvation’ but to be delivered from hell, and to enjoy heavenly happiness and glory. Hence they conclude that, if good works be *a means of* glorification, and precedent to it, they must also be precedent means of our whole salvation, and that, if they be not a necessary means of our *whole* salvation, they are not at all necessary to glorification. But though ‘salvation’ be often taken in Scripture *by way of eminency* for its perfection in the state of heavenly glory, yet, according to its full and *proper* signification, we are to understand by it all that freedom from the evil of our natural corrupt state, and all those holy and happy enjoyments that we receive from Christ our Saviour, either in this world by faith or in the world to come by glorification. Thus, justification, the gift of the Spirit to dwell in us, the privilege of adoption [deliverance from the *reigning* power of indwelling sin. A.W.P.] are *parts of* our ‘salvation’ which we partake of in this life. Thus also, the conformity of our hearts to the law of God, and the fruits of righteousness with which we are filled by Jesus Christ in this life, are *a necessary part of* our ‘salvation.’

“God saveth us from our sinful uncleanness *here*, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (Eze 36:29, Ti 3:5), as well as from hell hereafter. Christ was called Jesus, i.e., a Saviour—because He saves His people from their sins (Mat 1:21). Therefore, deliverance from our sins *is part of* our ‘salvation,’ which is begun in this life by justification and sanctification, and perfected by glorification in the life to come. Can we rationally doubt whether it be any proper part of our salvation by Christ to be quickened, so as to be enabled to live to God, when we were by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and to have the image of God in holiness and righteousness restored to us, which we lost by the Fall, and to be freed from a vile dishonourable slavery to Satan and our own lusts, and made the servants of God, and to be honoured so highly as to walk by the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit? and what is all this but holiness in heart and life?

“Conclude we, then, that holiness in this life *is absolutely necessary to salvation*, not only as a means to the end, but by a nobler kind of necessity—as part of the end itself. Though we are not saved by good works as *procuring* causes, yet we are saved to good works, as fruits and effects of

saving grace, ‘which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them’ (Eph 2:10). It is, indeed, one part of our salvation to be delivered from the bondage of the covenant of works, but the end of this is not that we may have liberty to sin (which is the worst of slavery) but that we may fulfill the royal law of liberty, and that ‘we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter’ (Rom 7:6). Yea, holiness in this life is such *a part of* our ‘salvation’ that it is *a necessary means* to make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in heavenly light and glory, for without holiness we can never see God (Heb 12:14), and are as unfit for His glorious presence as swine for the presence-chamber of an earthly king.

“The last thing to be noted in this direction is that holiness of heart and life is to be sought for earnestly *by faith* as a very necessary part of our ‘salvation.’ Great multitudes of ignorant people that live under the Gospel, harden their hearts in sin and ruin their souls forever, by trusting on Christ for such an *imaginary* ‘salvation’ as consisteth not at all *in holiness*, but only in forgiveness of sin and deliverance from everlasting torments. They would be free from the *punishments* due to sin, but they love their lusts so well that they hate holiness and desire not to be saved from the *service* of sin. The way to oppose this pernicious delusion is not to deny, as some do, that trusting on Christ for salvation is a saving act of faith, but rather to show that *none do* or can trust on Christ for *true* ‘salvation’ except they trust on Him *for holiness*. Neither do they heartily desire true salvation if they do not desire to be made holy and righteous in their hearts and lives. If ever God and Christ gave you ‘salvation,’ *holiness will be one part of it*—if Christ wash you not from the filth of your sins, you have no part with Him (Joh 13:8).

“What a strange kind of salvation do they desire that care not for holiness! They would be saved and yet be altogether dead in sin, aliens from the life of God, bereft of the image of God, deformed by the image of Satan, his slaves and vassals to their own filthy lusts, utterly unmeet for the enjoyment of God in glory. Such a salvation as that was never purchased by the blood of Christ, and those that seek it abuse the grace of God in Christ, and turn it into lasciviousness. They would be saved by Christ, and yet be *out* of Christ in a fleshly state, whereas God doth free none from condemnation but those that are in Christ, that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, or else they would divide Christ, and take a part of His salvation and leave out the rest—but Christ is not divided (1Co 1:13). They would have their sins forgiven, not that they may walk with God in love, in time to come, but that they may practice their enmity against Him without any fear of punishment. But let them not be deceived, God is not mocked. *They understand not what true salvation is*, neither were they ever yet thoroughly sensible of their lost estate, and of the great evil of sin, and that which they trust on Christ for is but an imagination of their own brains, and therefore their trusting is gross presumption.

“True Gospel-faith maketh us come to Christ with a thirsty appetite that we may drink of living water, even of His sanctifying Spirit (Joh 7:37-38), and cry out earnestly to Him to save us, not only from hell, but from sin, saying, ‘Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy Spirit is good’ (Psa 143:10). ‘Turn thou me, and I shall be turned’ (Jer 31:18). ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me’ (Psa 51:10). This is the way whereby the doctrine of salvation by grace doth necessitate us to holiness of life, by constraining us to seek for it by faith in Christ, *as a substantial part of* that ‘salvation’ which is freely given to us through Christ” (Walter Marshall, 1692).

The above is a much longer quotation than we usually make from others, but we could not abbreviate without losing much of its force. We have given it, not only because it is one of the clearest and strongest statements we have met with, but because it will indicate that the doctrine we are advancing is no novel one of our own, but one which was much insisted upon by the

Puritans. Alas, that so few today have any real Scriptural apprehension of what *salvation* really is. Alas that many preachers are substituting an imaginary “salvation” which is fatally deceiving the great majority of their hearers. Make no mistake upon this point, dear reader, we beg you—if your heart is yet unsanctified, you are still unsaved, and if you pant not after personal holiness, then you are without any real desire for *God’s* salvation.

The salvation which Christ purchased for His people includes both justification and sanctification. The Lord Jesus saves not only from the guilt and penalty of sin, but from the power and pollution of it. Where there is genuine longing to be freed from the love of sin, there is a true desire for *His* salvation, but where there is no practical deliverance from the service of sin, then we are strangers to His saving grace. Christ came here to “Perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life” (Luk 1:72-75). It is *by this* we are to test or measure ourselves—*are we* serving Him “in holiness and righteousness?” If we are not, we have not been sanctified, and if we are unsanctified, we are none of His.

UNION AND COMMUNION

2a. Divine Union

That which we shall seek to contemplate in this article is the revelation which God has made of Himself in His inspired Word. This ineffable subject is one which we must ever approach with bowed heads and reverent hearts, for the ground which we are to tread is indeed holy. The subject is transcendently sacred, for it is concerned with the infinite and majestic JEHOVAH. It is one of surpassing importance, for it is the foundation of all spiritual knowledge and faith. For any real light thereon, we are entirely shut up to what God has made known of Himself in His Word. Neither observation, science, or philosophy can, in this exalted sphere, advance our knowledge one iota. We can know no more thereon except what is set forth in Holy Writ, and that must be approached with the deepest humility and reverence, with the earnest prayer, “that which I see not teach thou me” (Job 34:32).

It is not sufficient to think of God as He may be conceived of in our imagination, instead, our thoughts of Him must be formed by what He has revealed of Himself in His Word. Man, unaided, cannot rightly conceive of God—all speculation concerning Him is utterly vain, yea, profane. The finite cannot comprehend the Infinite. If the “judgments” of God are “unsearchable” and if His “ways” are “past finding out,” how much more so must God Himself be! Even creation cannot fully teach us what God is, because no work is able to perfectly express the worker thereof. The heathen have creation spread before them, but what do they know of *God*! The ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, sought to delve deeply into the marvels and mysteries of “Nature,” but with all their boasted wisdom the deity was to them “the unknown God”!

It is of vast importance to the souls of God's believing people that they should have clear, spiritual, and divine knowledge of the true and living God. Without a scriptural acquaintance of the same, we are left without the very supports which are indispensable to found our faith upon. It is impossible to over-emphasize the momentousness of our present theme, for the truth thereon will alone direct us in worshipping God aright. If a person has erroneous thoughts of deity, then he worships a false god and renders homage to a fictitious being, the figment of his own imagination. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (Joh 17:3). That is unspeakably blessed. It is likewise unspeakably solemn—the man who knows not the "only true God" is destitute of eternal life!

Now as we turn to and examine the Holy Scriptures, we are at once impressed with their repeated and uniform emphasis upon the *unity* of God. In contrast from the polytheism (many gods) of the heathen, we read, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is *one* LORD" (Deu 6:4), and as we have seen above, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the *only* true God" (Joh 17:3). There can be but one infinite, self-existent Spirit, who reveals Himself as the great "I am," from whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things, to whom be glory forever. To think of two, or more, independent and supreme beings, would be to suppose a contradiction in terms, an utter impossibility. There can be but one *God*, with sovereign authority over all the works and creatures of His hands, having but one plan and a single administration. Such is indeed the teaching of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

But as we continue our examination of what God has revealed of Himself in His Holy Word, it is not long before we reach that which is profoundly mysterious, for side by side with its continuous emphasis on the *unity* of God, it also reveals *three* distinct divine Persons, namely, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Here we come to an infinite depth which we have no means of sounding, for while the Scriptures are unmistakably clear in their presentation of three divine Persons, nevertheless they are equally express in denying that there are three Gods. Though no attempt whatever is made in Scripture to explain this mystery, it is unmistakable in affirming it. In affirming that God is an absolute Unity in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, and all who refuse to bow to and acknowledge this ineffable truth must be eternally damned.

The incomprehensible nature of the truth which is now before us, so far from providing a valid motive for its rejection, supplies a most powerful argument for its being formally received. For if this truth be so sublime and mysterious, that even when revealed, it infinitely surpasses the feeble grasp of our finite powers, then it is very evident that it could never have been invented by men! What human wisdom cannot comprehend, human policy could never have proposed. It *must* have had some higher projector, and therefore the conclusion is unavoidable—in God alone we behold an adequate cause. "This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working" (Isa 28:29).

The first great truth, then, which is presented to faith—the foundation of everything—is the fact of the one living, eternal, and true God, and this we know not by any discovery of reason, but because He has Himself revealed it to our hearts through His Word. The next great truth is that the one living and true God has revealed Himself to us under the threefold relation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and this we know upon the same authority as the first. Both of these sublime truths are above reason yet their very transcendency so far from stumbling us, is a necessary condition of our confidence in the Scriptures and our faith in Him who is there revealed. Had the Scriptures professed to present a revelation of God which had no heights beyond our powers to scale, and no depth too deep for mental acumen to fathom, the writer for one would promptly

spurn them as the invention of man. Personally, I would no more worship a God that my intellect could measure, than I would an idol which my hands had manufactured.

“Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and *become as little children*, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 18:2-3). A hard lesson for proud man to learn is that, yet it *must be* learned (by grace) if any entrance is to be had into the things of God. It is at *this* point we may perceive one of the radical differences between the regenerate and unregenerate—*faith receives* what reason is unable to grasp. “Great God, I desire to fall down under the deepest self-abasement, in the consciousness of my own nothingness and ignorance before Thee! I bless the Lord for that degree of information He hath been pleased to give of Himself, while here below. It is enough! O for grace, ‘to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ Colossians 2:2-3” (Robert Hawker, 1810)—such is the language of every renewed heart.

Though the doctrine or truth of the divine Trinity is properly speaking a “mystery,” that affords no ground whatever for it to be disparaged by us. Some people seem to suppose that by the term “mystery,” reference is made to something of which they can at best form only a vague notion, that it pertains to the sphere of half-perceived shadows, in relation to which certainty is impossible, and that it has no *practical* connection with the solid elements of knowledge and real life. This is a great mistake. The word “mystery” in Scripture is applied to that which cannot be discovered by human reason, or arrived at by any speculation, but which can only be made known by *divine revelation*, and which can only be perceived so far as God has been pleased to unveil it. Just so far as spiritual “mysteries” *have been* disclosed by God, they become part of the real and solid knowledge of those by whom that revelation is humbly received.

It is in the Gospel that the three Persons in the Godhead are most clearly revealed, and their respective activities in the saving of the elect are most fully made known. “The Gospel represents *God the Father* as sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, as righteous Governor of the world, as giving laws to His creatures, as revealing His wrath against all transgressions. He is represented as being injured and offended by our sins, and concerned to maintain the honour of His majesty, of His law and government, and sacred authority. He is represented as having designs of mercy towards a sinful, guilty, ruined world, and as contriving and proposing a method of recovery. He is represented as one seated on a throne of grace, reconciling the world unto Himself by Christ, ordering pardon and peace to be proclaimed to any and all who will return to Him in the way prescribed.

“The Gospel represents *God the Son* as being constituted Mediator by His Father, that in and by Him He might open a way to accomplish His designs of mercy towards a guilty world, consistent with the honour of His majesty, of His holiness and justice, of His law and government. His Father appointed Him to the office, and He freely undertook it. His Father sent Him into this world to enter upon the difficult work, and He willingly came, ‘He was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’ Here He lived, and here He died, in the capacity of a Mediator. He arose, He ascended into heaven, and sits now at His Father’s right hand, God-man Mediator, exalted to the highest honour, made Lord of all things, and Judge of the world. And now we are to have access to God by Him, as our Mediator, High Priest, Intercessor, and Advocate, who has made complete atonement for sins in the days of His abasement, and has now sufficient interest in the court of heaven.

“The Gospel represents *God the Holy Spirit* as being sent of the Father as prime Agent, and by the Son as Mediator, in the character of an enlightener and sanctifier, in order to bring sinners

effectually to see and be made sensible of their sin, guilt, and ruin, to believe the Gospel, to trust in Christ, and to return home to God through Him. It is His office to dwell in believers, to teach and lead them, to sanctify, strengthen, comfort, and keep them through faith unto salvation.

“The Father is God by nature, and God by office. The Son is God by nature, and Mediator by office. The Spirit is God by nature, and sanctifier by office. The Father as Governor, Law-Giver, and Avenger, has all power in heaven and earth, in and of Himself, Matthew 11:25. The Son as Mediator derives all His authority from the Father, Matthew 11:27. The Holy Spirit acts as being sent by them both, John 14:16. The Father maintains the honour of the Godhead and of His government, displaying His grace while ordaining that sin should be punished, the sinner humbled, and brought back to God and into subjection into His will. Sin is punished in the Son as Mediator, standing in the room of the guilty. The sinner is humbled and brought into subjection to God’s will by the Holy Spirit. Thus the Son and the Spirit honour the Father as supreme Governor, and all join in the same design to discountenance sin, humble the sinner, and glorify grace” (Joseph Bellamy, 1780).

By affirming that the three divine Persons are more clearly revealed in the Gospel than elsewhere, it is *not* to be understood that the Old Testament saints were left in ignorance of this blessed and foundation truth. That could not be, or otherwise it had been impossible for them to know God, or to worship Him intelligently and acceptably. God must be *revealed* before He can (in any measure) be known, and He must be *known* in the distinctions of His Persons, before He can be loved and adored. Those who find it hard to conceive of the Old Testament saints possessing a clear evangelical knowledge of the mystery of the Trinity, create their own difficulty by supposing the Gospel is peculiar to the New Testament dispensation. This is a serious mistake. Hebrews 4:2 declares, “For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto *them*”—that is, unto Israel in the wilderness, see the closing verses of Hebrews 3. To go back further still, Galatians 3:8 tells us, that God, “preached before *the gospel* unto Abraham.”

The glorious truth of the three Persons in the Godhead is to be found as definitely and as frequently in the Old Testament as it is in the New. On the very first page of Holy Writ it is recorded, “And God said, Let *US* make man in *OUR* image, after *OUR* likeness” (Gen 1:26). How clearly do the plural pronouns there reveal the fact that there is *more* than one Person in the Godhead! Nor is Genesis 1:26 by any means the only passage in the Old Testament where the plural pronoun is used of God. After Adam had fallen, we find Him saying, “Behold, the man is become as one of *Us*, to know good and evil” (Gen 3:22)—probably that was the language of irony—God’s answer to the serpent’s lie in Genesis 3:5. Again, in response to the impiety of those who had said, “Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven” (Gen 11:4), the Lord said, “Go to, let *Us* go down, and there confound their language” (Gen 11:7).

Once more, in that marvelous vision granted unto Isaiah, wherein he saw the Lord “seated upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple,” before whom the seraphim veiled their faces, the prophet “heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall *I* send, and who will go for *Us*?” (Isa 6:8). Very wonderful is that “*I*” and “*Us*,” intimating the divine unity in Trinity, and the trinity in Unity. It is striking to note that the employment of this plural pronoun in connection with the Godhead, as it is consecrated by the Spirit of truth in use with the Persons in the divine essence, is employed by *each* of them to each other. By the Father in Genesis 1:26—cf. Ephesians 3:9, the Father being the *Creator* “by Jesus Christ;” by the Son in Genesis 11:7, for to Him all *judgment* is committed (Joh 5:22); by the Spirit in Isaiah 6:8, see Acts 28:26 and cf. Acts 13:2!

The Hebrew *noun* is in the plural number in each of these verses, “Remember now thy *Creator[s]* in the days of thy youth” (Ecc 12:1); “For thy *Maker[s]* are thine husband” (Isa 54:5); “Let the children of Zion be joyful in their *King[s]*” (Psa 149:2); “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the *holy [ones]* is understanding” (Pro 9:10)—according to the rule of Hebrew parallelism, it is obvious that “holy [ones]” is exegetical of “JEHOVAH.” Surely there is more than a hint of the divine Trinity in the benediction of Numbers 6:24-26, “*The LORD* bless thee, and keep thee: *the LORD* make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: *the LORD* lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” Also in the “Holy, holy, holy” of the seraphim in Isaiah 6:3. In Isaiah 48:16, we hear the Messiah saying, “Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the (1) Lord GOD, and (2) his spirit, hath sent (3) me.” “So *the spirit* took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of *the LORD* filled the house. And I heard *him* speaking unto me out of the house; and *the man* stood by me” (Eze 43:5-6). While the prophet was adoring the manifest glory of God, the Spirit conducted him into the inner chamber, while beside him stood the One who had been instructing him—“The man,” see Ezekiel 40:3. Thus the prophet had a vision of the three Persons in the Godhead, manifesting in different ways their presence with him.

A plurality of Persons in the Godhead was also indicated in such passages as, “Then *the LORD* rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire *from the LORD* out of heaven” (Gen 19:24); “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand” (Psa 110:1); “And *the LORD* said unto Satan, *The LORD* rebuke thee” (Zec 3:2). “Be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith *the LORD* of hosts: According to *the word* that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so *my spirit* remaineth among you” (Hag 2:4-5). The first Person in the sacred Trinity was known to the Old Testament saints as *the Father*. From a number of passages we select the following, “But now, O LORD, thou art our father” (Isa 64:8). The second Person in the Trinity was revealed as *the Son*, “The LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son” (Psa 2:7), and also as *the word*, “By *the word of the LORD* were the heavens made” (Psa 33:6) and cf. Genesis 15:1 and 1 Kings 19:9 where the essential and personal “word” is in view. The third Person in the Trinity was revealed as *the Holy Spirit*, “The spirit of the LORD” (1Sa 16:13).

“Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show *us* what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that *we* may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare *us* things for to come” (Isa 41:21-22). A truly remarkable passage is that, with it may be compared, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and *we* will come unto him, and make *our* abode with him” (Joh 14:23). “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit” (Isa 57:15)—the “high and lofty *one*”—one in the inseparable unity of the divine essence; “that inhabiteth eternity”—thus distinguished from all creatures; “dwelling in the high and lofty place”—true of the Father (1Ki 8:27), of the Son (Jer 23:24—see v. 6), of the Spirit (Psa 139:7-8); *indwelling His people*—true of the Father (2Co 6:16, 18), of the Son (Col 1:27), of the Spirit (1Co 6:19).

The title “JEHOVAH”—applied to the Father (Psa 110:1), the Son (Jer 23:6), and the Holy Spirit (2Sa 23:2)—is *always* in the *singular* number, having no plural form, being expressive of the Unity of the divine nature. Yet we frequently find it employed with the plural “Elohim” (God), and with plural pronouns and verbs—a thing which could never have been done consistent

with the laws of grammar, except for the purpose of proving thereby, what all the parts of Scripture concur in, that JEHOVAH, though but One in the essence of the Godhead, is nevertheless existing at the same time in a plurality or trinity of Persons. That the great God should subsist in a way *entirely different* and perfectly distinguished from all His creatures in a trinity of Persons in the unity of His essence should not stagger us, but should bow our hearts before Him in adoring wonder and worship.

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD” (Deu 6:4). This very verse which is quoted so much by “Unitarians,” in their hatred of the blessed truth which we are here endeavouring to set forth, would be quite meaningless were there no Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. It is self-evident that there is no need whatever for any *divine revelation* to teach us that *one is one*—had this text meant nothing more than that, it had been superfluous information. But inasmuch as “Elohim” (God) is in the plural number, it *was* necessary for the deity to make known unto His people that the three divine Persons are but *one* “Lord” or JEHOVAH. That Israel apprehended (in some measure, at any rate) this mystery of the great One in Three, is strikingly manifested by the fact that when Aaron made the single golden calf, the people addressed it in the *plural* number, “These be thy *gods*, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (Exo 32:4)!!

SPIRITUAL ONENESS

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (Joh 17:20-21). There appears to be considerable confusion in the minds of many today as to the meaning of “that they all may be one,” so much so that some of God’s dear children are in danger of espousing a view which is very dishonouring to Christ. Whatever be the real and full meaning of this petition in our Lord’s high priestly prayer, it certainly must not be interpreted in any such manner as to repudiate His own words to the Father in John 11:42, “And I knew that thou hearest me always.” Yet, those who constantly emphasize the differences which exist among God’s people come perilously near to committing this very sin.

Now it is obvious at the outset that, in order to understand this petition of Christ’s, attention needs to be carefully directed unto the following points—first, *for whom* was He here praying? Second, what was *the precise character* of the “oneness” for which He here prayed? Once these questions are rightly answered, much uncertainty and mistaken conception will be cleared away. Nor is it at all difficult to discover the right answers to these inquiries. They call for no protracted searching, but lie right on the surface itself, and once they are pointed out, the simplest believer should have no difficulty in perceiving their correctness. It is our desire herein to call attention to what is quite plain, and very satisfying to the hearts of those who desire their thoughts to be formed by what God has revealed in His Word, rejecting those human ideas which are contrary thereto.

First, then, for whom was our Lord praying when He asked, “that they all may be one?” Let us begin with the negative answer—Christ was *not* here supplicating for the union or unity of Christendom. It seems strange then there should be any need for us to make this assertion, yet for generations past not a few have deplored the divisions in “the professing church” as being contrary to that upon which the Saviour here set His heart, and zealous efforts have been made to unify discordant elements under the idea they were promoting the accomplishment of His desire. But such “zeal” was “not according to knowledge” and therefore we need not be surprised at the absence of God’s blessing upon such labours. Rather should the lack of His benediction at once make us suspicious of the Scripturalness of their enterprises.

“I pray for them: *I pray not for the world*, but for them which thou hast given me” (Joh 17:9). There is no ambiguity about these words, no excuse for not understanding their purport. They plainly enough define the objects Christ had before Him when interceding with the Father. Neither the profane world, nor the professing world, came within the scope of His high priestly requests, as He declared by the Spirit of prophecy centuries beforehand, “Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, *nor take up their names into my lips*” (Psa 16:4). Solemn indeed is this—Christendom, as such, never has been the object of Christ’s intercession. His petitions are limited unto those which the Father “gave Him” before the foundation of the world. So it was in the type, on the breastplate of Aaron were inscribed not the names of the nations of Canaan, but only the twelve tribes of Israel.

It should be clear, then, from what has been pointed out above, that the divisions of Christendom, the conflicting systems and parties which claim to be Christian, in no wise clashes with this request of the Redeemer’s “that they all may be one,” nor is the present “strife of tongues” in the religious realm any proof that His prayer yet remains unanswered. Far from it, for the simple but sufficient reason that *it was not for the oneness of Christendom* that the Lord Jesus here prayed. We say again, that once this simple and introversible fact be grasped much uncertainty and error disappears like the morning mists before the rising sun. If the divisions of Christendom were a hundred times more marked and bitter than they are now, that would in no wise conflict with Christ’s petition. And if all those breaches were closed and the whole of Christendom united in belief and practice, that would not to the slightest degree evidence the fulfillment thereof.

Secondly, exactly *what was* the “oneness” for which Christ here prayed? Again we will begin with the negative—certainly not for any external or organized oneness. Christ was not here supplicating for any visible or ecclesiastical union or unity, such as many have supposed is the great desideratum. It is to be deplored that there should be any need for us to assert this, yet, for many years past there have been those who decried the sectarian differences in Christendom as being opposed to what Christ so much desired, and various devices have been resorted to for breaking down the separating walls in the belief that this would secure the answer to the Saviour’s prayer. But this is as far from the truth as is the idea that the Lord was here praying for Christendom as a whole.

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” (Joh 17:21). There is nothing dark or uncertain in this language. It clearly signifies the nature of that “oneness” for which Christ is interceding. It was a spiritual and divine oneness, such as existed between Himself and the Father, a mystical and invisible union. This is brought out with equal explicitness in an earlier verse of the same chapter, “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, *as we are*” (Joh 17:11). Thus, that union and communion among the elect for which Christ prayed, had for its pattern or

similitude, the union and communion which existed between the Mediator and the Father, and that is neither a material nor external one.

“That the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (Joh 17:21). It is failure to understand this last clause which has led many to an erroneous interpretation of the whole verse. It has been supposed that the divided state of Christendom is the principal hindrance in the way of the world’s acceptance of the Gospel, and that if only the spirit of sectarianism could be banished from the earth, unbelief would be at an end. Such day-dreamers seem to have forgotten that at the beginning of this dispensation there *was* a manifested unity among all those who bore the name of Christ, “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common” (Act 4:32)—yet that was very far from effecting any change in the world’s attitude toward God and His Christ.

Let it be carefully noted Christ did not say, “That they also may be one in us, that the world may believe *in me*,” but “that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” And *when* will “the world,” (i.e., that “world” for which He prays not in verse 9) believe that Christ is the One sent by the Father? when will the ungodly be convicted of the verity of His claims? The only possible answer is, In the last great day, when before an assembled universe Christ shall present His people “faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 1:24). Then will the enemies of the Lord have such outward proof of the union and communion subsisting between Himself and the church as no longer to disbelieve the truth of it—only they will not believe and be saved, but instead believe and be damned.

That union and unity between His people for which the great High Priest prayed was not a visible one, but an invisible—not a material, but a spiritual one. It is a union in grace now, and a union in glory hereafter. It was not the unity of churches, but the unity of *the church* for which our Lord supplicated the Father. Nor has His prayer remained unanswered all these nineteen centuries. No, indeed. All His blood-bought people *are* welded together in a way and to a degree which no other company is or can be. As it is written, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are *all one* in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28)—note not “shall be,” but “*are all one* in Christ Jesus.”

Nor is the union of the redeemed *only* a mystical one during this present era. Even now there is a oneness among all the truly regenerate on everything that is vital and fundamental. All real Christians believe firmly in the divine inspiration and authority of Scriptures, in the unity and trinity of the Godhead, in the deity and sinless humanity of Christ, in the sufficiency of His atoning sacrifice as the alone ground of their acceptance with God, in His exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty on high, the prevalency of His intercession, of His returning in glory and final judgment of the wicked. Yes, on “the foundations” of the faith, *all* God’s people take their firm stand, and for this He should be fervently praised. Instead of dwelling so much upon minor things—concerning which God’s children, most probably, never will all see eye to eye down here—we should be occupied with the major things which we all enjoy in common.

What so many have clamoured for is neither union nor unity, but uniformity—absolute likeness in belief and practice. But such a desire ignores one of the principle characteristics in all God’s works, instead of uniformity, there is endless variety in all creatures of His hands. There are no two minds alike, no two faces, no two voices—nay, no two blades of grass. True, there are many species having one common genus, many different sounds or notes which combine in harmony, behind incidental variations there is an underlying unity. So it is in the spiritual realm. The eleven Galileans were equally the apostles of the Lamb and were loved alike by Him. They

all followed, trusted in, and loved the same Lord and Saviour, yet each had a distinct individuality, and no two of them were alike in all things.

Whatever blame may or may not rest upon men for the existence of the various evangelical denominations in Christendom, let not the superintending hand of God therein be lost sight of. In our readiness to criticize former leaders—which charity requires us to believe were at least equally devoted to the Lord and as anxious to conform to His Word as we are—we need to be much on our guard lest we be found quarreling with divine providence. While it be true that a measure of failure marks whatever God entrusted to men, yet let it not be forgotten that “*Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things*: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom 11:36). We are either very ignorant of history or superficial readers thereof, if we fail to perceive the guiding hand of God and His “manifold wisdom” in the appointing and blessing of the leading evangelical denominations.

“There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification” (1Co 14:10). Yes, and while those different voices may not all sound the same note, yet if they be pitched to the same key, they harmonize. The present writer is not prepared to hold a brief in defence of every peccadillo in any denomination, system, or company of professing Christians. On the other hand, he desires to freely recognize and gladly own whatever is of God in all of them. Though himself unattached ecclesiastically, and a partisan of no single group, he wishes to have Christian fellowship with any and all who love the Lord and whose daily walk evidences a sincere desire to please Him. We have lived long enough and traveled sufficiently to discover that no one “church,” company, or man, has all the truth, and as we grow older we have less patience with those who demand that others must adopt *their* interpretation of Scripture on all points.

There should be a happy medium between sectarian narrowness and the world’s “broadmindedness,” between deliberately compromising the truth and turning away from some of the Lord’s people because they differ from us on non-essentials. Shall I refuse to partake of a meal because some of the dishes are not cooked as I like them? Then why decline fellowship with a brother in the Lord because he is unable to pronounce correctly my favourite shibboleth? It is not without reason that “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” is immediately preceded by “forbearing one another in love” (Eph 4:2-3). Probably there is as much if not more in me that my brother has to “bear” with, as there is in him which grates upon me. As good old Matthew Henry said, “The consideration of being agreed in greater things should extinguish all feuds over lesser ones.”

In conclusion, let us anticipate an objection. “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1Co 1:10). More has been built upon this verse than it will legitimately sustain. The next two verses show plainly the scope of this exhortation. It was a word against party strifes which alienated brethren belonging to the same local church. To be “perfectly joined together” in this verse signifies a union in faith and love, and nothing further than a *general* and fundamental oneness of judgment can fairly be gathered from it. Where there is, by grace, an agreement in all vital things, there should be a charitable bearing with differences of lesser importance. The Lord mercifully preserve both writer and reader from aiding Satan and doing his work by fomenting division. “Hast *thou* faith? *have it to thyself before God*. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth” (Rom 14:22).

April

THE HOLY SPIRIT

27. The Spirit Uniting to Christ

One of the principal ends or designs of the Gospel is the communication to God's elect of those benefits or blessings which are in the Redeemer, but the communication of benefits necessarily implies communion, and all communion as necessarily presupposes union with His Person. Can I be rich with another man's money, or advanced by another man's honours? Yes, if that other be my surety, or my husband. Peter could not be justified by the righteousness of Paul, but both could be justified by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, seeing they are both knit to one common Head. Principal and surety are one in obligation and construction of law. Head and members are one body, branch and stock are one tree, and a slip will live by the sap of another stock when once engrafted into it. We must, then, be *united to Christ* before we can receive any benefits *from Him*.

Now there are two kinds of union between Christ and His people—a judicial and a vital, or a legal and a spiritual. The first is that union which was made by God between the Redeemer and the redeemed, when He was appointed their federal Head. It was a union in law, in consequence of which He represented them and was responsible for them, the benefits of His transactions redounding to them. It may be illustrated by the case of suretyship among men. A relation is formed between the surety and that person for whom he engages, by which the two are thus far considered as one—the surety being liable for the debt which the other has contracted, and his payment is held as the payment of the debtor, who is thereby absolved from all obligation to the creditor. A similar connection is established between Christ and those who had been given to Him by the Father.

But something farther was necessary in order to the actual enjoyment of the benefits procured by Christ's representation. God, on whose sovereign will the whole economy of grace is founded, had determined not only that His Son should sustain the character of their Surety, but that there should be also a vital as well as legal relation between them, as the foundation of communion with Him in all the blessings of His purchase. It was His good pleasure that as they were one in law, they should be also one spiritually, that Christ's merit and grace might not only be imputed, but also imparted to them, as the holy oil poured on the head of Aaron descended to the skirt of his garments. It is this latter, this vital and spiritual union, which the Christian has with Christ, that we now purpose to treat of.

The preaching of the Gospel by the ambassadors of the Lord Jesus is the instrument appointed for the reconciling or bringing home of sinners to God in Christ. This is clear from Romans 10:14 and 1 Corinthians 1:21, and more particularly from 2 Corinthians 5:20, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” But, as we have pointed out in previous papers, the mere preaching of the Word—no matter how faithfully—will never bring a single rebel to the feet of Christ in penitence, confidence, and allegiance. No, for *that* there must be the special and supernatural workings of the Holy Spirit. Only thus are any actually drawn to Christ to receive Him as Lord and Saviour, and only as this fact is carefully kept prominently before us does the blessed Spirit have His true place in our hearts and minds.

“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power” (Psa 110:3). It is by moral suasion—“with cords of a man” (Hos 11:4)—that the Holy Spirit draws men to Christ. Yet by moral persuasion we must not understand a simple and bare proposal or tender of Christ, leaving it still to the sinner’s choice whether he will comply with it or no. For though God does not force the will contrary to its nature, nevertheless He puts forth a real efficacy when He “draws,” which consists of an immediate operation of the Spirit upon the heart and will, whereby its native rebellion and reluctance is removed, and from a state of unwillingness the sinner is made willing to come to Christ. This is clear from Ephesians 1:19-20 which we quote below.

“And 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 in the heavenly places.” Here is much more than a mere proposal made to the will. There is the putting forth of divine power, great power, yea the exceeding greatness of God’s power, and this power hath a sure and certain efficacy ascribed to it. God works upon the hearts and wills of His people “according to the working of his mighty power, which he *wrought in Christ*, when he raised him from the dead”—both are *miracles* of divine might. Thus God fulfills “all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith *with power*” (2Th 1:11). Unless the “arm of the LORD” is revealed (Isa 53:1) none believe His “report.”

Spiritual union with Christ, then, is effected both by the *external* preaching of the Gospel and the *internal* “drawing” of the Father. Let us now take note of the *bands* by which Christ and the believer are knit together. These bands are two in number, being the Holy Spirit on Christ’s part, and faith on our part. The Spirit on Christ’s part is His quickening us with spiritual life, whereby Christ first takes hold of us. Faith on our part, when thus quickened, is that whereby we take hold of Christ. We must first be “apprehended” (laid hold of) by Christ, before we can apprehend Him, Philippians 3:12. No vital act of faith can be exercised till a vital principle be first communicated to us. Thus, Christ is in the believer by His Spirit, the believer is in Christ by faith. Christ is in the believer by inhabitation, the believer is in Christ by implantation (Rom 6:3-5). Christ is in the believer as the head is in the body, we are in Christ as the members are in the head.

“He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” with Him (1Co 6:17). The same Spirit which is in the Head is in the members of His mystical body, a vital union being effected between them. Christ is in heaven, we upon earth, but the Spirit being omnipresent is the connecting link. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles” (1Co 12:13)—what could be plainer than that? “Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit” (1Jo 4:13). Thus, Christ is unto His people a Head not only of government, but also of *influence*. Though the ties which connect the Redeemer and the redeemed are spiritual and invisible, yet are they so real and intimate that He lives in them and they live in

Him, for “the Spirit of life *in Christ Jesus* hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2).

“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom 8:11), and this, because the Spirit is the bond of union between us and Christ. Because there is the same Spirit in the Head and in His members, He will therefore work the same effects in Him and in us. If the Head rise, the members will follow after, for they are appointed to be conformed unto Him (Rom 8:29)—in obedience and suffering now, in happiness and glory hereafter. Christ was raised by the Spirit of holiness (Rom 1:4) and so shall we be—the earnest of which we have already received when brought from death unto life.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

88. Chastisement (12:6)

The problem of suffering is a very real one in this world, and to not a few of our readers a personal and acute one. While some of us are freely supplied with comforts, others are constantly exercised over procuring the bare necessities of life. While some of us have long been favoured with good health, others know not what it is to go through a day without sickness and pain. While some homes have not been visited by death for many years past, others are called upon again and again to pass through the deep waters of family bereavement. Yes, dear friend, the problem of suffering, the encountering of severe trials, is a very personal thing for not a few of the members of the household of faith. Nor is it the *external* afflictions which occasion the most anguish—it is the questioning they raise, the doubts they stimulate, the dark clouds of unbelief which they so often bring over the heart.

Very often it is in seasons of trial and trouble that Satan is most successful in getting in his evil work. When he perceives the uselessness of attempting to bring believers under the bondage in which he keeps unbelievers, he bides his time for the shooting at them of other arrows which he has in his quiver. Though he is unable to drag them down to the commission of the grosser outward forms of sin, he waits his opportunity for tempting them to be guilty of inward sins. Though he cannot infect them with the poison of evolutionism and higher criticism, he despairs not of seducing them with questionings of God’s goodness. It is when adversity comes the Christian’s way, when sore trials multiply, when the soul is opposed, and the mind distressed that the devil seeks to instill and strengthen doubtings of God’s love, and to call into question the faithfulness of His promises.

Moreover, there come seasons in the lives of many saints when to sight and sense it *seems* as though God Himself had ceased to care for His needy and afflicted child. Earnest prayer is made for the mitigation of the sufferings, but relief is not granted. Grace is sought to meekly bear the burden which has been laid upon the suffering one, yet, so far from any sensible answer being

received, self-will, impatience, unbelief, are more active than ever. Instead of the peace of God ruling the heart, unrest and enmity occupy its throne. Instead of quietness within, there is turmoil and resentment. Instead of “giving thanks always for all things unto God” (Eph 5:20), the soul is filled with unkind thoughts and feelings against Him. This is cause for anguish unto the renewed heart, yet, at times, struggle against the evil as the Christian may, he is overcome by it.

Then it is that the afflicted one cries out, “Why standest thou *afar off*, O LORD? why *hidest* thou thyself in times of trouble?” (Psa 10:1). To the distressed saint, the Lord seems to *stand* still, as if He coldly looked on from a distance, and did not sympathize with the afflicted one. Nay, worse, the Lord appears to be *afar off*, and no longer “a very present help in trouble” (Psa 46:1), but rather an inaccessible mountain, which it is impossible to reach. The felt presence of the Lord is the stay, the strength, the consolation of the believer. The lifting up of the light of His countenance upon us is what sustains and cheers us in this dark world. But when *that* is withheld, when we no longer have the joy of His presence with us, drab indeed is the prospect, sad the heart. It is the *hiding* of our Father’s face which cuts to the quick. When trouble *and desertion* come together, it is unbearable.

Then it is that the word comes to us, “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him” (Heb 12:5). Ah, it is easy for us to perceive the meetness of such an admonition as this while things are going smoothly and pleasantly for us. While our lot is congenial, or at least bearable, we have little difficulty in discerning what a sin it is for any Christian to either “despise” God’s chastenings or to “faint” beneath them. But when tribulation comes upon us, when distress and anguish fill our hearts, it is quite another matter. Not only do we become guilty of one of the very evils here dehorted from, but we are very apt to excuse and extenuate our peevishness or faintness. There is a tendency in all of us to pity ourselves, to take sides with ourselves against God, and even to justify the uprisings of our hearts against Him.

Have we never, in self-vindication, said “Well, after all we are *human*. It is *natural* that we should chafe against the rod or give way to despondency when we are afflicted. It is all very well to tell us that we *should not*, but how can we help ourselves? we cannot change our natures. We are frail men and women, and not angels.” And what has been the issue from the fruit of this self-pity and self-vindication? Review the past, dear friend, and recall how you felt and acted inwardly when God was tearing up your cozy nest, overturning your cherished plans, dashing to pieces your fondest hopes, afflicting you painfully in your affairs, your body, or your family circle. Did it not issue in calling into question the wisdom of God’s ways, the justice of His dealings with you, His kindness towards you? Did it not result in your having still stronger doubts of His very goodness?

In Hebrews 12:5, the Christian is cautioned against either despising the Lord’s chastenings or fainting beneath them. Yet, notwithstanding this plain warning, there remains a tendency in all of us not only to disregard the same, but to act contrary thereto. The apostle anticipates this evil, and points out the remedy. The mind of the Christian must be fortified against it. But how? By calling to remembrance *the source* from which all his testings, trials, tribulations, and troubles proceed, namely, the blessed, wondrous, unchanging love of God. “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him” (Heb 12:5). And then verse 6, “FOR whom the Lord *loveth* he chasteneth.” Here a reason is advanced why we *should not* despise God’s chastening nor faint beneath it—all proceeds from His *love*. Yes, even the bitter disappointments, the sore trials, the things which occasion an aching heart, are not only appointed by unerring wisdom, but are sent by infinite Love! It is the apprehension and appropriation of this glorious fact, and that alone, which will preserve us from both the evils forbidden in verse 5.

The way to victory over suffering is to keep sorrow from filling the soul, “Let not your *heart* be troubled” (Joh 14:1). So long as the waves wash only the deck of the ship, there is no danger of its foundering, but when the tempest breaks through the hatches and submerges the hold, then disaster is nigh. No matter what floods of tribulation break over us, it is our duty and our privilege to have peace within, “Keep thy *heart* with all diligence” (Pro 4:23). Suffer no doubtings of God’s wisdom, faithfulness, goodness, to take root there. But how am I to prevent their so doing? “Keep yourselves in the love of God” (Jude 1:21) is the inspired answer, the sure remedy, the way to victory. There, in one word, we have made known to us the secret of how to overcome all questionings of God’s providential ways, all murmurings against His dealings with us.

“Keep yourselves in the love of God” (Jud 1:21). It is as though a parent said to his child, “Keep yourself in the sunshine.” The sun shines whether he enjoys it or no, but he is responsible not to walk in the shade and thus lose its genial glow. So God’s love for His people abides unchanging, but how few of them keep themselves in the warmth of it. The saint is to be “rooted and grounded in love” (Eph 3:17)—“rooted” like a tree in rich and fertile soil—“grounded” like a house built upon a rock. Observe that both of these figures speak of *hidden* processes. The root-life of a tree is concealed from human eyes, and the foundations of a house are laid deep in the ground. Thus it should be with each child of God—the heart is to be fixed, nourished by the love of God.

It is one thing to believe intellectually that “God is love” and that He loves His people, but it is quite another to enjoy and live in that love in the soul. To be “rooted and grounded in love” means to have a settled assurance of God’s love for us, such an assurance as nothing can shake. This is the deep need of every Christian, and no pains are to be spared in the obtaining thereof. Those passages in Scripture which speak of the wondrous love of God should be read frequently and meditated upon daily. There should be a diligent striving to apprehend God’s love more fully and richly. Dwell upon the many unmistakable proofs which God has made of His love to you—the gift of His Word, the gift of His Son, the gift of His Spirit. What greater, what clearer proofs do we require! Steadfastly resist every temptation to question His love, “Keep yourselves *in* the love of God.” Let *that* be the realm in which you live, the atmosphere you breathe, the warmth in which you thrive.

This life is but a schooling. In saying this we are uttering a platitude, yet it is a truth of which all Christians need to be constantly reminded. This is the period of our childhood and minority. Now in childhood everything has, or should have, the character of education and discipline. Dear parents and teachers are constantly directing, warning, rebuking—the whole of the child-life is under rule, restraint, and guidance. But the only object is the child himself—his good, his character, his future, and the only motive is love. Now as childhood is to the rest of our life, so is the whole of our earthly sojourn to our future and heavenly life. Therefore let us seek to cultivate the spirit of childhood. Let us regard it as natural that we *should be* daily rebuked and corrected. Let us behave with the docility and meekness of children, with their trustful and sweet assurance that *love* is behind all our chastenings, that we are in the tender hands of our Father.

But if this attitude is to be maintained, *faith* must be kept in steady exercise. Only thus shall we judge aright of afflictions. Sense is ever ready to slander and belie the divine perfections. Sense beclouds the understanding and causes us to wrongly interpret God’s dispensations with us. Why so? Because sense estimates things from their outside and by their present feeling. “No chastening *for the present* seemeth to be joyous, but grievous” (Heb 12:11), and therefore if when under the rod we judge of God’s love and care for us by our *sense of* His present dealings, we are likely to conclude that He has but little regard for us. Herein lies the urgent need for the putting

forth of faith, for faith is “the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). *Faith* is the only remedy for this double evil. Faith interprets things not according to the outside or visible, but according to the promise. Faith looks upon providences not as a present disconnected piece, but in its entirety to the end of things.

Sense perceives in our trials naught but expressions of God’s disregard or anger, but faith can discern divine wisdom and love in the sorest troubles. Faith is able to unfold the riddles and solve the mysteries of providence. Faith can extract honey and sweetness out of gall and wormwood. Faith discerns that God’s heart is filled with love toward us, even when His hand is heavy and smarts upon us. The bucket goes down into the well the deeper, that it may come up the fuller. Faith perceives God’s design in the chastening is our good. It is through faith “that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is!” (Job 11:6). By the “secrets of wisdom” is meant the *hidden* ways of God’s providence. Divine providence has two faces—the one of rigor, the other of clemency. Sense looks upon the former only, faith enjoys the latter.

Faith not only looks beneath the surface of things and sees the sweet orange beneath the bitter rind, but it looks beyond the present and anticipates the blessed sequel. Of the Psalmist it is recorded, “I said *in my haste*, I am cut off from before thine eyes” (Psa 31:22). The fumes of passion dim our vision when we look only at what is present. Asaph declared, “My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked” (Psa 73:2-3), but when he went into the sanctuary of God he said, “Then understood I *their end*” (Psa 73:17), and that quieted him. Faith is occupied not with the scaffolding, but with the completed building; not with the medicine, but with the healthful effects it produces; not with the painful rod, but with the peaceable fruit of righteousness in which it issues.

Suffering, then, is a test of the heart. Chastisement is a challenge to faith—our faith in His wisdom, His faithfulness, His love. As we have sought to show above, the great need of the Christian is to keep himself in the love of God, for the soul to have an unshaken assurance of His tender care for us, “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1Pe 5:7). But the knowledge of that “care” can only be experimentally maintained by the exercise of faith—especially is this the case in times of trouble. A preacher once asked a despondent friend, “Why is that cow looking over the wall?” And the answer was, “Because she cannot look through it.” The illustration may be crude, yet it gives point to an important truth. Discouraged reader, look over the things which so much distress you, and behold the Father’s smiling face. Look above the frowning clouds of His providence and see the sunshine of His never changing love.

“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb 12:6). There is something very striking and unusual about this verse, for it is found, in slightly varied form, in no less than five different books of the Bible, “Happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty” (Job 5:17). “Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law” (Psa 94:12). “Whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth” (Pro 3:12). “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (Rev 3:19). Probably there is a twofold reason for this reiteration. First, it hints at the importance and blessedness of this truth. God repeats it so frequently lest we should forget, and thus lose the comfort and cheer of realizing that divine chastisement proceeds from *love*. This must be a precious word if God thought it well to say it five times over! Second, such repetition also implies our slowness to believe it. By nature our evil hearts are inclined in the opposite direction. Though our texts affirms so emphatically that the Christian’s chastisements

proceed from God's love, we are ever ready to attribute them to His harshness. It is really very humbling that the Holy Spirit should deem it necessary to repeat this statement so often.

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb 12:6). Four things are to be noted. First, the best of God's children *need* chastisement—"every son." There is no Christian but what has faults and follies which require correcting, "in many things we offend all" (Jam 3:2). Second, God *will correct* all whom He adopts into His family. However He may now let the reprobate alone in their sins, He will not ignore the failings of His people—to be suffered to go on unrebuked in wickedness is a sure sign of alienation from God. Third, in this God acts as a *Father*. No wise and good parent will wink at the faults of his own children. His very relation and affection to them oblige him to take notice of the same. Fourth, God's disciplinary dealings with His sons proceed from and make manifest His *love* to them. It is this fact we would now particularly concentrate upon.

1. The Christian's chastisements *flow from* God's love. Not from His anger or hardness, nor from arbitrary dealings, but from God's heart do our afflictions proceed. It is love which regulates all the ways of God in dealing with His own. It was love which *elected* them. The heart is not warmed when our election is traced back merely to God's sovereign will, but our affections are stirred when we read "in *love*: having predestinated us" (Eph 1:4-5). It was love which *redeemed* us. We do not reach the centre of the atonement when we see nothing more in the cross than a vindication of the law and a satisfaction of justice, "God so *loved* the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (Joh 3:16). It is love which regenerates or *effectually calls* us, "with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer 31:3). The new birth is not only a marvel of divine wisdom and a miracle of divine power, but it is also and superlatively a product of God's affection.

In like manner it is *love* which ordained our trials and orders our chastisements. O Christian, never doubt the love of God. A quaint old Quaker, who was a farmer, had a weather-vane on the roof of his barn, from which stood out in clear-cut letters "God is love." One day a preacher was being driven to the Quaker's home. His host called attention to the vane and its text. The preacher turned and said, "I don't like that at all. It misrepresents the divine character—God's love is not variable like the weather." Said the Quaker, "Friend you have misinterpreted its significance—that text on the weather-vane is to remind me that, no matter which way the wind is blowing, no matter from which direction the storm may come, still, "God is love."

2. The Christian's chastisements *express* God's love. Oftentimes we do not think so. As God's children we think and act very much as we did when children naturally. When we were little and our parents insisted that we should perform a certain duty, we failed to appreciate the love which had respect unto our future well-being. Or when our parents denied us something on which we had set our hearts, we felt we were very hardly dealt with. Yet was it *love* which said, "No" to us. So it is spiritually. The love of God not only gives, but also *withholds*. No doubt this is the explanation for some of our unanswered prayers. God loves us too much to give what would not really be for our profit. The duties insisted upon, the rebukes given, the things withheld, are all *expressions of His faithful love*.

Chastisements manifest God's care of us. He does not regard us with unconcern and neglect, as men usually do their illegitimate children, but He has a true parent's solicitation for us, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him" (Psa 103:13). "And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live" (Deu 8:3). There

are several important sermons wrapped up in that verse, but we have not the space here to even outline them. God brings into the wilderness that we may be drawn nearer Himself. He dries up cisterns that we may seek and enjoy the Fountain. He destroys our nest down here that our affections may be set upon things above.

3. The Christian's chastisements *magnify* God's love. Our very trials make manifest the fullness and reveal the perfections of God's love. What a word is that in Lamentations 3:33, "He doth not afflict willingly"! If God consulted only His own pleasure, He would not afflict us at all. It is for our profit that He "scourges." Ever remember that the great High Priest Himself is "*touched* with the feeling of our infirmities," yet, notwithstanding, He employs the rod! God is love, and nothing is so sensitive as love. Concerning the trials and tribulations of Israel of old, it is written, "In all their affliction *he* was afflicted" (Isa 63:9), yet out of love He chastens. How this manifests and magnifies the unselfishness of God's love!

Here, then is the Christian supplied with an effectual shield to turn aside the fiery darts of the wicked one. As we said at the beginning, Satan ever seeks to take advantage of our trials—like the fiend that he is, he makes his fiercest assaults when we are most cast down. Thus it was that he attacked Job, "Curse God and die." And thus some of us have found it. Did he not, in the hour of suffering and sorrow, seek to remind you that when you had become increasingly diligent in seeking to please and glorify God, the darkest clouds of adversity followed, and say, How unjust God is—what a miserable reward for your devotion and zeal! Here is your recourse, fellow-Christian—say to the devil, it is written, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Heb 12:6).

Again, if Satan cannot succeed in traducing the character of God and cause us to doubt His goodness and question His love, then he will assail our assurance. The devil is most persevering. If a frontal attack fails, then he will make one from the rear. He will assault your assurance of sonship. He will whisper, "*You* are no child of His, look at your condition, consider your circumstances, contrast those of other Christians. *You* cannot be an object of God's favour. You are deceiving yourself, your profession is an empty one. If you *were* God's child, He would treat you very differently. Such privations, such losses, such pains, show that you cannot be one of His." But say to him, it is written, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

Let our final thought be upon the last word of our text, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he *receiveth*." The one whom God scourges is not rejected, but "received"—received up into glory, welcomed in His house above. First the cross, then the crown, is God's unchanging order. This was vividly illustrated in the history of the children of Israel. God chose them in the furnace of affliction (Isa 48:10), and many and bitter were their trials ere they reached the promised land. So it is with us. First the wilderness, then Canaan; first the scourging, and then the "receiving." May we keep ourselves more and more in the love of God.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

40. His Bringing up the Ark (Contin.)

“And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness” (2Sa 6:12). There are five things to be observed here. First, the Lord’s blessing of a man is a very real and evident thing. Second, it is so patent that others take notice thereof. Third, they perceive why it is that the blessing of God is bestowed. Fourth, so impressed are they therewith, they mention it to others. Fifth, the effect which the evident blessing of the Lord of Obededom had upon David. Let us briefly ponder each of these points, and pray that their distinct messages may find lodgment in our hearts.

First, the Lord’s blessing of a man is a very real and evident thing. “All these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God...Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out” (Deu 28:2, 5-6). In view of our recent articles on “Dispensationalism,” we shall not take space now in replying to those who say “such promises are not for us.” Suffice it to point out that *God’s governmental ways* are the same in all dispensations. “The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it” (Pro 10:22), for the meaning of the word “rich” see verse 4—in the former, the means is in view, in the latter, the source. In neither verse does spiritual “riches” exclude material ones. “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Psa 84:11).

Second, God’s blessing of a person is so obvious that others are obliged to take notice thereof. So much so was this the case with Isaac, that Abimelech and two of his chief men went to him and said, “We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee” (Gen 26:28)—what a testimony was that! Of the one who purchased Joseph it is recorded, “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)—do people now see this is the case *with us*? “And Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David” (1Sa 18:28). The wicked may not read God’s Word, but they do the lives of His people, and are quick to perceive when His blessing is upon them, and the recognition of *that* has far more weight than anything they say!

Third, nor are men ignorant of *the reason why* the Lord prospers those with whom He is pleased. This is evident from the case now before us, “And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, *because of* the ark of God” (2Sa 6:12). This is very striking. They traced the effect back to the cause. They recognized that God had honoured the one who had honoured Him. The same principle is illustrated again in Acts 4:13, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and *they took knowledge* of them, that they had been with Jesus.” The men who drew this deduction were not regenerate, but the most notorious enemies of Christ. Nevertheless they were right in attributing the spiritual graces of the apostles unto their fellowship with the Saviour.

Fourth, the recognition of God's evident blessing upon those whose ways are pleasing in His sight is voiced by men unto their fellows. It was so in the incident now before us. When it was so apparent that Obededom was being blessed in all his affairs, some went and informed the king thereof. Ah, my readers, we little know what impression is being made upon our neighbours by God's governmental dealings with us, nor how they speak one to another when it is manifest that His smile is upon us. How we should plead this before God in prayer, that He would enable us so to walk that we may not miss His best, and this that *His* name may be glorified through those around us taking note of the fact that "godliness with contentment [Greek, "a sufficiency"] *is great gain*" (1Ti 6:6).

Fifth, the effect which this tidings had upon David. As he had perceived God's frown in His stroke upon Uzzah, so now he discerned God's smile in Obededom's prosperity. It was clear to him that the ark was not a burdensome object, for so far from being the loser, he who had provided a home for it had been noticeably blest of the Lord. This encouraged David to resume his original design of bringing the sacred coffer to Jerusalem. His fears were now stilled, his zeal was rekindled. "The experience which others have of the gains of godliness should encourage us to be religious. Is the ark a blessing to others' homes? let us bid it welcome to ours" (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Do we perceive that those who are most yielded to the Lord make the best progress spiritually? then let that be an incentive to fuller consecration on our part.

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Psa 23:3). In restoring the souls of His erring people, God does not act uniformly. According to His lovingkindness, unerring wisdom, and sovereign pleasure, He is pleased to use and bless a variety of means. Sometimes it is by a process of disappointment, withering the gourd under which we luxuriated, blowing upon that in which we had promised ourselves satisfaction. Sometimes it is by the application of a verse of Scripture, searching our conscience or melting our heart. Sometimes it is by a sore calamity, like the death of a loved one, which casts us back more closely upon the Lord for strength and comfort. In the case now before us, it was the words of friends, who reported to David the blessing which the presence of the ark had brought to the family of Obededom.

The effect of David's restoration of soul is seen very blessedly in 1 Chronicles 15:2-3, 12-13. "Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever. And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD unto his place, which he had prepared for it. And said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order." There are several things in these verses which we do well to note.

First, David now gave the Lord His proper place in his plans and submitted to the regulations which He had given. He learned from painful experience that God's work must be done in God's prescribed way, if His approval and blessing was to rest upon the same. None but those whom God had specifically appointed must carry the sacred ark. This was one of the duties assigned the Levites, who had been definitely set apart unto the Lord's service. The application of this to our own day is obvious. The ark was a type of Christ. The carrying of the ark from place to place prefigured the making known of Christ through the preaching of the Gospel. Only those are to preach the Gospel whom God has specially called, separated, and qualified for His holy service. For others to invade this sacred office is but to introduce confusion and incur God's displeasure.

Second, David now realized that suitable preparation must precede holy activities, “Sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it” (1Ch 15:12). Let the reader compare Exodus 19:10-15; 2 Chronicles 29:5. Those who carried the ark must cleanse themselves from all ceremonial pollution and compose themselves for the solemn service of the Lord. Only thus would they strike reverence upon the people. The same principle holds good in this Christian dispensation, “The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations...*be ye clean*, that bear the vessels of the LORD” (Isa 52:10-11). Those whom God has separated unto the sacred ministry of the Gospel must be “an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1Ti 4:12 and cf. 2Ti 2:21-22)—God’s servants today are to “sanctify” themselves for the discharge of their honourable duties by repentance, confession, faith, prayer, and meditation, availing themselves constantly of that precious fountain which has been opened for sin and uncleanness.

Third, David owned his previous failures, “The LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order” (1Ch 15:13). In like manner, Daniel acknowledged, “O LORD, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee” (Dan 9:7). “The life of faith is little more than a series of falls and restorations, errors and corrections displaying, on the one hand, the sad weakness of man, and on the other, the grace and power of God” (Charles Henry Mackintosh, 1820-1896).

“So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD” (1Ch 15:14-15). All was now carried out “after the due order.” God requires obedience in small things as well as great. And due notice is taken and record made by Him of all our actions. Blessed is it to behold these Levites now being governed, in every detail, by the revealed will of the Lord. “*Then* we make a good use of the judgments of God on ourselves and others, when we are awakened by them to reform and amend whatever has been amiss” (Matthew Henry). O that each of us may have more and more occasion for saying, “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I *kept* thy word” (Psa 119:67).

“So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the house of Obed-edom *with joy*” (1Ch 15:25). That is no small part of the present reward which God bestows upon His obedient people. Satan would feign seek to persuade us that a strict compliance with all the statutes of Holy Writ would be irksome. One of his favourite dogmas is, law-keeping brings one into bondage. That is one of his lies. The Psalmist was better instructed—said he, “And I will walk *at liberty*: for I seek thy precepts” (Psa 119:45). The more we practice the precepts of Scripture, the more are we delivered from the dominion of sin. God fills the heart of the obedient with gladness, hence, the reason why there is so much gloom and unhappiness among Christians today is because their obedience is so half-hearted and spasmodic.

“And it came to pass, when God *helped* the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams” (1Ch 15:26). God is honoured when we acknowledge His assistance—for without Him we can do nothing—even in those things which fall within the compass of our natural powers. But more especially should we own His aid in all our spiritual exercise, “Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day,

witnessing” (Act 26:22). These Levites were in need of special help, for remembering the fate of Uzzah, they were likely to tremble when they took up the ark, but God calmed their fears and strengthened their faith. God enabled them to discharge their duty decently and orderly, without any mishap.

“And it came to pass, when God *helped* the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams” (1Ch 15:26). This is very blessed. Everything was changed now. There was no stumbling, no thrusting forth of presumptuous hands to steady a shaking ark, no judgment from God. Instead, His evident smile was upon them. It is ever thus. When God’s work is done in God’s way, we may confidently count upon His help. Go against the Word of God, and He is against us, as we shall discover sooner or later—but go according to the Word and God will bless us. “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord *working with them*, and confirming the word with signs following” (Mar 16:20).

“And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings” (2Sa 6:13). Probably David offered this sacrifice unto God with a twofold design—to make an atonement for his former errors and as a thank-offering for present mercies. Great must have been his gratitude and joy when he perceived that all was now well. “*Then* we are likely to speed [prosper] in our enterprises when we begin with God, and give diligence to make our peace with Him. When we attend upon God in holy ordinances, our eye must be to the great sacrifice, to which we owe it that we are taken into covenant and communion with God” (Matthew Henry).

“And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod” (2Sa 6:14). The ordinances of God are to be partaken in with joy as well as reverence. In seeking to preserve a becoming decorum and sobriety, we need to be on our guard against lapsing into a cold and stilted perfunctoriness. No doubt there are certain occasions when higher expressions of joy are more suited than at others. It was so here. After his previous disappointment, David was now transported with delight. His exultation of mind was manifested in his leaping for gladness, which he did “with all his might.” “We ought to serve the Lord with our whole body and soul, and with every endowment or capacity we possess. Our religious affections cannot be too intense, if properly directed, nor our expressions of them too strong, provided ‘all be done decently and in order,’ according to the spirit of the dispensation under which we live” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

“And David was girded with a linen ephod” (2Sa 6:14). On this auspicious occasion, David laid aside his royal robes, and as taking the lead in the worship of God he wore a linen ephod. This was the ordinary garb of the priests when officiating, yet it was also used in religious exercises by those who were not priests, as the case of Samuel shows, 1 Samuel 2:18. The Spirit of God has here duly noted the fact that, though king over all Israel, David deemed it no disparagement to appear in the clothing of a minister of the ark—yet let it not be supposed that he was making any attempt to encroach upon the priestly office. The practical lesson for us in this detail is, that instead of decking ourselves out in worldly finery, we should be garbed plainly when we attend the public worship of God.

In conclusion it should be pointed out that the best expositors, ancient and modern, have regarded Psalm 24 as a sacred song composed by David on the glad occasion of the ark being brought to Jerusalem. The joy and triumph, the awe and the memories of victory which clustered around the dread symbol of the presence of the Lord are wonderfully expressed in that choral piece. It is divided into two parts. The first replies to the question, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?” (Psa 24:3)—an evident echo of the terror-

stricken exclamation of the Bethshemites (1Sa 6:20). The answer is given in a description of the men who dwell with God. The second half deals with the correlative inquiry, “Who is this King of glory?” (Psa 24:8). And the answer is, the God who comes to dwell with men.

Inexpressibly blessed is verse 7. As the precession reached the walls of Jerusalem, and ere the ark—type of Christ—entered, the cry was made “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.” It was as though their towering portals were too low. How clearly David recognized his own derived power, and the real Monarch of whom he was but the shadowy representative! The newly-conquered city was summoned to admit its true Conqueror, whose throne was the ark, which was expressly named “the glory” (1Sa 4:21), and in whose train the earthly king followed as a subject and a worshipper.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

3d. The Adamic (Continued)

We must now bring to a close our rather lengthy remarks upon the first covenant which the Lord made with man, the issues of which were so momentous. This primordial compact or “Covenant of Works,” was that agreement into which the Lord God entered with Adam as the federal head and representative of the entire human family. It was made with him in a state of innocence, holiness, and righteousness. The terms of that covenant were perfect and continuous obedience on man’s part, and the promise of confirming him in immutable holiness and happiness on God’s part. A test was given whereby his obedience or disobedience should be evidenced. That test consisted of a single positive ordinance—abstinence from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, so named because so long as Adam remained dutiful and faithful, he enjoyed that inestimable “good” which issued from communion with his Maker, and because as soon as he disobeyed, he tasted the bitter “evil” which followed the loss of communion with Him.

As we have seen in the previous papers, all the essential elements of a formal covenant between God and Adam are clearly to be seen in the Genesis record. A requirement was made—obedience; a penal sanction was attached—death as the penalty of disobedience; a reward was promised upon his obedience—confirmation in life. Adam consented to its terms; the whole was divinely sealed by the tree of life—so called because it was the outward sign of that life promised in the covenant, from which Adam was excluded because of his apostasy, and to which the redeemed are restored by the last Adam (Rev 2:7). Thus Scripture presents all the prime features of a covenant as co-existing in that constitution under which our first parent was originally placed.

Adam wickedly presumed to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree and incurred the awful guilt of violating the covenant. In his sin there was a complication of many crimes. In Romans 5, it is called the “offence, disobedience, transgression.” Adam was put to the test of whether the will of God was sacred in his eyes, and he fell by preferring his own will and way. He failed to love God with all his heart. He had contempt of His high authority. He disbelieved His holy veracity. He

deliberately and presumptuously defied Him. Hence, at a later date, in the history of Israel, God said, “But they *like Adam have transgressed the covenant*: there have they dealt treacherously against me” (Hos 6:7 margin). Even Mr. Darby (notes on Hosea, in “Synopsis” vol. 2, p. 472, 1800-1882) acknowledged, “It should be rendered, ‘But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant.’”

It is to this divine declaration in Hosea 6:7, the apostle makes reference, when of Adam he declares that he was the figure of him that was to come. Let it be duly noted that Adam is not there viewed in his creation-state simply, but rather as he is related to an offspring whose case was included in his own. As the vicar of his race, Adam disobeyed the Eden-statute in their room and stead, precisely as Christ, the “last Adam” (1Co 15:45), obeyed the moral law as the representative of His people in their room and stead. “By *one man* sin entered into the world” (Rom 5:12). This is a remarkable statement, calling for the closest attention. *Eve* sinned too. She sinned *before* Adam did—then why are we not told that “by *one woman* sin entered into the world”?—the more so seeing that she is, equally with Adam, a root of propagation.

Only one answer is possible to the above question—because Adam was the one *public person* or federal head that represented us and not she. Adam was the legal representative of Eve as well as of his posterity, for she was taken out of him. Remarkably is this confirmed by the historical record of Genesis 3. Upon *Eve’s* eating of the forbidden fruit no change was evidenced, but as soon as Adam partook, “the eyes of them *both* were opened, and they knew that they were naked” (Gen 3:7)!!—which means that they were instantly conscious of *the loss of innocency* and were ashamed of their woeful condition. The eyes of a convicted conscience were opened, and they perceived their sin and its awful consequences. The sense of their bodily nakedness only adumbrating their spiritual loss.

Not only was it by Adam (rather than by Eve) that sin entered into the world, “the judgment was by *one* (offence) to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification” (Rom 5:16). The fact that Eve is entirely omitted from Romans 5:12-19 shows that it is the *guilt* of our federal head being imputed to us which is there in view, and not the pravity of nature which is imparted, for corruption has been directly derived through her as much as from Adam. The fact that it was by Adam’s one offence that condemnation has come upon all his posterity shows that his subsequent sins are not imputed to us, for by his original transgression he lost the high honour and privilege conferred upon him. In the covenant being broken, he ceased to be a public person, the federal head of the race.

Man’s defection from his primordial state was purely voluntary, and from the unconstrained choice of his own mutable and self-determining will. Adam was “without excuse” (Rom 1:20). By eating of the forbidden fruit, he broke, first, the law of his very being, violating his own *nature*, which bound him unto loving allegiance to his Maker. Self now took the place of God. Second, he flouted the law of God, which requires perfect and unremitting obedience to the moral Governor of the world. Self had now usurped the throne of God in his heart. Third, in trampling upon the positive ordinance under which he was placed, he broke the covenant, preferring to take his stand alongside of his fallen wife.

“Every man at his best state is altogether vanity” (Psa 39:5). Thus was Adam. In full-grown manhood, with every faculty perfect, amid ideal surroundings, he rejected the good and chose the evil. He was not deceived. The Scriptures declare he was not—1 Timothy 2:14. He knew well what he was doing. “Deliberately he wrecked himself and us. Deliberately he jumped the precipice. Deliberately he murdered unnumbered generations. Like many another who has loved ‘not wisely but too well,’ he would not lose his Eve. He chose her rather than God. He determined

he would have her if he went to hell with her” (George Sayles Bishop, 1836-1914). Direful were the consequences—the death-sentence fell upon Adam the day in which he sinned, though for the sake of his posterity, the full execution of it was delayed.

As Romans 5:12 declared, “Wherefore, as by one man [the first man, the father of our race] sin [guilt, criminality, condemnation] entered [as a solemn accuser in the witness-stand] into the world [not into “the universe,” for that had previously been defiled by the rebellion of Satan and his angels—but the world of fallen humanity], and death [as a judicial infliction] by sin [the original offence]; and so death [as the divine punishment] passed [as the penal sentence from the Judge of all the earth] upon all men [none, not even infants, being exempted], in whom [the correct rendering—see margin] all have sinned”—that is, sinned in the “one man,” the federal head of the race, the legal representative of the “all men.” Note, not all now “sin,” nor all are inherently “sinful” (though sadly true), but “in whom all have sinned” in Eden.

Direful and dreadful as was the outcome of the Adamic covenant, yet we may, with awe, perceive and admire the divine wisdom in the same. Had God permitted and enabled Adam to stand, all his posterity had been eternally happy. Adam had then been in a very real sense their Saviour, and while enjoying everlasting bliss, all his posterity would have exclaimed, “For all this we are indebted to our first parent.” Ah, what anointed eye can fail to discern that *that* would have been far too great a glory for any finite creature to have borne. Only the last Adam was entitled to and capable of sustaining such an honour. Thus, the first man, who was of the earth, earthy, *must* fall, so as to make way for the second Man, who is “the Lord from heaven.”

It must also be pointed out that, in taking this way of staining human pride (involving the dreadful fall of the king of our race), displaying His own infinite wisdom, and securing the glory of His beloved Son (so that in all things He has “the pre-eminence”) God made not the slightest infraction of His justice. In decreeing and permitting Adam’s fall, with the consequent imputation of the guilt of his offence unto all his posterity, God has wronged no man. This needs to be emphatically insisted upon and plainly pointed out, lest some in their blatant haughtiness should be guilty of charging the Most High with unfairness. God is inflexibly righteous, and *all* His ways are right and just. Nor is the one which we are now considering any exception, and this will be seen, once it is rightly understood.

In saying that the guilt of Adam’s offence is imputed to all his posterity, we do not mean the human race is now suffering for something in which *they* had no part, that innocent creatures are being condemned for the act of another which cannot rightly be laid to their account. Let it be clearly understood that God punishes none for Adam’s personal sin, but only for *his own* sin in Adam. The whole human race had a federal standing in Adam. Not only was each of us seminally in his loins in the day God created him, but each of us was legally represented by him when God instituted the Covenant of Works. Adam acted and transacted in that covenant not merely as a private being, but as a *public* person—not merely as a single individual, but as the surety and sponsor of his race. Nor is it lawful for us to call into question the meetness of that arrangement—all God’s works are perfect, all His ways are ordered by infinite wisdom and righteousness.

Of necessity the creature is subject to the Creator, and his loyalty and fealty must be put to the proof. In the nature of the case, only two alternatives were possible—the human family must either be placed on probation in the person of a responsible and suitable head and representative, or each individual member must enter upon his probation for himself. Once again we quote the words of Mr. Bishop, “The race must have either stood in a full grown man, with a full-orbed intellect, or stood as babies, each entering his probation in the twilight of self-consciousness, each deciding his destiny before his eyes were half-opened to what it all meant. How much better

would that have been? How much more just? But could it not have been some other way? There was no other way. It was either the baby or it was the perfect, well-equipped, all-calculating man—the man who saw and comprehended everything. That man was Adam.”

The simplest and most satisfactory way of reconciling with human reason the federal constitution which was given to Adam, is to recognize it was of *divine* appointment. God cannot do that which is wrong. It must therefore have been right. The principle of representation is inseparable from the very constitution of human society. The father is the legal representative of his children during their minority, so that what he does binds his family. The political heads of a nation represent the people, so that their declarations of war or treaties of peace bind the whole commonwealth. This principle is so fundamental that it cannot be set aside. Human affairs could not move nor society exist without it. Founded in man’s nature by the wisdom of God, we are compelled to recognize it, and being of *His* appointment, we dare not call into question its rightness. If it was unjust for God to impute to us Adam’s guilt, it must equally have been so to impart to us his depravity, but seeing God *has* righteously done the latter, we must vindicate Him for doing the former.

The very fact that *we* go on breaking the Covenant of Works and disobeying the law of God, show our oneness with Adam under that covenant. Let that fact be duly weighed by those who are inclined to be captious. Our complicity with Adam in *his* rebellion is evidenced every time that *we* sin against God. Instead of challenging the justice which has charged to our account, the guilt of the first human transgression, let us seek grace to repudiate Adam’s example, standing out in opposition to his insubordination by gladly taking upon us the easy yoke of God’s commandments. Finally, let it again be pointed out that if we were ruined *by another*, Christians are redeemed *by Another*. By the principle of representation we were lost, and by the same principle of representation—Christ transacting for us as our Surety and Sponsor—we are saved.

In what sense is the Covenant of Works abrogated? and in what sense is it still in force? We cannot do better than subjoin the answers of one of the ablest theologians of the last century. “This covenant having been broken by Adam, not one of his natural descendants is ever able to fulfill its conditions, and Christ having fulfilled all of its conditions in behalf of all His own people, salvation is offered now on the condition of faith. In *this* sense the Covenant of Works having been fulfilled by the second Adam is henceforth abrogated under the Gospel.

“Nevertheless, since it is founded upon the principles of immutable justice, it still binds all men who have not fled to the refuge offered in the righteousness of Christ. It is still true that ‘He that doeth these things shall live by them,’ and ‘The soul that sinneth it shall die.’ This law in *this* sense remains, and in consequence of the unrighteousness of men condemns them, and in consequence of their absolute inability to fulfill it, it acts as a school-master to bring them to Christ. For He having fulfilled alike its condition wherein Adam failed, and its penalty which Adam incurred, He has become the end of this covenant for righteousness to every one that believeth, who in Him is regarded and treated as having fulfilled the covenant, and merited its promised reward” (Archibald A. Hodge, 1823-1886).

It only remains for us now to point out wherein the Adamic Covenant adumbrated [foreshadowed] the Everlasting Covenant. While it be true that the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace are diametrically opposed in their character—the one being based upon the principle of, Do and live, the other on, Live and do—yet there are some striking points of agreement between them. That engagement into which the Father entered into with the Mediator before the foundation of the world was foreshadowed in Eden in the following respects. First, Adam, the one with whom the covenant was made, entered this world in a manner none other

ever did—without being begotten by a human father, he was miraculously produced by God. So with Christ. Second, none but Adam of the human family entered this world with a pure constitution and holy nature. So was it with Christ.

Third, his wife was taken out of him, so that he could say, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23). Of Christ’s wife it is declared, “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Eph 5:30). Fourth, Adam voluntarily took his place alongside of his fallen wife. He was not deceived, but had such a love for Eve that he could not see her perish alone, compare Ephesians 5:25. Fifth, in consequence of this, Adam fell beneath the curse of God, compare Galatians 3:13. Sixth, the father of the human family was their federal head. So is Christ the federal Head of His people, the “last Adam.” Seventh, what Adam did is imputed to the account of all those whom he represented. The same is true of Christ, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Rom 5:19).

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

4. Its Necessity (Completed)

In the first part of our treatment of the necessity of sanctification, it was shown that the making of a sinner holy is indispensable unto his salvation, yea, that sanctification is an integral part of salvation itself. One of the most serious defects in modern ministry is the ignoring of this basic fact. Of only too many present-day “converts” does it have to be said, “Ephraim is a cake not turned” (Hos 7:8)—browned underneath, unbaked on the top. Christ is set forth as a fire-escape from hell, but not as the great Physician to deal with the malady of indwelling sin, and fit for heaven. Much is said upon how to obtain forgiveness of sins, but little is preached of how to be cleansed from its pollutions. The necessity for His atoning blood is set forth, but not the indispensability of experimental holiness. Consequently, thousands who mentally assent to the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice know nothing about heart purity.

Again, there is a woeful disproportion between the place which is given to faith and the emphasis which the Scriptures give to that obedience which flows from sanctification. It is not only true that “without faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb 11:6), but it is equally true that without holiness “no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). Not only are we told, “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” (Gal 6:15), but it is also written, “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, *but the keeping of the commandments of God*” (1Co 7:19). It is not for nothing that God has told us, “*Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*” (1Ti 4:8). Not only is there in all the promises a particular respect unto personal, vital, and practical “godliness,” but it is that very godliness which, pre-eminently, gives the saint an especial interest in those promises.

Alas, how many there are today who imagine that if they have “faith,” it is sure to be well with them at the end, *even though they are not holy*. Under the pretence of honouring faith, Satan, as an angel of light, has deceived, and is still deceiving multitudes of souls. But when their “faith” be examined and tested, what is it worth? Nothing at all so far as insuring an entrance into heaven is concerned. It is a powerless, lifeless, and fruitless thing. It is nothing better than that faith which the demons have (Jam 2:19). The faith of God’s elect is unto “the acknowledging of the truth *which is after godliness*” (Ti 1:1). Saving faith is a “most holy faith” (Jude 1:20). It is a faith which purifieth the heart (Act 15:9), it is a faith which worketh by love (Gal 5:6), it is a faith which overcometh the world, (1Jo 5:4), it is a faith which bringeth forth all manner of good works (Heb 11). Let us now enter into detail, and show more specifically *wherein* lies the necessity for personal holiness.

1. *Our personal holiness is required by the very nature of God.* Holiness is the excellence and honour of the divine character. God is called “rich in mercy” (Eph 2:4), but “glorious in holiness” (Exo 15:11). His mercy is His treasure, but holiness is His glory. He swears by this perfection, “Once have I sworn by my holiness” (Psa 89:35). Over thirty times is He called, “The Holy One of Israel.” This is the superlative perfection for which the angels in heaven and the spirits of just men made perfect do so much admire God, crying, “Holy, holy, holy” (Isa 6:3, Rev 4:8). As gold, because it is the most excellent of the metals, is laid over inferior ones, so this divine excellency is laid upon all connected with Him. His sabbath is “holy” (Exo 16:23), His sanctuary is “holy” (Exo 15:13), His name is “holy” (Psa 99:3), all His works are “holy” (Psa 145:17). Holiness is the perfection of all His glorious attributes. His power is holy power, His mercy is holy mercy, His wisdom is holy wisdom.

Now the ineffable purity of the divine nature is every where in the Scriptures made the fundamental reason for the necessity of holiness in us. God makes the holiness of His own nature the ground of His demand for holiness in His people, “For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; *for I am holy*” (Lev 11:44). The same fundamental principle is transferred to the Gospel, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1Pe 1:15-16). Thus God plainly lets us know that His nature is such as unless we be sanctified, there can be no intercourse between Him and us. “For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, *to be your God*: ye shall *therefore* be holy, for I am holy” (Lev. 11:45). Without personal holiness the relationship cannot be maintained that *He* should be our God and we should be *His* people.

God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab 1:13). Such is the infinite purity of His nature, that God cannot take any pleasure in lawless rebels, filthy sinners, the workers of iniquity. Joshua told the people plainly that if they continued in their sins, they could not serve the Lord, “for he is an holy God” (Jos 24:19). All the service of unholy people toward such a God is utterly lost and thrown away, because it is entirely inconsistent with His nature to accept of it. The apostle Paul reasons in the same manner when he says, “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: *for our God is a consuming fire*” (Heb 12:28-29). He lays his argument for the necessity of grace and holiness in the worship of God from the consideration of *the holiness of His nature*, which, as a consuming fire will devour that which is unsuited unto and inconsistent with it.

He who resolveth not to be holy, must seek another god to worship and serve, for with the God of Scripture he will never find acceptance. The heathen of old realized this, and liking not to retain the knowledge of the true God in their hearts and minds (Rom 1:28), and resolving to give

up themselves unto all filthiness with greediness, they stifled their notions of the divine Being and invented such “gods” to themselves as were unclean and wicked, that they might freely conform unto and serve *them* with satisfaction. God Himself declares that men of corrupt lives have some secret hopes that He is not holy, “Thou thoughtest that I was *altogether such an one as thyself*: but I will reprove thee” (Psa 50:21). Others, today, while professing to believe in God’s holiness, have such false ideas of His grace and mercy that they suppose He will accept them though they are unholy.

“Be ye holy, for I am holy” (1Pe 1:16). Why? Because herein consists our conformity to God. We were originally created in the image and likeness of God, and that, for the substance of it, was *holiness*—therein consisted the privilege, blessedness, pre-eminence of man over all the lower creatures. Wherefore, without this conformity unto God, with the impress of His image and likeness upon the soul, we cannot stand in that relation unto God which was designed us in our creation. This we lost by the entrance of sin, and if there be not a way for us to acquire it again, we shall forever come short of the glory of God and the end of our creation. Now this is done by our becoming holy, for therein consists the renovation of God’s image in us (Eph 4:22-24 and cf. Col 3:10). It is utterly vain for any man to expect an interest in God while he does not earnestly endeavour after conformity to Him.

To be sanctified is just as requisite as to be justified. He that thinks to come to enjoyment of God without holiness makes Him an unholy God, and puts the highest indignity imaginable upon Him. There is no other alternative—we must either leave our sins, or our God. We may as easily reconcile heaven and hell, as easily take away all difference between light and darkness, good and evil, as procure acceptance for unholy persons with God. While it be true that our interest in God is not built upon our holiness, it is equally true that we have none without it. Many have greatly erred in concluding that, because piety and obedience are not meritorious, they can get to heaven without them. The free grace of God towards sinners by Jesus Christ, by no means renders holiness needless and useless. Christ is not the minister of sin, but the maintainer of God’s glory. He has not purchased for His people security *in* sin, but salvation *from* sin.

According to our growth in likeness unto God are our approaches unto glory. Each day both writer and reader is drawing nearer the end of his earthly course, and we do greatly deceive ourselves if we imagine that we are drawing nearer to heaven while following those courses which lead only to hell. We are woefully deluded if we suppose that we are journeying towards glory, and yet are not growing in grace. The believer’s glory, subsequently considered, will be his likeness to Christ (1Jo 3:2), and it is the very height of folly for any to think that they shall love hereafter what now they hate. There is no other way of growing in the likeness of God *but in holiness*, thereby alone are we “changed into the same image from glory to glory” (2Co 3:18)—that is, from one degree of glorious grace to another, until by one last great change shall issue all grace and holiness in eternal glory.

But is not God ready to pardon and receive the greatest and vilest sinner who comes unto Him by Christ? Is not His mercy so great and His grace so free that He will do so apart from *any consideration* of worth or righteousness of their own? If so, why insist so much on the indispensability of holiness? This objection, though thousands of years old, is still made. If men must be holy, then carnal reasoners can see no need of grace, and they cannot see how God is gracious if men perish because they are unholy. Nothing seems more reasonable to carnal minds than that we may live in sin because grace has abounded. This is met by the apostle in Romans 6:1, where he subjoins the reasons why, notwithstanding the superaboundings of grace in Christ, there is an indispensable necessity why all believers should be holy. Without the necessity of

holiness in us, grace would be disgraced. Note how when He proclaimed His name “merciful and gracious,” the Lord at once added, “and will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo 34:6-7), i.e., those who go on in their sins without regard unto obedience.

2. *Our personal holiness is required by the commands of God.* Not only is this so under the Covenant of Works, but the same is inseparably annexed under the Covenant of Grace. No relaxation unto the duty of holiness is granted by the Gospel, nor any indulgence unto the least sin. The Gospel is no less holy than the law, for both proceeded from the Holy One. And though provision be made for the pardon of a multitude of sins for the acceptance of the Christian’s imperfect obedience, yet the standard of righteousness is not lowered, for there is no abatement given by the Gospel unto any duty of holiness nor any license unto the least sin. The difference between those covenants is twofold. Under that of works, all the duties of holiness were required as our righteousness before God, that we might be justified thereby (Rom 10:5)—not so under grace. No allowance was made for the least degree of failure (Jam 2:10)—but, now, through the mediation of Christ, justice and mercy are joined together.

Under the Gospel-commands for universal holiness respect is required unto three things. First, unto the *authority* of Him who gives them. Authority is that which obligates unto obedience, see Malachi 1:6. Now He who commands us to be holy is our sovereign lawgiver, with absolute right to prescribe that which He pleases, and therefore a non-compliance is a despising of the divine Legislator. To be under God’s command to be holy, and then not to sincerely and earnestly endeavour always and in all things so to be, is to reject His sovereign authority over us, and to live in defiance of Him. No better than *that* is the state of every one who does not make the pursuit of holiness his daily and chief concern. Forgetfulness of this, or failure to heed it as we ought, is the chief reason of our careless walking. Our great safeguard is to keep our hearts and minds under a sense of the sovereign authority of God in His commands.

Second, we must keep before our minds the *power* of Him who commands us to be holy. “There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy” (Jam 4:12). God’s commanding authority is accompanied with such power that He will eternally reward the obedient and eternally punish the disobedient. The commands of God are accompanied with promises of eternal bliss on the one hand, and of eternal misery on the other, and this will most certainly befall us according as we shall be found holy or unholy. Herein is to be seen a further reason for the indispensable necessity of our being holy. If we are not, then a holy and all-powerful God will damn us. A due respect unto God’s promises and threatenings is a principal part of spiritual liberty, “I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Gen 17:1). The way to walk uprightly is to ever bear in mind that He who requires it of us is Almighty God, under whose eyes we are continually. If, then, we value our souls, let us seek grace to act accordingly.

Third, respect is to be had unto the infinite *wisdom and goodness* of God. In His commands, God not only maintains His sovereign authority over us, but also exhibits His righteousness and love. His commands are not the arbitrary edicts of a capricious despot, but the wise decrees of One who has *our good* at heart. His commands “are not grievous” (1Jo 5:3). They are not tyrannical restraints of our liberty, but are just, wholesome, highly beneficial. It is to our great advantage to comply with them. It is for our happiness, both now and hereafter, that we obey them. They are a heavy burden only unto those who desire to be the slaves of sin and Satan. They are easy and pleasant unto all who walk with God. Love for God carries with it a desire to please Him, and from Christ may be obtained that grace which will assist us thereto—but of this, more later, D.V.

3. *Our personal holiness is required by the mediation of Christ.* One principal end of the design of God in sending His Son into the world was to recover us unto that state of holiness which we had lost, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1Jo 3:8). Among the principal of the works of the devil was the infecting of our natures and persons with a principle of sin and enmity against God, and that evil work is not destroyed but by the introduction of a principle of holiness and obedience. The image of God in us was defaced by sin—the restoration of that image was one of the main purposes of Christ’s mediation. Christ’s great and ultimate design was to bring His people unto the enjoyment of God to His eternal glory, and this can only be by grace and holiness, by which we are made meet for “the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col 1:12).

Now the exercise of Christ’s mediation is discharged under His threefold office. As to His priestly, the immediate effects were the making of satisfaction and reconciliation, but the mediate effects are our justification and sanctification, “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Ti 2:14)—no *unholy* people, then, have any sure evidence of an interest in Christ’s sacrifice. As to His prophetic office, this consists in His revelation to us of God’s love and will—to make God known and to bring us into subjection unto Him. At the very beginning of His prophetic ministry, we find Christ restoring *the law* to its original purity—purging it from the corruptions of the Jews, Matthew 5. As to His kingly office, He subdues our lusts and supplies power for obedience. It is by these things we are to test ourselves. To live in known and allowed sin, and yet expect to be saved by Christ is the master deception of Satan.

From which of Christ’s offices do I expect advantage? Is it from His priestly? Then has His blood cleansed me? Have I been made holy thereby? Have I been redeemed out of the world by it? Am I by it dedicated to God and His service? Is it from His prophetic office? Then have I effectually learned of Him to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts,” and to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”? (Ti 2:12). Has He instructed me unto *sincerity* in all my ways, in all my dealings with God and men? Is it from His kingly office? Then does He *actually* rule in me and over me? Has He delivered me from the power of Satan and caused me to take *His* yoke upon me? Has His sceptre broken the dominion of sin in me? Am I a loyal subject of His kingdom? If not, I have no rightful claim to a personal interest in His sacrifice. Christ died to procure holiness, not to secure an indulgence for unholiness.

4. *Our personal holiness is required in order to the glory of Christ.* If we are indeed His disciples, He has bought us with a price, and we are not our own, but His, and that to glorify Him in soul and body because they are His, 1Co 6:19-20. He died for us that we should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto Him who redeemed us at such a fearful cost. How, then, are we to do this? *In our holiness* consists the principal part of that revenue of honour which the Lord Jesus requires and expects from His disciples in this world. Nothings glorifies Him so much as our obedience. Nothing is a greater grief and reproach to Him than our disobedience. We are to witness before the world unto the holiness of His life, the heavenliness of His doctrine, the preciousness of His death by a daily walk which shows forth HIS praises (1Pe 2:9). This is absolutely necessary if we are to glorify Him in this scene of His rejection.

Nothing short of the *life* of Christ is our *example*. This is what the Christian is called to “follow.” It is the life of Christ which it is his duty to express in his own, and he who takes up Christianity on any other terms woefully deceives his soul. No more effectual reproach can be cast upon the blessed name of the Lord Jesus than for His professing people to follow the lusts of the flesh, be conformed to this world, and heed the behests of Satan. We can only bear witness for

the Saviour as we make His doctrine our rule, His glory our concern, His example our practice. Christ is honoured not by wordy expressions, but by a holy conversation. Nothing has done more to bring the Gospel of Christ into reproach than the wicked lives of those who bear His name. If I am not living a holy and obedient life this shows that I am not “for” Christ, but *against* Him.

N.B. Much in this article is a condensation of John Owen (1616-1683) on the same subject, Volume 3, of his works.

UNION AND COMMUNION

2b. Divine Union (Completed)

Right views of the divine Being and character lie at the foundation of all genuine and vital godliness. It should, then, be our supreme quest to seek after the knowledge of God. Without the true knowledge of Him, in His nature, Persons, attributes, we can neither worship Him acceptably nor serve Him aright. The *unity* of the Godhead is an essential part of His character. The God whom the Scriptures command us to adore and serve, love and obey, is the one only living and true God. There cannot be but *one* First Cause of all things, absolutely, independent, necessarily existent, and infinite in all perfections. But this one God subsists in a *threefold*, though to us incomprehensible, manner. Though He is one simple, undivided essence, yet in the mode of His existence He subsists in three Persons. Incomprehensible as this is, yet it is no more so than as *uncaused* and eternal existence. God is infinitely above all creatures and exists in a manner peculiar to Himself.

This truth of three Persons in the Godhead is basic, being essential to the very scheme of salvation itself, and it has been accounted the catholic doctrine of the whole Christian Church in all ages. In Scripture, the work of our salvation is represented as engaging the *joint-agency* of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God *the Father* it was who, in infinite wisdom planned the amazing scheme, providing Himself a Lamb to purge away sin. God *the Son*, in His own Person, executed the plan, by submitting to be “delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification.” God *the Spirit* secures an effectual reception of this scheme of salvation, sanctifying the souls of the elect unto eternal happiness, in which it finally issues.

Each of these sacred Persons, who thus co-operate in our salvation, must of necessity be really and truly *God*, for none less could possibly execute any part of that grand scheme. Who, but the supreme Lord Himself, could admit an innocent Substitute to become Surety for criminals and bear their curse! What being *beneath* the dignity of deity could possibly offer a satisfaction of infinite sufficiency to the divine government, possessing such merits that, by obeying and suffering the penalty of the law, full atonement should be made for all innumerable offences committed against the Majesty of heaven by the entire election of grace! And unto whom beside God Himself, the eternal and blessed Holy Spirit, doth such power belong as to change the darkness of human depravity into ineffable light, subdue rebellious wills, and bring them into loving obedience unto the Lord!

All that pertains to salvation is the gift of the Father, through the incarnate Son, by the Holy Spirit. And it is inexpressibly blessed to find in so many Scriptures how *all* the Persons in the Godhead are individually as well as unitedly concerned in the grand matter of the Church's redemption. This ought ever to be viewed as the standard of orthodoxy. Whatever is presented from pulpit or press which does not give *equal* place and ascribe equal honour to *each* of the eternal three is the doctrine of demons. There is not a vestige of real "Christianity" where this foundation truth of the Trinity is not known, acknowledged, and magnified. Nor is there a vestige of true piety in any heart where the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do not dwell. Furthermore, it is not possible to obtain a clear and full view of any doctrine of the Word, unless the telescope of this transcendent truth be applied to the eye of faith and be viewed through it.

Now if the Holy Scriptures be so plain and full in declaring in the interposition and operations of each Person in the blessed Trinity in the work of our salvation, it must of necessity be the bounden duty as well as the precious privilege of each Christian to pay a becoming attention to and endeavour by devout meditation and prayerful searching of the Word, to get impressed on his mind and heart what God has revealed on the subject. It most certainly behooves each one of us to spare no pains in endeavouring to attain unto a full spiritual knowledge of how the divine three stand related to us, how they are severally interested in us, and what we are to expect from them. This will lead us to render unto each divine Person that honour and praise, that loving obedience, which is His distinctive due. For "this is life eternal, that they might *know thee* the only true God" (Joh 17:3).

"The knowledge of God here spoken of, must include in it such a knowledge of the Holy Trinity as is revealed in the blessed gospel. The divine Persons in their essential and distinctive relation to each other, and to us, must be so far known as to be believed, and acknowledged by us. The truth of their existence (not the knowledge of their subsisting in the infinite essence), is most essential to the being and to the well-being of our faith. As also how they are related unto us, and have acted for us in the everlasting covenant, in and by which they are and have revealed themselves to be the Lord our God. To know the Father, to be our Father in Christ Jesus, that He hath loved with an everlasting love, is life eternal. To know the Son, as one with the Father, of the same essence with the Father, and that He was set up to be God-man, from everlasting, this is life eternal. To know the Holy Spirit, to be Personally distinct from the Father and the Son, yet of the same essence, glory, perfections and blessedness with the Father and the Son, is life eternal" (S. E. Pierce, 1746-1829).

A distinction in the divine nature inconceivable by us, but plainly revealed in Holy Writ, must be acknowledged by us on the all-sufficient testimony of Him who alone can instruct us in what we are concerned to know of His ineffable essence and being. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three *are one*" (1Jo 5:7). To each of these three Persons the perfections of deity are attributed and ascribed in hundreds of passages of Scripture. Each of them, therefore, is *God*, and yet it is equally clear that there is but *one* JEHOVAH. Nor is there the slightest ground for us to demur in the face of this insuperable and insoluble mystery. "Let us first if we can, account for the nature, essence, and properties of the things with which, as to their effects, we are familiarly acquainted. Let us *explain* the growth of a blade of grass, or the virtues of the lodestone. Till we are able to do *this*, it becomes us to lay our hands upon our mouths, and our mouths in the dust" (John Newton, 1725-1807).

A plurality of Persons does *not* mean that the Godhead is divided, so that the Father is *one part* of deity, the Son another part, and the Spirit still a third part. "The divine *nature* IS the Godhead, simply and absolutely considered; a *Person* is that which subsisteth IN the Godhead, as

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (William Perkins, 1595). It is the divine Persons in the union of the divine essence which are to be distinguished, and not the essence itself. JEHOVAH is to be worshipped as a Unity in Trinity, and a Trinity in Unity. One God is to be acknowledged in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. When Scripture is compared with Scripture, it is plain to be seen that the divine Unity is *not* a unity of Persons, but of nature and essence. Though there are three in the Godhead, who are dignified with the incommunicable name of JEHOVAH, possessing *the same* attributes and perfections and entitled to the same adoration, yet Holy Writ does not exhibit a plurality of deities.

That each of the eternal three partakes of the one divine essence is proved by their names. Each is called “God”—the Father in Hebrews 1:1, the Son in Hebrews 1:8, the Spirit in Acts 5:4—see verse 3. Each of them is designated “JEHOVAH”—the Father is Psalm 110:1, the Son in Psalm 23:1, the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 11:2. Each of them is denominated “The living God”—the Father in Matthew 16:16, the Son in Hebrews 3:12 and 1 Timothy 4:10, the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 6:16—cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16. Each of them is addressed as “The Almighty”—the Father in 2 Corinthians 6:18, the Son in Revelation 16:7, the Spirit in Job 32:8. Each of them is set forth as a “Fountain”: the Father in Jeremiah 2:13, the Son in Zechariah 13:1, the Spirit in John 7:38. In Ephesians 1:17 the first Person is termed “the Father of glory”; in James 2:1 the second Person is termed “the Lord of glory,” while in 1 Peter 4:14 the third Person is termed “the spirit of glory.”

That these three names—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—are *not* so many diverse titles for one and the same august Person, but instead, belong to three distinct but equally divine Persons, is clear from the fact that in Scripture they are frequently represented as *speaking to one another*. Thus, in the second Psalm the Messiah declares, “The LORD hath said *unto* [not “of”] me, thou art my Son...*Ask of me*, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance” (Psa 2:7-8). In the fortieth Psalm the Son is heard speaking *to* the Father, saying “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:7-8). In the forty-fifth Psalm the Father says to His Son, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre” (Psa 45:6). And again in the one hundred and tenth Psalm, “The LORD *said unto* my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Psa 110:1). What could possibly set forth more clearly the distinction of Persons in the Godhead!

In the previous section of this article we called attention to a number of passages in the Old Testament where the eternal three are all mentioned together. The same blessed phenomenon is presented again and again in the New Testament. “When the (1) Comforter is come, whom (2) I will send unto you from (3) the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me” (Joh 15:26). “I beseech you, brethren, for (1) the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for (2) the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers (3) to God” (Rom 15:30). “For through him [Christ] we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph 2:18). “To the acknowledgment of the mystery of God [the Spirit], and of the Father, and of Christ” (Col 2:2). “The Lord [the Spirit] direct your hearts into the love of God [the Father], and into the patient waiting for Christ” (2Th 3:5). “Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God” (Heb 9:14). “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1Pe 1:2).

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Mat 28:19). In the name of the Triune God believers are to be

baptized. What a conclusive confirmation of the blessed doctrine of the Holy Trinity is this! Here are three divine Persons, but with *one* “Name”—note carefully it is not “names!” The absolute deity of the Son and of the Spirit are here unmistakably intimated by their conjunction with the Father, since baptism is administered *equally* in the name of all three as a religious ordinance, yea, as a part of divine worship, which could never be were either of the three merely a creature. Not only is there a profession of faith in the three divine Persons made by those who are scripturally baptized, but there is a solemn dedication unto their service and worship, being laid under obligation of obedience unto Each.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God [the Father], and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all” (2Co 13:14). This passage contains another clear proof of a trinity of Persons in the Godhead, for here distinct things are ascribed and of them asked, as *equal objects* of prayer and worship. That comprehensive benediction includes all the prime blessings and benefits of redemption—the “grace” of our adorable Saviour, the “love” of our heavenly Father, and the “communion” of our divine Comforter. Unto what wretched shifts are the enemies of the truth put, who would reduce the meaning of this verse unto “the grace of a *creature* and the love of the *Creator* be joined with the communion of *an energy* of Deity, be with you all!” Unspeakably solemn is 1 John 2:23, “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father”—a denial of the Trinity is a repudiation of the deity of the Son and the Spirit, and he who is guilty of that most awful sin knows not, hath not “the Father!” In denying *one* they equally deny *all*.

“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat 3:16-17). Let it be carefully observed, here were presented all three Persons of the Godhead, clearly distinguished from each other and manifested severally, and that, in such a way and manner as is needed to define the Persons of each. Here was the Person of the Father, manifested by a voice from heaven. Here was the Person of the Son, manifested in our nature, coming up from the water. Here was the Person of the Holy Spirit manifested in the form of a dove, lighting upon the Son. What could more clearly distinguish the eternal three—the Father speaking, the Son spoken of, and the Spirit manifested apart from both! Forever be His name praised that the Triune God there so gloriously revealed Himself.

Not only are the eternal three in one God plainly revealed in Scripture in their distinctive personalities, but their *absolute equality* one with the other is also clearly made known. It would extend this article unto too great a length were we to present a small part of the proof that each one is possessed of the same divine perfections, and quote some of the texts which affirm that Father, Son, and Spirit are alike eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. Instead, we will here simply point out how their equality is evidenced by the *order* in which they are mentioned in various Scriptures. In Matthew 28:19, it is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. In 2 Corinthians 13:14, it is the Son, the Father, and the Spirit. In Ephesians 4:4, it is the Spirit, the Son, and the Father. In Colossians 2:2, it is the Spirit, the Father, and the Son. In Revelation 1:4-5, it is the Father, the Spirit, and the Son. What could more definitely intimate their equality than this *variation* of order!

Infidels have sought to turn into ridicule the fact of Christ praying to the Father, arguing that if both were divine and there be only one God, then God was praying to Himself. In this they betray their ignorance, failing to discern the distinctions in the Godhead. Though the divine essence be one, there is a distinction of Persons in the undivided nature. “The language of *I* and *Thou*, and

Me and *Thee*, so often used by Christ in John 17, are so many proofs of the divine personalities of Himself and of the Father. The word personalities is expressive of the mode of existing in the divine nature. The word Person, besides that, implies the nature and substance in whom He subsists. A Person is an individual that subsists and lives of itself, endowed with will and understanding, who is neither sustained by, nor is part of another. Such is the Father, therefore a Person; such is the Son, therefore a Person; such is the Holy Spirit, therefore a Person. The great and incommunicable name of JEHOVAH is always in the singular number, because it is expressive of His essence, which is but one, but the first name we meet with in the first verse of Scripture is plural” (S. E. Pierce).

Scripture does not present the doctrine of the sacred Trinity in any way of contradiction, and affirms that God is one and three, three and one, in the *same* manner. Instead, it reveals that God is one in *nature*, but three in His *Persons*. When Christ said, “I and [my] Father are one” (Joh 10:30), He signified one in nature, not one in Person. The word “God” is sometimes expressive of the divine essence, and sometimes of one of the Persons in that essence. The three Persons are one in substance, one in the depths of a common consciousness, one in purpose, and with absolute equality in power and glory. “They agree with one another in nature, being, life, time, dignity, glory, or anything else pertaining to the divine essence: for in all these they are one and the same, and consequently co-essential, co-equal, co-eternal” (James Usher, 1640).

The divine Persons are not only one, but they are *in* one another, “As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee” (Joh 17:21)—there is an intimate inhabitation without any confusion of the three subsistences. They enjoy perfect, absolute, and divine union and communion with each other. In the Scriptures we hear them speaking *to* each other, and *of* each other in such a way as to clearly show a distinction of Persons, while constituting one JEHOVAH in the indivisible essence of the Godhead. The ineffable union between the eternal three is such that each one is *in* and *with* the others. Each one loves, possesses, glories, in the other, and works the same thing. “The Father loveth the Son” (Joh 3:35). “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” (Joh 5:19). “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?” (Joh 14:10).

“The union of the Trinity in Godhead is an essential one. There can be no greater unity. Nothing can be more one than the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one. Yet it is a unity which consists with order and distinction. The Unity of the Trinity does not take away the distinction of the Persons, nor confuse their order. They are one, yet three. They keep their distinct personalities, and their distinct personal operations, and their different manner and order of acting. It is an eternal and inseparable union, for in the divine nature or essence there can be no change. It is from the unity of the Persons in the same essence ariseth their essential inbeing in each other. All the Persons having the same essence and being in the one essence, it follows that in respect of the essence, one Person is as another.

“The great and incomprehensible God is essentially and infinitely holy, happy, blessed, and glorious. His nature is a fountain of infinite perfection. He is life itself, eternity itself, love itself, and blessedness itself. His happiness arises from the knowledge which He hath of His own essential nature, Persons and perfections. Nothing can be added unto Him, for ‘of him, and through him, and to him, are all things’ (Rom 11:36). From the in-being, society, and mutual intercourse held between the eternal three in the one JEHOVAH, flows that life of joy and bliss which belongs to God alone. The essential union between the Persons in the eternal Godhead is incommunicable, and the communion which they had from everlasting with each other is incomprehensible. Yet we may venture to say, their communion consisteth in the eternal life of

the three Persons among themselves, in the common interests and propriety which they have in each other, in reciprocal affections, communion and enjoyment; in an equal knowledge of each other, in an alternate communication of each other's mind in mutual love and delight, and in their possession of one common glory and blessedness.

“There is an incomprehensible love borne by the three in JEHOVAH to each other. It is a part of their essential perfection and blessedness. Whilst the Scripture is not altogether silent on this most sublime truth, yet it speaks but sparingly of it, because it exceeds all created conceptions. It can no more be comprehended than the life and self-sufficiency of JEHOVAH can. Yet, as in the order in which the essential three exist and co-exist in the incomprehensible JEHOVAH, they have been pleased to make known and manifest their personalities in all their eternal, internal and external acts of grace in election, regeneration, sanctification, preservation, and eternal glorification. So their love to each other is intimated in those distinct displays of grace which are attributed to each of them in the sacred Word. It is expressly said, ‘The Father loveth the Son’ (Joh 3:35), ‘I love the Father’ (Joh 14:31). And from the co-equality of the Father, Son, and Spirit, in the essence or Godhead, and from the unity of the Holy Ones in the whole revelation of grace, it is evident that the Spirit loves the Father and the Son” (S. E. Pierce, 1810).

Thus we have sought to begin this series of articles with the highest and most glorious of all—the union of the eternal three. It is the union of distinct Persons in the unity of a single nature. It is a union which is absolute, essential, eternal, incomprehensible, ineffable. It is not only futile, but grossly impious, to attempt any *illustration* of it, for there exists *no* analogy in all the universe. GOD is unique! But though profoundly mysterious, every truly regenerated soul has *proof of this truth* in his own inward experience. He knows that he has access through Christ, by the Spirit unto the Father. He knows that the Man who has saved him from hell is indwelt by “all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” He knows that the invincible power which subdued his enmity and caused him to throw down the weapons of his rebellion, was exercised by God the Spirit. And he knows that he has received the spirit of adoption whereby he cries, “Abba, Father.”

A PERSONAL WORD

At the time this issue is being printed [1935], indications are that our stay in Cheltenham is drawing to a close. We are not yet sure where the Lord will next have us pitch our tent. Prayer that our steps may be definitely directed by Him, will be valued. Until further notice, please address us c/o “Shalom,” Old Bath Road, Leckhampton, Cheltenham.

EVIL SPEAKING

“He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction” (Pro 13:3). “A guard upon the lips is a guard to the soul. He that is careful, who thinks twice before he speaks once, that, if he hath thought evil, lays his hand upon his mouth to suppress it, that keeps a strong bridle on his tongue, and a strict hand on the bridle, he keeps his soul from a great deal of guilt and grief, and saves himself the trouble of many bitter reflections on himself, and others upon him” (Matthew Henry). Alas, how many are now saying—by their very attitude and actions “our lips are our own: who is lord over us?” (Psa 12:4).

“Speak not evil one of another, brethren” (Jam 4:11). Is not this a word which is much needed by some of us today? Alas, in some quarters the habit of discrediting others behind their backs has become so common that it is regarded almost as a matter of course. The mentioning to others of a brother’s faults or a sister’s failures, the repeating of unfavourable reports which have come to our ears is so general that few appear to make any conscience thereof. Nevertheless, God still says, “*Speak not evil* one of another, brethren.” Yes, this *is* an exhortation which requires to be prayerfully taken to heart by not a few. Personally, the writer has to acknowledge with shame that this divine injunction has not had the restraining influence upon his unruly tongue which it ought, and in what follows he desires to preach unto himself as well as to others.

How solemn it is to observe that one of the sins mentioned in that awful catalogue enumerated in Romans 1:29-31 is that of detraction or injuring the reputation of others —“whisperers, backbiters.” Therein does the corruption of man’s vitiated nature evidence itself. To stain the good reputation of another is highly reprehensible. God commanded us to love our neighbour as ourself, and this requires that I am to be concerned not only about his person and property, but to protect his good name. “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches” (Pro 22:1), and therefore to rob a man of his good name is worse than stealing his property. A citizen of Zion is thus described, “He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour” (Psa 15:3).

“Speak not evil one of another, brethren” (Jam 4:11). That which is here forbidden is the saying of anything, be it true or false, to the prejudice of another. God requires that our words should be governed by “the law of kindness” (Pro 31:26), and anything which would hurt or injure the reputation of another is to be rigidly eschewed. Whenever I cannot speak well of my brother or sister, I must say nothing at all. It is devilish to take delight in exposing the faults of fellow-Christians, and stirring up prejudice and bitter feelings against them (Rev 12:10). God requires that our words should agree with love as well as with truth. Since Christians are *brethren*, the last thing they should be guilty of is defaming one another.

“Take no heed unto all words that are spoken” (Ecc 7:21). “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge” (Pro 19:27). *Beware of evil listening!* Those who receive tales about others, who delight to hear of the failings of their brethren, encourage evil speakers in their sin and are partakers of their guilt. “The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue” (Pro 25:23). The Christian is not only bidden to abstain from all evil speaking himself, but is required to discourage this sin in others by frowning on it and endeavouring to put it out of countenance. Slanders would not be so readily spoken as they are, if they were not so readily heard. “Many abuse those spoken evil of,

only in hopes to curry favor with those they speak *to*" (Matthew Henry). Disappoint them by showing your disapproval.

Since it be a grievous sin to speak evil of a brother in Christ, how much greater is the offence when it is committed against one of His ministering servants! True, they are not faultless, yet their blemishes are not to be blazed abroad, but should be covered with the mantle of love. "Wherefore then *were ye not afraid* to speak against my servant Moses?" (Num 12:8). Observe the emphasis—ye should be afraid to speak evil against any one, much more against My honoured servant. It is written, "Against an elder [bishop] *receive not an accusation*, but before two or three witnesses" (1Ti 5:19). It is at our peril that we say or do anything against the servants of God, for He reckons those who touch them as touching "the apple of *his* eye" (Zec 2:8). "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets *no* harm" (Psa 105:15) is His express command.

To speak evil of others proceeds from ill will or malice, either desiring that they should be made odious in the esteem of others, or being quite indifferent if that effect be produced. To say that no harm is intended is to talk foolishly, "As a mad man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?" (Pro 26:18-19). Much repeating of the ill reports about others issues from an uncharitable readiness to believe the worst, "For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and *we will report it*" (Jer 20:10). But the chief cause of this evil is an unruly tongue, nor are we likely to seek grace for bridling that member until we really make conscience of this sin.

It is both striking and searching to note how often the Holy Spirit addresses Himself to God's children on this subject. Many are the verses in the Book of Proverbs which contain salutary instruction for the right use of our tongues. So also in the New Testament exhortations are frequently given against the wrong use of our tongues. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, *and evil speaking*, be put away from you, with all malice" (Eph 4:31). "Let your speech be *always* with grace, seasoned with salt" (Col 4:6). "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). There must be the definite and daily "laying aside" of these bad habits if we are to preserve a healthy appetite for spiritual things. "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him *refrain his tongue from evil*, and his lips that they speak no guile" (1Pe 3:10). Here is one of the divine rules of longevity—"evil speaking" has more ill effect upon the health than many imagine!

But is *all* speaking evil of another unlawful? No, though even here it is hard to keep clear of sinning. There are times when it is a duty to caution our friends against those who might prove a menace to them. If I know one is about to buy an article that has been misrepresented, or trust some money to a dishonest person, then I must faithfully raise my voice in warning. If I should be summoned as a witness in court, then I am bound to tell what I know. Yet, where the glory of God and the honour of His Gospel is at stake, or where there is danger of a brother being imposed upon or wronged, and my duty to speak out is plain, nevertheless, the following cautions need to be heeded. First, take pains to fully *verify* what you have heard, and make sure that what you relate is true. Second, do it in a right spirit—not censoriously, nor with delight, but with godly sorrow. Third, be impartial, and if occasion requires you to mention another's faults, be careful not to conceal his virtues.

Except where the glory of God plainly requires it and the good of our neighbour or brother demands it, we must refrain from all evil speaking of others. If we are duly occupied with and humbled over *our own* many faults, we shall have neither time nor inclination to dwell upon or publish those of others. If we properly heed the exhortation of Philippians 4:8, we shall cultivate

the habit of admiring the graces in our brethren instead of like filthy flies settling on their sores. Certain it is that if we are not tender of the reputation of others, God will make us taste of the bitterness of this affliction for ourselves, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal 6:7). “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Mat 7:2). How solemn is that word, “speaking evil of you: who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead” (1Pe 4:4-5). Well may we pray, “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Psa 141:3).

May

THE HOLY SPIRIT

28. The Spirit Indwelling (Part 1)

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom 8:9). The possession of the Holy Spirit is the distinguishing mark of a Christian, for to be without the Spirit is proof positive that we are out of Christ—“none of His”—fearful words! And my reader, if we are not Christ’s, whose are we? The answer must be, *the devil’s*, for there is no third possessor of men. In the past all of us were subjects of the kingdom of darkness, the slaves of Satan, the heirs of wrath. And the great questions which each one of us needs to accurately answer are, Have I been taken out of that terrible position? Have I been translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son, made an heir of God, and become indwelt by His Holy Spirit?

Observe that the Spirit and Christ go together. If we have Christ for our Redeemer, then we have the Holy Spirit for our Indweller, but if we have not the Spirit, we are not Christ’s. We may be members of His visible “church,” we may be externally united to Him by association with His people, but unless we are partakers of that vital union which arises from the indwelling of the Spirit, we are His only by name. “The Spirit *visits* many who are unregenerate, with His motions, which they resist and quench, but in all that are sanctified He *dwells*. There He resides and rules. He is there as a man at his own house, where he is constant and welcome, and has the dominion. Shall we put this question to our hearts, Who dwells, who rules, who keeps house there? Which interest has the ascendant?” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

The Spirit belongs to Christ (Heb 1:9, Rev 3:1) and proceeds from Him (Joh 1:33; 15:26; Luk 24:49). The Spirit is sent by Christ as Mediator (Act 2:33). He is given to God’s people in consequence of Christ’s having redeemed them from the curse of the law (Gal 3:13-14). We have nothing but what we have in and from the Son. The Spirit is given to Christ immediately, to us derivatively. He dwells in Christ by radication, in us by operation. Therefore is the Spirit called “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8:9) and “the Spirit of his Son” (Gal 4:6), and so it is Christ who “liveth in” us (Gal 2:20). Christ is the great fountain of the waters of life, and from Him proceeds every gift and grace. It is our glorious Head who communicates or sends from Himself that Spirit who quickens, sanctifies, and preserves His people.

What high valuation we set upon the blessed Person and work of the Holy Spirit when we learn that He is the gift, yea the dying legacy which Christ bequeathed unto His disciples to supply His absence. “How would some rejoice if they could possess any relic of anything that belonged unto our Saviour in the days of His flesh, though of no use or benefit unto them. Yea, how great a part of men, called Christians, do boast in some pretended parcels of the tree whereon He suffered. Love abused by superstition lies at the bottom of this vanity, for they would embrace anything left them by their dying Saviour. But He left them no such things, nor did ever bless and sanctify them unto any holy or sacred ends, and therefore hath the abuse of them been punished with blindness and idolatry. But this *is* openly testified unto in the Gospel. When His heart was overflowing with love unto His disciples and care for them, when He took a holy prospect of what would be their condition, work, and temptations in the world, and thereon made provision of all that they could stand in need of, He promised to leave and give unto them *His Holy Spirit* to abide with them forever” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

Plain and express are the declarations of Holy Writ on this wondrous and glorious subject. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God *dwelleth in you?*” (1Co 3:16). “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6). Observe where the Spirit is said to dwell—not in the understanding—the fatal error of many—but in the heart. Most certainly He enlightens the understanding with truth, but He does not rest there. He makes His way to, and takes up His abode in the renewed and sanctified *heart*. There He sheds abroad the love of God. There He inspires the cry of, “Abba, Father.” And be that cry never so faint, it yet is the breathing of the indwelling Spirit, and meets a response in the heart of God.

How affecting are Paul’s words to Timothy, “That good thing which was committed unto thee *by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us*” (2Ti 1:14).

*“Dear Lord, and shall Thy Spirit rest,
In such a heart as mine?
Unworthy dwelling! glorious Guest
Favour astonishing, divine.”*

The basis upon which the Spirit takes up His abode within the believer is twofold—first, on the ground of redemption. This is illustrated most blessedly in the cleansing of the leper—figure of the sinner. “And the priest shall take some of *the blood* of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot...And of the rest of *the oil* that is in his hand shall the priest put upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot, *upon the blood* of the trespass offering” (Lev 14:14, 17). Wondrous type was that—the “oil” (emblem of the Holy Spirit) was placed “upon the blood”—only on the ground of atonement accomplished could the Holy Spirit take up His abode in sinners. This at once sets aside human merits.

There must be *moral fitness* as well. The Spirit of God will not tabernacle with unbelieving rebels. “*After* [or “when”] that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Eph 1:13). It is to those who obey the command, “Be ye not unequally yoked together” (2Co 6:14) that God promises, “I will dwell in them” (2Co 6:16). When by repudiating all idols, receiving Christ as Lord, trusting in the merits of His sacrifice, the heart is prepared, the Spirit of God enters to take possession for Christ’s use. When we give up ourselves to the Lord, He owneth the dedication by making our bodies the temples of the Holy Spirit, there to maintain His interests against all the opposition of the devil.

In considering the Spirit indwelling believers we need to be on our guard against entertaining any conception of this grand fact which is gross and dishonouring to His Person. He does not so indwell as to impart His *essential* properties or perfections—such as omniscience or omnipotence. It would be blasphemy so to speak. But His saving and sanctifying operations are communicated to us as the sun is said to enter a room, when its bright beams and genial warmth are seen and felt therein. Further, we must not think that the graces and benign influences of the Spirit abide in us in the selfsame manner and measure they did in Christ. No, for God “giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him” (Joh 3:34)—in Him all fullness dwells.

Leaving for our next article other aspects of this theme, let us now point out that what has been before us lays the basis of the most solemn appeal and powerful exhortation. Is my body a temple of the Holy Spirit? then how devoted should it be to God and His service! Am I indwelt by the Spirit of Christ? then how I ought to lend my ear to His softest whisper, my will to His gentlest sway, my heart to His sacred influence. In disregarding His voice, in not yielding to His promptings, He is grieved, Christ is dishonoured, and we are the losers. The greatest blessing we possess is the indwelling Spirit. Let us seek grace to conduct ourselves accordingly.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

89. Divine Chastisement (12:7-8)

The all-important matter in connection with divine chastenings, so far as the Christian is concerned, is the spirit in which he *receives* them. Whether or not we “profit” from them, turns entirely on the exercises of our minds and hearts under them. The advantages or disadvantages which outward things bring to us is to be measured by the effects they produce in us. Material blessings become curses if our souls are not the gainers thereby, while material losses prove benedictions if our spiritual graces are enriched therefrom. The difference between our spiritual impoverishment or our spiritual enrichment from the varied experiences of this life will very largely be determined by our heart-attitude toward them, the spirit in which they are encountered, and our subsequent conduct under them. It is all summed up in that word, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Pro 23:7).

As the careful reader passes from verse to verse of Hebrews 12:3-11, he will observe how the Holy Spirit has repeatedly stressed this particular point, namely, *the spirit in which* God’s chastisements are to be received. First, the tired and troubled saint is bidden to consider Him who was called upon to pass through a far rougher and deeper sea of suffering than any which His followers encounter, and this contemplation of Him is urged “lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Heb 12:3). Second, we are bidden to “despise not” the chastenings of the Lord, “nor faint” when we are rebuked of Him (Heb 12:5). Third, our Christian duty is to “endure” chastening as becometh the sons of God (Heb 12:7). Fourth, it is pointed out that since we gave reverence to our earthly fathers when they corrected us, much more should we “rather be in subjection” unto our heavenly Father (Heb 12:9). Finally, we learn there will only be the

“peaceable fruit of righteousness” issuing from our afflictions, if we are duly “exercised thereby” (Heb 12:11).

In the previous articles, we have sought to point out some of the principal considerations which should help the believer to receive God’s chastisements in a meet and becoming spirit. We have considered the blessed example left us by our Captain—may we who have enlisted under His banner diligently follow the same. We have seen that, however severe may be our trials, they are by no means extreme. We have not yet “resisted unto blood” (Heb 12:4)—martyrdom has not overtaken *us*, as it did many who preceded us. Shall we succumb to the showers, when they defied the fiercest storms! We have dwelt upon the needs-be for divine reproof and correction. We have pointed out the blessed distinction there is between divine punishment and divine chastisement. We have contemplated the source from which all proceeds, namely, the *love* of our Father. We have shown the imperative necessity for the exercise of faith, if the heart is to be kept in peace while the rod is upon us.

“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (Heb 12:7-8). In these verses another consideration is presented for the comfort of those whom God is chastening. That of which we are here reminded is, that, when the Christian comports himself properly under divine correction, he gives proof of his divine sonship. If he endure them in a manner becoming to his profession, he supplies evidence of his divine adoption. Blessed indeed is this, an unanswerable reply to Satan’s evil insinuation. So far from the disciplinary afflictions which the believer encounters showing that God loves him not, they afford a golden opportunity for him to exercise and display *his* unquestioning love of the Father. If we undergo chastisements with patience and perseverance, then do we make manifest, both to ourselves and to others, the genuineness of our profession.

In the verses which are now before us, the apostle draws an inference from and makes a particular application of what had been previously affirmed, thereby confirming the exhortation. There are three things therein to be particularly noted. First, the duty which has been enjoined. Divine chastisements are to be “endured” by us. That which is included and involved by that term we shall seek to show in what follows. Second, the great benefit which is gained by a proper endurance of those chastisements. Evidence is thereby obtained that God is dealing with us as “sons,” not as enemies whom He hates, but as dear children whom He loves. Third, a solemn contrast is then drawn, calculated to unmask hypocrites and expose empty professors. Those who are without divine chastisement are not sons at all, but “bastards”—claiming the church for their mother, yet having not God for their Father. What is signified thereby will appear in the sequel.

“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons” (Heb 12:7). This statement supplements what was before us in verse 5. Both of them speak of the spirit in which chastisements are to be received by the Christian, only with this difference—verse 5 gives the negative side, verse 7 the positive. On the one hand, we are not to “despise” or “faint” under them. On the other hand, they are to be “endured.” It has become an English proverb that “what cannot be cured must be endured,” which is but another way of saying that we must grit our teeth and make the best of a bad job. It scarcely needs pointing out that the Holy Spirit has not used the term here in its lowest and carnal sense, but rather in its noblest and spiritual signification.

In order to ascertain the force and scope of any word which is used in Holy Scripture neither its acceptance in ordinary speech nor its dictionary etymology is to be consulted. Instead, a concordance must be used, so as to find out how it is actually employed on the sacred page. In the case now before us, we do not have far to seek, for in the immediate context it is found in a

connection where it cannot be misunderstood. In verse 2, we read that the Saviour “endured the cross,” and in verse 3, that He “endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.” It was in the highest and noblest sense that Christ “endured” His sufferings. He remained steadfast under the sorest trials, forsaking not the path of duty. He meekly and heroically bore the acutest afflictions without murmuring against or fainting under them. How, then, is the Christian to conduct himself in the fires? We subjoin a sevenfold answer.

First, the Christian is to “endure” chastisement *inquiringly*. While it be true that all chastisement is not the consequence of personal disobedience or sinful conduct, yet much of it is so, and therefore it is always the part of wisdom for us to seek for the *why* of it. There is a cause for every effect, and a reason for all God’s dealings. The Lord does not act capriciously, nor does He afflict willingly (Lam 3:33). Every time the Father’s rod falls upon us it is a call to self-examination, for pondering the path of our feet, for heeding that repeated word in Haggai, “Consider your ways” (Hag 1:5). It is our bounden duty to search ourselves and seek to discover the reason of God’s displeasure. This may not be a pleasant exercise, and if we are honest with ourselves, it is likely to occasion us much concern and sorrow. Nevertheless, a broken and contrite heart is never despised by the One with whom we have to do.

Alas, only too often this self-examination and inquiring into the cause of our affliction is quite neglected, *relief* therefrom being the uppermost thought in the sufferer’s mind. There is a most solemn warning upon this point in 2 Chronicles 16:12-13, “And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease *he sought not to the LORD*, but to the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers.” How many professing Christians do likewise today. As soon as sickness strikes them, their first thought and desire is not that the affliction may be sanctified unto their souls, but how quickly their bodies may be relieved. We do not fully agree with some brethren who affirm that the Christian ought never to call in a doctor, and that the whole medical fraternity is of the devil—in such case the Holy Spirit had never denominated Luke “the beloved physician,” nor had Christ said the sick “need” a physician. On the other hand, it is unmistakably evident that physical healing is not the first need of an ailing saint.

Second, the Christian is to “endure” chastisement *prayerfully*. If our inquiry is to be prosecuted successfully, then are we in urgent need of divine assistance. Those who rely upon their own judgment are certain to err. As our hearts are exercised as to the *cause* of the chastening, we need to seek earnestly unto God, for it is only in *His* light that we “see light” (Psa 36:9). It is not sufficient to examine ourselves. We must request the divine Physician to diagnose our case, saying, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa 139:23-24). Nevertheless, let it be pointed out that such a request cannot be presented sincerely unless we have personally endeavoured to thoroughly search ourselves and purpose to continue so doing.

Prayer was never designed to be a substitute for the personal discharge of duty, rather is it appointed as a means for procuring help therein. While it remains our duty to honestly scrutinize our hearts and inspect our ways, measuring them by the holy requirements of Scripture, yet only the immediate assistance of the Spirit will enable us to prosecute our quest with any real profit and success. Therefore we need to enter the secret place and inquire of the Lord, “Show me *wherefore* thou contendest with me” (Job 10:2). If we sincerely ask Him to make known unto us what it is in our ways He is displeased with, and for which He is now rebuking us, He will not mock us. Request of Him the hearing ear and He will tell what is wrong. Let there be no reserve, but an honest desire to know what needs correcting and He will show you.

Third, the Christian is to “endure” chastisement *humbly*. When the Lord has responded to your request and has made known the cause of His chastening, see to it that you quarrel not with Him. If there be any feeling that the scourging is heavier than you deserve, the thought must be promptly rejected. “Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment [or chastisement] of his sins?” (Lam 3:39). If we take issue with the Most High, we shall only be made to smart the more for our pains. Rather must we seek grace to heed that word, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God” (1Pe 5:6). Ask Him to quicken conscience, shine into your heart, and bring to light the hidden things of darkness, so that you may perceive your inward sins as well as your outward. And then will you exclaim, “I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me” (Psa 119:75).

Fourth, the Christian is to “endure” chastisement *patiently*. Probably that is the prime thought in our text—steadfastness—a resolute continuance in the path of duty, an abiding service of God with all our hearts, notwithstanding the present trial, is what we are called unto. But Satan whispers, “What is the use? you *have* endeavoured, earnestly, to please the Lord, and how is He rewarding you? You cannot satisfy Him. The more you give, the more He demands. He is a hard and tyrannical Master.” Such vile suggestions must be put from us as the malicious lies of him who hates God and seeks to encompass our destruction. God has only your good in view when the rod is laid upon you. Just as the grass needs to be mown to preserve its freshness, as the vine has to be pruned to ensure its fruitfulness, as friction is necessary to produce electric power, as fire alone will consume the dross, even so the discipline of trial is indispensable for the education of the Christian.

“Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal 6:9). Keep before you the example of Christ. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, yet before His shearers He was “dumb.” He never fretted or murmured, and we are to “follow his steps.” “Let patience have her perfect work” (Jam 1:4). For this we have to be much in prayer, for this we need the strengthening help of the Holy Spirit. God tells us that chastisement is not “joyous” but “grievous.” If it were not, it would not be “chastening.” But He also assures us that “*afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb 12:11). Lay hold of that word “afterwards.” Anticipate the happy sequel and in the comfort thereof continue pressing forward along the path of duty. “Better is *the end* of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit” (Ecc 7:8).

Fifth, the Christian is to “endure” chastisement *believingly*. This was how Job endured his, “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). Ah, he looked behind all secondary causes and perceived that above the Sabeans and Chaldeans was JEHOVAH Himself. But is it not at *this* point we most often fail? Only too frequently we see only the injustice of men, the malice of the world, the enmity of Satan, in our trials—that is walking by sight. Faith brings God into the scene. “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living” (Psa 27:13). It is an adage of the world that “Seeing is believing,” but in the spiritual realm the order is reversed. There we must “believe” in order to “see.” And *what is it* which the saint most desires to “see”? Why, “the goodness of the LORD,” for unless he sees *that*, he “faints.” And *how* does faith see “the goodness of the LORD” in chastisements? By viewing them as proceeding from God’s love, as ordered by His wisdom, and as designed for our profit.

As the bee sucks honey out of the bitter herb, so faith may extract much good from afflictions. Faith can turn water into wine and make bread out of stones. Unbelief gives up in the hour of trial and sinks in despair, but faith keeps the head above water and hopefully looks for deliverance.

Human reason may not be able to understand the mysterious ways of God, but faith knows that the sorest disappointments and the heaviest losses are among the “all things” which work together for our good. Carnal friends may tell us that it is useless to strive any longer, but faith says, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). What a wonderful promise is that in Psalm 91:15, “I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him.” Ah, but faith alone can feel that Presence, and faith alone can enjoy now the assured deliverance. It was because of the joy set before Him (by the exercise of faith) that Christ “endured the cross,” and only as we view God’s precious promises will *we* patiently endure *our* cross.

Sixth, the Christian is to “endure” chastisement *hopefully*. Though quite distinct, the line of demarcation between faith and hope is not a very broad one, and in some of the things said above we have rather anticipated what belongs to this particular point. “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man *seeth*, why doth he yet *hope for*? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom 8:24-25). This passage clearly intimates that “hope” relates to *the future*. “Hope” in Scripture is far more than a warrantless wish. It is a firm conviction and a comforting expectation of a future good. Now inasmuch as chastisement, patiently and believingly endured, is certain to issue in blessing, hope is to be exercised. “When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10)—that is the language of confident expectation.

While it be true that faith supports the heart under trial, it is equally a fact—though less recognized—that *hope* buoys it up. When the wings of hope are spread, the soul is able to soar above the present distress, and inhale the invigorating air of future bliss. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; *while* we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen” (2Co 4:17-18). That also is the language of joyous anticipation. No matter how dark may be the clouds which now cover thy horizon, ere long the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. Then seek to walk in the steps of our father Abraham, “who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations” (Rom 4:18).

Seventh, the Christian is to “endure” chastisement *thankfully*. Be grateful, my despondent brother, that the great God cares so much for a worm of the earth as to be at such pains in your spiritual education. O what a marvel that the Maker of heaven and earth should go to so much trouble in His son-training of us! Fail not, then, to thank Him for His goodness, His faithfulness, His patience, toward thee. “We are chastened of the Lord [now], that we should not be condemned with the world” in the day to come (1Co 11:32). What cause for praise is this! If the Lord Jesus, on the awful night of His betrayal, “sung an hymn” (Mat 26:30), how much more should we, under our infinitely lighter sorrows, sound forth the praises of our God. May divine grace enable both writer and reader to “endure chastening” in this sevenfold spirit, and then will God be glorified and we advantaged.

“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons” (Heb 12:7). This does not mean that upon our discharge of the duty enjoined God will act toward us “as with sons,” for this He does in the chastisements themselves, as the apostle has clearly shown. No, rather, the force of these words is, If ye *endure* chastening, then you have the evidence in yourselves that God deals with you as sons. In other words, the more I am enabled to conduct myself under troubles as becometh a child of God, the clearer is the proof of my divine adoption. The new birth is known by its fruits, and the more my spiritual graces are exercised under testing, the more do I make manifest my regeneration. Furthermore, the clearer the evidence of my regeneration, the clearer do I perceive the dealings of a *Father* toward me in His discipline.

The patient endurance of chastenings is not only of great price in the sight of God, but is of inestimable value unto the souls of them that believe. While it be true that the sevenfold description we have given above depicts not the spirit in which all Christians *do* receive chastening, but rather the spirit in which they *ought* to receive it, and that all coming short thereof is to be mourned and confessed before God, nevertheless, it remains that no truly born again person continues to either utterly “despise” the rod or completely “faint” beneath it. No, herein lies a fundamental difference between the good-ground hearer and the stony-ground one. Of the former it is written, “The righteous also shall hold on his way” (Job 17:9). Of the latter, it is recorded, “Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended” (Mat 13:21).

A mere suffering of things calamitous is not, in itself, any evidence of our acceptance with God. Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upwards, so that afflictions or chastisements are no pledges of our adoption. But if we “endure” them with any measure of real faith, submission, and perseverance, so that we “faint not” under them—abandon not the faith or entirely cease seeking to serve the Lord—then do we demonstrate our divine sonship. So too it is the proper frame of our minds and the due exercises of our hearts which lets in a sense of God’s gracious design toward us in His chastenings. The Greek word for “dealeth with us as with sons” is very blessed. Literally it signifies, “he *offered himself* unto us.” He proposeth Himself not as an enemy, but as a Friend, not as toward strangers, but toward His own beloved children.

“But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (Heb 12:8). These words present the reverse side of the argument established in the preceding verse. Since it be true, both in the natural and in the spiritual realm, that disciplinary dealing is inseparable from the relation between fathers and sons, so that an evidence of adoption is to be clearly inferred therefrom, it necessarily follows that those who are “without chastisement” are not children at all. What we have here is a testing and discriminative rule, which it behooves each of us to measure himself by. That we may not err therein, let us attend to its several terms.

When the apostle says, “But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers,” it is obvious that his words are not to be taken in their widest latitude. The word “all” refers not to all men, but to the “sons” of whom he is speaking. In like manner, “chastisement” is not here to be taken for everything that is grievous and afflictive, for none entirely escape trouble in this life. But *comparatively* speaking, there are those who are largely exempt. Such the Psalmist referred to when he said, “For there are no bands in *their* death: but their strength is firm. *They* are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men” (Psa 73:4-5). No, it is God’s *disciplinary* dealings which the apostle is speaking of, corrective instruction which promotes holiness. There are many professors who, whatever trials they may experience, are without any divine *chastisement* for their good.

Those who are “without chastisement” are but “bastards.” It is common knowledge that bastards are despised and neglected—though unjustly so—by those who illegitimately begot them. They are not the objects of that love and care as those begotten in wedlock. This solemn fact has its counterpart in the religious realm. There is a large class who are destitute of divine chastisements, for they give no evidence that they receive them, endure them, or improve them. There is a yet more solemn meaning in this word. Under the law, “bastards” *had no right of inheritance*, “A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD” (Deu 23:2). No cross, no crown. To be without God’s disciplinary chastenings now means that we must be excluded from His presence hereafter. Here, then, is a further reason why the Christian should be contented

with his present lot. The Father's rod upon him now evidences his title unto the inheritance in the day to come.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

41. His Condemnation by Michal

In the closing verses of 2 Samuel 6, there is to be seen a mingling of the lights and shadows—the blessed fruits of the Spirit appear, but the evil works of Satan are also evident. As it often is in the natural world, so we find it in the moral realm—conflicting forces clash with each other—sunshine and rain, calm and storm, summer and winter constantly alternate. That which is spread before our senses in nature is but an external adumbration of what exists in the invisible—two mighty beings, diametrically opposed to each other, the Lord God and the devil, are ever at work. Such too is the life of the individual Christian, for he is a miniature replica of the world. In him “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), and consequently in his experience there is ever a mingling of the lights and shadows.

Before it ended, the joyful day of David's bringing up of the ark to Jerusalem was overcast by a domestic cloud. There was one in his own household who was incapable of entering into the fervour of his heart toward God, who was irritated by his devotion, and who bitterly condemned his zeal. One who was near and dear to him railed upon the king for his earnestness in JEHOVAH's cause and service. The enmity of the serpent was stirred by the honour accorded the holy ark, the procession of the Levites, the jubilation of Israel's ruler, and the offerings which had been presented before the Lord. The anointed eye has no difficulty in discerning behind Michal him who is the inveterate enemy of God and His people, and in her biting denunciation of David, the Christian of today may learn what to expect from those who are not one with him in the Lord.

Our last article closed at the verse, “So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet” (2Sa 6:15). Our present lesson opens with “and as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart” (2Sa 6:16), and as we shall see from the sequel, that secret hatred of David was shortly after vented in open opposition. Let not those who are engaged in the happy service of the Lord be surprised when they encounter antagonism, when, so far from their efforts being appreciated by all, there will be some who decry and denounce them. It was so with the prophets. It was so with Christ's forerunner. It was so with the Lord of glory Himself. It was so with His apostles and it will continue to be so with all His faithful servants unto the end of time. It cannot be otherwise while Satan is out of the pit.

“And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart” (2Sa 6:16). Saul himself had grievously neglected the public worship of

JEHOVAH, and his daughter appears to have had no sense of the importance and value of heavenly things. It could hardly be expected that a woman who had idols, “teraphim,” in her house (1Sa 19:13), cared anything for the holy ark, and hence she regarded her husband with scorn as she beheld his show of gratitude and joy. Poor creature, though a king’s daughter, and married to the present monarch of Israel, Michal was quite incapable of entering into the gladness and zeal of the man after God’s own heart. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1Co 2:14).

Yes, not only is the natural man (the unregenerate) unable to apprehend the things of the Spirit, but that of which He is the author appears as “foolishness” unto him. When the Lord Jesus was so occupied in ministering unto the needy multitude that He and His disciples “could not so much as eat bread,” we are told that His kinsmen “went out to lay hold on him: for they said, he is *beside himself*” (Mar 3:21). When the apostles began to “speak with other tongues,” the wondrous works of God, some mocked and said, “These men are full of new wine” (Act 2:4, 13). When Paul reasoned so earnestly with Agrippa, he answered, “Thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad” (Act 26:24). And my reader, there is something seriously lacking in you and me if similar charges are not made against us today!

The world will tolerate religion so long as its carnal repose is not disturbed. Yea, while it provides a garb to hide its shame, the world approves. But let the high claims of God be pressed, let it be insisted on that HE demands the *first* place in our affections, thoughts, lives, and such a message is at once distasteful. The professing Christian who attends the church on Sunday and the theatre during the week, who contributes occasionally to missionary societies but underpays his servants and overcharges his customers, is commended for his broadmindedness and shrewdness. But the real Christian who lives in the fear of the Lord all the day long, and who conducts himself as a stranger and pilgrim in this scene, is condemned as a bigot and puritan. Let the saint weep over the dishonoring of his Lord by many that bear His name, or leap for joy in His service as David did, and like David he will be dubbed a fanatic and his whole-heartedness will be similarly censured.

“And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD” (2Sa 6:17). The word “tabernacle” does not signify a building made of wood or stone, but rather a tent. Joshua had erected such a one centuries before, but doubtless that had decayed and perished long ago. It is to be noted that David did not bring the ark into his own residence, but into a separate curtained canopy which he had provided for it. In the days of Solomon a more stately temple was built to house the sacred coffer. As the ark was so manifestly a figure of Christ, its abiding first in a lowly tent and then in a magnificent edifice, no doubt foreshadowed the twofold state of the Saviour—first in humiliation, and then in glory.

“And David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD” (2Sa 6:17). Now that his noble design had been completely effected, David presented suitable sacrifices unto the Lord. His object in so doing was probably twofold—to express his deep gratitude unto God for the success of his undertaking and to supplicate a continuance of His favours. An important lesson for us is therein inculcated. Praises are to mingle with our prayers. God is to be recognized and owned amid our joys as well as sought unto under our sorrows. “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms” (Jam 5:13). The first is easily remembered, but the latter is often forgotten. God has appointed “feasts” as well as “fasts,” for He is to be given the first place by us at all times.

“And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts” (2Sa 6:18). This seems to have been an official act, consonant with the position to which God had instated him. The expression occurs first in Genesis 14:19, where we find that Melchizedek, priest of the Most High, “blessed” Abraham. At a later date, Moses (Exo 39:43), Joshua (Jos 22:6), and Solomon (1Ki 8:14) “blessed the people.” In each case it was their leaders who did so. The added words that David “blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts,” signifies that he, formally and authoritatively, pronounced His blessing upon those who had been committed to his care.

As a prophet of God, and as king over the people, it was both David’s privilege and duty to do so, for “without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better” (Heb 7:7). In this act we may see David prefiguring his greater Son and Lord. Of Him it is recorded, “And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and *blessed* them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven” (Luk 24:50-51). There we behold Christ as the Prophet unto and the King over the church, officially blessing its ministers. That was His final act ere He left this earth and took His place on high, to administer all the blessings which He had purchased for His people, and unto the end of the age the efficacy of His benediction abides. If by grace the writer and reader be among those whom *He* has blest, then are we blessed indeed.

“And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed every one to his house” (2Sa 6:19). Those who accompanied David on his joyous undertaking were now bounteously feasted. Having presented his thank offerings unto the Lord, presents were now made to the people. “When the heart is engaged in cheerfulness, that should open the hand in liberality, as they to whom God is merciful ought to show mercy in forgiving; so they to whom God is bountiful ought to exercise bounty in giving” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Compare Esther 9:22, the feast of Purim, celebrating the Jews’ deliverance from the plot of Haman, was observed with “sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.” By this act, David confirmed his interest in the people, and would endear himself to them, so that they would be encouraged to attend him again should he have occasion to call them. The typical significance is obvious.

“Then David returned to bless his household” (2Sa 6:20). In attending to his official duties, David did not overlook his domestic responsibilities. “Ministers must not think that their public performances will excuse them from their family worship, but when they have, with their instructions and prayers, blessed the solemn assemblies, they must return in the same manner to bless their households, for with them they are in a particular manner charged” (Matthew Henry). Nor must they be deterred from the discharge of this obligation and privilege should there be those under their roof whose hearts do not accompany them in such holy exercises. God must be honoured by the head of the house and the family altar maintained, no matter how much Satan may oppose the same.

“And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!” (2Sa 6:20). Being a total stranger to the zeal for God which filled David, incapable of appreciating his elevation of heart over the bringing home of the ark, she regarded his joyous dancing as unbecoming a king, and imagined he was bemeaning himself in the eyes of his subjects. Having no heart herself for God, she despised the exuberance of one who had. Being obsessed with thoughts of temporal dignity and glory, she

looked upon David's transports of religious fervour in the midst of his people, as degrading to his high office. "David *the brave captain*, leading forth the people to battle and returning with them in triumph, she admired, but David *the saint*, leading the people in the ordinances of God, and setting before them the example of fervency of spirit in His service, she despised" (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

Base ingratitude was this for Michal to thus revile the very one who had been so devoted to her that he had declined to accept a crown unless she was restored to him (2Sa 3:13). Fearful sin was this to insult and denounce her lord, whom God required her to reverence. Having secretly scorned him in her heart, she now openly chides with her lips, for out "of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh" (Luk 6:45). She was highly displeased with his deep veneration for the holy ark, and basely misrepresented his conduct by charging him with indecent dancing before it. There can be no doubt that her charge was a false one, for it is a common thing for those who have no piety themselves to paint others in false colours and hold them up as the most odious characters.

But the wicked conduct of Michal is not difficult to account for. At heart she was a partisan of the fallen house of Saul, and a despiser of JEHOVAH and His worship. As she grew older, her character had hardened in its lines and became more and more like her father's in its insatiable pride, and in its half dread and half hatred of David. Now she poured forth her venom in these mocking jibes. Because David had laid aside his royal robes, and had girded himself in a plain "linen ephod" (2Sa 6:14), she vilely charged him with immodesty. O how empty professors hate the true pilgrim spirit! Nothing riles them more than to see the children of God refusing to conform to the extravagant and flesh-pleasing fashions of the world, and instead, dress and act as becometh the followers of Him, who, when here, had "not where to lay his head" (Mat 8:20).

"And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD" (2Sa 6:21). David now vindicated himself. He had no reason to be ashamed of his conduct, for what he had done was only for the glory of God. No matter through what distorted lens the evil eyes of Michal might view it, his conscience was clear. If our own hearts condemn us not, we need not be troubled over the censures of the ungodly. Moreover, had not God recently elevated him to the throne? then it was but fitting that he should show his jubilant gratitude. There was an implied reproof in his reference to Saul and "all his house." God had not been honoured in *their* courts—all the more reason, then, why He should be publicly magnified now.

"And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour" (2Sa 6:22). David replies to Michal's evil charge in the language of irony, which was suitably answering "a fool according to his folly" (Pro 26:5). The force of his words is, If because of my setting aside the showy robes of imperial majesty and clothing myself in plain linen, and dancing before the ark of God's glory I am regarded by *you* as mean, then I, who am but "dust and ashes" in the sight of the Almighty, will humble myself yet more before Him—and so far from the common people despising me for the same, they will esteem one who takes a lowly place before the Lord. The more we be condemned for well-doing, the more resolute should we be in it.

"Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death" (2Sa 6:23). Thus did God punish David's wife for her sin. "She unjustly reproached David for his devotion, and therefore God justly put her under the perpetual reproach of barrenness. They that honour God, He will honour, but those that despise Him, and His servants and service, shall be lightly

esteemed” (Matthew Henry). There is a searching application to this verse which holds good today. We often hear quoted the first half of 1 Samuel 2:30, but the second half is not so frequently cited. It is just as true that they who “despise” the Lord shall be “lightly esteemed” by Him as those who “honour” Him shall be “honoured” by Him. A solemn example of this is found here. In mocking David, Michal insulted his Master (Luk 10:16)! Beware how you slight or speak evil against God’s servants, lest spiritual “barrenness” be your portion!

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

3. The Noahic

Noah is the connecting link between “the world that then was” which “being overflowed with water, perished,” and the earth which now is “reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2Pe 3:6-7). He lived upon both, was preserved from the awful judgment which swallowed up the former, and given dominion over the latter in its pristine state. A period of sixteen centuries intervened between the covenant of works which God entered into with Adam, and the covenant of grace which He made with Noah. So far as the Scriptures inform us, no other covenant was instituted by the Lord during that interval. There were divine revelations, divine promises, and precepts, in fact the antediluvians enjoyed very much more light from heaven than they are commonly credited with. But during those early centuries, where grace abounded, sin did much more abound, until “God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth” (Gen 6:12).

“The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing” (1Pe 3:20), and “space” was granted the ungodly to turn from their wickedness. Enoch prophesied, “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 1:14-15). Noah too was “a preacher of righteousness” (2Pe 2:5), and therefore must have warned his hearers that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom 1:18). But it was all to no avail, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecc 8:11). The evil continued to increase, till the divine patience was thoroughly exhausted. The threatened punishment came, and the ungodly were swept from the earth, and the first great period in the world’s history closed in judgment.

The facts briefly stated above require to be carefully kept in mind, for they throw not a little light upon the covenant which the Lord God made with Noah. They explain the reason for the transaction itself, and impart at least some aid towards a right conception of the particular form it took. The background of that covenant was divine judgment—drastic, unsparing, effectual. Every individual of the ungodly race perished. The great deluge completely relieved the earth of their presence and crimes. In due time the water subsided, and Noah and his family came from their

place of refuge to people the earth afresh. It is scarcely possible for us to form any adequate conception of the feelings of Noah on this occasion. The terrible and destructive visitation in which the hand of God was so manifest, must have given him an impression of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and of the ineffable holiness and righteousness of God such as he had not previously entertained.

“In one respect the world seemed to have suffered material loss by the visitation of the deluge. Along with the agents and instruments of evil there had also been swept away by it the emblems of grace and hope—paradise with its tree of life and its cherubim of glory. We can conceive Noah and his household, when they first left the ark, looking around with melancholy feelings on the position they now occupied, not only as being the sole survivors of a numerous offspring, but also as being themselves bereft of the sacred memorials which bore evidence of a happy past, and exhibited the pledge of a yet happier future. An important link of communion with heaven, it might well have seemed was broken by the change thus brought through the deluge on the world” (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874).

As we pointed out many years ago in our “Gleanings in Genesis,” the contents of Genesis 4, though exceedingly terse, intimate that from the time of Adam onwards, there was a specific place where God was to be worshipped. When we are told in verses 3 and 4 that Cain and Abel brought “an offering unto the LORD,” the implication is clear that they came to some particular location of His appointing. When we read that Abel brought “the firstlings of his flock *and of the fat thereof*,” we cannot escape the conclusion that there was an *altar* where the victim must be offered and upon which its fat must be burned. These necessary inferences receive clear corroboration in the words of verse 16, “And Cain *went out* from the presence of the LORD,” which can hardly mean less than that he was formally prohibited from the place where the presence of JEHOVAH was symbolically manifest. That place of worship appears to have been located at the east of the Garden of Eden.

In their commentary on Genesis, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown translate the last verse of Genesis 3 as follows, “And he [God] dwelt at the east of the garden of Eden between the Cherubim, as a Shekinah [a fire tongue or fire-sword] to keep open the way to the tree of life.” The same thought is presented in the Jerusalem Targum. Thus it would seem that when man was excluded from the garden, God established a mercy-seat, protected by cherubim, the fire tongue or sword being the emblem of His presence, and whosoever would worship Him must approach that mercy-seat with a bloody sacrifice. We may add that the Hebrew word “shaken” which in Genesis 3:24 is rendered “placed,” is defined in Young’s concordance “to tabernacle.” Eighty-three times in the Old Testament it is translated “to dwell,” as in Exodus 25:8, etc.

The signal and sovereign mercy which God had displayed toward Noah must also have deeply affected him. He would be strongly constrained to give some sweet expression to the overwhelming emotions of his heart. Accordingly, his very first act on taking possession of the new earth was to engage in a service of solemn worship, “And 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). Nothing could have been more becoming and appropriate. It was an acknowledgment of his deep obligations to the Lord, an expression of gratitude for the rich grace shown him, an intimation of his sense of personal unworthiness, an exercise of faith in the promised seed through whom alone divine blessings were conferred, and an avowal of his determination to consecrate himself to God and walk before Him in humble obedience.

It was in connection with this act of worship that the Lord God now entered into a covenant with the new head of the race. But before examining its terms, let us further ponder the

circumstances in which Noah now found himself, and try to form some idea of the thoughts which must then have exercised his mind. “However remarkable the deliverance he had experienced, whatever the conclusions he might have been warranted to draw from it in regard to the certainty of the divine favour towards himself, and however ardent his gratitude in the view of the great mercy of which he had been the recipient, he was still a man, and his novel situation could hardly fail to awaken anxiety and apprehension on several distinct grounds. He and his family were few in number, and with very slender means of shelter and defense in their reach. His condition was far from secure.

“Although the natural disposition of the animals preserved with him in the ark had been by divine power brought under restraint, he could not be ignorant that, when again left at large, their natural tempers and the instinctive ferocity of some of them would be resumed and multiplying, in a more rapid ratio than his own family, he might probably have distrusted his ability to cope with them, and might have anticipated the likelihood of perishing before their destructive violence. He knew, too, that the heart of man was full of evil, and that however his naturally bad propensities may have been awed by the fearful catastrophe from which he had recently escaped, the effect of it was not likely to be lasting. The time he might well fear would come—and that at no distant period—when the sinful tendencies of the heart would acquire strength, would be excited by temptation, and soon issue in the most disastrous consequences.

“He must have had a distinct and painful remembrance of those sins of lawlessness and violence with which he had been familiar in the old world. He might reasonably dread their repetition, and look forward to times when human life would be held cheap, and when wanton passion would not scruple to sacrifice it in the furtherance of its selfish purposes, unrestrained by any competent authority, and only feebly checked by the dread of revenge. The prospect would have been anything but cheering, and it cannot be thought surprising that he should have contemplated it with feelings of concern and dismay. He could form his views of the future simply from what he knew of the past, and his memory could recall little but what was painful and distressing” (John Kelly, 1861).

But more. Noah had not only witnessed the outbreakings of human depravity in its worst forms, but he had also seen the failure of all the religious means employed to restrain the same. Outside of his own little family, the worship of God had entirely ceased, the preaching of His servants was completely disregarded, and profligacy and violence universally prevailed. Even his building of the ark—“by the which he condemned the world” (Heb 11:7)—had no effect upon the wicked. The divine warnings were openly flouted until the flood came and swept them all away. Nor had Noah any reason now to believe that human nature had undergone any radical change for the better, or that sin had been eradicated from the hearts of the few survivors of the deluge. As Noah reflected upon the past, his anticipations of the future must have been anxious and gloomy.

What assurance could he have that the evil propensities of fallen men would not again break out in works just as heinous as any performed by those who had found a watery grave? Would not men still be impatient against divine restraints and treat the divine warnings with reckless contempt? Were such fears realized, should the corruption of the human heart once more develop in enormities and unlimited crimes, then what else could be expected than a repetition of the judgment which he had just survived? And where could such a recurrence of crime and punishment end? Did there not seem but one likely answer—the Almighty, in His righteous indignation, would utterly exterminate a guilty race which refused to be reclaimed. Such fears would not be the bogies of unwarranted pessimism, but the natural and logical conclusions to be drawn from what had already transpired upon the theatre of this earth. It is only by thus entering

into the exercises of Noah's heart that we can really appreciate the *pertinency* of that assurance which JEHOVAH now gave him.

But as we endeavour to follow the thoughts which must have presented themselves to our patriarch's mind, we must not overlook one bright ray of comfort which doubtless did much to relieve the darkness of his trepidations. When God had declared unto Noah, "And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die," He also added, "*But with thee will I establish my covenant*" (Gen 6:17-18). That gracious promise provided a resting place for his poor heart during the dreary days and months when he had been shut up in the ark, and must also have imparted some cheer as he now stood upon the judgment-swept and desolate earth. Yet, who that has any personal experience of the fierce assaults made by carnal reasonings (unbelief), can doubt but what Noah's faith now met with a painful conflict as it sought to withstand the influence of gloom and anxiety.

Some readers may consider that we have gone beyond due bounds in what has been said above, and that we have drawn too much upon our own imagination. But Scripture says, "As in water face answereth to face, *so the heart of man to man*" (Pro 27:19). How had you felt, dear reader, had *you* been in Noah's place? What had been my thoughts, had I been circumstanced as he was? Would we had no such fears as those we have sought to describe? Had we anticipated the unknown future without any such dark forebodings? Could we have passed through such a fearful ordeal and have returned to an earth from which the last of our former companions had been swept away, without wondering if the next storm of divine judgment would not quite complete its awful work? Would we, only eight all told, have been quite confident that the wild beasts would leave us unmolested? Why, it is *just this very mental background* which enables us to appreciate the tender mercy in what God now said unto Noah.

"And GOD blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you [why such repetition, but for the sake of emphasis?] shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; *into your hand are they delivered*. Every moving thing that liveth shall be *meat for you*; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat...And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; *neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood*; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen 9:1-4, 8-11). What does such language *imply*? What fears were such gracious declarations designed to calm? What other conclusions can logically be drawn from these verses than those that we have sketched in the preceding paragraphs? To the writer at least, an endeavour to place ourselves in Noah's position and follow out the thoughts most likely to engage his mind, has caused us to admire as never before *the suitability* of the divine revelation then given to Noah.

That which we have assayed to do in this first article upon the Noahic covenant has been to indicate its background, the occasion of it, and *why* it took the particular form it did. Just as the various Messianic prophecies, given by God at different times and at wide intervals, *were suited* to the local occasions when they were first made, so it was in the different renewals of His Covenant of Grace. Each of those renewals—unto Abraham, Moses, David, etc.—adumbrated some special feature of the Everlasting Covenant into which God had entered with the Mediator,

but the immediate circumstances of each of those favoured men *molded*, or gave form to, each particular feature of the Eternal Agreement which was severally shadowed forth unto them. We trust that the reader will now the better perceive *the reasons why* God gave unto Noah the particular statements recorded in Genesis 9.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

4. Its Problem

It should hardly be necessary for us to explain that when speaking of the *problem* of sanctification we refer not to such as unto God, but rather as it appears unto our feeble perceptions. But in these days it is not wise to take anything for granted, for not only are there some ready to make a man an offender for a word if he fails to express himself to their satisfaction, but there are others who need to have the simplest terms defined unto them. No, it would be blasphemy to affirm that sanctification, or anything else, ever presented any problem to the great JEHOVAH. Omniscience can never be confronted with any difficulty, still less an emergency. But to the Christian's finite understanding, deranged as it has been by sin, the problem of holiness is a very real and actual one; far more perplexing, we may add, than that presented by the subject of justification.

There are various subsidiary difficulties in sanctification, as we intimated in the fourth and fifth paragraphs of the introductory article, such as whether sanctification itself be a quality or a position, whether it be legal or experimental, whether it be absolute or progressive—all of which need to be cleared up in any satisfactory treatment of this theme. But far more intricate is the problem itself of how one who is a moral leper can be fit to worship in the sanctuary of God. Strange to say this problem is the acutest unto those who are the most spiritual. Self-righteous Pharisees and self-satisfied Laodiceans are in no wise troubled over the matter. Antinomians cut the knot (instead of untying it) and deny all difficulty by asserting that the holiness of Christ is imputed to us. But those who realize God requires *personal* holiness, yet are conscious of their own filthiness, are deeply concerned thereupon.

Things are now, generally, at such a low ebb that some of our readers may be surprised to find us making any reference at all to the *problem* of sanctification. In most places today, either the doctrine taught is so inadequate and powerless, or the practice maintained is so defective that few are likely to be exercised in conscience over the nature of that holiness without which none shall see the Lord. The claims of God are now so whittled down, the exalted standard which Scripture sets forth is so disregarded, *heart-purity* (in which vital godliness so largely consists) is so little emphasized, that it is rare to find any concerned about their personal state. If there be some preachers zealously warning against the worthlessness of good works to save where there be no faith in Christ, there are far more who earnestly cry up an empty faith, which is unaccompanied by personal holiness and obedience.

Such a low standard of spiritual living now prevails, that comparatively few of the Lord's own people have any clear or disturbing conceptions of how far, far short they come of measuring up to the holy model which God has set before us in His Word. Such feeble and faulty ideals of Christian living now prevail that those who are preserved from the grosser evils which even the world condemns, are "at ease in Zion" (Amo 6:1). So little is the fear of God upon souls, so faintly are the majority of professing Christians conscious of the plague of their own hearts, that in most quarters to speak about the *problem* of sanctification would be talking in an unknown tongue. A fearful miasma has settled down upon nine-tenths of Christendom, deadening the senses, blunting spiritual perceptions, paralyzing endeavour after deeper personal piety, till almost anything is regarded as being acceptable unto God.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that some of us have intensified the problem by creating for ourselves additional and needless difficulties through erroneous ideas of what sanctification is or what it involves in this life. The writer has been personally acquainted with more than one who was in abject despair through failing—after the most earnest and resolute efforts—to attain unto a state which false teachers had told them was attainable in this life, and who terminated their mortal wretchedness by committing suicide, and it has long been a wonder to him that thousands more who heed such teachers do not act likewise. There is no need to multiply difficulties. Scriptural sanctification is neither the eradication of sin, the purification of the carnal nature, nor even the partial putting to sleep of the "flesh," still less does it secure an exemption from the attacks and harassments of Satan.

Yet, on the other side, we must not minimize the problem, and reduce it to such simple proportions that we suppose a complete solution thereto is provided by merely affirming that Christ is our sanctification, and in himself the believing sinner remains unchanged to the end of his earthly course. If we die unholy in ourselves, then we are most assuredly lost for eternity, for only the "pure in heart" shall ever see God (Mat 5:8). What that purity of heart is, and how it is to be obtained, is the very real problem which sanctification raises. It is at the heart God looks (1Sa 16:7), and it is with the heart we need to be most concerned, for *out of it* "are the issues of life" (Pro 4:23). The severest woes were pronounced by Christ upon men not because their external conduct was foul, but because *within* they were "full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Mat 23:27).

That personal holiness is absolutely essential for an entrance into heaven was shown at length in our last article, and that what men regard as the lesser pollutions of sin just as effectually exclude from the kingdom of God as do the most heinous crimes, is clear from 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. The question which forces itself upon us is, *How* shall men be sanctified so as to suit an infinitely pure God? That we must be justified before we can stand before a righteous God is no more obvious than that it is necessary we must be sanctified so as to live in the presence of a holy God. But man is utterly without holiness, yea, he is impure, foul, filthy. The testimony of Scripture on this point is plain and full. "They are *corrupt*, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become *filthy*" (Psa 14:1-3).

The testimony of Scripture is that all men are vile and polluted—that they are, root and branch, source and stream, heart and life, not only disobedient, but *unholy*, and therefore *unfit* for God's presence. The Lord Jesus who knew what was in man, makes this clear enough when, revealing with His own light that loathsome den, the human heart, He says, "Out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness,

deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mar 7:21-23). Nor must we forget the confession of saints concerning themselves has always corresponded to God’s testimony. David says, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psa 51:5). Job declared, “Behold I am vile” (Job 40:4). Isaiah cried out, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips...for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isa 6:5).

But the most remarkable confession of this absolute vileness is contained in an acknowledgment by the Old Testament church—a sentence which has been taken up by all believers as exactly expressing what they all have to say of their condition by nature, “But we are all *as an unclean thing*, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa 64:6). Strong language indeed is that, yet not one whit too strong to depict the mud and mire into which the fall has brought us. If, then, when considering the doctrine of justification we found it appropriate—in view of man’s self-will, lawlessness, and disobedience—to ask, “How shall a man be just with God?” it is no less so now we are contemplating the doctrine of sanctification to inquire—in view of man’s uncleanness and filthiness, “*Who* can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” (Job 14:4).

We have no more power to make ourselves holy than we have to unmake or unbeing ourselves. We are no more able to cleanse our hearts than we can command or direct the winds. Sin in dominion is the “plague” of the heart (1Ki 8:38), and as no disease is so deadly as the plague, so there is no plague so deadly as *that of the heart*. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil” (Jer 13:23). The proud cannot make himself humble. The carnal cannot force himself to become spiritual. The earthly man can no more transform himself into a heavenly man than he can make the sun go backward or the earth fly upward. Sanctification is a work altogether above the powers of human nature. Alas that this is so little realized today.

Even among those preachers who desire to be regarded as orthodox, who do not deny the fall as an historical fact, few among them perceive the dire effects and extent thereof. “*Bruised* by the fall,” as one popular hymn puts it, states the truth far too mildly—yea, entirely misstates it. Through the breach of the first covenant all men have lost the image of God, and now bear the image of the devil (Joh 8:44). The whole of their faculties are so depraved that they can neither think (2Co 3:5), speak, nor do anything truly good and acceptable unto God. They are by birth altogether unholy, unclean, loathsome, and abominable, in nature, heart, and life, and it is altogether beyond their power to change themselves.

Not only so, but the curse of the law lying upon them has severed all spiritual relation between God and them, cutting off all communion and communication with heaven. The driving from the garden of our first parents and the establishment of the cherubim with the flaming sword at its entrance, denoted that in point of justice they were barred from all sanctifying influences reaching them—that being the greatest benefit man is capable of, as assimilating him to God Himself or rendering him like Him. The *curse* has fixed a gulf between God and fallen creatures, so that sanctifying influences cannot pass from Him unto them any more than their unholy desires and prayers can pass unto Him. It is written, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD” (Pro 15:8). And again, “The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD” (Pro 15:26).

It has, then, been rightly said that our sanctification “is no less a mystery than our justification” (Thomas Boston, 1676-1732). As the depravity of human nature has always been so manifest that it could not escape notice even in the world, so in all ages men have been seeking to discover a remedy for the same, and have supposed a cure could be achieved by a right use of

their rational faculties. But the outcome has always been, at best, but an outward show and semblance of sanctification, going under the name of “moral virtue.” But so far is that from meeting the requirements of Him who is Light, that men themselves, once their eyes are (in any measure) anointed with heavenly eye salve, perceive their moral virtue to be as “filthy rags,” a menstrous cloth. Until men are regenerate and act from a principle of grace in the heart, all their actions are but imitations of real obedience and piety, as an ape would mimic a man.

It is a common error of those that are unregenerate to seek to reform their conduct without any realization that their *state* must be changed before their lives can possibly be changed from sin to righteousness. The tree itself must be made good before its fruit can possibly be good. As well attempt to make a watch go, whose mainspring is broken, by washing its face and polishing its back, as for one under the curse of God to produce any works acceptable to Him. That was the great mistake Nicodemus laboured under. He supposed that *teaching* was all he needed, so that he might adjust his walk to the acceptance of heaven. But to him the Lord Jesus declared, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (Joh 3:7). That was only another way of saying, Nicodemus, you cannot perform spiritual works before you possess a spiritual nature, and a spiritual nature cannot be had until you are born again.

Multitudes have laboured with great earnestness to subdue their evil propensities, and have struggled long and hard to bring their inward thoughts and affections into conformity with the law of God. They have sought to abstain from all sins and to perform every known duty. They have been so devout and intent that they have undermined their health, and were so fervent in their zeal that they were ready to kill their bodies with fastings and macerations, if only they might kill their sinful lusts. They were strongly convinced that holiness was absolutely necessary unto salvation, and were so deeply affected with the terrors of damnation as to forsake the world and shut themselves up in convents and monasteries—yet all the while ignorant of the *mystery* of sanctification—that *a new state* MUST precede *a new life*.

It is positively asserted by divine inspiration that, “They that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:8). Alas, how few understand the meaning of those words “in the flesh.” How many suppose they only signify to be inordinately addicted to the baser passions. Whereas, to be “in the flesh” is to be in a state of nature—fallen, depraved, alienated from the life of God. To be “in the flesh” is not simply being a personal transgressor of God’s holy law, but is *the cause* of all sinfulness and sinning. The “flesh” is the very *nature* of man as corrupted by the fall of Adam, and propagated from him to us in that corrupt state by natural generation. To be “in the flesh” is also being in complete subjection to the power of the devil, who is the certain conqueror of all who attempt to fight him in their own strength or with his own weapons. The flesh can no more be brought to holiness by man’s most vehement endeavours, than he can bring a dead carcass to life by chafing and rubbing it.

The varied elements which entered into the problem of justification were—God’s law requires from us perfect obedience to its statutes. This we have utterly failed to render. We are therefore under the condemnation and curse of the law. The Judge Himself is inflexibly just and will by no means clear the guilty. How, then, can men be shown mercy without justice being flouted? The elements which enter into the problem of sanctification are—God’s law requires inward as well as outward conformity to it, but we are born into this world with a nature that is totally depraved, and can by no means be brought into subjection to the law (Rom 8:7). God Himself is ineffably pure, how then can a moral leper be admitted into His presence? We are utterly without holiness and can no more make ourselves holy than the Ethiopian can change his skin. Even though a holy nature be imparted by regeneration, how can one with the flesh, unchanged, within him, draw

near as a worshipper unto the heavenly sanctuary? How can I as a person possibly regard myself as holy, while conscious that I am full of sin? How can I honestly profess to have a “pure heart,” while realizing that a sea of corruption still rages within me? If my *state* must be changed before anything in my *life* is acceptable to God, what can I possibly do?—I cannot unmake myself. If I know that I am polluted and vile, and utterly unsuited unto the thrice holy God, how much less can *He* regard me as fit for His presence?

UNION AND COMMUNION

2. Mediatorial

That which is now to engage our attention is the constitution of the Person of Christ, not as He existed from all eternity with the Father and the Holy Spirit, but as He was upon earth working out the salvation of His church, and as He now is in heaven at God’s right hand. It was an essential part of His covenant-engagement that the beloved Son should become the Surety of His people, and in order thereto, assume their nature into union with His divine Person, and thus become God and man in the Person of one Christ. In consequence of that union, all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily or personally, in a manner and to an extent it does not, will not, and cannot, in any other. This is the next greatest mystery which is revealed in Holy Writ, being the foundation upon which the church is built (Mat 16:18), and concerning which a belief thereof is absolutely essential unto salvation. It is therefore impossible to overestimate the importance, blessedness, and value of this truth.

This Mediatorial union—denominated the “Hypostatic (personal) union” by theologians—or the conjunction of the divine and human natures in the God-man Mediator, is based upon that infinitely higher union which we sought to contemplate in the last two articles. Divine union—between the Eternal Three—was the foundation of the Mediatorial union. Had there been only one Person in the divine essence or Godhead, our salvation had been utterly impossible. We could not be joined to the very nature or essence of God, without either ungodding Him or deifying us. For the elect to have been taken into immediate union with God would produce a change in the divine nature—an addition to it—something which can never be. Even the Man Christ Jesus could not be taken into immediate union with the divine essence absolutely considered, though He could and was with one in that essence.

We are conscious of the fact that we have just stepped into deep water, and perhaps those who are accustomed to paddle in the shallows will be unwilling to follow, but for the sake of the few who desire, by grace, to believe, and as far as God now permits, to understand the *mysteries* of our faith, we deemed it expedient to touch briefly upon this profound depth—not in a spirit of unholy boldness, but in fear and trembling. As it was impossible that the divine nature should suffer and die, so it was for us to be joined thereto. But we could become one with a divine *Person* who Himself subsisted *in* the divine essence, and omniscience found a way whereby that should be effected. By virtue of the Son’s assuming our humanity, the elect have been taken into

union with a divine Person, yet not into union with the divine nature or essence itself. Thus we have sought to point out an error against which we need to carefully guard, lest we entertain thoughts grossly dishonouring to the Godhead.

The highest union of all is that incomprehensible and yet ineffable union which exists between the three divine Persons in the one divine essence. The next great union—founded, as we have briefly intimated above, upon that essential one—is the union of our nature unto the second Person in JEHOVAH, so that the Word made flesh is both God and man in the Person of Jesus Christ. This too is a profound and unfathomable mystery, yet is it revealed as a cardinal article of our faith. It is a subject of pure revelation, and only from the sacred Scriptures can we obtain any light thereon. It falls not within our province to *explain* this mystery, yet it is our privilege and duty to spare no pains in prayerfully seeking sound and clear views of the same, for there can be no true growing in grace except as we grow in the scriptural and Spirit-imparted knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Right thoughts of Him are to be esteemed far above all silver and gold.

Rightly did the Puritan John Flavel (1630-1691) say of this subject, “We walk upon the brink of danger. The least tread awry may engulf us in the bogs of error.” There are certain vital postulates which are necessary to the scriptural setting forth of “the doctrine of Christ” (2Jo 1:9), if the truth about His wondrous and glorious Person is to be maintained, such as the following. First, that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly God, possessing the divine nature and all its essential attributes. Second, that He is also true man, possessing human nature in all its essential properties and sinless infirmities. Third, that those two diverse natures are united in His unique Person, yet ever remain distinct and unmixed, so that the divine is not humanized, nor the human deified. Fourth, that both of those natures were and are operative in all of His mediatorial acts, so that while they may be distinguished, they cannot be separated. These great verities must be held firmly by us if we are to believe in and worship *the Christ of God*.

“The Son of God, the second Person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon Him man’s nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures—the Godhead and the manhood—were inseparably joined together in one Person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which Person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man” (Westminster Catechism). This is a clear and helpful setting forth of the constitution of Christ’s theanthropic Person, i.e., His Person as the God-man.

Let it not be supposed that because this is one of the deep mysteries of Christianity, it is a subject in which only theologians are interested, or that it is a matter upon which Christians may lawfully differ. Not so—it is a vital truth which is to be held fast at all costs, a precious truth revealed for the nourishing of faith. Only as the Holy Spirit enables us to receive into our minds and hearts the revelation which the Father has so graciously made of His Son shall we be effectually preserved from the subtle errors of Satan. The value of *what* Christ did depended entirely upon *who* He was, and therefore it is of the very first importance we should attain unto right views of the constitution of His wondrous Person. If the angels “desire to look into” these things (1Pe 1:12)—figured by the cherubim with their faces turned toward the mercy-seat on the ark (Exo 25)—how much more should we who are chiefly concerned therein.

The “doctrine of Christ” or the truth concerning the constitution of His Person is of such fundamental and vital concern that without the belief of it no man can be a Christian, “Every

spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God” (1Jo 4:2), that is, born of God, one of His people, and on the side of His truth. On the other hand, “every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God” (1Jo 4:3). As John Newton well put it,

*“What think ye of Christ? is the test
To try both your state and your scheme,
You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly of Him.”*

But the great majority of people have no desire to meditate upon *Him*, wishing rather to banish all thoughts of Him from their minds, and even among those who sing, “How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,” few are willing to read *and re-read* the deeper things about His Person.

That which determines our *interest* in a person is our *love* for him. I am not much concerned about the ancestry and history of one who is a stranger to me, but when it comes to a person who is an object of my affections, then the smallest details about him are welcomed by me. A letter filled with little items about the person and doings of her absent son would be dearly treasured by his fond mother, but would be pointless and wearisome to one not acquainted with him. Does not the same principle hold good regarding the blessed Person of our Lord and Saviour? One who is, experimentally, a stranger to Him, cannot be expected to relish a setting forth of the mysterious constitution of His Person, but those who, by grace, esteem Him as the fairest among ten thousand to their souls, are ready to read, meditate upon, and study, if thereby they may be favoured with clearer and fuller views of *Him*.

Surely this is a subject of thrilling interest, for it is one in which the infinite wisdom of God is most gloriously exhibited. “To unite finite and infinite, almightiness and weakness, immortality and mortality, immutability with a thing subject to change; to have a nature from eternity and yet a nature subject to the revolutions of time; a nature to make a law, and a nature to be subjected to the law; to be God blessed forever in the bosom of His Father, and an infant exposed to calamities from the womb of His mother: terms seeming most distant from union, most incapable of conjunction, to shake hands together, to be most intimately conjoined; glory and vileness, fulness and emptiness, heaven and earth; He that made all things, in one Person with a nature that is made; Immanuel, God and man in one; that which is most spiritual to partake of that which is carnal flesh and blood; one with the Father in His Godhead, one with us in His manhood; the Godhead to be in Him in the fullest perfection, and the manhood in the greatest purity; the creature one with the Creator, and the Creator one with the creature. Thus is the incomprehensible wisdom of God declared in the Word being made flesh.

“The terms of this union were infinitely distant. What greater distance can there be than between the deity and humanity, between the Creator and the creature? Can you imagine the distance between eternity and time, infinite power and miserable infirmity, and immortal Spirit and dying flesh, the highest being and nothing? Yet these are espoused. A God of unmixed blessedness is linked personally with a man of perpetual sorrows; life incapable to die joined to a body in that economy incapable to live without dying first; infinite purity and a reputed sinner, eternal blessedness with a cursed nature, omniscience and ignorance; that which is entirely independent and that which is totally dependent, met together in a personal union, the eternal Son, the seed of Abraham (Heb 2:16). What more miraculous than for God to become man, and man to become God! That a Person possessed of all the perfections of the Godhead should inherit all the imperfections of the manhood in one Person, sin only excepted; a holiness incapable of sinning to be made sin. Was there not need of an infinite power to bring together terms so far asunder, to

elevate the humanity to be capable of, and disposed for, a conjunction with the deity?” (Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680).

The regulation of our thoughts about Him who is divinely denominated “Wonderful” (Isa 9:6), is what every believer should pray and earnestly aim at. It is of deepest importance that we should have scriptural views concerning Him, not only in general, but in detail—not only that we may be fortified against pernicious errors touching His Person, which are now so rife, but also that we may be enabled to appreciate those particular instances in which the divine wisdom shines forth with greatest splendour. This it is which will give Christ the “pre-eminence” in our minds, revealing how high above the relation and union which exists between Christians and God, is the relation and union between Christ Himself and God. Yes, nothing short of this should be our aim and quest “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).

Before seeking to contemplate, separately, the various aspects of and elements in the great mystery of “God manifest in flesh,” we will devote the remainder of this article unto a consideration of some of the reasons *why* it was needful for the Son of God to become the Son of man. The union of two distinct natures in the Person of the Lord Jesus was a fundamental requisite for the union of sinners to God in Christ. We were once with God in Adam, but when he fell, a breach was made, as it is written, “They are all *gone out of the way*” (Rom 3:12), which clearly implies that they were once found in “the way.” That breach being made, we cannot be restored unto God, unless and until He came to us. A divine Person must take our nature in order to reconcile our persons to God, and therefore do we read of Christ that He “once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might *bring us to God*” (1Pe 3:18). But let us enter a little into detail, even though the ground here be familiar to most of our readers.

First, it was requisite that one of the divine Persons should be made under that very law which was originally given to man, and which man transgressed. “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal 4:4). Observe the order—He was “made of a woman” in order to be “made under the law.” He who was “in the form of God” took upon Him “the form of a servant,” that is, entered the place of subjection. He came to repair our lost condition, and in order thereto it was needful that He submit Himself unto the divine precepts, that by His obedience He might recover what by their disobedience His people had lost. And by the perfect obedience of this august Person, the law was more “magnified” than it had been insulted by our rebellion.

Second, it was requisite that He who would save His people from their sins should suffer the penalty of that law which they had broken. There was an awful curse pronounced upon those who broke the law, and the Saviour must take His people’s place and undergo it, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, *being made a curse for us*” (Gal 3:13). That curse was death, but how could God the Son die? Only by assuming a mortal nature. Third, it was requisite that in delivering Satan’s captives, the great enemy should be conquered by one in the same nature as had been defeated by him. Accordingly it is written, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14).

Fourth, it was requisite that the Redeemer should take possession of heaven for us in our nature, and therefore did He say, “I go to prepare a place for you” (Joh 14:2). Blessed indeed is that word in Hebrews 6, “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: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which

entereth into that *within the veil*; whither the forerunner is *for us entered*, even Jesus” (Heb 6:18-20). Fifth, it was requisite that the mighty Redeemer should also be capable, experimentally, of having compassion on the infirmities of His people, and how could this be had He never encountered them in His own person? “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15).

Not only was it necessary for God the Son to assume a *human* nature, but also that His humanity should be derived from *the common root* of our first parents. It would not suitably have answered the divine purpose that Christ’s humanity should be created immediately out of nothing, because there had then been no such alliance between Him and us as to lay a foundation of hope of salvation by His undertaking. No, it was essential that He should sustain the character and perform the work of a *redeemer*, that He should be our Goal or *near Kinsman*, for to Him alone belonged the *right* of redemption, see Leviticus 25:48-49; Ruth 2:20 and 3:9, margin. So it was declared at the beginning, He was to be *the woman’s* “seed” (Gen 3:15), and thus become our Kinsman. “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are *all of one* [i.e., one stock]: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb 2:11).

Yet, it was also absolutely necessary, notwithstanding, that the nature in which redemption was to be performed should not only be derived from its original root, but also by *such derivation* that it should not be tainted by sin or partake in any degree of that moral defilement in which every child of Adam is conceived and born. It was requisite that our High Priest should be “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” “If the human nature of Christ had partook, in any measure, of that pollution which, since the fall, is hereditary to us, it would have been destitute of the holy image of God, as we are prior to regeneration, and consequently, He would have been rendered incapable of making the least atonement for us. He who is himself sinful, cannot satisfy divine justice on the behalf of another, because by one offence, he forfeits his own soul. Here, then, the adorable wisdom of God appears in its richest glory. For though it was necessary our Surety should be man and the seed of the woman, yet He was conceived in such a manner as to be entirely without sin” (Abraham Booth, 1734-1806).

God brought a clean thing out of an unclean. The manhood of Christ was derived from the common stock of our humanity, yet was it neither begotten nor conceived by carnal concupiscence. Original sin is propagated by ordinary generation, but the Son of man was produced by extraordinary generation. It is by the father’s act that a child is begotten in the image and likeness of our first fallen and corrupted father. But though a real man, Christ was not begotten by a man. His humanity was produced from the substance of Mary by an extraordinary operation of the Holy Spirit above nature, and hence His miraculous and immaculate conception is far above the compass of human reason to either understand or express. Through the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit, the humanity of Christ was conceived by a virgin who had never known a man. It was an act of omnipotence to produce it. It was an act of divine holiness to sanctify it. It was an act of omniscience to unite it unto the Person of the eternal Son of God.

CHRIST IN GLORY

“And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father’s house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons” (Isa 22:24). “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. 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” (2Ti 2:20-21).

They are called “vessels” because the Lord forms them for Himself, to show forth His praise—sometimes vessels of honour and glory, because He draws a greater revenue of honor and glory to Himself from them than from all the world beside. In a word, they are called “vessels” because the milk, the wine, the honey, and the oil of divine grace is bestowed and laid up in them, and out of the fulness of Christ they are daily receiving grace for grace. And as the vessels of a house are its *ornament*, so are fruitful believers the ornament of the church, and of the great Owner thereof, for He calls them His crown and diadem.

We are here told that these vessels are *of different sizes*—some are vessels of “cups,” and others are vessels of “flagons”—plainly intimating that in God’s family there are saints of different stature—there are babes, young men, and fathers, “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph 4:7). Some are like the smoking flax, others like a flaming lamp. Some are like the bruised reed, others like the tall cedar in Lebanon. And if you ask me *why* God will have it so, that the vessels of the house shall be of different sizes, I answer, 1. For the manifestation of His own sovereignty. He is the Lord of the house and He will do all His pleasure, and it is the good will and pleasure of God to give more of His grace to one, and to another less. And who may say unto Him, “What doeth thou?” He is no man’s debtor, but may do with His own what He pleases. 2. Because this is for the beauty and ornament of the house. It serves not a little to adorn a house that there are different vessels in it—some more and some less, for different services. The least vessel, like the least member in the natural body has its proper usefulness in the body, so that the one cannot say to the other, “I have no need of thee.” 3. God will have it so, that there may be room for the edifying exercises of the fellowship of saints. If every saint had the same degree of faith, love, knowledge, and other graces, the one could not be edified by the other, but it is otherwise ordered, that the strong may be useful to the weak in strengthening, and that those who have more knowledge and experience than others may communicate of their gifts, to the benefit and edifying of others, until they all come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

I come now to show that *all* the vessels of different sizes, from vessels of “cups” to vessels of “flagons,” *do hang upon the great Manager*, Jesus Christ, as upon a nail fastened in a sure place. This is what is commonly called the mystical union between Christ and the church, and is in Scripture set forth to us by a variety of metaphors, sometimes by the union that is between the branches of a tree and the root of it. For as all the branches hang upon the root, and receive their sap and nourishment, growth, and fruit from it, so does every believer, whether of a higher or lower stature, receive life, grace, and growth from Christ. “I am like a green fir tree. *From me* is thy fruit found” (Hos 14:8). “I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (Joh 15:5).

Sometimes this union is represented by the union betwixt the building and the foundation upon which it stands. As the whole building and every stone of it hangs and rests on the foundation, and receive their support and stability from it, so doth the whole house of God, and every spiritual, living stone thereof, hang upon Christ by faith of His Spirit's operation, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone...ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house" (1Pe 2:4-5). Sometimes this union is represented to us by the union betwixt the head and the members of the natural body (Eph 4:15-16; Col. 2:19), from which you will perceive that the whole body, and every particular member, greater or lesser, hangs upon Christ as by "joints and bands." But here arises the main question to our present purpose—What *are* these "bands" by which all believers, from the least to the greatest, hang upon Christ? Answer—these "bands" are principally two—the Holy Spirit and faith of the Spirit's operation.

First, I say the Spirit is one and the principal band whereby believers do hang upon Christ, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1Co 6:17). By the Holy Spirit the union is made up between Christ and His members, "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph 2:22). Yes, the Spirit Himself is the band, "We know that he [Christ] abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" (1Jo 3:24). The Spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus, by the means of the Word, in a day of regeneration, enters into the soul and quickens it, and in the very quickening by the Spirit, it becomes a member of Christ, and so forever after hangs upon Him as a nail in a sure place.

Second. Another band by which they all hang upon the nail is faith by the Spirit's operation—not mere historical, temporary, partial, or legal faith, but a living, working, receiving, justifying, and sanctifying faith, which applies and appropriates Christ by the means of the Word of grace and promise—such a faith as eats the flesh and drinks the blood of Christ, and so lives in and upon Him. According as it is written, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal 2:20). In a word, faith hangs all its everlasting concerns upon the nail fastened in a sure place, and there it stays and rests all its cares and concerns, and in this way the soul is kept in perfect peace, knowing that the nail, being well fastened, will not yield or give way. And thus it is that *all the glory*, the whole offspring and issue, and the vessels of the house, greater and lesser, hang upon our blessed Eliakim.

The next inquiry is, *Why is Christ* constituted sole Manager of His Father's house? Why doth He hang all the vessels *upon Him*, as upon a nail fastened in a sure place? I answer, the management of the house, and of all its concerns, is committed unto Christ because it was the good pleasure of God that it should be so. But although sovereignty is enough to satisfy us upon this head, yet there are some ways of infinite wisdom to be observed in this constitution of things in the church, which is the house of the living God—as (1) He only had ability for bearing such a weight, "I have laid help," saith the Lord, "upon one that is mighty" (Psa 89:19). (2) Because Christ voluntarily undertook it in the council of peace, saying, "Lo, I come!...I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Psa 40:7-8), whereupon JEHOVAH the Father said and determined, "He shall build the temple...and he shall bear the glory" (Zec 6:13). (3) Hereby a new revenue of glory is brought in to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, even "glory to God in the highest," higher glory than what comes in by creation and providence. (4) Because hereby His saints are brought to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. (5) Because this was for the safety and comfort of the children of God. All their everlasting concerns hang upon Him, that they may warble out that song through eternity, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which

is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Rev. 5:12-13).

Again. See hence why it is that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro, to show Himself strong on behalf of His people in this world, why He rides in the heavens for their help, and makes all things work together for their good. There is good reason for it. They are the offspring and issue of His family. They are the gold and silver vessels of His house. And you know, if a man have power and ability, he will not suffer his offspring to be hurt, or his house to be plundered of his valuable furniture, which he has bought at a dear rate. Hence it is that the Lord watches His house day and night, lest any hurt it. All His saints are in the hand of Christ, and He defies hell and earth to pluck them out of His hands.

2. See what trust and credit our glorious Kinsman-Redeemer has with His Father. Why, you see how that He puts the whole family under His hand. He hangs the whole glory upon Him, He hath made him to be *head over* all things to the church, which is his body (Eph 1:22-23). All power in heaven and earth is given unto me,” says Christ (Mat 28:18). “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (Joh 5:22). And seeing He has such trust and credit with His Father, what an indignity is done to the Father, and the Son also, when a sinner, through unbelief, declares Him to be unworthy of any credit, and says, practically, that the nail that God has fastened is loose, weak, or insufficient, and therefore he will not venture the weight of his salvation upon it, but will choose rather to hang upon some nails of his own fastening, such as the nail of an empty profession, the nail of God’s general mercy, the nail of legal duties, and obedience, which are all but rusty, weak, broken nails, that will give way and ruin all that depend upon them.

3. See hence one great ground and reason of the perseverance of the saints, and why they cannot fall totally or finally away from a state of grace—because they hang upon the nail fastened in a sure place. Being the great Manager of His Father’s house and family, *He* has them in custody and is to give an account of every vessel of the house unto His Father. And He will make *a good account* of every one of them, and say to His Father, that entrusted them with Him, “Of all thou hast given me, I have lost none. Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me” (see Joh 17:11-12). If a believer can fall totally or finally away, it is because the nail may break or be loosed, or because the bands by which they hang upon the nail may be broken or cut. But none of these can fall out. The nail, as you heard in the first part of this discourse, is so fixed that heaven and earth will sooner be dissolved than that it should yield or give way in the least. And as for the bands by which they hang upon the nail, they are so firm, strong, and well-fastened, that the soul, when it has a view of its security in the light of the Lord, is able to exclaim with Paul, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution” etc. (Rom 8:35).

4. See the great difference between the state of a believer now, under a covenant of grace, and the state of Adam, under a covenant of works. Adam, the first covenant-head and representative, though an innocent, yet was but a fallible creature. And being left to the freedom of his own will, that nail gave way, and he and all his posterity fell into a horrible pit of sin and misery, from which the whole creation could not recover them. But the case of the believer is not so, he hangs on a nail in a sure place. He stands on the foundation God has laid in Zion, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. Many a pull and pluck has the devil and the world given at the vessels that hang upon this nail, and yet by all their power and policy they never were able to carry off a cup, much less a flagon, that did hang upon the nail fastened in a sure place. To this purpose are those words of Christ, none shall “pluck them out of my hand” (Joh 10:28).

5. See hence that the saints have no cause of boasting or glorying in themselves, but only in Christ, for *He* is the nail, upon whom all the glory and all the offspring and issue do hang. Where is boasting? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Now the law of faith is to lay the whole weight of our salvation upon Christ, to receive Him and rest upon Him alone for eternal life, and to receive out of His fullness grace for grace. And, therefore, “He that glorieth, let him glory *in the Lord*” (1Co 1:31), saying, “The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation” (Psa 118:14). When the believer finds pride of gifts or grace begin to stir in his heart, he should at once check it by putting these, or the like questions to himself, “What hast thou, O man, that thou hast not *received*? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou boast as though thou hadst not received it?” Let none of the branches that grow upon the true vine boast, as though they had their stand, strength, or righteousness *in themselves*. “If thou boast, [remember] thou bearest not the root, but the root [bearest] thee” (Rom 11:18). All hang upon the nail.

6. See hence a good reason for that solemn work and duty of covenanting, by “stretching out her hands unto God” as it is said of Ethiopia (Psa 68:31). This duty is warranted by Scripture example and Scripture prophecy concerning the days of the New Testament. As God the Father by solemn oath has constituted His own Son the great Manager of His house, hanging all the offspring and issue upon Him, so it is highly reasonable that all the offspring and issue of the family should confess His deed by solemn oath and covenant, before the whole world, because this is for His declarative glory, upon whom all the glory hangs. It is requisite that we not only believe with the heart unto righteousness, but confess Him with the mouth unto salvation (Rom 10:10). And this is in a peculiar manner necessary in a day like this, when the prophets are become such fools, and the spiritual men so mad, as to derogate from the glory of the great Manager of His Father’s house His prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices, by tolerating the erroneous, foisting in moral virtue in the room of His everlasting righteousness.

I say, what more just and reasonable in such a case, than that all who love our Lord Jesus Christ and regard His honour and glory, should, in the most solemn manner imaginable, declare their adherence to Him in the presence of angels and men, saying with Joshua, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Jos 24:15). There are a generation of men in our day, who set up only for a private, selfish kind of religion. If they believe with the heart, they think they have done enough, if they enjoy raptures of love to Christ, they are easy what come of Jerusalem, what come of the ark of God. Let error in doctrine, corruption in worship, tyranny in government prevail as much as they will, it is all a small matter—these are not the essentials—all is well with them if they have what they call “the Spirit.” But what sort of a spirit is that which follows, cleaves to abjured prelacy, a corrupt backsliding ministry, and judges that deny the obligation of solemn covenants? Surely such a spirit must be the spirit of the old serpent transforming himself into an angel of light. A deceived heart and a subtle devil have turned them aside from the truth.—Ralph Erskine, 1743. (Completed in the June issue.)

As Brother Pink was penning this *Studies* in 1935, he requested prayers of readers that the blessing of God would continue on this publication. As we publish this issue of the *Studies* 67 years later, we, too, request your prayers that the blessing of God may continue on this publication.

June

THE HOLY SPIRIT

28. The Spirit Indwelling (Part 2)

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God *dwell in you*” (Rom 8:9). Three things are denoted by the Spirit’s “indwelling.” First, *intimacy*. As the inhabitant of a house is more familiar there than elsewhere, so is the Spirit in the hearts of Christ’s redeemed. God the Spirit is omnipresent, being everywhere essentially, being excluded nowhere, “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?” (Psa 139:7). But as God is said more especially to be there where He *manifests* His power and presence, as heaven is “His dwelling place,” so it is with His Spirit. He is in believers not simply by the effects of common providence, but by His gracious operations and familiar presence. “Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (Joh 14:17). The world of natural men are utter strangers to the Spirit of God, not being acquainted with His sanctifying operations, but He intimately discovers His presence to those who are quickened by Him.

Second, *constancy*—“dwelling” expresses a permanent abode. The Spirit does not affect the regenerate by a transient action only, or come “upon” them occasionally as He did the prophets of old, when He endowed them for some particular service above the measure of their ordinary ability, but He abides in them by working such effects as are lasting. He comes to the believer not as a Visitor, but as an Inhabitant. He is within us “a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (Joh 4:14). He liveth in the renewed heart, so that by His constant and continual influence He maintains the life of grace in us. By the blessed Spirit, Christians are “sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30).

Third, *sovereignty*—this is also denoted under the term “dwell.” He is owner of the house and not an underling. From the fact that the believer’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, the apostle points out the necessary implication that he is not his own (1Co 6:19). Previously he was possessed by another owner, even Satan—the evil spirit says, “I will return into *my* house” (Mat 12:44). But the Spirit has dispossessed him, and the sanctified heart has become *His* “house,” where He commands and governs after His own will. Take again the figure of the sanctuary, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1Co

3:16). A “temple” is a sacred dwelling, employed for the honour and glory of God, where He is to be revered and worshipped, and from which all idols must be excluded.

The indwelling Spirit is *the bond by which believers are united to Christ*. If therefore we find the Holy Spirit abiding in us, we may warrantably conclude we have been “joined to the Lord.” This is plainly set forth in those words of the Saviour’s, “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one” (Joh 17:22-23). The “glory” of Christ’s humanity was its union with the Godhead. How was it united? By the Holy Spirit. This very “glory” Christ has given His people, “I in them,” which He is by the sanctifying Spirit—the bond of our union with Him.

The indwelling Spirit is *the sure mark of the believer’s freedom from the covenant of works*, under which all Christless persons stand, and our title to the special privileges of the new covenant, in which none but Christ’s are interested, which is another way of saying they are “not under the law, but under grace” (Rom 6:14). This is plain from the apostle’s reasoning in Galatians 4:6-7, “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son.” The spirit of the old covenant was a servile one, a spirit of fear and bondage, and those under the same were not “sons,” but *servants*. But the spirit of the new covenant is a free one, that of *children*, inheriting the blessed promises and royal immunities contained in the charter of grace.

The indwelling Spirit is *the certain pledge and earnest of eternal salvation*. The execution of the eternal decree of God’s electing love—“drawn” (Jer 31:3), and the application of the virtues and benefits of the death of Christ by the Spirit (Gal. 3:13, 14), must needs be a sure evidence of our personal interest in the Redeemer. This is plain from 1 Peter 1:2, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” God’s eternal decree is executed and the blood of Christ is sprinkled upon us, when we receive the Spirit of sanctification. The Spirit’s residing in the Christian is the guarantee and earnest of the eternal inheritance, “Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2Co 1:22).

What are the evidences and fruits of the Spirit’s inhabitation? First, wherever the Spirit dwells, He doth in some degree mortify and subdue the evils of the soul in which He resides. “The Spirit it [lusteth] against the flesh” (Gal 5:17), and believers “through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body” (Rom 8:13). This is one special part of His sanctifying work. Though He kills not sin in believers, He subdues it—though He does not subdue the flesh as that it never troubles or defiles them any more, its dominion is taken away. Perfect freedom from its very presence awaits them in heaven. But even now, animated by their holy Indweller, Christians deny themselves and use the means of grace which God has appointed for deliverance from the reigning power of sin.

Second, wherever the Spirit dwells, He produces a spirit of prayer and supplication. “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom 8:26). The two things are inseparable: wherever He is poured out as the Spirit of *grace*, He is also poured out as the Spirit of *supplication* (Zec 12:10). He helps Christians *before* they pray by stirring up their spiritual affections and stimulating holy desires. He helps them *in* prayer by teaching them to ask for those things which are according to God’s will. He it is who humbles the pride of their hearts, moves their sluggish wills, and out of weakness makes them strong. He helps them *after* prayer by quickening hope and patience to wait for God’s answers.

Third, wherever the Spirit dwells, He works a heavenly and spiritual frame of mind. “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. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom 8:5-6). The workings of every creature follow the being and bent of its nature. If God, Christ, heaven, engage the thoughts and affections of the soul, the Spirit of God is there. There are times in each Christian’s life when he exclaims, “How precious also are *thy* thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee” (Psa. 139:17-18)—such holy contemplation is the very life of the regenerate.

But says the sincere Christian, If the Spirit of God dwelt in me, could my heart be so listless and averse to spiritual duties? Answer, the very fact that you are exercised and burdened over this sad state evidences the presence of spiritual life in your soul. Let it be borne in mind that there is a vast difference between spiritual death and spiritual deadness—the former is the condition of the unregenerate, the latter is the disease and complaint of thousands of the regenerate. Note it well that nine times over, David, in a single Psalm, prayed, “Quicken me!” (Psa 119). Though it be so *often*, it is not so *always* with thee. There are seasons when the Lord breaks in upon thy heart, enlarges thy affections, and sets thy soul at liberty—clear proof thou art not deserted by the Comforter!

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

90. Divine Chastisement (12:9)

The apostle Paul, did not, like so many of our moderns, hurry through a subject and dismiss an unpleasant theme with a brief sentence or two. No, he could say truthfully, “I kept back *nothing* that was profitable unto you” (Acts 20:20). His chief concern was not to please, but to *help* his hearers and readers. Well did he know the tendency of the heart to turn away quickly from what is searching and humbling, unto that which is more attractive and consoling. But so far from acceding to this spirit, he devoted as much attention unto exhortation as instruction, unto reproving as comforting, unto duties as expounding promises—while the latter was given its due place, the former was not neglected. It behooves each servant of God to study the methods of the apostles, and seek wisdom and grace to emulate their practice. Only thus will they preserve the balance of truth and be delivered from “handling the word of God deceitfully” (2Co 4:2).

Some years ago, when the editor was preaching a series of sermons on Hebrews 12:3-11, several members of the congregation intimated they were growing weary of hearing so much upon the subject of divine chastisement. Alas, the very ones who chafed so much at hearing about God’s rod, have since been smitten the most severely by it. Should any of our present readers feel the same way about the writer’s treatment of this same passage, he would lovingly warn them that, though these articles may seem gloomy and irksome while prosperity be smiling upon them, nevertheless, they will be well advised to “hearken and hear *for the time to come*” (Isa 42:23). The sun will not always be shining upon you, dear reader, and if by grace you now store them up in your memory, they may stand you in good stead when your sky becomes overcast.

Sooner or later, this portion of Holy Writ *will apply* very pertinently unto each of our cases. God “scourgeth *every* son whom he receiveth” (Heb 12:6). None of the followers of “the man of sorrows” are exempted from sorrow. It has been truly said that “God had one Son without sin, but none without suffering.” So much depends upon *how* we “endure” suffering—the spirit in which it be received, the graces which are exercised by it, and the improvement which we make of it. Our attitude toward God, and the response which we make unto His disciplinary dealings with us, means that we shall either honour or dishonour Him, and suffer loss or reap gain therefrom. Manifold are our obligations to comport ourselves becomingly when God is pleased to scourge us, and many and varied are the motives and arguments which the Spirit, through the apostle, here presents to us for this end.

In the verse which is now before us, a further reason is given showing the need of the Christian’s duty to meekly bear God’s chastenings. First, the apostle had reminded the saints of the teaching of Scripture thereon, Heb 12:5—how significant he began with that! Second, he had comforted them with the assurance that the rod is wielded not by wrath, but in tender solicitude, verse 6. Third, he affirmed that God chastens all His children without exception, bastards only escaping, verses 7-8. Now he reminds us that we had natural parents who corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Our earthly fathers had the right, because of their relationship, to discipline us, and we acquiesced. If, then, it was right and meet for us to submit to their corrections, how much more ought we to be in subjection unto our heavenly Father when He reproves us.

“Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?” (Heb 12:9). The opening “Furthermore” is really humbling and searching. One would think sufficient had been said in the previous verses to make us submissive under and thankful for the tender discipline of our God. Is it not enough to be told that the Scriptures teach us to expect chastisements and exhort us not to despise them? Is it not sufficient to be assured that these chastisements proceed from the very heart of our Father, being appointed and regulated by His love? No, a “furthermore” is needed by us! The Holy Spirit deigns to supply further reasons for bringing our unruly hearts into subjection. This should indeed humble us, for the implication is clear that we are *slow* to heed and bow beneath the rod. Yea, is it not sadly true that the older we become, the more need there is for our being chastened?

The writer has been impressed by the fact, both in the study of the Word and his observation of fellow-Christians, that, as a general rule, God uses the rod very little and very lightly upon the babes and younger members of His family, but that He employs it more frequently and severely on mature Christians. We have often heard older saints warning younger brothers and sisters of *their* great danger, yet it is striking to observe that Scripture records not a single instance of a young saint disgracing his profession. Recall the histories of young Joseph, the Hebrew maid in Naaman’s household, David as a stripling engaging Goliath, Daniel’s early days, and his three youthful companions in the furnace, and it will be found that all of them equitted themselves nobly. On the other hand, there are numerous examples where men in middle life and of grey hairs grievously dishonoured their Lord.

It is true that young Christians *are* feeblest, and with rare exceptions, they *know* it, and therefore does God manifest His grace and power upholding them. It is the “lambs” which He carries in His arms! But some older Christians seem far less conscious of their danger, and so God often suffers them to have a fall, that He may stain the pride of their self-glory, and that others may see it is *nothing* in the flesh—standing, rank, age, or attainments—which insures our safety, but that *He* upholds the humble and casts down the proud. David did not fall into his great

sin till he had reached the prime of life. Lot did not transgress most grossly till he was an old man. Isaac seems to have become a glutton in his old age, and was as a vessel no longer “meet for the Master’s use” (2Ti 2:21), which rusted out rather than wore out. It was after a life of walking with God and building the ark, that Noah disgraced himself. The worst sin of Moses was committed not at the beginning but at the end of the wilderness journey. Hezekiah became puffed up with pride near the sunset of his life. What warnings are these!

God thus shows us there is no protection in years. Yea, added years seem to call for increased chastenings. Often there is more grumbling and complaining among the aged pilgrims than the younger ones. It is true their nerves can stand less, but God’s grace is sufficient for worn-out nerves. Often there is more occupation with self and circumstances among the fathers and mothers in Israel, a less talking of Christ and His wondrous love, than there is among the babes. Yes, there is much need for all of us to heed the opening “furthermore” of our text. Every physician will tell us there are some diseases which become more troublesome in middle life and others which are incident to old age. The same is true of different forms of sinning. If we are more liable to certain sins in our youth, we are in greater danger of others in advanced years. Undoubtedly it is the case that the older we get, the more need there is to heed this “furthermore” which prefaces the call of our being in subjection to the Father of spirits. If we do not need more grace, certain it is that we need as much grace, when we are grown old as while we are growing up.

The aged meet with as many temptations as do young Christians. They are tempted to live in the past, rather than in the future. They are tempted to take things easier, spiritually as well as temporally, so that it has to be said of some “ye *did* run well” (Gal 5:7). O to be like Paul, “the aged” (Phi 1:9), who was in full harness to the end. They are tempted to be unduly occupied with their increasing infirmities, but is it not written “the Spirit also *helpeth* our infirmities”! (Rom 8:26). Yet, because this is affirmed, we must not think there is no longer need to earnestly *seek* His help. This comforting word is given in order that we *should* frequently and confidently pray for this very thing. If it were not recorded, we might doubt His readiness to do so, and wonder if we were asking “according to his will.” Because *it is* recorded, when feeling our “infirmities” press most heavily upon us, let us cry, “O Holy Spirit of God do as thou has said, and help us.”

In this connection let us remind ourselves of that verse, “Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed *like the eagle’s*” (Psa 103:5). The eagle is a bird renowned for its *longevity*, often living to be more than a hundred years old. The eagle is also the high-soaring bird, building its nest on the mountain summit. But *how* is the eagle’s “youth *renewed*”? By a new crop of feathers, by the rejuvenation of its wings. And that is precisely what some middle-aged and elderly Christians need—the rejuvenation of their spiritual wings—the wings of faith, of hope, of zeal, of love for souls, of devotedness to Christ. So many leave their first love, lose the joy of their espousals, and instead of setting before younger Christians a bright example of trustfulness and cheerfulness, they often discourage by gloominess and slothfulness. Thus God’s chastenings increase in severity and frequency!

Dear friend, instead of saying, “The days of my usefulness are over,” rather reason, the night cometh when no man can work, therefore I must make the most of my opportunities while it is yet called day. For your encouragement, let it be stated that the most active worker in a church, of which the editor was pastor, was seventy-seven years old when he went there, and during his stay of three and a half years she did more for the Lord and was a greater stimulus to him than any other member of that church. She lived another eight years, and they were, to the very end, filled with devoted service to Christ. We believe that the Lord will yet say of her, as of another woman,

“She hath done what she could” (Mar 14:8). O brothers and sisters, especially you who are feeling the weight of years, heed that word, “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal 6:9).

“Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence” (Heb 12:9). It is the duty of children to give the reverence of obedience unto the just commands of their parents, and the reverence of submission to their correction when disobedient. As parents have a charge from God to minister correction to their children when it is due—and not spoil them unto their ruin—so children have a command from God to receive parental reproof in a proper spirit, and not to be discontented, stubborn, or rebellious. For a child to be insubordinate under correction evidences a double fault. The very correction shows a fault has been committed and insubordination under correction is only adding wrong to wrong. “We gave them reverence,” records the attitude of dutiful children toward their sires—they neither ran away from home in a huff, nor became so discouraged as to quit the path of duty.

From this law of the human home, the apostle points out the humble and submissive conduct which is due unto God when He disciplines His children, “Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits?” (Heb 12:9). The “much rather” points a contrast suggested by the analogy. That contrast is at least fourfold. First, the former chastening proceeded from those who were our fathers according to the flesh, the other is given by Him who is our heavenly Father. Second, the one was sometimes administered in imperfect knowledge and irritable temper, the other comes from unerring wisdom and untiring love. Third, the one was during but a brief period, when we were children, the other continues throughout the whole of our Christian life. Fourth, the one was designed for our temporal good, the other has in view our spiritual and eternal welfare. Then how much more should we readily submit unto the latter.

“Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits?” (Heb 12:9). By nature we are not in subjection. We are born into this world filled with the spirit of insubordination—as the descendants of our rebellious first parents, we inherit their evil nature. Man is born “like a wild ass’s colt” (Job 11:12). This is very unpalatable and humbling, but nevertheless it is true. As Isaiah 53:6 tells us, “We have turned every one to *his own way*” and *that* is one of opposition to the revealed will of God. Even at conversion, this wild and rebellious nature is not eradicated. A new nature is given, but remnants of the old one lusts against it. It is because of this that discipline and chastisement are needed by us, and the great design of these is to bring us into subjection unto the Father of spirits. To be “in subjection unto the Father” is a phrase of extensive import, and is well that we should understand its various significations.

1. *It denotes an acquiescence in God’s sovereign right to do with us as He pleases.* “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it” (Psa 39:9). It is the duty of saints to be mute under the rod and silent beneath the sharpest afflictions. But this is only possible as we see the hand *of God* in them. If His hand be not seen in the trial, the heart will do nothing but fret and fume. “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*? 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” (2Sa 16:10-11). What an example of complete submission to the sovereign will of the Most High was this! David knew that Shimei could not curse him without God’s permission.

*“This will set my heart at rest,
What my God appoints is best.”*

But with rare exceptions many chastenings are needed to bring us to this place, and to keep us there.

2. *It implies a renunciation of self-will.* To be in subjection unto the Father presupposes a surrendering and resigning of ourselves to Him. A blessed illustration of this is found in Leviticus 10:1-3, “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.” Consider the circumstances. Aaron’s two sons, most probably intoxicated at the time, were suddenly cut off by divine judgment. Their father had no warning to prepare him for this trial, yet he “held his peace!” O quarrel not against JEHOVAH. Be clay in the hands of the Potter. Take Christ’s yoke upon you and learn of Him who was “meek and lowly in heart.”

3. *It signifies an acknowledgment of God’s righteousness and wisdom in all His dealings with us.* We must vindicate God. This is what the Psalmist did, “I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me” (Psa 119:75). Let us see to it that wisdom is ever justified by her children. Let our confession of her be, “Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments” (Psa 119:137). Whatever be sent, we must vindicate the Sender of all things. The Judge of all the earth cannot do wrong. Stifle, then, the rebellious murmur, What have I done to deserve such treatment by God? and say with the Psalmist, “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psa 103:10). Why, my reader, if God dealt with us only according to the strict rule of His justice, we had been in hell long ago, “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark [“impute”] iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand?” (Psa 130:3).

The Babylonish captivity was the severest affliction which God ever brought upon His earthly people during Old Testament times, yet even then a renewed heart acknowledged God’s righteousness in it, “Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day. *Howbeit* thou art *just* in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done *right*, but we have done wickedly” (Neh 9:32-33). God’s enemies may talk of His injustice, but let His children proclaim His righteousness. Because God is good, He can do nothing but what is right and good.

4. *It includes a recognition of His care and a sense of His love.* There is a sulking submission and there is a cheerful submission. There is a fatalistic submission which takes this attitude—this is inevitable, so I must bow to it, and there is a thankful submission, receiving with gratitude whatever God may be pleased to send us. “It is *good* for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes” (Psa 119:71). The Psalmist viewed his chastisements with the eye of faith, and doing so he perceived the love behind them. Remember that when God brings His people into the wilderness it is that they may learn more of His sufficiency, and that when He casts them into the furnace, it is that they may enjoy more of His presence.

5. *It involves an active performance of His will.* True submission unto the “Father of spirits” is something more than a passive thing. The other meanings of this expression which we have considered above are more or less of a negative character, but there is a positive and active side to it as well, and it is important that this should be recognized by us. To be “in subjection” to God also means that we are to walk in His precepts and run in the way of His commandments. Negatively, we are not to be murmuring rebels. Positively, we are to be obedient children. We are

required to be submissive unto God's Word, so that our thoughts are formed and our ways regulated by it. There is not only a suffering of God's will, but a *doing* of it—an actual performance of duty. When we utter that petition in the prayer which the Saviour has given us, "Thy will be done," something more is meant than a pious acquiescence unto the pleasure of the Almighty. It also signifies, may Thy will be *performed* by me. Subjection "unto the Father of spirits" (Heb 12:9), then, is the practical owning of His Lordship.

Two reasons for such subjection are suggested in our text. First, *because the one with whom we have to do is our Father*. O how profoundly thankful we should be that the Lord God stands revealed to us as the "Father"—our Father, because the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and *He* rendered perfect obedience unto Him. It is but right and meet that children should honor their parents by being in complete subjection to them—not to do so is to ignore their relationship, despise their authority, and slight their love. How much more ought we to be in subjection unto our heavenly Father. There is nothing tyrannical about Him. His commandments are not grievous. He has only our good at heart. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1Jo 3:1), then let us earnestly endeavour to express our gratitude by dutifully walking before Him as obedient children, and no matter how mysterious may be His dealings with us, say with the Saviour, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (Joh 18:11).

The particular title of God found in our text calls for a brief comment. It is placed in antithesis from "fathers of our flesh" (Heb 12:9), which has reference to their begetting of our bodies. True, our bodies also are a real creation on the part of God, yet in connection therewith He is pleased to use human instrumentalities. But in connection with the immaterial part of our beings, God is the immediate and alone Creator of them. As the renowned Owen (1616-1683) said, "The soul is immediately created and infused; having no other father but God Himself," and rightly did that eminent theologian add, "This is the fundamental reason of our perfect subjection unto God in all afflictions, namely, that our very souls are His, the immediate product of His divine power, and under His rule alone. May He not do as He wills with His own?" The expression "Father of spirits," refutes, then, the error of traducianists, who suppose that the soul, equally with the body, is transmitted by our parents. In Numbers 16:22, He is called "the God of the spirits of all flesh" which refers to all men naturally, while the "Father of spirits" in our text includes the new nature in the regenerate.

The second reason for our subjection to the Father is, *because this is the secret of true happiness*, which is pointed to in the final words of our text, "and live" (Heb 12:9). The first meaning of those words is, "and be happy." This is clear from Deuteronomy 5:33, "Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may *live*, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess." Observe the words "prolong your days" are added to "that ye may live," which obviously signifies "that ye may be happy"—compare Exodus 10:17, where Pharaoh called the miseries of the plagues "this death." Life ceases to be *life* when we are wretched. It is the making of God's will our haven, which secures the true resting-place for the heart. The rebellious are fretful and miserable, but "great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psa 119:165). "Take my yoke upon you," said Christ, "and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Mat 11:29). Alas, the majority of professing Christians are so little in subjection to God, they have just enough religion to make them miserable.

"Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, *and live*?" (Heb 12:9). No doubt the final words of this verse point a designed contrast from Deuteronomy 21:18-21, "If

a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place....And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, *that he die.*” “The increase of spiritual life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, is that whereunto they [the words “and live”] tend” (John Owen).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

42. His Concern for God’s House

How often has “success” been the ruination of those who have experienced it! how often has worldly advancement been followed by the deterioration of spirituality! It is good to see that such was far from being the case with David. In the thirty-fifth article of this series, we called attention to the blessed manner in which David conducted himself after coming to the throne. So far from indulging in ease and self-luxuriation, it was now that his best achievements were accomplished. First, he captured the stronghold of Zion. Next he vanquished the Philistines. Then he provided a restingplace for the holy ark and now he evidenced his deep concern to build a temple for the worship of JEHOVAH. So blessed is each of these incidents, so rich are they in their spiritual and typical import, we proposed to devote an article unto the separate consideration of each of them. By the Lord’s gracious enabling we have accomplished our purpose concerning the first three, and now we turn to the fourth.

“And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies” (2Sa 7:1). This brings before us a restful interlude in the strenuous and eventful life of our hero. As we have seen in earlier chapters, David had been called upon to gird on the sword again and again, and as we shall see (D.V.) in what follows, considerable fighting yet lay before him. Moreover, little opportunity had been given him in previous years for quietness and repose. During Saul’s life and also under the reign of Ishbosheth, David was much harried, and forced to move from place to place. So too in the future, disquieting and distressing experiences lay before him. But here in 2 Samuel 7, a very different picture is set before us—for a brief season the Lord granted His servant rest.

What has been pointed out above finds its counterpart, more or less, in the lives of all Christians. For the most part, their experience both outward and inward closely resembles that of David’s. Christians are called upon to wage a warfare against the flesh, the world, and the devil, to “Fight the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12). Those inveterate enemies of the new man give him little rest, and often when he has been enabled by divine grace to achieve a notable victory, he quickly discovers that fresh conflicts await him. Yet, amid his outward troubles and inward strifes, he is occasionally granted a little breathing-spell, and as he sits in his house it can be said of him, “The LORD hath given him rest round about from all his enemies” (2Sa 7:1).

As it is in nature, so it is in grace—after the storm comes a peaceful calm. The Lord is very merciful and tender in His dealings with His own. Amid many disheartenings, He grants encouragements along the way. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but 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” (1Co 10:13). After the toil of trying service, He says, “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and *rest a while*” (Mar 6:31). After a long stretch of the dreary sands of the wilderness, He brings us to some Elim, “where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees” (Exo 15:27). After some unusually fierce conflict with Satan, the Lord grants a season of peace, and then, as in David’s case, we have rest “from all our enemies.”

And with what was David’s mind employed during the hour of repose? Not upon worldly trifles or fleshly indulgences, but with the honour of God, “That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains” (2Sa 7:2). This is very blessed and furnishes a true insight to the character of him whom the Lord Himself declared to be “a man after his own heart” (1Sa 13:14). There are few things which afford a surer index to our spirituality—or the lack of it—than how we are engaged in our hours of *leisure*. When the conflict is over, and the sword is laid down, we are very apt to relax and become careless about spiritual concerns. And then it is, while off our guard, that Satan so often succeeds in gaining an advantage over us. Far different was it with him whose history we are here pondering.

“The king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains” (2Sa 7:2). Observe, first, that in this season of rest David’s companion was “the prophet.” Let that speak loudly to us! A godly companion is an invaluable aid to the preserving of spirituality when we are enjoying a little rest. Hours of recreation would prove hours of *re-creation* indeed, if they were spent in godly converse with someone who lives near to the Lord. David here supplied proof of his own assertion, “I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts” (Psa 119:63). A person is not only *known* by the company he or she keeps, but is *molded* thereby, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Pro 13:20). Seek as your friends, dear reader, those who are most Christlike in their character and conversation.

Next, observe what it was which occupied David’s heart while he sat in his palace in the company of Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains (2Sa 7:2). How, this, too, reveals the beatings of David’s heart! One cannot but contrast what we have here with the haughty words of Nebuchadnezzar, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of *my* majesty?” (Dan 4:30). Instead of being occupied with his achievements and self-satisfied with the position which he now occupied, David was concerned about the lowly abode of God’s ark. Very beautiful indeed is it to see the recently crowned monarch solicitous, not for the honour of his own majesty, but for the glory of Him whom he served.

It is not often that those in high places manifest such interest in spiritual things—would that more of the Lord’s people who are entrusted with a considerable amount of this world’s goods were more exercised in heart over the prospering of His cause. There are not many who make conscience over spending far more upon themselves than they do for furthering the service of God. In this generation, when the pilgrim character of the saints is well-nigh obliterated, when separation from the world is so largely a thing of the past, when self-indulgence and the gratification of every whim is the order of the day, few find their rest disturbed in the conviction

that the worship is languishing. Thousands of professing Christians think more about the welfare of their pet dogs than they do in seeing that the needs of God's servants and impoverished believers are met, and spend more on the upkeep of their motorcars than they do in the support of missionaries. Little wonder that the Holy Spirit is quenched in so many places.

"And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee" (2Sa 7:3). A certain class of writers who delight in criticizing almost everyone and everything, and who pretend unto a deeper insight of spiritual things than all who went before them, condemn both David and Nathan on this occasion, which seems to us close akin to the complaint of Judas, when Mary lavished her costly ointment upon the Saviour. Nothing is said in the record here that David actually purposed to build JEHOVAH a temple, but only that he was troubled because one was not yet erected. Whatever conclusion Nathan may have drawn therefrom, he was careful to say nothing to modify David's godly concern, but rather sought to encourage his spiritual aspirations. Alas, how many today are ready to snub earnestness, quench zeal, and hinder those who have more love for perishing souls than they have.

Nathan was better taught in divine things than some of those who have traduced him. He was quick to perceive that such unselfishness and godly concern as the king manifested was good evidence that the Lord was with him, for such spiritual exercises of heart proceed not from mere nature. Had David been actuated by a "legalistic" spirit as one of his foolish detractors supposed—deploring it with an "alas, alas!"—God's faithful servant had promptly rebuked, or at least corrected him. But instead of so doing, he says "Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee" (2Sa 7:3). O that more of this so-called "legality" were in evidence today—a heart melted by the Lord's abounding mercies, anxious to express its gratitude by furthering His cause and service. But it is hardly to be expected that those who so strenuously oppose the law's being a rule of life for the Christian, should have any clear ideas on either grace or what constitutes "legality."

"And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan" (2Sa 7:4). In the brief notes on this verse found in "The Companion Bible," it is there stated that, "After these words ('that night') all the MSS. [manuscripts] have a hiatus, marking a solemn pause." The design of the ancient Hebrews may have been to connect this passage with Genesis 15:12-17, which is another *night* scene. In both, a wondrous revelation was made by the Lord. In both His great purpose concerning the Messiah and Mediator received an unfolding. In both, a remarkable adumbration was made respecting the contents of the everlasting covenant.

"Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?" (2Sa 7:5), or as it is said in 1 Chronicles 17:4, "Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in." Some may suppose that these words make it quite clear that David *had* definitely determined to erect a temple unto JEHOVAH. But we rather regard these statements as the gracious construction which God placed upon the holy concern of His servant, just as the Saviour sweetly interpreted the loving devotion of Mary's anointing as "against the day of my burying hath she kept this" (Joh 12:7). And as in a coming day He will yet say unto those on His right hand, "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" (Mat 25:35, etc.)

"For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2Co 8:12). It is the disposition and desire of the heart which God regards, and sincere intentions to do good are approved by Him, even though His providences do not permit the execution of them. Thus it was in David's case. He was concerned that the sacred ark should be under curtains, while he dwelt in a ceiled house. That holy concern was tantamount

unto a willingness on his part to honour the Lord's worship by a stately temple, and *this* is the construction which God graciously placed upon it, accepting the will for the deed. Though David had not formally planned to build the temple, God so *interpreted* the exercises of his mind—just as when a man looks lustfully upon a woman, Christ *interprets* this as “adultery” itself (Mat 5:28).

We have dwelt the longer upon this point because the commentators have quite missed the force of it. Not only so, but some teachers, who are looked upon in certain circles as well-nigh infallible in their expositions, have falsely charged David with “legality.” Now that the Lord had elevated him from sheepcote to the throne, and had given him rest from all his enemies, David's concern for the dwelling place of the ark is twisted into his desire to do something *for* the Lord as payment of all He had done for him. Such men err “not knowing the Scriptures” (Mat 22:29). One verse of the Word is sufficient to refute their childish misconceptions, and establish what we have said above, “And the LORD said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou *didst well* [not “thou wast moved by a legalistic spirit”] that it was in thine heart” (1Ki 8:18).

We do not propose to comment in detail upon the remainder of the Lord's message through Nathan, but rather will we generalize our remarks upon the same. First, the Lord made touching mention of His own infinite condescension in graciously accommodating Himself unto the stranger and pilgrim character of His people (2Sa 7:6). The great JEHOVAH had deigned to *walk with* the children of Israel (2Sa 7:7). What an amazing and heart-melting word is that in Leviticus 25:23, “The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners *with me*.” David himself had laid hold of that word, as his statement in Psalm 39:12 clearly shows, “Hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger *with thee*, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.” Until Israel were settled in their inheritance, a humble tent had served the Lord's requirements. In this He has left *us* an example to follow—pomp and parade, extravagance and luxury, ill become those who have here “no continuing city” (Heb 13:14).

Second, as yet the Lord had given no definite instruction for the erection of an imposing edifice for His worship (2Sa 7:7) and until He did, a *tent* of His appointing was better than a *temple* of man's devising. Our desires, even of usefulness, must be governed by His precepts. Whatever be our spiritual aspirations, they must be regulated by the revealed will of God. He assigns unto every one his own work, and each of us should thankfully and faithfully attend to our own proper business. For example, no matter how strong the sisters may yearn to engage in public preaching, since they have received no commission from the Lord so to do, they are required to “keep silence in the churches” (1Co 14:34). O to be satisfied with the place which God has allotted *us*, to discharge earnestly the duty which He has appointed us, and leave to others whom He has chosen, the more honourable work. The temple was to bear the name of Solomon and not that of David.

Third, David was reminded of the wondrous things which God had already wrought for him, so that while he was not called unto the building of the temple, nevertheless, he *was* one of the favourites of heaven (2Sa 7:8). Moreover, God had made him signally victorious over all his foes and had advanced him unto high honour among the nations (2Sa 7:9). Let us be thankful for the mercies which God *has* bestowed, and not repine for any which He sees fit to withhold. Fourth, the happy future of his people was assured him (2Sa 7:10), from which he might well conclude that, when *they* were more securely established, then would be the time for the erection of a permanent house of worship. Finally, God announces rich blessings as being entailed upon David's family, for from *his* seed should issue, according to the flesh, the promised Messiah and

Mediator (2Sa 7:11-16). Thus, instead of David's building for the Lord a material and temporal house, the Lord would build for *him* a spiritual house which would abide "forever." Thus we see that a "willing mind" (2Co 8:12) is not only accepted, but richly *rewarded*. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Eph 3:20-21).

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

3. The Noahic (Continued)

Having contemplated the *occasion* when the Lord God entered into covenant with Noah, the unspeakably solemn circumstances which formed its background, we are now almost ready to turn our attention unto the covenant itself and examine its terms. The covenants which the Lord established at successive intervals with different parties were substantially one, embracing in the main the same promises and receiving similar confirmation. The Siniatic Covenant—although it possessed peculiar features which distinguished it from all others—was no exception. They were all of them revelations of God's gracious purpose, exhibited at first in an obscure form, but unfolding according to an obvious law of progress—each renewal adding something to what was previously known, so that the path of the just was as the shining light, which shone "more and more" unto the perfect day, when the shadows were displaced by the substance itself.

We are not to suppose that the divine promises, of which the covenant was the expression and confirmation, were not previously known. The antecedent history shows otherwise. The declaration made by JEHOVAH unto the serpent in Genesis 3:15, while it announced his doom, clearly intimated mercy and deliverance unto the woman's "seed"—an expression which is by no means to be restricted unto Christ personally, but which pertains to Christ mystical, that is, to the Head *and* His body, the church. The divine institution of sacrifices opened a wide door of hope unto those who were convicted of their sinful and lost condition by nature, as the recorded case of Abel clearly shows (Heb 11:4). The spiritual history of Enoch, who walked with God and before his translation received testimony that he pleased Him (Heb 11:5), is a further evidence that the very earliest of the saints were blest with considerable spiritual light and were granted an insight into God's eternal counsels of grace.

There is a word in Genesis 5:28-29 which requires to be carefully pondered in this connection. There we read that "Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son: and he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed." This is the first mention of Noah in Scripture, and there is no doubt he had his name prophetically given him. His name signifies "Rest," and was bestowed upon him by his father in the confident expectation that he would prove more than an ordinary blessing to his generation. He would be the instrument of bringing in

that which would speak peace and inspire hope in the hearts of the elect—for the “us” and “our” (spoken by *a believer*) obviously refer to the godly line.

The words of the believing Lamech had respect unto what had been said in Genesis 3:15, and were also undoubtedly a prophecy which looked forward to Christ Himself, in whom it was to receive its antitypical fulfillment, for *He* is the true Rest-giver (Mat 11:28) and Deliverer from the curse (Gal 3:13). The full scope and intent of Lamech’s prophetic language is to be understood in the light of those blessings which were pronounced on Noah by God *after* the flood—blessings which, as we shall see, were infinitely more precious than that which their mere letter conveys. They were blessings to proceed through the channel of the Everlasting Covenant of Grace and by means of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. The proof of this is found in the fact that they were pronounced *after* sacrifice had been offered. This requires us to glance again at Genesis 8:20-22.

“And 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). The typical teaching of this carries us much further than that which was foreshadowed by Abel’s offering. Here, for the first time in Scripture, mention is made of the “altar”—the key which unlocks the meaning of this is found in Matthew 23:19—“the altar that sanctifieth the gift.” And what was *the* “Altar” which sanctified the supreme “Gift?” Why, *the Person* of Christ Himself. It was *who* He was that rendered acceptable and efficacious *what* He did. Thus, while the offering of Abel pointed forward to the sacrifice of Christ, the altar of Noah adumbrated the One who offered that sacrifice, His Person being that which gave infinite value unto the blood which He shed.

“And the LORD smelled a sweet savour” (Gen 8:21). Here again our present type rises much higher than that of Abel’s. In the former case, it was the *manward* aspect which was in view, but here it is the *Godward* that is brought before us. Blessed indeed is it to learn what the sacrifice of Christ obtained for His people—deliverance from the wrath to come, securing an inheritance in heaven forever. But far more blessed is it to know what that sacrifice meant unto Him to whom it was offered. In the sacrifice of Christ, God Himself found that which was “a sweet savour,” with which *He* was well pleased, that which not only met every requirement of His righteousness and holiness, but also which satisfied His heart.

“And the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done” (Gen 8:21). The unusual words, “The LORD said in his heart” emphasizes the effect which the “sweet savour” of the sacrifice had upon Him. The remainder of the verse appears, at first sight, to mar the unity of the passage, for it seems to bear no direct relation unto what immediately precedes or follows. But a more careful pondering of it reveals its pertinency. The reference to human depravity comes in here with a solemn significance, intimating that the waters of judgment had in nowise changed the corruption of fallen man’s nature, and announcing that it was not because of any change in the flesh for the better that the Lord now made known His thoughts of peace and blessing. No, it was solely on the ground of the sweet-smelling sacrifice that He dealt in grace.

The blessings which were included in the benedictions which God pronounced upon Noah and his sons were granted on *a new foundation*, on the basis of a grant quite different from any revelation or promise which the Lord gave to Adam in his *unfallen* condition, even on the ground of that Covenant of Grace which He had established with the Mediator before ever the earth was. That eternal Charter anticipated Adam’s offence and provided for the deliverance of God’s elect from the curse which came in upon our first parent’s sin. Yea, secured for them far greater

blessings than any which pertained to the earthly paradise. It is of great importance that this fact should be clearly grasped, namely, that it was on the sure foundation of the Everlasting Covenant of Grace that God here pronounced blessing upon Noah and his sons—as He did later on Abraham and his seed.

What has just been pointed out had been more easily grasped by the average reader had the chapter-break between Genesis 8 and 9 been made at a different point. Genesis 8 should close with the 19th verse. The last three verses of Genesis 8, as they stand in our Bibles, should begin chapter 9, and then *the immediate connection between* Noah's sacrifice and the covenant which the Lord made with him would be more apparent. The covenant was *JEHOVAH'S response to* the offering upon the altar. That offering was "a sweet savour" to Him, clearly pointing to the offering of Christ. Christ's sacrifice was not then to be offered for over two thousand years, so the satisfaction which Noah's typical offering gave unto JEHOVAH must have pointed back to the Everlasting Covenant, in which the great Sacrifice was agreed upon.

Noah's passing safely through the Flood, in the ark, was a type of *salvation* itself. For this statement, we have the authority of Holy Writ, see 1 Peter 3:20-21. Noah and his sons were delivered from the wrath of God which had destroyed the rest of the world, and they now stepped out on to what was, typically, *resurrection* ground. Yes, the earth having been swept clean by the besom of divine judgment, and a fresh start now being made in its history, it was virtually *new-creation* ground on to which the saved family came as they emerged from the ark. Here is another point in which our present type looked unto higher truths than did the types which had preceded it. It is in connection with the *new* creation that the inheritance of the saints is found (1 Peter 1:3-4). We are therefore ready now to consider the blessing of the typical heirs.

"And God blessed Noah and his sons" (Gen 9:1). This is the first time that we read of God *blessing* any since the fall had occurred. Before sin entered the world we read that "male and female created he them. And God blessed them," (Gen 1:27-28). No doubt there is both a comparison and a contrast suggested in these two verses. First, and from the natural viewpoint, God's "blessing" of Noah and his sons was the formal announcement that the same divine favour which the Creator had extended to our first parents should now rest upon the new progenitors of the human race. But secondly, and more deeply, this blessing of Noah and his sons *after* the offering upon the altar, and in connection with the *covenant*, denoted their "blessing" upon a new basis. Adam and Eve received blessing on the ground of their creature purity, Noah and his sons (as the representatives of the entire election of grace) received blessing on the ground of their acceptance and perfection *in Christ*.

"And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things" (Gen 9:1-3). These verses (together with the closing ones of chapter 8) introduce us to the beginning of a new world. In several respects it resembles the first beginning. There was the divine blessing upon the heads of the human family, there was the renewed command for the propagation of the human species—the earth having been depopulated, and there was the promise of the subjection of the lower creatures to man. But there was one great and vital difference, which has escaped the notice of most of the commentators—*all now rested on the Covenant of Grace*.

This difference is indeed radical and fundamental. Adam was placed as lord over the earth on the ground of the Covenant of Works. His tenure was entirely a conditional one, his retention

thereof depending wholly upon his own conduct. Consequently, when he sinned, he not only forfeited the blessing and favour of his Creator, but lost his dominion over the creature, and as a discrowned monarch he was sent forth to play the part of a common labourer in the earth (Gen 3:17-19). But here we see man re-instated over the lost inheritance, not on the basis of creature responsibility and human merits, but on the basis of divine grace—for Noah “found *grace* in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen 6:8), not on the foundation of creature doings, but on the foundation of the excellency of that sacrifice which satisfied the heart of God. Consequently it was as the children of *faith* the heirship of the new world was given to Noah and his seed.

“Man now rises, in the person of Noah, to a higher place in the world—yet not simply as man, but as a child of God, standing in faith. His faith had saved him amid the general wreck of the old world, to become in the new a second head of mankind, and an inheritor of earth’s domain, as now purged and rescued from the pollution of evil. ‘He is made heir,’ as it is written in Heb 11:7, ‘of the righteousness which is by faith,’—heir, that is, of all that properly belongs to such righteousness, not merely of the righteousness itself, but also of the world, which in the divine purpose it was destined to possess and occupy. Hence, as if there had been a new creation, and a new head brought in to exercise over it the right of sovereignty, the original blessing and grant to Adam was substantially renewed to Noah and his family, Genesis 9:1-3. Here, then, the righteousness of faith received direct from the grace of God the dowry that had been originally bestowed upon the righteousness of nature—not a blessing merely, but a blessing coupled with the heirship and dominion of the world” (P. Fairbairn, 1805-1874).

“Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual” (1Co 15:46). Though these words have reference immediately to the bodies of the saints, yet they enunciate a cardinal principle in the ways of God in the outworking of His eternal purpose. Divine grace cannot clearly appear as *grace* until it shines forth from the dark background of man’s sin and ruin. It was therefore requisite that the Covenant of Works with Adam should precede the Covenant of Grace with Noah. The failure of the first man did but make way and provide a suitable foil for the triumph of the Second Man—whom Noah clearly foreshadowed, as his name and the prophetic utterance of his father concerning him plainly announced. The more clearly this be grasped the easier will it be to perceive the deeper meaning of the Noahic Covenant.

Everything was now clearly placed on a fresh footing and established upon a new basis. This fact throws light upon or brings out the significance of several details which, otherwise, are likely to be passed by unappreciated. For example, that “*eight* souls were saved by water” (1Pe 3:20), for in the language of Bible numerics eight speaks of *a new beginning*. Hence, too, the reverent student of Holy Writ, who delights to see the finger of God in its minutest details, will regard as something more than a coincidence the fact that the word “covenant” is found in connection with Noah just *eight* times—Genesis 6:18, 9:9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17. It is to be carefully noted that the entire emphasis is upon the Lord’s making a covenant with Noah, and not Noah with God. He was the initiator and sole compactor. In it there were no conditions stipulated, no “ifs” interposed, all was of grace—free, pure, unchangeable.

There is only space now left for us to call attention unto how the blessed promises recorded in Genesis 8:22 and 9:2-3 were all well-calculated to still the fears of Noah’s heart—see the previous article—and establish his confidence. Therein he was graciously assured that in God’s full view of the evil which still remained in the heart of man, a similar judgment, at least to the same extent, would never again be repeated. That not only would man be preserved on the earth, but that also the whole animal creation should be in subserviency to his use. By these divine

assurances his fears were effectually relieved—adumbrating the fact that God delights to bring His children, sooner or later, into the full assurance of faith, and of confidence, and joy in His presence.

CHRIST IN GLORY

(Concluded)

The second use of the doctrine (of assurance) may be by way of *trial and examination*. Is it so, that believers are the offspring and issue of the house of God? then it concerns every one to try himself, whether he be of that blessed progeny. We read (Heb 12) of bastards in the visible church, who cannot be reckoned among this number. They are indeed called the children of the kingdom, but they are such as do not inherit the kingdom of God, because they will be cast into utter darkness. And therefore, it concerns us to see whether or not we be the lawfully-begotten children of Zion, the true offspring and issue of God's household and family. I remember, in the doctrinal part, I told you why they are called the offspring and issue, and now I would offer two or three remarks whereby they may be known.

1. All the offspring and issue of God's family have passed through the strait gate of the new birth, for, says Christ, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Joh 3:3). But, say you, How may I *know* if I be a partaker of the new birth? I answer, the new birth brings a new state or standing with it. You have quitted your standing upon the law-bottom or works and all foundations of sand, and taken up your only stand upon the foundation laid in Zion, which is Christ Jesus. The new birth brings a new heart along with it, "A new heart also will I give you" (Eze 36:26). The new birth brings with it new principles of action—a principle of life, of faith and love, new motives and ends. Self-love constrains the sinner, but the love of Christ, and the glory of God constrains the new convert to duty. The new birth makes a man to love the new covenant, even a covenant of rich grace and promise, saying, "This is all my salvation." The new birth produces new laws in a man. He was formerly under the law of sin and death, but now he delights in the law of the Lord after the inner man. The new birth brings a new language with it. The man gets a new tongue. Formerly he spoke the language of Ashdod, but now the language of Canaan. The new birth produces new views, both of things temporal and eternal. So, then, try yourselves by these, whether you be among the true offspring and issue of the house of God, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom 2:28-29).

2. All the offspring and issue of the house have seen their Father's countenance, and they are always glad at the sight of it. Like David, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased" (Psa 4:7). 3. All the offspring of God's family, each one of them, resembles the children of the King, because they bear a likeness unto their Father and His firstborn Son. By beholding His glory they are changed into the same image. They hate

themselves because of their dissimilitude through remaining sin and indwelling corruption, feeling with Paul, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom 7:24). 4. All the offspring of God’s family have faith in Christ, hence they are called believers, because they believe in and believe on His name, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (Joh 1:12). The very name of Christ is so sweet to them that it is like “ointment poured forth,” and when the Holy Spirit works faith in them, if they had all the souls that ever sprang from Adam dwelling in their bodies, they could commit the keeping of them all to Him.

5. All the offspring of the house are acquainted with the Shepherd’s voice, the voice of His Word, and the voice of His rod, “My sheep hear my voice” (Joh 10:27). When they hear His promising voice, they are filled “with all joy and peace in believing.” When they hear His commanding voice, they are ready to say, “I will run the way of Thy commandments; only give grace to obey, and command what Thou wilt.” When they hear His threatening voice, they tremble at His Word. When they hear His correcting voice in worldly trials and crosses, they are ready to say with David, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it” (Psa 39:9). 6. All the offspring and issue of the family love to lisp out their Father’s name, crying, “Abba, Father.” It is true, through the prevalency of unbelief and a sense of guilt and filth, they blush when they speak to Him as a Father, but yet, now and then, as faith gets up its head, they will be ready to cry as the church, “Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our father, our redeemer” (Isa 63:16). 7. If you be the true offspring of this family, your Father’s presence will be your delight, and His absence, hiding, and frowns will be an intolerable affliction. Christ the firstborn of the family never complained so much of all His other troubles as when His Father forsook Him, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Psa 22:1). Just so it is with the genuine offspring, as you see in David, Asaph, Heman, and others.

8. You will dearly love all that bear their Father’s image, and the image of Him who is the express image of the Father, and the more resemblance they have unto Him, you will love them the better, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1Jo 3:14). You will esteem them as David did, the “excellent of the earth,” with whom will be all your delight. Lastly, all the offspring, and issue of God’s house have a zeal for the standing of their Father’s house. They love the habitation of it, and the place where His honour dwells, and therefore will have something of the spirit of the Firstborn, of whom it is said, “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up” (Psa 69:9). Is it possible that a true child of a family may be unconcerned when he sees robberies committed in his house, or the house of his Father turned into a den of thieves? or will a true-born child herd and associate himself with such without opposing them and witnessing against them? A true child of the family will be ready to say of such, as Jacob did of Simeon and Levi, “Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret” (Gen 49:5-6). Thus I have given you some marks which have a relation to the first character to believers in the text.

I come next to pursue a trial with an eye toward the second character or designation of vessels of different sizes—“vessels of cups” and “vessels of flagons” (Isa 22:24), all hanging upon the “nail that is fastened in the sure place” (Isa 22:25). In the professing church there are vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath, vessels of honour fitted for the Master’s use, and vessels of dishonour fitted to destruction. Now here some may readily put the question, “How may I know if I be a vessel of mercy and honour?” For clearing the way of answering this question, you will consider that all the children of men sprang from Adam by natural generation. The elect of God,

as well as others, are, in the eye of the law, vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, through the pollution and guilt of original and actual sin—and until God comes in a day of power, and digs the vessel of mercy from under the filth and rubbish of the fall of Adam, no man can make a difference betwixt the vessels of mercy and of wrath, because this is among the secret things that belong unto the Lord. But if the question be, “How may a person know he be yet a vessel of mercy *fitted by regeneration and sanctifying grace* for the Master’s use? Hath God yet formed me for Himself? Hath He taken me out of nature’s quarry, out of the miry clay, and washed, and justified, and sanctified me in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God?”—Now I say, if *this* be the question, I will give you a few marks of the vessels of mercy and honour.

1. Every vessel of mercy in the house of our God (whether they be vessels of “cups” or vessels of “flagons”) has seen himself to be a vessel of wrath by nature, condemned already, full of the vermin of sin and corruption, treasuring up to himself wrath against the day of wrath. Hence, all God’s Israel are ready to take up that melancholy song, “A Syrian ready to perish was I; at that time I was afar off, an alien to the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger to the covenants of promise, without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world.” Hence, 2. All the vessels of mercy are taken up in admiring the rich and free mercy of God in taking up the like of them from among the pots, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration” (Ti 3:5). O, says Paul, I was a “blasphemer, and...injurious: but I obtained mercy” (1Ti 1:13). “He brought me up,” says David, “out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and...put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God” (Psa 40:2-3).

3. All God’s vessels of mercy have undergone the hammer of the law, in a greater or less measure, “Is not my word...like a hammer,” saith the Lord, “that breaketh the rock in pieces?” (Jer 23:29). The law is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. So much hammering by the law is necessary, and no more, as serves to beat the heart and hands of a sinner off from the broken nail of the law, in point of righteousness, “I through the law,” say Paul, “am dead to the law” (Gal 2:19). So much of this hammer is needful to beat down the vain and towering imaginations of our own goodness, holiness, wisdom, and righteousness. The Dagon of self, and all the shapes and forms of it, must be broken down forever. The vessel of mercy shall never more say, “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men” (Luk 18:11), or with Laodicea, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (Rev 3:17). 4. All the vessels of mercy are made heartily content to change their holding. All mankind have their holding on the first or second Adam. They are either hanging by the broken nail of the Covenant of Works, or by the Gospel nail of the Covenant of Grace. They are either seeking life and righteousness by the works of the law, or by the grace of the Gospel. Now, in a day of conversion, the sinner having his hands knocked off from his first holding, he, by the hand of faith, which is God’s gift, receives Christ, and takes hold of that covenant whereof He is Head, saying, “In him will I be justified, and in him will I glory; for in him have I righteousness and strength. He is to me the end of the law for righteousness: for he was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

5. All the vessels of mercy are melted in the fire of Gospel grace and love, and made pliable to the will of God. The heart of stone is melted into a heart of flesh (Eze 36:26). The iron sinew of the obstinate will, through the heat of divine love, is made to give way, and yield unto the divine will (Psa 110:3). The language of every vessel of mercy is, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” The adamant heart is dissolved into evangelical repentance, so that the man now looks on Him whom he had pierced, and mourns (Zec 12:10). 6. All the vessels of the house are washed, and

will be frequently washing themselves, in the fountain of a Redeemer's blood, from sin and uncleanness (Zec 13:1). The vessels of the house, through remaining corruption, temptation, and frequent falls into the puddle of actual sin, gather dust, and become dim, and unfit for the use and service of the great Father and Manager of the house, and therefore He will have them sprinkled with clean water. He will have their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and their bodies washed with pure water, "If I wash thee not," says Christ to Peter, "thou hast no part with me" (Joh 13:8). And this washing is what they themselves long for, especially when defiled with any fall. Hence they cry with David, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Psa 51:2). And again, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psa 51:7).

7. All the vessels of the house, from the least to the greatest, have the name of the Father of the house, and of the Manager of the house, engraven upon them. It has been, and still is, the custom of great men to have their names and arms graven on their gold and silver vessels. So it is in the house of our God. All the vessels of mercy have *His* name and motto engraven upon them, "Lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads" (Rev 14:1). They have the name of Christ, the great Manager, written on them, particularly that name, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer 23:6), and in this name of His do they rejoice continually, for in His righteousness are they exalted. And then, as we are told (Rev 3:12), the name of the new Jerusalem, which cometh down from above, out of heaven, is engraven on them, for they prefer Jerusalem to their chiefest joy. In a word, God's name, His glory, honour, and authority, His truth, His worship, His cause and interest, the Word of God, the testimony of Jesus, the prerogatives of His crown and kingdom—every true believer hath these as it were, engraven on his heart, and will study to maintain them before the world.

8. If you be the vessels of mercy and honour, the Master of the house will now and then be making use of you by pouring the wine, the oil, the water, or milk of His grace and Spirit into you, "And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace" (Joh 1:16). Every vessel of the house is anointed with the fresh oil of the Holy Spirit, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One" (1Jo 2:20), and they that lack this anointing of the Spirit, in one degree or another, the Manager of the house will not own him as His, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom 8:9). They will be found among the foolish virgins, whose vessels had no oil when the midnight cry was heard, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (Mat 25:6). But I say all the vessels of mercy have a greater or smaller measure of the anointing of the Spirit, and every anointing of the Spirit enlargeth the vessel to hold more, insomuch that through the frequent communications of the Spirit, a "cup" vessel at first becomes a large vessel or a "flagon" one, until it be ready to be transplanted from the lower to the upper story of the house, where every vessel shall be filled brimful of God.

Question: Some exercised soul may be ready to say, "O how happy would I be, if I knew that I were but the least vessel in the house of God, hanging on the 'nail fastened in a sure place!' but, alas! I am such a poor, worthless, useless creature, that I am afraid I am none of them." Answer: It is the nature of all the vessels of mercy in the house of God, yea, of the great flagons, to *esteem themselves worthless* and among the least, yea, less than the least of all the vessels of the house. Says the apostle Paul, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints" (Eph 3:8). And the lower they sink in their own eyes, the higher do they rise in the esteem of the great Lord of the house, and the more of His grace and favour do they receive, for He giveth grace to the humble.

Objection 2: Another may say, “I am so broken and tossed with worldly trials, that I am ready to think I am none of the offspring or vessels of His house.” Answer: “Many are the afflictions of the righteous,” and “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22). Christ Himself suffered before He entered into His glory, and so have all the cloud of witnesses (Heb 11), and therefore, it is a false conclusion to think you do not belong to the Lord because of multiplied roots of affliction, for “if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (Heb 12:8) for “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth” (Heb 12:6). God’s gold and silver vessels go frequently into the furnace, and there is a need be for it, to purge away their dross, and therefore, they learn to say with Job, “When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10).

Objection 3: “I am such a vile, polluted creature, that I cannot think I am one of His offspring by regeneration, but rather a vessel of wrath.” Answer: God will not cast away His gold and silver vessels because of the dross and alloy of sin and corruption that is about them. A man will take up a vessel of his house, though it be lying on a dunghill. So David, Solomon, Peter, and many other of the saints, fell in to the mire of sin, and yet the Lord took them from the dunghill, and made them like the wings of a dove, and therefore, seeing God will not cast off forever, do not you cast yourself off.

Objection 4: “I am so harassed with Satan and his fiery darts, that I am afraid I am not one of God’s children. I am tempted to evils and abomination that I am afraid to name to any in the world.” Answer: Christ Himself was tempted in all things as we are, that He might be a merciful High Priest to sympathize with those that are tempted. Consider again, for thy encouragement, that usually the devil gives the sorest pulls and pushes at the gold and silver vessels of God’s family, and if you did not belong to God, Satan would not pursue so much. When Israel came out of Egypt, then Pharaoh and his hosts pursued most vigorously. “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.”

Objection 5: “I am not one of the offspring or vessels, for God is hiding and carrying Himself to me as an enemy, that the very remembrance of Him is a terror to me.” Answer: This is no unprecedented case among God’s children. David, when he remembered God, was “troubled.” Asaph cries, “Is his mercy clean gone?” (Psa 77:8). Heman also, “While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted” (Psa 88:15). Yea, Christ, the firstborn and beloved Son, is under such an agony of soul that He cries out, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Mat 26:38). It is hard to tell how far fatherly chastisement may be carried, but this is an uncontroverted truth, that the foundation of God standeth sure, and God will never disinherit any of the offspring and issue, or cast away any of the vessels which hang by a faith of His operation upon the “nail that is fastened in the sure place” (Isa 22:25).

This truth will yield comfort, though the present aspect of providence gives just ground to fear some shaking judgment is not far off, on account of the abounding sin of all ranks, a condemned Gospel, and the blood of those whose souls are crying from under the altar. But whatever calamities may be coming, though the world should be unhinged, and nothing be heard or seen but the confused noise of warriors and garments rolled in blood, “yet verily it shall be well with the righteous.” Here is comfort in case of rents, and divisions, and manifold disorders in the visible church, as there is at this day. Men beating their fellow servants, and putting them out of the house for their faithfulness to the Master of the house, and preferring the man with the gold ring to the man who is rich in faith and an heir of the kingdom. These, or the like evils, take place in the visible church and have a melancholy aspect. But here is comfort, the Lord is looking on. He permits and overrules all these confusions and disorders for His own holy and wise ends, for

the trial of faith and patience, and to show His own skill in bringing order out of confusion. And when He hath performed His whole work in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, He will reign among His ancients gloriously. Here is comfort to the Lord's remnant, when there are few or none of the rulers or nobles of the land to own the cause of Christ, or to put their hand to the rebuilding of the walls or gates of Jerusalem, lying in rubbish, as in the days of former reformation in this land. The great Zerubbabel can carry on His work either with them or without them, for it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zec 4:6). The Man whose name is "The Branch" shall come out of His place. He shall build the Temple, and bear all the glory forever and ever, Amen. (Ralph Erskine, 1743).

UNION AND COMMUNION

2. Mediatorial (Continued)

Having sought to point out at the close of last month's article some of the reasons why it was requisite for the Son of God to become incarnate, we shall now endeavour to consider *the nature of the divine incarnation itself*—exactly what took place when the Word became flesh. Here it behooves us to tread with the utmost reverence and caution, for the ground is truly holy. Only by adhering closely to the Scriptures themselves can we hope to be preserved from error. Only as the Holy Spirit Himself is pleased to be our guide may we expect to be led into the truth thereof, and only as we attend diligently to every jot and tittle in the revelation which God has graciously vouchsafed, will it be possible to obtain anything approaching a complete view of the same. May the Lord enable us to gird up the loins of our mind, and grant that in His light we may see light, as we approach our happy but difficult task.

In Old Testament times, God granted various intimations that the coming deliverer should be both divine and human. At the beginning, God announced to the serpent (not "promised" unto Adam, be it noted), "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15). This was a clear indication that the Saviour should be human, for He would be the woman's "seed," yet it as definitely intimated that the Saviour would be more than a man, for it is the work of omnipotence to destroy Satan's power, hence we read, "The *God* of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom 16:20). Expressly was it revealed that "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa 7:14), "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God" etc., (Isa 9:6). In the ancient "Theophanies" such as in Genesis 18:1-2; 32:24; Joshua 5:13-14, etc., the divine incarnation was anticipated and adumbrated, for in each case the "man" was obviously the Lord Himself in temporary human form.

Now there were three distinct things which belonged to the Word's becoming flesh—the actual production of His humanity, the sanctifying thereof, and His personal assumption of it. The production of it was by miraculous conception, whereby His human nature was under the

supernatural operation of God the Spirit framed of the substance of Mary, without man's help, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luk 1:35). But let it here be pointed out that in no sense was the Spirit the "father" of Jesus, for He contributed no matter to the making of His manhood, but only miraculously fashioned it out of the seed of His virgin mother. "Although the human nature of Christ was individualized and personalized by a miraculous conception, and not by ordinary generation, yet there was as really and truly a conception and birth as if it had been by ordinary generation. Jesus Christ was really and truly the Son of Mary. He was bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh. He was of her substance and blood. He was consubstantial with her, in as full a sense as an ordinary child is consubstantial with an ordinary mother" (William Shedd, 1889).

That which was conceived by Mary, under the mighty power of the Holy Spirit was *not* a human *person*, but a human *nature*, hence was it said "that holy *thing* which shall be born" (Luk 1:35). It is most important to clearly grasp this fact if we are to be preserved from error. When contemplating the ineffable mystery of the Holy Trinity, we saw how necessary it was to distinguish sharply between *nature* and *person*, for while there are three Persons in the Godhead, their essence or nature is but one. In like manner, it is equally essential that we observe the same distinction when viewing the Person of the Mediator, for though He assumed human nature, He did not take a human person into union with Himself. Thus, we may correctly refer to the *complex person* of Christ, but we must not speak of His *dual personality*.

At the first moment of our Lord's assumption of human nature, that human nature existed only as the "seed" or *un-individualized* substance of the Virgin. But it was not for that reason an *incomplete* humanity, for all the essential *properties* of humanity are in the human nature itself. Christ assumed the human nature *before* it had become a particular person by conception in the womb. He "took on him the *seed* of Abraham" (Heb 2:16). The personalizing of His humanity was by its miraculous union with His deity, though that added no new properties to human nature, but gave it a new and unique *form*. Nor was it simply a material body He assumed, but a human spirit and soul and body, for He was made "in all things like unto his brethren" (Heb 2:17), sin excepted.

That it was an *impersonal* human nature which the Son of God assumed is clear from His own words in Hebrews 10:5, "A body hast thou prepared *me*." The "body," put metonymically for the entire human nature was *not* the "me" or "person," but something which He took unto Himself. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (2Co 5:14)—note carefully it is *one* who died—though possessing two natures, there was but a single Person. The humanity of Christ—consisting of spirit, and soul and body—had no subsistence in itself or by itself, but only as it was taken into union with a divine Person. In answering the question, "What was the cause that the Person of the Son of God *did not* join Himself to a perfect *person* of man," the renowned James Usher (1654) replied, "1. Because then there could not be a personal union of both to make *one* perfect Mediator. 2. Then there should be four Persons in the Trinity. 3. The works of each of the natures could not be counted the works of a whole Person."

"The *personality* of Jesus Christ is in His divine nature, and not in His human. Jesus Christ existed a distinct, divine Person from eternity, the second Person in the adorable Trinity. The human nature which this divine Person, the Word, assumed into a personal union with Himself, is not and never was a distinct person by itself, and personality cannot be ascribed to it, and does not belong to it any otherwise than as united to the Logos" (Samuel Hopkins, 1795). As a woman has

no *wifely* personality until she is married, so the humanity of Christ had no personality till it was united to Himself, “that holy thing which shall be born of thee [Mary] shall be called *the Son of God*” (Luk 1:35)—receiving its name from the divine Person with which it was made one. Just as my personality and your personality, from first to last, centres in our *highest* part—the soul—and is only shared in by the body, so the personality of the Mediator centres in His highest part—His deity—His humanity only sharing in it.

The second thing pertaining to the mediatorial union was the *sanctifying* of that “seed” which was miraculously conceived in the womb of the Virgin. To sanctify signifies to set apart unto God. For that two things are required—the cleansing of the object or person from pollution, and the enduing it with excellency fit for the divine service—typified under the ceremonial economy by the washing, and then the anointing of the priests and the sacred vessels. In connection with the humanity of our Lord, the first was secured by God’s miraculously preserving it from the slightest taint of defilement, so that the Lamb was “without blemish and without spot” (1Pe 1:19). Nothing with the least trace of corruption in it could be joined to the immaculate Son of God. Original sin could not be transmitted to Him, because He was never in Adam nor begotten by a man. The immediate interposition of the Holy Spirit (Luk 1:35) prevented all possibility of any corruption being transmitted through Mary.

The enduing of Christ’s humanity was also by the gracious operation of the Spirit, see Isaiah 11:1-2. “God, in the human nature of Christ, did perfectly renew that blessed image of His on our nature, which we lost in Adam, with an addition of many glorious endowments which Adam was not made partaker of. God did not renew it in His nature, as though that portion of it whereof He was partaker, had ever been destitute or deprived of it, as it is with the same nature in all other persons. For He derived not His nature from Adam in the same way that we do, nor was He ever in Adam as the public representative of our nature as we were. But our nature in Him had the image of God implanted in it, which was lost and separated from the same nature, in all other instances of its subsistence. It pleased the Father that in Him *all fullness* should dwell, that He should be ‘full of grace and truth,’ and in all things have the pre-eminence.

“The great design of God in His grace is, that as we have borne the ‘image of the first Adam’ in the depravation of our natures, so we should bear ‘the image of the second’ in their renovation. As we have borne ‘the image of the earthy,’ so we shall bear ‘the image of the heavenly’ (1Co 15:49). And as He is the pattern of all our graces, so He is of glory also. All our glory will consist in our being ‘made like unto him,’ which what it is doth not yet appear (1Jo 3:2). For He shall ‘change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body’ (Phi 3:21). Wherefore the fullness of grace was bestowed upon the human nature of Christ, and the image of God gloriously implanted thereon, that it might be the prototype and example of what the church was through Him to be made partaker of” (John Owen).

The Holy Spirit infused into our Saviour’s humanity *every* spiritual grace in its fullness and perfection. Each child of God is lovely in His sight because of some spiritual excellence which has been imparted to him—in one it is faith, in another courage, in another meekness, but the humanity of Christ was “*altogether lovely*.” This was foreshadowed of old in the meal offering (Lev 2)—not only was the fine flour “unleavened” (Lev 2:5), but the fragrant “frankincense” was put thereon as a “sweet savour to the LORD” (Lev 2:2). Christ was more holy in His human nature than was Adam when he was first created, and than are the unfallen and pure angels in heaven, for it received the Spirit “without measure” (Joh 3:34), and because it was taken into personal union with the Son of the Living God. “His body and mind were the essence of purity. His heart was filled with the love of God, His thoughts were all regularly acted on what was

before Him, His will was perfectly sanctified to perform the whole will of God. His affections were most correctly poised and properly fixed on God” (S. E. Pierce, 1746-1829).

The third thing pertaining to the mediatorial union was *the actual assumption* of that human nature which the Holy Spirit framed in the womb of the Virgin, and which He endowed with a fullness of grace and truth, whereby the eternal Son took the same upon Him, that it might have a proper and personal subsistence. A remarkable adumbration of this mystery seems to have been made in the natural world for the purpose of aiding our feeble understandings. This was set forth by one of the earlier Puritans thus, “As the plant called mistletoe *has no root of its own*, but grows and lives in the stock or body of the oak or some other tree, so the human nature having no personal subsistence, is, as it were, ingrafted into the Person of the Son, and is wholly supported and sustained by it, so as it should not be at all, if it were not sustained in that manner” (William Perkins, 1595).

We believe this act of assumption took place at the very first moment of conception in the Virgin’s womb, certainly it was months before the birth, as is clear from Luke 1:43, where Elizabeth, “filled with the Holy Ghost” (Luk 1:41), exclaimed “And whence is this to me, that the mother of my *Lord* should come to me?” This assumption was purely a *voluntary* act on the part of the Son of God. He did not assume human nature from any necessity, but freely—not out of indigence, but bounty—not that *He* might be perfected thereby, but to perfect *it*. It was also a *permanent* act, so that from the first moment of His assumption of our humanity, there never was, nor to all eternity shall there be, any separation between His two natures. Therein the hypostatic union differs from the conjunction between the soul and body in us. At death this conjunction is severed in us, but when Christ died, His body and soul were still united to His divine Person as much as ever.

As to *how* this act of assumption took place, we cannot say. The Scriptures themselves draw a veil over this mystery, “the power of the highest shall *overshadow thee*” (Luk 1:35), so that from Mary and from us was hidden that ineffable work of the Most High, forbidding us to make any curious and unholy attempts to pry into it. The divine transaction occurred, the amazing work was performed, and we are called upon to believe and adore. That unique act whereby the Maker of all things “took on him the seed of Abraham” (Heb 2:16), when the Sovereign over angels “took upon him the form of a servant” (Phi 2:7), was the foundation of the divine relation between the Son of God and the man Christ Jesus. Concerning the blessedness, the marvel, the unfathomable depths, the transcendent wisdom and glory of the act of assumption, we cannot do better than quote again from that prince of theologians, John Owen:

“His conception in the womb of the Virgin, as unto the integrity of human nature, was a miraculous operation of the divine power. But the prevention of that nature from any subsistence of its own, by its assumption into personal union with the Son of God, in the first instance of its conception, is that which is *above all miracles*, nor can be designed by that name. A *mystery* it is, so far above the order of all creating or providential operations, that it wholly transcends the sphere of them that are most miraculous. Herein did God glorify all the properties of the divine nature, acting in a way of infinite wisdom, grace, and condescension. The depths of the mystery hereof are open only unto Him whose understanding is infinite, which no created understanding can comprehend.

“All other things were produced and effected by an outward emanation of power from God. He said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light (Gen 1:3). But this assumption of our nature into hypostatical union with the Son of God, the constitution of one and the same individual person in two natures so infinitely distinct, as those of God and man, whereby the eternal was made in time,

the infinite became finite, the immortal mortal, yet continuing eternal, infinite, immortal, is that singular expression of divine wisdom, goodness, and power, wherein God will be admired and glorified unto all eternity. Herein was that change introduced into the whole first creation, whereby the blessed angels were exalted, Satan and his works ruined, mankind recovered from a dismal apostacy, all things made new, all things in heaven and earth reconciled and gathered into one Head, and a revenue of eternal glory raised unto God, incomparably above what the first constitution of all things in the order of nature could yield unto Him.”

“And the Word was made flesh” (Joh 1:14), not by His deity being converted into matter, nor simply by His appearing in the outward semblance of man, but by actually assuming that “holy thing” which was framed by the Spirit and conceived by the Virgin. The word “flesh” in John 1:14 includes more than a physical body—compare Romans 3:20 and 1 Corinthians 1:29 for the scope of this term. The eternal Word took upon Him a complete and perfect human nature, with all the faculties and members pertaining to such. “Choosing from the womb of the Virgin a temple for His residence, He who was the Son of God became also the Son of man: not by confusion of substance, but by a unity of person. For we assert such a connection and union of the divine with the humanity, that each nature *retains* its properties entire, and yet both together constitute one Christ” (John Calvin, 1509-1564, “Institutes”).

This union of the divine and human natures in the Mediator is not a *consubstantial* one such as pertains to the three Persons in the Godhead, for they are united among themselves in one essence. They all have but one and the same nature and will, but in Christ there are two distinct natures and wills. Nor is the mediatorial union like unto the *physical*, whereby a soul and body are united in one human being, for that constitution is dissolved by death—whereas the hypostatic union is indissoluble. Nor is the mediatorial union analogous unto the *mystical*, such as exists between Christ and His church, for though that be indeed a most glorious union, so that we are in Christ and He in us, yet we are not *one person* with Him, and thus the mystical union falls far below that ineffable and incomprehensible oneness which exists between the Son of God and the Son of man.

Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680), of blessed memory among lovers of deep expository works, was wont to call this mediatorial union “the *middle* union,” coming in as it does between the union of the three divine Persons in the Godhead, and the church’s union with God in Christ. We may also perceive and admire the wisdom of the eternal Three in selecting the middle One to be the Mediator, as we may also discern and adore the propriety of choosing the *Son* to be the one who should enter the place of *obedience*. He who eternally subsisted between the Father and the Spirit, has, by virtue of His incarnation, entered the place of “Daysman” between God and men. For in consequence of His union with the divine essence, He is able to “take hold” of God on the one side, and in consequence of His union with our humanity, He is able to take hold of us on the other side, so that He “takes hold of both” as Job desired (Job 9:33).

A SATANIC DEVICE

One device that Satan hath to keep souls off from holy exercises and religious services is by moving them to make false inferences from those blessed and glorious things that Christ hath done. As, that Jesus Christ has done all for us, therefore there is nothing for us to do, but to joy and rejoice. He hath perfectly justified us, fulfilled the law, satisfied divine justice, pacified His Father's wrath, is gone to heaven to prepare a place for us, and in the meantime to intercede for us—and therefore away with praying, mourning, hearing, striving, etc. Ah! what a world of professors hath Satan drawn in these days from religious services by working them to make such sad, wild, and strange inferences from the sweet and excellent things that the Lord Jesus hath done for His beloved ones. Now the remedies against this device are these:

1. To dwell as much on those Scriptures that show you the duties *and services that Christ requires of you*, as upon those Scriptures that declare to you the precious and glorious things that Christ hath done for you. It is a sad and dangerous thing to have two eyes to behold our dignity and privileges, and not one to see our duties and services. I should look with one eye upon the choice and excellent things that Christ hath done for me, to raise up my heart to love Christ with the purest love, and to joy in Christ with the strongest joy, and to lift up Christ above all, who hath made Himself to be my all, and I should look with the other eye upon those services and duties that the Scriptures require of those for whom Christ hath done such blessed things, as upon that of the apostle, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and 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). And that, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1Co 15:58). And that, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal 6:9). And that, "Rejoice evermore" and "pray without ceasing" (1Th 5:16-17). And that, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phi 2:12). And that, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb 10:24-25). Now a soul that would not be drawn away by this device of Satan, he must not look with a squint eye upon *these* blessed Scriptures, and abundance more of like import, but he must dwell upon them. He must make these Scriptures to be his chiefest and choicest companions, and this will be a happy means to keep him close to Christ and His service in these times, wherein many turn their backs upon Christ, under pretense of being interested in the great things that have been acted by Christ.

2. The second remedy against this device of Satan is to consider that the great and glorious things which Jesus Christ hath done and is a-doing for us, should be so far from taking us off from religious services and pious performances, that they should be the *greatest motives and encouragements* to the performance of them that may be, as the Scriptures do abundantly evidence. I will only instance in some, as, "That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luk 1:74-75). Christ hath freed you from all your enemies—from the curse of the law, the predominant damnatory power of sin, the wrath of God, the sting of death, and the torments of hell. *But what is the end and design* of Christ in doing these great and marvellous things for His

people? It is not that we should throw off duties of righteousness and holiness, but that our hearts may be the more free and sweet in all holy duties and heavenly services. So says the apostle, “I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” Mark what follows, “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 6:18 and 7:1). Again, “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; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, *zealous of good works*” (Ti 2:11-14). Ah, souls! I know no such arguments to work you to a lively and constant performance of all heavenly services, like those that are drawn from the consideration of the heart and glorious things that Christ hath done for you, and if such arguments will not take you and win upon you, I do not think the throwing of hell fire in your faces will ever do it.

3. The third remedy against this device of Satan is seriously to consider that those precious souls which Jesus Christ hath done and suffered as much for as He hath for you, *were exceedingly active and lively in all religious services and heavenly performances*. He did and suffered as much for David as for you, and yet who more in praying and praising God than David? “Seven times a day will I praise the LORD” (see Psa 119:164). Who more in the studying and meditating on the Word than David? “Thy law is my meditation day and night” (see Psa 1:2). The same truth we run and read in Jacob, Moses, Job, Daniel, and the rest of the holy prophets and apostles, for whom Christ hath done as much for as for you. Ah, how have all those worthies abounded in works of righteousness and holiness, to the praise of free grace! Certainly Satan hath got the upper hand of those souls that do argue thus—Christ hath done such and such glorious things for us, therefore we need not make any care and conscience of doing such and such religious services as men say the Word calls for. If this logic be not from hell, what is? Ah, were the holy prophets and apostles alive to hear such logic from out of the mouths of such as profess themselves to be interested in the great and glorious things that Jesus Christ hath done for His chosen ones, how would they blush to look upon such souls! and how would their hearts grieve and break within them to hear the language and to observe the actings of such souls! He that talks of heaven, but *doeth not the will of God*, is like him that gazed upon the moon, but fell into the pit.

4. The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is seriously to consider that those who do not walk in the ways of righteousness and holiness, who do not wait upon God in the several duties and services which are commanded by Him, *cannot have that evidence to their own souls of this righteousness before God*, of their fellowship and communion with God, of their blessedness here and their happiness hereafter, as those souls have who love and delight in the ways of the Lord, who are always best when they are most in the works and service of the Lord. “Little children,” saith the apostle, “let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous” (1Jo 3:7). “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (1Jo 3:10). “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him” (1Jo 2:29) and, “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1Jo 2:4-6). “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in

the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1Jo 1:6-7). So James, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” *i.e.* it cannot. “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (Jam 2:14, 26). To look after holy and heavenly works is the best way to preserve the soul from being deceived and deluded by Satan’s devices, and by sudden flashes of joy and comfort, holy works being a more conscious and constant pledge of the precious Spirit, begetting and maintaining in the soul more solid, pure, clear, strong, and lasting joy. Ah souls! as you would have in yourselves a constant and blessed evidence of your fellowship with the Father and Son, and of the truth of grace, and of your future happiness, look that you cleave close to holy services, and that you turn not your backs upon religious duties.

5. The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is solemnly to consider that there are other choice and glorious ends for the saints’ performance of religious duties than for the justifying of their persons before God, or for the purchasing of the pardon of sin, namely, *to testify* their justification. A good tree cannot but bring forth good fruits (Mat 7:17); to testify their love to God, and their sincere obedience to the commands of God; to testify their deliverance from spiritual bondage, to evidence the indwelling of the Spirit, to stop the mouths of the worst of men, and to gladden those righteous souls whom God would not have you sadden. These, and abundance of other choice ends there be, why those that have an interest in the glorious doings of Christ, should, notwithstanding that, keep close to the holy duties and religious services that are commanded by Christ. And if these considerations will not prevail with you to wait upon God in holy and heavenly duties, I am afraid if one should rise from the dead, his arguments would not win you, but you would hold on in your sins and neglect God’s service, though you lost your souls forever” (Thomas Brooks, 1652).

A PERSONAL WORD

Our brief sojourn in Cheltenham is over. The Lord, we believe, has called us to pitch our tent next in Scotland. O that it may prove a case of “they went to *their own* company” (Act 4:23). Will Christian friends kindly pray that God will make His people of the land of Knox a blessing to our needy souls, and that it may please Him to make us of some service to them. We hope to feel more at home in a land where the Sabbath is more strictly observed, and where the doctrines of the Reformers and Puritans are more widely held, than any country we have yet sojourned in. Letters which had been sent to Cheltenham or Leckhampton will be re-mailed to our new address, but please write us now at Glasgow.—A.W.P.

[Written by Brother Pink to his readers in 1935.]

July

THE HOLY SPIRIT

29. The Spirit Teaching (Part 1)

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall *teach you all things*” (Joh 14:26). Those words received their first fulfillment in the men to whom they were immediately addressed. The apostles were so filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit that their proclamation of the Gospel was without flaw and their writings without error. Those original ambassadors of Christ were so taught by the third Person in the Trinity that what they delivered was the very mind of God. The second fulfillment of the Saviour’s promise has been in those men whom He called to preach His Gospel throughout the Christian era. No new revelations have been made to them, but they were, and are, according to their varied measure and the particular work assigned to them, so enlightened by the Spirit that the truth of God has been faithfully preached by them. The third and widest application of our Lord’s words are unto the entire household of faith, and it is in this sense we shall now consider them.

It is written, “And *all* thy children shall be taught of the LORD” (Isa 54:13 and cf. Joh 6:45). This is one of the great distinguishing marks of the regenerate—all of them are “taught *of the LORD*.” There are multitudes of unregenerate religionists who are taught, numbers of them well taught, in the letter of the Scriptures. They are thoroughly versed in the historical facts and doctrines of Christianity, but their instruction came only from human media—parents, Sunday School teachers, or through reading religious books. Their intellectual knowledge of spiritual things is considerable, sound, and clear, yet is it unaccompanied by any heavenly unction, saving power, or transforming effects. In like manner, there are thousands of preachers who abhor the errors of “Modernists” and who contend earnestly for the faith. They were taught in Bible Institutes, and theological schools, yet it is to be feared that many of them are total strangers to a *miracle of grace* being wrought in the heart. How it behooves each *of us* to test ourselves rigidly at this point!

It is a common fact of observation—which anyone may test for himself—that a very large percentage of those who constitute the membership of evangelical denominations were first taken there in childhood by their parents. The great majority in the Presbyterian churches today had a father or mother who was a Presbyterian and who instructed the offspring in their beliefs. The same is true of Baptists, the Methodists, and those who are in fellowship at the Brethren assemblies. The present generation has been brought up to believe in the doctrines and religious

customs of their ancestors. Now we are far from saying that because a man who is a Presbyterian today had parents and grandparents that were Presbyterians, and who taught him the Westminster Catechism, that therefore all the knowledge he possesses of divine things is but traditional and theoretical. No indeed, yet we do say that such a training in the letter of the truth makes it more difficult, and calls for a more careful self-examination, to ascertain whether or no he has been taught *of the Lord*.

Though we do not believe that grace runs in the blood, yet we are convinced that, *as a general rule*, (having many individual exceptions), God does place His elect in families where at least one of the parents loves and seeks to serve Him, and where that elect soul will be nurtured in the fear and admonition of the Lord. At least three-fourths of those Christians whom the writer has met and had opportunity to question, had a praying and Scripture-reading father or mother. Yet, on the other hand, we are obliged to acknowledge that three-fourths of the empty professors we have encountered also had religious parents, who sent them to the Sunday School and sought to have them trained in their beliefs, and these now rest upon their intellectual knowledge of the truth, and mistake it for *a saving experience* of the same. And it is *this* class which it is the hardest to reach. It is much more difficult to persuade such to *examine themselves* as to whether or not they have been taught *of God*, than it is those who make no profession at all.

Let it not be concluded from what has been pointed out that, where the Holy Spirit teaches a soul, He dispenses with all human instrumentality. Not so. It is true the Spirit is sovereign, and therefore works where He pleases and when He pleases. It is also a fact that He is Almighty, tied down to no means, and therefore works as He pleases and how He pleases. Nevertheless, He frequently condescends to employ means and to use very feeble instruments. In fact, this seems to generally characterize His operations—that He works through men and women, and sometimes through little children. Yet, let it be said emphatically, that no preaching, catechizing, or reading produces any vital and spiritual results unless God the Spirit is pleased to bless and apply the same unto the heart of the individual. Thus there are many who have passed from death unto life, and been brought to love the truth under the Spirit's application of a pious parent's or Sunday School teacher's instruction, while there are some who never enjoyed such privileges yet have been truly and deeply taught by God.

From all that has been said above, a very pertinent question arises, How may I know whether or not *my* teaching has been by the Holy Spirit? The simple but sufficient answer is, *By the effects produced*. First, that spiritual knowledge which the teaching of the Holy Spirit imparts is an *operative* knowledge. It is not merely a piece of information which adds to our mental store, but is a species of inspiration which stirs the soul into action. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined *in our hearts*, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2Co 4:6). The light which the Spirit imparts reaches the heart. It warms the heart, and sets it on fire for God. It masters the heart and brings it into allegiance to God. It molds the heart and stamps upon it the image of God. Here, then, is a sure test—how far does the teaching you have received, the knowledge of divine things you possess, *affect your heart*?

Second, that knowledge which the teaching of the Spirit imparts is *a soul-humbling* knowledge. "Knowledge puffeth up" (1Co 8:1), that is a notional, theoretical, intellectual knowledge, which is merely received from men or books in a natural way. But that spiritual knowledge which comes from God reveals to a man his empty conceits, his ignorance and worthlessness, and abases him. The teaching of the Spirit reveals our sinfulness and vileness, our lack of conformity to Christ, our unholiness, and makes a man little in his own eyes. Among

those born of women was not a greater than John the Baptist—wondrous were the privileges granted him, abundant the light he was favoured with. What effect had it on him? “He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet *I am not worthy* to unloose” (Joh 1:27). Who was granted such an insight into heavenly things as Paul! Did he herald himself as “The greatest Bible teacher of the age”? No, “unto me, who am less than the least of all saints” (Eph 3:8). Here, then, is a sure test—how far does the teaching you have received *humble* you?

Third, that knowledge which the teaching of the Holy Spirit imparts is a *world-despising* knowledge. It makes a man have poor, low, mean thoughts of those things which his unregenerate fellows (and which he himself, formerly) so highly esteem. It opens his eyes to see the transitoriness and comparative worthlessness of earthly honours, riches, and fame. It makes him perceive that all under the sun is but vanity and vexation of spirit. It brings him to realize that the world is a flatterer, a deceiver, a liar, and a murderer, which has fatally deceived the hearts of millions. Where the Spirit reveals eternal things, temporal things are scorned. Those things which once were gain to him, he now counts as loss, yea, as dross and dung (Phi 3:4-9). The teaching of the Spirit raises the heart high above this poor perishing world. Here is a sure test—does *your* knowledge of spiritual things cause you to hold temporal things with a light hand and despise those baubles which others hunt so eagerly?

Fourth, the knowledge which the teaching of the Spirit imparts is a *transforming* knowledge. The light of God shows how far, far short we come of the standard Holy Writ reveals, and stirs us unto holy endeavours to lay aside every hindering weight, and run with patience the race set before us. The teaching of the Spirit causes us to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts,” and to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Ti 2:12). “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, *are changed into the same image* from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:18). Here, then, is a sure test—how far does my knowledge of spiritual things influence my heart, govern my will, and regulate my life? Does increasing light lead to a more tender conscience, more Christlike character, and conduct? If not, it is vain, worthless, and will only add to my condemnation.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

91. Divine Chastisement (12:10)

Would any Christian in his right mind dare to pray, Let me not be afflicted, no matter what good it should do me? And if he would be unwilling and afraid to pray thus, why should he murmur when it so falls out? Alas, what a wide breach there is, usually, between our praying and the rest of our conduct. Again, if our rescuer dislocated our shoulder when pulling us out of the water in which we were drowning, would we be angry with him? Of course not. Then why fret against the Lord when He afflicts the body in order to better the soul? If God takes away outward comforts and fills us with inward peace, if He removes our worldly wealth but imparts to us more of the true riches, then, instead of having ground for complaint, we have an abundant cause for

thanksgiving and praise. Then why should I fear to enter the dark shaft of tribulation if persuaded that it leads to the gold mines of spiritual experience?

In Scripture, afflictions are compared to fire that purges away the dross (1Pe 1:7), to the fan which drives away the chaff (Mat 3:12), to a pruning-hook which cuts off superfluous branches and makes more fruitful the others that remain (Joh 15:2), to physic that purges away poisonous matter (Isa 27:9), to plowing and harrowing the ground that it may be prepared to receive good seed (Jer 4:3). Then why should we be so upset when God is pleased to use the fire upon us in order to remove our dross, to employ the fan so as to winnow away the chaff, to take the pruning-hook to lop off the superfluities of our souls, to give us physic to purge out our corruptions and filth, to drive the plow into us so as to break up our fallow ground and to destroy the weeds which grow in our souls? Should we not rather rejoice that He will not leave us alone in our carnality, but rather fit us to become partakers of His holiness?

A little child requires much coaxing (at times, something more!) in order to make him take his medicine. It may be very ill, and mother may earnestly assure him that the unpleasant potion will bring sure relief, but the little one cries out, "I cannot take it, it is so nasty." But adults, generally, need not for the doctor to argue and plead with them. They will swallow the bitterest remedy if convinced that it will do them good. The application of this to spiritual matters is obvious. Those Christians who are but spiritual babes, fret and fume when called upon to endure divine chastisement, knowing not the gains they will receive if it be accepted in the right spirit. But those who have grown in grace, and become *men* in Christ, who know that all things work together for good to them that love God, and who have learned by experience the precious fruits which issue from sanctified afflictions, accept from God the bitterest cup, and thank Him for it.

But alas, many of God's people are but infants experimentally, and need much coaxing to reconcile them to the cup of trial. Therefore is it needful to present our consideration one argument after another. Such is the case here in Hebrews 12. If one line of reasoning does not suffice, perhaps another will. The Christian is very skeptical and takes much convincing. We have heard a person say to one who claims he has done, or can do, some remarkable thing, "You must *show me* before I will believe you." Most of us are very much like that in connection with spiritual things. Though the Scriptures assure us, again and again, that chastisement proceeds from our Father's love, and is designed for our good, yet we are slow, very slow, to really believe it. Therefore does the apostle here proceed from one consideration to another so as to assure the hearts and establish the faith of his afflicted brethren upon this important subject.

O that our hearts might be so taught by the Spirit, our understandings so enlightened, our faith so strengthened by Him, that we would be more grateful and increasingly thankful for the merciful discipline of our Father. What a proof of His love is this, that in His chastening of us, His object is to bring us nearer Himself and make us more like His blessed Son. The more highly we prize health, the more willing are we to take that which would cure our sickness. And the more we value holiness (which is the health of our souls), the gladder shall we be for that which is a means to increase the same in us. We are on a low plane of spiritual experience, if we do nothing more than simply "bow" to God's hand. Scripture says, "Giving *thanks* always for *all* things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 5:20), and again it exhorts us, "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Phi 4:4). We are to "glory in tribulations" (Rom 5:3), and *we shall* when we perceive more clearly and fully what blessed fruits are brought forth under the pruning knife.

"For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Heb 12:10). This is a continuation of what was before us

in the previous verse. A further reason is given why Christians should be “in subjection unto” their heavenly Father, when His correcting rod is laid upon them, not only is it becoming for them so to do, because of the relationship which exists between them, but it is also meet they should act thus, because of the gains they receive thereby. The consideration which the apostle now presents to the attention of the afflicted saints is really a double one. First, the chastisement we received from our earthly parents had reference mainly to our good in this life, whereas the disciplinary dealings of our heavenly Father look forward to the life to come (2Co 4:17-18). Second, the chastisement of our earthly parents was often a matter of their caprice and sometimes issued from irritability of temper, but the rod of our heavenly Father is wielded by infinite goodness and wisdom, and has in view our well-being.

We regard the words “for they verily *for a few days* chastened us” (Heb 12:10) as referring not so much to the brief season of our childhood, but more to the fact that our parents had only our *temporal* interests in view, whereas God has our *eternal* welfare before Him. “The apostle seems to bring in this circumstance to contrast the dealings of earthly parents with those of God. One of the circumstances is that the corrections of earthly parents had a much less important object than those of God. They related to this life—a life so brief that it may be said to continue but a “few days.” Yet, in order to secure the benefit to be derived for so short a period from fatherly correction, we submitted without murmuring. Much more cheerfully ought we to submit to that discipline from the hand of our heavenly Father which is designed to extend its benefits through eternity” (Albert Barnes, 1798-1870).

The added words “after their own pleasure” or “as seemed good” to them, points another contrast between the disciplinary dealings of our earthly parents and those of our heavenly Father. In their infirmity, sometimes the rod was used upon us in a fit of anger, rather than from a loving desire to reform our manners. “Meaning that it was sometimes done arbitrarily, or under the influence of passion. This is an additional reason why we should submit to God. We submitted to our earthly parents, though their correction was sometimes passionate, and was designed to gratify their own pleasure rather than to promote our good. There is much of this kind of punishment in families, but there is none of it under the administration of God. ‘*But he for our profit*’ (Heb 12:10)—never from passion, from caprice, from the love of power or superiority, but always for our good” (Albert Barnes).

Now the particular contribution which our present verse makes to the subject of chastisement is, the apostle here makes known the general end or design of God in the same, namely “our profit.” And let it be pointed out that whatsoever He purposes must surely come to pass, for He will make the means He employs effectual unto the accomplishment of His end. Many are the blessings comprehended and various are the fruits produced through and by means of divine chastisement. This word “for our profit” is a very embracing one, including the development of our characters, the enrichment of our spiritual lives, a closer conformity to the image of Christ. The same truth is found again in the “that we might be partakers of his holiness” (Heb 12:10), that our lusts might be mortified, our graces vivified, our souls sanctified. Whatever be the form, degree, or duration of our afflictions, all is ordered by infinite wisdom so as to secure this object. But to particularize the benefits of divine chastisement—

1. *It weans us from the world.* One of the greatest surprises of the writer’s Christian life in connection with his fellow saints has been, not their ignorance, nor even their inconsistencies, but their *earthliness*, their reluctance to leave this world. As “strangers and pilgrims,” we should be longing and yearning for our heavenly home, as those who are away from Him whom they love best, we should desire to “*depart and be with him*” (Phi 1:23). Paul did. Christ has promised to

return for His people, yet how few of them are daily crying, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20). How rarely we hear them saying, in the language of the mother of Sisera, “Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?” (Jdg 5:28).

*“And all the trials here we see
Should make us long to be with Thee.”*

Scripture speaks of this world as a “dry and thirsty land, where no water is” (Psa 63:1), and God intends for us to *prove* this in our experiences. His Word also affirms that this world is a “dark place” (2Pe 1:19), and He means for us to discover that this *is* so.

One would think that after the soul had once seen the King in His beauty, it would henceforth discover no attractions elsewhere. One would suppose that once we had quenched our thirst at the fountain of living waters, we would no more want to drink from the unsatisfying and polluted cisterns of this world. Surely now that we have experienced a taste and foretaste of heaven itself, we shall be repelled and nauseated by the poor husks this world has to offer. But alas! the “old man” is still in us, unchanged, and though divine grace subdues his activities, still he is very much alive. It is because of this that we are called on to “crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.” And this is not only an unpalatable, but a very hard task. Therefore does God in His mercy help us—help us by chastenings, which serve to loosen the roots of our souls downward and tighten the anchor-hold of our hearts heavenward.

This God does in various ways. Sometimes He causes us to lose our confidence in and draw us away from fellowship with worldlings by receiving cruel treatment at their hands. “Come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2Co 6:17). is the Lord’s word to His people. But they are slow to heed, oftentimes they must be *driven out*. So with worldly pleasures. God often makes the grapes of earthly joys bitter to our taste, so that we should no longer seek after them. It is earthly disappointments and worldly disillusionments which make us sigh for our heavenly home. While the Hebrews enjoyed the land of Goshen they were content. Hard and cruel bondage was needed to make them ready to leave for the promised land. We were once familiar with a Christian who had formed a habit of meeting each worldly difficulty or trial to the flesh by saying, “This is only another nail in my coffin.” But that is a very gloomy way of viewing things. Rather should the children of God say after each trial or affliction, “That severs another strand in the rope which binds me to this world, and makes me long all the more for heaven.”

2. *It casts us back the more upon God.* By nature we are filled with a spirit of independency. The fallen sons of Adam are like wild ass’ colts. Chastisement is designed to empty us of our self-sufficiency, to make us feel our weakness and helplessness. “In their affliction they will seek me early” (Hos 5:15), then surely afflictions are for our “profit.” Trials and troubles often drive us to our knees, sickness and sorrow make us seek unto the Lord. It is very noticeable in the four Gospels how rarely men and women that were in health and strength sought out Christ. It was trouble and illness which brought them to the great Physician. A nobleman came to Christ—why? Because his son was at the point of death. Jarius sought out the Master—why? Because his little daughter was so low. The Canaanitish woman interviewed the Lord Jesus—why? On behalf of her tormented daughter. The sisters of Lazarus sent a message to the absent Saviour—why? Because their brother was sick.

Afflictions may be very bitter, but they are a fine tonic for the soul, and are a medicine which God often uses on us. Most vividly is this illustrated in Psalm 107—read carefully verses 11 to 28. Note that it is when men are “brought down,” when they are “afflicted,” when they are “at their wits’ end,” that they “cry unto the LORD in their trouble.” Yes, it is “trouble” which makes

us turn unto the Lord, not in a mechanical and formal way, but in deep earnestness. Remember that it is the “effectual *fervent* prayer of a righteous man that availeth much.” When you observe that the fire in your room is getting dull, you do not always put on more coal, but simply *stir* with the poker. So God often uses the black poker of adversity in order that the flames of devotion may burn more brightly.

Ah, my brethren, all of us delight in being made to lie down in the “green pastures” and being led beside the “still waters” (Psa 23:2), yet it would not be for God’s glory nor for our own highest good to luxuriate spiritually at all times. And why not? Because our hearts would soon be more occupied with the blessings rather than the Blessor Himself. Oftentimes the sheep have to be brought into the dry and desolate wilderness, that they may be made more conscious of their dependency upon the Shepherd. May we not discern here one reason why some saints so quickly lose their assurance. They are occupied more with their graces or comfortable feelings than they are with the Giver of them. God is a jealous God, and will not tolerate idols in the hearts of His people. A sense of our acceptance in Christ is indeed a blessed thing, yet it becomes a hindrance if it be treasured more highly than the Saviour Himself.

3. *It makes the promises of God more precious to us.* Trouble often acts on us like a sharp knife which opens the truth of God to us and our hearts unto the truth. Experience unlocks passages which were otherwise closed. There is many a text in the Bible which no commentator can helpfully expound to a child of God. It must be interpreted by experience. Paul wrote his profoundest epistles while in prison. John was “in tribulation” (Rev 1:9) on Patmos when he received the Revelation. If you go down into a deep well or mine in the daytime, you will then see the shining of stars which were not visible from the earth’s surface. So God often brings us low in order that we may perceive the shining beauty of some of His comforting assurances. Note how Jacob, in Genesis 32, pleaded God’s promises when he heard that Esau was approaching with four hundred men! The promises of resurrection mean far more unto Christians when some of their loved ones have been removed by death.

“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) means far more to afflicted souls than it can to those who are not under the rod. So, too, the many “fear not” promises are most valued when our strength fails us and we are ready to sink under despair. As the late Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) was wont to say, “There are some verses written, as it were, in a secret ink, which must be held before the fire of adversity before they become visible.” There are many passages in Job, the Psalms, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah which do not appeal to one while the sun is shining, but which, in times of adversity, are like the welcome beams of the moon on a dark night. It was his painful thorn in the flesh which taught Paul the blessedness of that text, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2Co 12:9).

4. *It qualifies us to sympathize with others.* If we have never trod the vale of sorrow and affliction, we are really unable to “weep with those that weep.” There are some surgeons who would be more tender if they had suffered from broken bones themselves. If we have never known much trouble, we can be but poor comforters to others. Even of our Saviour it is written, “For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb 2:18). Bunyan (1628-1688) could never have written the book which he did, unless God had permitted the devil to tempt and buffet him severely for so many years. How clearly is all this brought out in 2 Corinthians 1:4, “Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, *that we* may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, *by* the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted

of God.” Luther frequently said, “Three things make a good preacher: prayer, meditation, and temptation.”

5. *It demonstrates to us the blessedness and sufficiency of divine grace.* “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2Co 12:9). But in order to *prove* this, we have to be brought into the place of severe testing and trial, and made to feel our own incompetency and nothingness. Brethren, if you have prospered in business all your lives, and have always had an easy time financially, then it is probable you know very little about God’s strength being perfected in your weakness. If you have been healthy all your lives and have never suffered much weakness and pain, then you are not likely to know much about the strength of God. If you have never been visited with trying situations which bring you to your wits’ end, or by heart-rending bereavements, you may not have discovered much of the sufficiency of divine grace. You have *read* about it in books, *or heard* others speak of it, but this is a very different thing from having an *experimental* acquaintance of it for yourself. It is much tribulation which brings out the sufficiency of God’s strength to support under the severest trials, and demonstrates that His grace *can* sustain the heart under the heaviest losses.

It is in the stormiest weather that a captain gives most heed to the steering of his ship, so it is in seasons of stress and grief that Christians pay most attention to, “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). If Israel had journeyed direct from Egypt to Canaan, they had missed the tender care of JEHOVAH in the wilderness. If Lazarus had not died, Martha and Mary would not have received such a demonstration of Christ as the resurrection and the life. And if *you*, my brother, my sister, had not been cast into the furnace of affliction, you would not have known the nearness and preciousness of His presence with you there. Yes, God intends us to *prove* the reality and sufficiency of His grace.

6. *It develops our spiritual graces.* This is clearly set forth in that familiar passage Romans 5:3-5, “We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed.” This “rejoicing” is not in tribulations considered in themselves, but because the Christian knows they are appointed by his Father, and because of their beneficial effects. Three of these effects or spiritual graces thus developed are here mentioned. First, tribulation worketh “patience.” Patience never thrives except under buffetings and disappointments. It is not even called into exercise while things are going smoothly and pleasantly. Sanctified tribulations call into activity that strength and fortitude which is evidenced by a submissive endurance of suffering. The patience here referred to signifies deliverance from murmuring, refusing to take things into our own hands (which only causes additional trouble), a contented waiting for God’s time of deliverance, and a persevering continuance in the path of duty.

Second, patience worketh experience, that is a *vital* experience of the reality of what we profess, a personal acquaintance with that which before we knew only theoretically. An experience of the sufficiency of divine grace to support and sustain. An experience of God’s faithfulness, that He *is* “a very present help in trouble.” An experience of the preciousness of Christ, such as the three Hebrews had in the furnace. The Greek word for “experience” also means “the obtaining of proof.” The patient submission which tribulation works in the saint *proves* both to him and to his brethren the reality of his trust in God. It makes manifest the fact that the faith which he possesses is genuine. Instead of his faith being overcome, it triumphs. The test of a ship is to weather the storm, so it is with faith. Real faith ever says, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:17). Third, experience worketh hope. This is a grace which

anticipates the future. While circumstances are as we like them, our outlook is mainly confined to the present, but sorrows and trials make us long for the future bliss. “As an eagle stirreth up her nest”...so the Lord led Israel (Deu 32:11). God removes us from our comfortable resting places for the purpose of teaching us to use the wings of hope.

7. *It brings us into fellowship with the sufferings of Christ.* The cross is the symbol of Christian discipleship. Like the scars which the wounded soldier prizes above all other distinctions, so our sufferings are the proof of our oneness with Christ (Rom 8:17). Not only so, they make us appreciate the more what He endured for us. While we have plenty, we cannot properly estimate or appreciate the poverty which our Saviour endured. While we enjoy a comfortable bed we cannot truly sympathize with Him who had “not where to lay his head” (Luk 9:58). It is not till some familiar friend, on whom we counted, has basely betrayed our trust, that we can enter into something of what the Saviour suffered through the perfidy of Judas. It is only when some brother has denied you, that you begin to understand what Christ felt, when Peter denied Him. As we, in some small measure, obtain an experimental acquaintance with such trials, it makes Christ increasingly precious to us, and enables us to appreciate the more all that He went through on our behalf. In a coming day we are going to share His throne, now we are privileged to taste His cross.

If, then, trials and tribulations, under God, produce such delightful fruits, then *welcome* chastisements that are for “our profit” (Heb 12:10). Let the rains of disappointment come if they water the plants of spiritual graces. Let the winds of adversity blow if they serve to root more securely in grace the trees of the Lord’s planting. Let the sun of prosperity be eclipsed if this brings us into closer communion with the Light of Life. Oh, brothers and sisters, however distasteful they are to the flesh, chastisements are not to be dreaded, but welcomed, for they are designed to make us “partakers of God’s holiness” (Heb 12:10).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

43. His Deep Humility

In last month’s article, we looked upon David while he was permitted to enjoy a brief season of repose, following the trying experiences through which he had passed ere he came to the throne. He might well have found in the many trials and vicissitudes of his past life an excuse for luxurious repose now. But devout souls will consecrate their leisure as well as their toil to God, and will serve with thank offerings in peace Him whom they invoked with earnest supplication in battle. As another has said, “Prosperity is harmless only when it is accepted as an opportunity for fresh forms of devotion, and not as an occasion for idle self-indulgence.” Thus it was with our hero. He was not spoilt by success, his head was not made giddy by the height he now occupied, the Lord was not forgotten when prosperity smiled upon him. Instead, he was deeply concerned about the honour of God, especially at there being no suitable place for His public worship.

As David sat alone in his palace, meditating, there can be little doubt that one so conversant with the Scriptures as he was, would turn in thought to the ancient promise, "When he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there" (Deu 12:10-11). It was *that* word, we believe, which caused our hero to say unto Nathan, "See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains" (2Sa 7:2). Israel's king felt more or less rebuked by his own ease and comfort, and regarded his tranquility not as a season for selfish indolence, but rather as a call to serious reflection upon the interests of God's cause or kingdom. He could not bear the thought of lavishing more upon self than upon the service of Him to whom he owed everything.

The response made by the Lord unto the spiritual exercises of His servant was indeed blessed. Through the prophet He gave David a much fuller revelation of what was in *His* heart toward him, "I will set up thy seed after thee...I will establish his kingdom...I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever...thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever" (2Sa 7:12-13, 16). God made known His purpose to confer upon the posterity of David a special favour, which He had not granted even to Abraham, Moses, or Joshua, namely, establish them upon the throne of Israel. Moreover, it was declared of his seed who should be set up after him, "He shall build an house for my name" (2Sa 7:13). If we are spared, this will be considered in more detail under "The Divine Covenants" (when we reach the "Davidic"). Suffice it now to say, the ultimate reference was a *spiritual* one in the Person and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

While there was much in the revelation now granted to David which was well-calculated to evoke gratitude and praise, yet there was one omission from it that presented a real test of his submission, humility, and patience. While there was abundant cause for thanksgiving, that *his* posterity should continue to occupy the throne, and his own son build an house for JEHOVAH's name (and fame), yet that *he* was denied this honour, had been resented by one who was proud and filled with a sense of his own importance. David's longings were not to be realized during his own lifetime, and though he should be permitted to gather together much of the material for the future temple, yet *he* would not be permitted to see the finished product itself. Here, then, was a real trying of his character, and it is blessed to see how he endured and met the same.

How often it falls out that one sows and another reaps. One set of men labour and another generation is permitted to enter into the benefits of their toil. Nor should we complain at this, seeing that our sovereign and all-wise God has so ordered it. David did not complain, nor did he manifest any petulant disappointment at the crowning of his hopes being deferred to a future time. Instead, as we shall see, he sweetly bowed to God's pleasure and adored Him for the same. Ah, my readers, our prayers may yet move God to send a gracious revival, yet that happy event may not come during *our* lifetime. The faithful labourers of God's servants today may not immediately transform the present "wilderness" state of Zion into a fruitful garden, yet if they be the means of plowing and harrowing the ground as a necessary preliminary thereto, ought we not to gladly acquiesce?

In the passage which is now to be before us, we behold the effects which God's wondrous revelation through Nathan had upon the soul of David. "Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" (2Sa 7:18). Inexpressibly blessed is this. Such tidings as had just fallen on his ears would have puffed up many a man, filled him with a sense of his own importance, and caused him to act arrogantly toward his fellows. Far otherwise was it with "the man after God's own heart" Filled with joyful amazement at JEHOVAH's infinite condescension, David at once left

the royal palace and betook himself to the humble tent which housed that sacred ark, there to pour out his heart in adoration and praise. There is nothing like a feeling sense of God's sovereign, free, and rich *grace*, to melt the soul, humble the heart, and stir unto true and acceptable worship.

"Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD" (2Sa 7:18). This is in designed contrast from verse 1. There the king "sat in his house," here he is seen in the tabernacle, before JEHOVAH. The word "*sat* before the LORD," probably refers to his *continuance* in the tabernacle, rather than to the posture in which he prayed. "And he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" (2Sa 7:18). How few kings there are who have such a realization of their lowliness as this! All sense of personal greatness vanished when David came into the presence of the great JEHOVAH. Ah, my reader, when *the Lord* is truly before us, "I" sinks into utter insignificance! But it is only as we are absorbed with His perfections—His infinitude, His majesty, His omnipotency—that self will be lost sight of.

"Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house?" (2Sa 7:18). How these words bring before us the deep humility of David! truthfully could he say, "LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty" (Psa 131:1). A number of illustrations of this lovely grace may be cited from the record of David's life. His being content to follow his mean vocation as a shepherd, till God called him to a higher office. He never affected the royal diadem, neither would it have been any grief of heart to him had God passed him by, and made another king. His words to Abishai concerning Saul, "Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?" (1Sa 26:9) show plainly that he was not coveting the crown, and was quite content for the son of Kish to continue occupying the throne of Israel.

It is beautiful to see how often this spirit of lowliness and self-abnegation appears in "the man after God's own heart." When he went forth to engage Goliath, it was not in the confidence of his own skill, but with the holy assurance, "This day will *the LORD* deliver thee into mine hand" (1Sa 17:46). When Saul lay helpless before him, he took no credit unto himself, but said to the king, "*The LORD* had delivered thee to day into mine hand" (1Sa 24:10). When Abigail was used to quieten his passionate spirit, he exclaimed, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me" (1Sa 25:32), and when Nabal was dead, "Blessed be the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach...and hath kept his servant from evil" (1Sa 25:39). After his notable victory over the Amalekites he said, "Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which *the LORD* hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand" (1Sa 30:23). Humility is that grace which gives the Lord His proper place.

Distrusting his own wisdom, we find David "inquiring of the LORD" again and again (1Sa 23:2, 4; 30:8; 2Sa 2:1; 5:19, etc.). This is another sure mark of genuine humility—that spirit which is afraid to trust in our own knowledge, experience, and powers, and seeks counsel and direction from above. When for his prowess Saul called him to court and promised to give him Michal to wife, he answered, "Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?" (1Sa 18:23). Note the love he bore to those who admonished him for his sins, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head" (Psa 141:5), far meaner people do not take it so kindly! In all his heroical acts he sought not his own honour, but God's, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory" (Psa 115:1).

Mark his submission to God under chastisement, "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: 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*" (2Sa 15:25-26). In all his dealings with God, he

dared not trust in his own righteousness, but wholly took refuge in the Covenant of Grace, “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” (Psa 130:3). “Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified” (Psa 143:2). When a man can find all this in himself, he may honestly say, “LORD, *my* heart is not haughty” (Psa 131:1). Yet, David was not perfect, and the remains of pride still indwelt him, as they do each of us—till we get rid of the flesh, we shall never be completely rid of pride. Psalm 30:1-2 and 2 Samuel 24:2 show his vainglory creeping out.

We have dealt the more largely upon David’s *humility*, because in this day of Laodicean conceit and boasting, it needs to be emphasized that, as a general rule, those whom God has used most mightily have not been men who were distinguished for abnormal powers or gifts, but instead *by deep humility*. See this admirable trait in Abraham, I “am but dust and ashes” (Gen 18:27); in Moses, “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (Exo 3:11); in Christ’s forerunner, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Joh 3:30); in Paul, “I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1Co 15:9). O that divine grace may make us “little in our own eyes.”

But again we would notice it was while David was “before the Lord” that he said, “Who am I?” (Exo 3:11). So too it was while he was in the immediate presence of the Lord that Abraham confessed himself to be “but dust and ashes” (Gen 18:27). In like manner, it was when the great I Am revealed Himself at the burning bush that Moses asked, “Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh?” (Exo 3:11). It was when Job could say, “Now mine eye seeth thee” (Job 42:5)—in all Thine awful sovereignty (see context)—that he cried, “Wherefore I abhor myself” (Job 42:6). It was when Isaiah saw JEHOVAH “sitting upon a throne high and lifted up,” that he bemoaned “Woe is me! for I am undone” (Isa 6:5). It was when he stood face to face with the Lord Jesus in the theophanic manifestation that Daniel owned, “My comeliness was turned in me into corruption” (Dan 10:8). And my brethren if *we* were more in the Lord’s presence and had closer dealings with Him, pride would be more largely subdued in us.

“And what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?” (2Sa 7:18). David continued in the same lowly strain. His “house” pertained to the royal tribe. He was the immediate descendant of the prince of Judah, so that he was connected with the most honourable family in Israel, yet such fleshly distinctions were held very lightly by him. The “Thou hast brought me hitherto”—to the throne, to rest from all his enemies—gave to God the rightful glory. “It intimates that he could not have reached this himself by his own management, if God had not brought him to it. All our attainments must be looked upon as God’s vouchsafements” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

“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?” (2Sa 7:19). Having owned the goodness of the Lord upon him “hitherto,” David now turns to comment upon the glorious things which God had promised for the future. The latter so immeasurably outweighed the former, that he sums up his own establishment over the kingdom as “this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD” (2Sa 7:19). We believe this throws light upon the word “sat” in the previous verse, which has presented a difficulty unto the commentators—who point out that this is the only place in Scripture where a saint is represented as being seated while engaged in prayer. But are we not rather to regard the term as denoting that David was in an attitude of most carefully surveying the wonderful riches of divine grace toward him, instead of defining his posture while engaged in his devotions?

The whole of 2 Samuel 7 is to be viewed as the blessed and instructive sequel to what is presented to us in the opening verse. God had tenderly given His servant a season of rest that he might receive a fuller revelation of what was in *His* heart toward David. And now he is in the sacred tabernacle, pondering over what he had heard through Nathan. As he meditated, divine light and understanding broke in upon him, so that he was enabled, in measure at least, to penetrate the mysterious depths of that wonderful prophecy. The golden future was now opened to him, shining with more than earthly glory and bliss. “He beheld in spirit another Son than Solomon, another temple than that built of stones and cedar, another kingdom than the earthly one of whose throne he sat. He beholds a sceptre and a crown, of which his own on Mount Zion were only feeble types—dim and shadowy images” (F. W. Krummacher’s “David and the Godman,” 1796-1868).

Beautifully does this come out in his next words, “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. 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 7:19-21)—in the light of which knowledge, he no doubt penned the 40th, 45th, and 110th Psalms. The last clause of verse 19 should be translated, more literally, “This is the law of *the* man, the Lord GOD,” namely, “The Man” of Psalm 8:5-6 and of Psalm 80:17! David was now given to realize that the blessed promises which had been given to him through the prophet would be made good in the Person of the Messiah, who should yet issue from his own loins, who would be “The Man,” yet none other than “the Lord God” incarnate. Yes, God reveals His secrets to the lowly, but hides them from those who are wise and prudent in their own esteem.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

3. The Noahic (Continued)

In last month’s article, we intimated that the blessings contained in the benediction which the Lord pronounced upon Noah and his sons were infinitely more precious than the mere letter conveys. In order to a right understanding of the various covenants which God made with different men, it is highly essential that we carefully distinguish between the literal and the figurative, or the outward form and its inner meaning. Only thus shall we be able to separate between what was merely local and evanescent, and that which was more comprehensive and enduring. There was connected with each covenant that which was literal or material, and also that which was mystical or spiritual, and unless this be duly noted, confusion is bound to ensue. Yea, it is at *this* very point that many have erred—particularly so with the Abrahamic and Siniatic Covenants.

Literalists and futurists have been so occupied with the shell or letter that they have quite missed the spirit or kernel. Allegorizers have been so much engaged with the figurative allusions, they have often failed to discern the historical fulfillment. Still others have so arbitrarily juggled

with the two that they have carried out and applied neither consistently. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we use the best possible care in seeking to distinguish between the carnal and the spiritual, the transient and the eternal, what pertains to the earthly and what adumbrated the heavenly in the several covenants. The reader should already have been prepared, in some measure at least, to follow us in what we are now saying, by that which was brought out in our examination of the Adamic Covenant.

When studying the Adamic Covenant, we discovered the need for throwing upon the Genesis record the light of the later Scriptures, finding in the prophets and the epistles that which helped to open the meaning of the historical narrative. We saw the necessity of regarding Adam as something more than a private individual, namely, as a public head or federal representative. We learned that the language of Genesis 2:17 conveyed not only a solemn threat, but by necessary implication, also contained a blessed promise. We also perceived that the “death” there threatened was something far more dreadful than physical dissolution. We ascertained from other passages that while the “tree of life” in the centre of the garden was a real and tangible one, yet it also possessed an emblematic significance, being the *seal* of the covenant. Let us seek to keep in mind these principles as we proceed to our consideration of the other covenants.

Each covenant that God made with men shadowed forth some element of the Everlasting Covenant which He entered into with Christ before the foundation of the world on the behalf of His elect. The covenants which God made with Noah, Abraham, and David, as truly exhibited different aspects of the Compact of Grace as did the several vessels in the tabernacle typify certain characteristics of the Person and work of Christ. Yet, just as those vessels also had an immediate and local use, so the covenants respected that which was earthly and carnal, as well as what was spiritual and heavenly. This dual fact receives illustration and exemplification in the covenant which is now before us. That in it which was literal and external is so obvious and well-known that it needs no enlarging upon by us here. The sign and seal of the covenant—the rainbow—and the promise connected therewith were tangible and visible things, which the senses of men have verified for themselves from then till now. But is that *all* there was to the Noahic Covenant?

The note made upon the Noahic Covenant in the “Scofield” Bible reads as follows: “The elements of: (1) The relation of man to earth under the Adamic Covenant is confirmed (Gen 8:21). (2) The order of nature is confirmed (Gen 8:22). (3) Human government is established (Gen 9:1-6). (4) Earth is secured against another universal judgment by water (Gen 8:21; 9:11). (5) A prophetic declaration is made that Ham will descend an inferior and servile posterity (Gen 9:24-25). (6) A prophetic declaration is made that Shem will have a peculiar relation to JEHOVAH (Gen 9:26-27). All divine revelation is made through Semitic men, and Christ, after the flesh, descends from Shem. (7) A prophetic declaration is made that from Japheth will descend the ‘enlarged’ races (Gen 9:27). Government, science, and art, speaking broadly, are and have been Japhetic, so that history is the indisputable record of the exact fulfillment of these declarations.” This is a fair sample of the superficial contents to be found in this popular catch-penny, and we strongly advise our readers not to waste their money in purchasing or their time in perusing the same.

Asking our readers’ pardon for so doing, let us glance for a moment at the above summary. The last three items in Mr. Scofield’s “Elements” do not belong at all to the Noahic Covenant, having no more connection with it than does that which is recorded in Genesis 9:20-23. The first four elements Mr. S. mentions all concern that which is mundane and political. The whole is a lifeless analysis of the letter of the passage. There is absolutely nothing helpful in it. No effort is

attempted at interpretation. No mention is made of the significant and blessed connection there is between the offering on the altar (Gen 8:20) and the Lord's covenant with Noah. No notice is taken of the new foundation upon which the divine grant is made. No hint is given of the precious typical instruction of the whole, and the thought does not seem to have entered the editor's mind that there was anything mystical or spiritual in the covenant.

Was there no deeper meaning in the promises than that the earth should never again be destroyed by a flood, that so long as it existed its seasons and harvests were guaranteed, that the fear of man should be upon all the lower creatures? Had those things no spiritual import? Assuredly they have, and in them may be clearly discerned, by those favoured with anointed eyes, that which adumbrated the contents of the Everlasting Covenant. Noah and his family had been wondrously saved from the wrath of God, which had destroyed the rest of the race. Now that the world was to be restored from its ruined state, what more suitable occasion than that for a fuller revelation of various aspects of the believer's so-great salvation! It was ever God's way in Old Testament times to employ the event of some *temporal* deliverance of His people, to renew His intimation of the great *spiritual* deliverance and restoration by Christ's redemption. Who can doubt that it was so here, immediately after the flood?

It seems pitiable that at this late date it should be necessary to labour a point which ought to be obvious to all God's people. And obvious it would be, at least when pointed out to them, were it not that so many have had dust thrown into their eyes by carnal "dispensationalists" and hucksters of "prophecy." Alas, that the writer himself once had his own vision dimmed by them, and even now he often has to exert himself in order to refuse looking at things through their coloured spectacles. That there were *temporal* benefits bestowed upon Noah and his seed in JEHOVAH's covenant-grant, is just as sure as that Noah built a tangible altar and offered real sacrifices thereon. But to confine those benefits to the temporal, and ignore (or deny) their *spiritual* import, is as excuseless as would be a failure to discern Christ and His sacrifice in what Noah presented and which was a "sweet savour" unto God.

Yet so dull of spiritual comprehension are many of God's own people, so prejudiced and stupefied are they by the opiates which false teachers have ministered to them, we must perforce proceed slowly, and take nothing for granted. Therefore, before we seek to point out the various typical, mystical, and spiritual features of the Noahic Covenant, we must first establish the fact that something more than the temporary interests of this earth or the material well-being of its inhabitants was involved in what God said to our patriarch in Genesis 9. Nor is this at all a difficult matter. Leaving for our closing paper the contemplation of the later Scriptures which cast a radiant glow upon the seal of the covenant, the rainbow, we turn to one passage in the prophets which clearly contains all that can be required by us.

In Isaiah 54:4-9, we read, "Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee."

The connection of Isaiah 54 with the preceding chapter (on the atonement) suggests that Gospel times are there in view, which is confirmed by the use Paul makes of it in Galatians 4:27, etc. The church, under the form of the Israelitish theocracy, is pictured as a married woman, who (like Sarah) had long continued barren. Comparatively few of the real children of God had been raised up among the Jews. At the time of Christ's advent, Pharisaical formality and Sadducean infidelity were well-nigh universal, and this was a sore grief unto the little remnant of genuine saints. But the death of Christ was to introduce better times, for many from among the Gentiles would then be saved. Accordingly, the barren woman is exhorted to break forth into singing, faith being called upon to joyfully anticipate the promised blessings. Gracious assurances were given that her hope should not be confounded.

True, the Church was then at a low ebb, and seemingly deserted by the Lord Himself, but the hiding of His face was only temporary, and He would yet gather an increasing number of children into His family, and that with "great mercy" and with "everlasting kindness." God's engagements to this effect were irrevocable, as His covenant testified. In the days of that patriarch, the Lord had contended with the world in great wrath for a whole year, the "*waters of Noah*" having completely destroyed it. Nevertheless, He returned in "great mercy," yea, with "everlasting kindness," as His covenant with Noah attested. Though the world has often been highly provoking to God since then, yet He has faithfully kept His promise, and will continue doing so unto the end. In like manner, there is often much in His people to displease and try God's patience, but He *will not* utterly cast them off (Psa 89:34).

Here in Isaiah 54, the Noahic Covenant is appealed to in proof of the perpetuity of God's gracious purpose in the midst of His sore chastenings. There we find definite interpretation of its original import, confirming what we said in the earlier paragraphs. The prophet Isaiah was announcing God's mercy to the church in future times, and he adduces His oath unto Noah as a sure pledge of the promised grace—an assurance of its certain bestowment notwithstanding the afflictions which the people of God were then enduring and of the low condition to which they had been reduced. The unalterableness of the one is appealed to in proof of the unalterableness of the other. How plainly this shows that the covenant with Noah not only afforded a practical demonstration of the unfailing faithfulness of God in fulfilling its temporal promise to the world, but also that the *church* was the chief object and subject concerned in it.

Why did the Lord promise to preserve the earth until the end of time, so that it should not again be destroyed by a flood? The answer is, *Because of the church*, for when the full number of the elect have been gathered out of every clime, and brought (manifestatively) into the Body of Christ, the world will come to an end. That the Noahic Covenant has a clear connection with the Everlasting Covenant (called in Isaiah 54, "the Covenant of my Peace" because based upon *reconciliation effected*), and that it has a special relation to the church, is abundantly evident from what the prophet there says of it, "For this [namely, 'with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee'] is as the waters of Noah unto me: for *as* I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; *so* have I sworn that I would not be wroth *with thee*" (Isa 54:9)—the church.

From all that has been said it should now be abundantly clear that, while the *literal* aspect of the promises made to Noah concerned the *temporal* welfare of the earth and its inhabitants, yet their *mystical* import had respect unto the *spiritual* well-being of the church and its members. This same twofoldedness will come before us again yet more plainly, when we consider the "rainbow," which was the sign and the seal of the Noahic Covenant. It seems strange that those who perceived that the laws which God gave unto Israel respecting the eating only of fishes with

scales and fins and animals which divided the hoof and chewed the cud, had not only a temporal or hygienic value, but a mystical or spiritual meaning as well, should have failed to discern that the same dual feature holds good in respect to all the details of the Noahic Covenant.

Once this key is firmly grasped by us, it is not difficult to reach the inner contents contained in the benediction which the Lord pronounced after He had smelled the sweet savour of Noah's offering. The guarantee that the earth should not again be destroyed by a flood (as the Adamic earth had been), pointed to *the eternal security* of the saints—a security assured by the vastly superior position which is now theirs from what they had in Adam, namely, their inalienable portion *in Christ*. The promise that while the earth remained, seedtime and harvest should not fail, contained as its inner kernel the divine pledge that as long as the saints were left below, God would *supply all their need* “according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” The fact that those blessings were promised after Noah and his family had come on to resurrection and new-creation ground, foreshadowed the blessed truth that the believer's standing is no longer “in the flesh.”

Noah is the figure of Christ. First, as the remover of the curse from a corrupted earth, and as the rest-giver to those who, with sorrow of heart and sweat of the brow, had to till and eat of it (Gen 5:29, Mat 11:28). Second, as the heir of the new earth, wherein there shall be “no more curse” (Gen 8:21, Rev 22:3). Third, as the one into whose hands all things were now delivered (Gen 9:2, Joh 17:2, and Heb 1:2). Noah's sons or seed were the figure of the church. With him they were “blessed” (Gen 9:1 and cf. Eph 1:3). With him they were given dominion over all the lower creatures, so the saints have been made “*kings and priests unto God*” (Rev 1:6) and shall “reign with him” (2Ti 2:12). With him they were bidden to be “fruitful” and “bring forth abundantly” (Gen 9:7), so Christians are to abound in fruit and in every good work. The fact that this covenant was an absolute or unconditional one, tells us of the immutability of our blessings in Christ.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

5. Its Solution

In connection with the grand truth of sanctification, there is both a mystery and a problem—the former relates to the unregenerate, the latter is what exercises so deeply the regenerate. That which is hidden from the understanding of the natural man is, why his best performances are unacceptable unto God, no matter how earnestly and devoutly they be done. Even though he be informed that the tree must be made good if its fruit is to be wholesome, in other words, that his very *state* and *nature* must first be made acceptable unto God before any of his *works* can be so, he has not the remotest idea of how this is to be accomplished. But that which perplexes the spiritual man is, how one who is still full of sin may justly regard his state and nature as being acceptable unto God, and how one who is a mass of corruption within can honestly claim to be holy. As the Lord is pleased to enable we will consider each in turn.

The natural man is quite ignorant of the mystery of sanctification. Though he may—under the spur of conscience, the fear of hell, or from desire to go to heaven—be very diligent in seeking to conquer the activities of indwelling sin and exceedingly zealous in performing every known duty, yet he is quite in the dark as to why his *state* must be changed before his *actions* can be acceptable unto God. That upon which he is unenlightened is, that it is not *the matter* which makes a work good and pleasing to God, but *the principles* from which that work proceeds. It is true that the conscience of the natural man distinguishes between good and evil, and religious instruction may educate him to do much which is right and avoid much that is wrong. Nevertheless, his actions are not done out of gratitude and in a spirit of loving obedience, but out of fear and from a servile spirit, and therefore are they like fruit ripened by art and forced in the hothouse, rather than normally by the genial rays of the sun.

“Now the end [design] of the commandment [or law] is charity [love] out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1Ti 1:5). Nothing less than this will meet the divine requirements. Only those actions are pleasing to God which have respect unto His commandment, which proceed from gratitude unto Him for His goodness, and where faith has respect unto His promised acceptance and blessing. No works are approved of heaven except they possess these qualities. A sense of duty must sway the conscience, disinterested affection must move the heart, and faith in exercise must direct the actions. Hence, should I be asked why I do thus and so? the answer should be, Because God has commanded it. And if it be further inquired, And why such earnestness and affection? the answer ought to be, Because God requires my best, and I desire to honour Him with the same. Obedience respects God’s authority; love His kindness; faith His bounty or reward.

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1Co 10:31). This must be our design—the glory of God—if our actions are to meet with His approval. Whether it be the discharge of our temporal duties, the performing of deeds of charity and kindness, or acts of piety and devotion, they must be executed with this aim—that *God* may be honoured by our conformity to His revealed will. The natural man, when in sore straits, will cry fervently unto God, but it is only that *his* wants may be supplied. Many will contribute liberally of their means to the relief of sufferers, but it is “that they may have glory of men” (Mat 6:2). People are religious on the Sabbath and attend public worship, but it is either to satisfy an uneasy conscience or in the hope of earning heaven thereby.

From what has been said above it should be clear that the best deeds of the unregenerate fall far short of the divine requirements. The actions of the natural man cannot receive the approbation of heaven, because *God* is neither the beginning nor the end of them—love for Him is not their spring, glorifying Him is not their aim. Instead, they issue from the workings of corrupt self and they have in view only the advancement of self. Nor can it be otherwise. Water will not rise above its own level or flow uphill. A pure stream cannot issue from an impure fountain. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (Joh 3:6), and will never be anything but flesh—educate, refine, religionize the flesh all we may, it can never become spirit. The man himself must be sanctified, before his actions are purified.

But how shall men be sanctified so as to be suited unto the presence of an infinitely pure God? By nature they are utterly without holiness. They are corrupt, filthy, an unclean thing. They have no more power to make themselves holy than they have to create a world. We could tame a tiger from the jungle far more easily than we could our lusts. We might empty the ocean more quickly than we could banish pride from our souls. We might melt marble more readily than our hard hearts. We might purge the sea of salt more easily than we could our beings of sin. “For though

thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD” (Jer 2:22).

“Why, when we were in our best condition by nature, when we were in the state of original holiness, when we were in Adam vested with the image of God, we preserved it not. How much less likely then, is it, that now, in the state of lapsed and depraved nature, it is in our power to restore ourselves, to re-introduce the image of God into our souls, and that in a far more eminent manner than it was at first created by God? What needed all that contrivance of infinite wisdom and grace for the reparation of our nature by Jesus Christ, if holiness, wherein it doth consist, be in our power, and educed out of the natural faculties of our souls? There can be no more fond imagination befall the minds of men, than that defiled nature is able to cleanse itself, or depraved nature to rectify itself, or we, who have lost that image of God which He created in us, and with us, should create it again in ourselves by our own endeavours” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

Yet, let it be pointed out that this impotency to measure up to the requirements of God is no mere innocent infirmity, but a highly culpable thing, which greatly aggravates our vileness and adds to our guilt. Our inability to measure up to the standard of personal piety which God has appointed, lies not in a lack of executive power or the needful faculties, but in the want of a willing mind and a ready heart to practice true holiness. If men in a natural state had a hearty love and liking to true holiness, and a fervent and sincere endeavour to practice it, and yet failed in the event, then they might under some pretence plead for this excuse (as many do), that they are compelled to sin by an inevitable necessity. But the fact is that man’s impotency lies in his own *obstinacy*—“Ye will not come to me” (Joh 5:40) said the Lord Jesus.

Inability to pay a debt does not excuse a debtor who has recklessly squandered his estate, nor does drunkenness excuse the mad or violent actions of a drunkard, but rather aggravates his crime. God has not lost His right to command, even though man through his wickedness has lost his power to obey. Because the flesh “lusteth against the Spirit” (Gal 5:17), that is far from an extenuation for not being in subjection to Him. Because “every one that doeth evil *hateth* the light,” that is far from justifying them because they “loved darkness” (Joh 3:19-20). Yea, as the Saviour there so plainly and solemnly states, it only serves to heighten their criminality, “This is *the* condemnation.” Then “How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?” (Job 15:16) that cannot practice holiness because he will not.

It is because men do not *make a right use of* their faculties that they are justly condemned. The soul in an unsanctified person is not dead, but is a living and acting principle, and therefore it is able to understand, desire, will, reason, and improve its opportunities, or redeem the time. Though the natural man is unable to work grace in his own heart, yet he *is* able to attend and wait upon the means of grace. An unsanctified person may as well go to hear a sermon as attend a theatre. He has the same eyes for reading the Scriptures as the newspaper or a novel. He may as well associate himself with those who fear an oath, as with those who delight to blaspheme that Name at which all should tremble. In the day of judgment, unsanctified persons will be damned not for *cannots*, but for *will nots*.

Men complain that they cannot purify themselves, that they cannot cease from sin, that they cannot repent, that they cannot believe in Christ, that they cannot live a holy life. But if only they were honest, if they were duly humbled, if they sincerely grieved over the awful hold which sin has obtained upon them, they would fly to the throne of grace, they would cry unto God day and night for Him to break the chains which bind them, deliver them from the power of Satan, and translate them into the kingdom of His dear Son. If they were but sincere in their complaint of inability, they would go to God and beg Him to sprinkle clean water upon them, put His Spirit

within them, and give them a new heart, so that they might walk in His statutes and keep His judgments (Eze 36:25-28). And it is just because they will not, that their blood justly lies upon their own heads.

“Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded” (Jam 4:8). Outward separation from that which is evil and polluting is not sufficient—purity of heart is also indispensable. “Behold, thou desirest truth in the *inward* parts” (Psa 51:6). The divine law not only prohibits stealing, but also insists, “Thou shalt not covet,” which is a lusting of our souls rather than an external act. Holiness *of nature* is required by the law, for how else shall a man love the Lord his God with all his heart, mind, and strength, and his neighbour as himself? God is essentially holy by nature and nothing can be so contrary to Him as an unholy nature. Nothing can be so contrary as opposite natures. How can a wolf and a lamb, or a vulture and a dove, dwell together? “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?” (2Co 6:14-15).

How, then, is this mystery cleared up? By what method, or in what way, have the sanctified become blest with a nature which makes them meet for the ineffable presence of God? By what process does the evil tree become good, so that its fruit is wholesome and acceptable? Obviously, we cannot here supply the full answer to these questions, or we should be anticipating too much what we desire to bring out (D.V.) in later articles. But we will endeavour to now indicate, at least, the direction in which, and the lines along which, this great mystery is cleared—lines which most assuredly would never have entered our hearts and minds to so much as conceive, but which once they are viewed by anointed eyes, are seen to be divine and satisfying. The Lord graciously assist us to steer clear of the rocks of error and guide us into clear and refreshing waters of the truth.

As we have shown, it was quite impossible—though it was their bounden duty—for those whom God sanctifies to personally answer the requirements of His holy law, “Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?” (Pro 20:9). Wherefore, for the satisfaction of the law, which requires absolute purity of nature, it was settled as one of the articles in the Everlasting Covenant, that Christ, the Representative of all who would be sanctified, should be a Man of an untainted and perfectly pure nature, which fully met the requirements of the law, “For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb 7:26). The meeting of that requirement necessitated two things—first, that the Head of His people should be born with a holy human nature, second, that He should retain that holiness of nature inviolate unto the end. Let us consider, briefly, each of these separately.

There was a holy nature given to Adam as the root of mankind, to be kept by him and transmitted to his posterity by natural generation. Upon that ground the law requires all men to be born holy, and pronounces them unclean and “children of wrath” (Eph. 2:3) in the contrary. But how can this demand be met by those who are born in sin? They cannot enter again into their mother’s womb and be born a second time without sin. Even so, the law will not abate its demand. Wherefore it was provided that Christ, the last Adam, should, as the Representative and Root of His spiritual seed, be born perfectly holy—that whereas they brought a sinful nature into the world with them, He should be born “that *holy* thing” (Luk 1:35). Consequently, in the reckoning of the law, all believers are born holy in the last Adam. They are said to be “circumcised” by the circumcision of Christ (Col 2:11) and circumcision necessarily presupposes *birth!*

But more was required. It was necessary that the Second Man should preserve His holy nature free from all spot or defilement, as He passed through this world of sin. The law not only

demands holiness of nature, but also that the purity and integrity of that nature be preserved. Wherefore to satisfy this demand, it was provided that the believers' federal Head should preserve His ineffable purity unstained. "He shall not fail" (Isa 42:4). The first man did fail—the fine gold soon became dim, the holiness of his nature was quickly extinguished by sin. But the Second Man failed not—neither man nor devil could corrupt Him. He preserved the holiness of His nature unstained, even to the end of His life. And so of His sanctified, viewing them in Himself, He declares, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee" (Song 4:7).

But while that completely meets the judicial side, satisfying the demands of the law, something more was yet required to satisfy the heart of God and meet the experimental needs of His people. In view of their being actually defiled in Adam when he sinned, they are defiled in their own persons, so that not only is his guilt imputed to them, but his corruption is imparted to them in the nature they have received from him by generation. Therefore, not only were the elect legally born holy in Christ their Head, but from Him they also receive a holy nature. It is written, "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit" (1Co 15:45). This is accomplished by that gracious and supernatural working of the third Person in the Godhead, whereby the elect are vitally united to their Head so that, "He that is joined unto the Lord is *one spirit*" (1Co 6:17).

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2Co 5:17). Our being united to Christ, through the Spirit, by faith, makes us partakers of the same spiritual and holy nature with Him, as really and as actually as Eve (type of the church) was made of one nature with Adam, being bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. Because believers are united to Christ the Holy One, they are "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1Co 1:2). The believer being one with Christ is made "a new creature," because He is such a Stock as changes the graft into its own nature, "If the root be holy, so are the branches" (Rom 11:16). The same Spirit which Christ received without measure (Joh 3:34) is communicated to the members of His body, so that it can be said, "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (Joh 1:16). Being united to Christ by faith, and through the communication of the quickening Spirit from Christ unto him, the believer is thereupon not only justified and reconciled to God, but sanctified, made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and made an heir of God.

UNION AND COMMUNION

2. Mediatorial (Completed)

Christ is not now two persons combined together, but one Person having two natures. He is both God and man, as many Scriptures plainly affirm, possessing in Himself both deity and humanity. "Unto us a child is born," there is His humanity, "Unto us a son is given...and his name shall be called...The mighty God" (Isa 9:6), there is His deity. "That holy thing which shall be born of thee," there is His humanity; "shall be called the Son of God" (Luk 1:35), there is His

deity. “*Called* the Son of God” means He shall be *owned* as such—“All shall so acknowledge Him—either here in gracious confession or in glorious confusion hereafter” (Thomas Adams, 1660). “God sent forth his Son,” there is His deity; “made of a woman” (Gal 4:4), there is His humanity. “Made of the seed of David according to the flesh,” there is His humanity; “And declared to be the Son of God” (Rom 1:3-4), there is His deity, both making up the one Person of “Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Having considered the needs-be for the divine incarnation, having sought to contemplate the nature thereof, we now turn unto some of the *effects and consequences* of the same. We shall seek to examine, first, the effects of the mediatorial union with respect unto the divine nature of Christ; second, with respect unto His human nature; and third with respect unto His complex Person.

When the eternal Word became flesh, His divine nature underwent *no* change whatsoever. Such a thing could not be. God is no more subject to alteration or variation than He is to death. Being God the Son, the Word was immutable, and must remain forever the same. To say that His deity was humanized is to assert an utter impossibility. The incarnation of the Beloved of the Father, despoiled Him of none of His perfections. Had He lost (or “emptied” Himself of) any of those attributes proper to the divine nature, He could not have been a sufficient Mediator. That is properly a “change,” when anything ceases to be what it was before—but such was not the case with Immanuel. It was none other than *God* who was “manifest in flesh” (1Ti 3:16), so that the incarnate Son could say, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (Joh 14:9).

When it is affirmed “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (Joh 1:14). the Spirit was careful to move John to at once add, “and we beheld his glory.” *What* “glory”? the “glory” of His meekness, gentleness, compassion? No, but “the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father.” Though He now became what He was not previously—united to manhood—yet He ceased not to be in Himself all that He was before. “He assumed our nature without laying aside His own. When the soul is united to the body, doth it lose any of those perfections that are proper to its nature? Is there any change either in the substance or qualities of it? No, but it makes a change in the body, and of a dull lump it makes a living mass, conveys vigour to it, and by its power quickens it to sense and motion. So did the divine nature and human remain entire. There was no change of the one into the other, as Christ by a miracle changed water into wine, or men by art change sand or ashes into glass” (Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680).

During the days of His humiliation, the divine *glory* of the Mediator was partly veiled. There was no halo of divine light encircling His head, to mark Him out as Immanuel. There was no visible retinue of angels in attendance upon Him, to signify the Lord of heaven was tabernacling upon earth. Instead, He was born in a manger, grew up in the home of a peasant family, and when He began His public ministry, His forerunner was clothed in a garment of camel’s hair, and His ambassadors were humble fishermen. Yet even then His divine glory was not completely eclipsed. The character He displayed was “Fairer than the children of men” (Psa 45:2). His teaching was such that even the officers sent to arrest Him testified, “Never man spake like this man” (Joh 7:46). His miracles witnessed to His Almightyness. Even in death He could not be hid, the centurion exclaiming, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Mat 27:54).

Yet the partial veiling of His divine glory in nowise wrought any change in, still less did it injure the divine nature itself, any more than the sun undergoes any change or is to the slightest degree injured when it is hid by the interposition of a cloud. “When He prays for the glory He had with the Father before the world was (Joh 17:5), He prays that a glory He had in His deity might shine forth in His Person as Mediator, and be evinced in that height and splendour suitable to His dignity, which had been so lately darkened by His abasement; that as He had appeared to be the

Son of man in the infirmity of the flesh, He might appear to be the Son of God in the glory of His Person, that He might appear to be the Son of God and the Son of man in one Person” (S. Charnock). At His ascension, nothing was added to His essential Person. His divine glory did but shine forth more distinctly when He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

We turn next to consider the consequence of His human nature being taken into union with the Son of God. And first, negatively. His humanity was not invested with divine attributes. As the divine nature was not humanized at the incarnation, neither was the humanity deified. There was no communication of properties from one to the other, both preserved their integrity and remained in possession of their distinctive qualities. “I do not hereby ascribe the infusion of omniscience, of infinite understanding, wisdom, and knowledge into the human nature of Christ. It was and is a creature, finite and limited, nor is a capable subject of properties absolutely infinite and immense. Filled it was with light and wisdom to the utmost capacity of a creature. But it was so, not by being changed into a divine nature or essence, but by the communication of the Spirit unto it without measure. The Spirit of the Lord did rest upon Him, Isaiah 11:1-3” (John Owen).

There were three respects in which the humanity of Christ underwent no change by virtue of its union with His divine Person. First, with respect to its *essence*—intrinsically and integrally it was and forever remains a real and true humanity. Second, in respect to its *properties*—“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luk 2:52). When He prayed “not my will, but thine, be done” (Luk 22:42), it was the subjecting of the human unto the divine. Third, with respect to its *operations*—every human faculty was normally exercised by “the man Christ Jesus.” He hungered and thirsted, ate and drank. He wearied and slept. He sorrowed and wept. He suffered and died. Some things as a man He knew not (Mar 13:32), except as they were *given* Him by revelation (Rev 1:1).

Positively, the humanity was elevated unto a state infinitely surpassing that of every other creature in earth and heaven. Though the Godhead received nothing from the manhood, yet the manhood itself—taken into union with the second Person in the Trinity—was immeasurably enriched and exalted to unspeakable dignity, infinitely above that of the angels. He who is Head of the church has, in all things, “the pre-eminence.” Not only was the divine *wisdom* more illustriously displayed in the wondrous constitution of the Mediator than in any or all the other works of God, but His *grace* was also more gloriously evidenced unto the man Christ Jesus than it was in the saving of sinners. The highest act of divine favour was exercised when the woman’s “seed” was raised high above all other creatures, and made JEHOVAH’s “Fellow.” Wherein could the seed of Abraham merit such an inestimable honour! It was *grace*, pure and simple, grace in its most superlative exercise, which conferred upon the humanity of Christ a dignity and glory immeasurably exceeding that possessed by the cherubim and seraphim.

The Man Christ Jesus was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world (1Pe 1:20) unto union with the second Person in the Godhead, and therefore the divine grace shown unto Him in *His* predestination was greater far than that shown unto *us*, by how much more the privileges ordained were greater. Marvelous grace indeed is it that we should be elevated unto a place in the family of God and “made nigh” (Eph 2:13) unto Him, but that falls far, far short of the Man Christ Jesus being actually united to the immediate Person of the Son of God, and in consequence thereof being not only “the *firstborn* [Chief] of every creature” (Col 1:15). but “the man that is *my fellow*, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zec 13:7)—advanced unto a fellowship in the society of the blessed Trinity. This it was which stamped an infinite worth upon the whole work of the Mediator.

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; *mine elect*, in whom my soul delighteth” (Isa 42:1). God’s “elect” was the Man whom He eternally chose to take into personal union with His co-essential and co-equal Son. This is the One in whom He eternally delighted, ever viewing Him in the glass of His decrees. This is “the man of his right hand, the Son of man whom he madest strong *for himself*” (See Psa 80:17). This was indeed grace worthy of God, such as can never be fully conceived by any finite intelligence, no not by the saints in heaven through the ages of eternity. In the Person of the God-man, grace, sovereign grace, was exercised in its first and greatest act, shining forth in its utmost splendour and discovered in its utmost freeness. For again we say, there could be nothing whatever in the unindividualized “seed” of the woman which could be, to the smallest degree, entitled unto such supernal glory.

It was therefore meet and requisite that grace and glory should be communicated and bestowed upon the humanity of Christ, proportionately to the high dignity of its being taken into union with the Son. “1. Preeminence, to all other individuals of human nature—The humanity of Christ was chosen and preferred to the grace of union with the Son of God, above them all. It has a better subsistence than they had, and has obtained a more excellent name than they, and is possessed of blessings and privileges above all creatures. All which is not of any merit in it, but of the free grace of God. 2. Perfect holiness and impeccability—It is called *that holy Thing*. It is eminently and perfectly so, without original sin or any actual transgression. It is not conscious of any sin, never committed any, nor is it possible it should. 3. A communication of habitual grace to it in the greatest degree—It is, in this respect, fairer and more beautiful than any of the sons of men. Grace being poured into it in great plenty. It is anointed with the oil of gladness above its fellows, that is, with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit” (John Gill, 1770).

Consider, briefly, some of the super-excellent perfections of the Man Christ Jesus. There is a *wisdom* in Him which is far above what all other creatures have attained or can reach unto, so that in Him “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3). It is true those treasures of wisdom are not of that richness and extent as the wisdom that dwells in God Himself, for the manhood of Christ is not omniscient, yet by virtue of its union with the Son of God, it has been taken into all the counsels of the Godhead, and knows all decrees concerning the past, the present, and the future.

The same holds good of His *power*. Though the manhood of Christ has not been endowed with omnipotence, yet it approximates as closely thereto, as any creature could, for all power has been given to Him, both in heaven and earth (Mat 28:18), so that the rule of the universe is committed to Him, He upholding all things by the word of His power (Heb 1:3). God “hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of *man*” (Joh 5:27).

The image of God shines brightly in Christ’s *independency* and *sovereignty*. This incommunicable attribute of deity is reflected to a high degree in Him who has been made “both Lord and Christ” (Act 2:36), being one of the brightest jewels in the crown of His glorified humanity. This personal prerogative of the Son of God is now shared in by the nature which He took into union with Himself, as the queen shares the palace of the king. A dependent “thing” has been made an independent creature—what a marvel of marvels!

So too of His *holiness*. There is that transcendency of holiness in the Man Christ Jesus that is not found in all other creatures put together, and in this respect also He is “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15). There is in Him a holiness over and above that grace communicated to Him “without measure” by the Spirit. It is a relative holiness of a man united to the second Person of the Godhead, which casts the shine of its superlative glory upon that which is habitual or communicated. It is *this* which gave infinite value to all He did.

Coming now to the consequences of the divine incarnation as it respects *the complex Person* of the Mediator. First, there is a communion between the two natures in Him which is far more intimate than that enjoyed by husband and wife, or even that which obtains between Christ and His Church. It is exceeded only by that ineffable fellowship which exists among the eternal Three. While the properties of each several nature preserve their distinctness, yet they are so united to form one Person, who may be denominated according to either nature. Sometimes the Mediator is called “man” as in Acts 17:31, etc., and at others He is designated “God,” as in Romans 9:5, etc. Thus, what cannot be said of Christ in the abstract, can be predicated of Him in the concrete—His deity could not be tempted, nor is His humanity omnipresent—yet as a *Person* He was tempted and is omnipresent.

Second, in consequence of the two natures in His Person, Christ holds the office of Mediator. “But He is not Mediator only in His human nature, and only exercises it in that, He took upon Him, and was invested with this *office* before His assumption of human nature, and could and did exercise some parts of it without it. But there were others that required His human nature, and when, and not before it was requisite, He assumed it, and in it, as united to His divine Person, He is God-man, is Prophet, Priest, King, Judge, lawgiver, and Saviour, and has power over all flesh, to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him” (John Gill, 1697-1771). This it is which stamped infinite worth, dignity, and glory on what He did. He being both God and man in one Person, His love was the love of God (1Jo 3:16), His righteousness was the righteousness of God (Phi 3:9), His blood was the blood of God (Act 20:28).

Thirdly, there is a communion *of operations* in both natures to the discharge of His mediatorial office. The work performed by Christ was the work of the God-man—there was a concurrence of both natures in the performance of it. “In the work of atonement, as well as in all the other parts of His mediatorial activity, Christ acted according to both natures. They ever acted conjointly, but in their several spheres. It is important to keep in mind that they never acted apart in anything that concerned the mediatorial function. And this it is the more necessary to mention, because the notion has obtained currency in modern times that the divine nature was for the most part in abeyance during His humiliation” (George Smeaton, 1868). “The perfect complete work of Christ in every act of His mediatory office, in all that He did as the King, Priest, and Prophet of the church, in all that He continueth to do for us, in or by virtue of whether nature soever it be done, is not to be considered as the act of this or that nature in Him alone, but it is the act and work of *the whole person*” (John Owen).

Fourth, though the human nature of Christ, distinctively considered, is not a formal object of worship, since it is a creature, yet as taken into union with God the Son, and both natures together forming the one Person of the Mediator, Christ is to be adored and worshipped. Thus, at His birth it was said, “Let all the angels of God worship him” (Heb 1:6). So at His ascension He was given a name which is above every name, “that at the name *of Jesus* every knee should bow” (Phi 2:9-10), that is, in a way of religious adoration. Accordingly we read “And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, *and unto the Lamb* for ever and ever” (Rev 5:13).

Fifth, in consequence of the hypostatic union, all the fullness of the Godhead dwells personally in Jesus Christ, and in Him there is such an outshining of the perfections of JEHOVAH as contain the utmost manifestation of deity which can be made either unto the angels or unto men. The “glory of God” shines “in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). Much may be seen of God, in creation, in providence, in grace, but in and by *Jesus Christ alone* is He fully and

perfectly revealed. Therefore could He say, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (Joh 14:9).

The particular points which most need to be guarded in connection with this mysterious and glorious subject are: 1. The eternal Son of God united to Himself human nature. 2. Every particular man is a separate person, because he subsists of himself, but the manhood of Christ never subsisted of itself, but only in union with the second Person of the Godhead. 3. Christ, the Mediator, is but one Person—God and man being perfectly united in Him. 4. The two natures remain distinct in Him, preserving their own properties and characteristics. 5. Christ’s human nature was *not* created in heaven (as the early Plymouth Brethren taught), “The Lord from heaven” (1Co 15:47) refers to His *divine Person* and not to the descent of His humanity. If Christ’s humanity had not been formed out of Mary’s substance, it had belonged to another class of creatures, and Christ had not been “the Son of man” and so could not have been our Kinsman-Redeemer. 6. The humanity of Christ was not begotten by generation according to the ordinary course of nature, but was produced by the extraordinary operation of the Holy Spirit, and therefore it is high above the compass of human reason to understand or explain. 7. As man, Christ is neither “the Son of God” (Luk 1:35) by nature or by adoption, but only *by personal union*—as the wife receives the name of her husband. 8. The humanity of Christ had to be united to His divine Person, in order that His work should possess infinite merits. 9. Each nature acts separately, yet in conjunction with the other, as man Christ “laid down” His life, as God He “took it again” (See Joh 10:18). 10. A *whole* Christ, God and man, is the object of our faith, is our Saviour and Lord, and is to be worshipped and served as such.

In conclusion, let us marvel at, admire and adore this transcendent wonder and mystery. First, that a *human* nature was produced without the instrumentality of any man. Second, that that human nature was produced out of a woman without contracting the slightest taint of sin. Third, that it had no separate personality subsisting by itself. Fourth, that it should be, nevertheless, “the Son of man.” Fifth, that a divine Person should unite unto Himself such a frail and lowly nature. Sixth, that that divine Person was in nowise injured by such an union. Seventh, that each nature should continue to preserve its own separate properties and functions.

WELCOME TIDINGS

In the midst of so much that is depressing and saddening, it becomes the more necessary for the Christian’s heart and mind to be occupied with that which is elevating and joy-producing, “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on *these* things” (Phi 4:8). Instead of dwelling so much upon the evil fruits which sin bears, we need to be more engaged with the glorious things which divine grace produces. This is what the editor has sought to keep before him from month to month, and year to year. He realizes that he has by no means fully succeeded, for here too it is no easy matter to preserve the balance. There are alarms which need to be sounded, faults which need pointing out, diseases requiring to be ministered unto—yet the performance of such duties

must not absorb the entire, or even principal, attention of God's servant. There is also good news to be proclaimed, a glorious Christ to delight our souls, precious promises to comfort, amazing grace to be extolled.

It is wrong for the Christian to dwell too much on the state of this poor world, the advancing apostasy in Christendom, the workings of Satan, and the depravity of his own heart. There is no food for the soul in such things, nothing that stimulates to praise and thanksgiving, nought which lifts up above the things of time and sense. The heart needs to be more occupied with those things which will cause him to bring his "harp" into use, which will put a song into his mouth, which will send him on his way rejoicing. But *where* are such things to be found? Not in the doings of the creature, not in the achievements of art and science, not in any of the productions of man. No, we must look elsewhere, for that which will deliver us from gloom and despondency, "Set your affection *on things above*, not on things on the earth" (Col 3:2).

"Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto *thy* works" (Psa 86:8). Ah, *these* are what should engage the attention of the saint—the wondrous "works" of the Lord. Note well the connection between these two verses, "Praise ye the LORD. I will *praise* the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation," and "The *works of the LORD* are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein" (Psa 111:1-2). What was it there which stirred up the Psalmist into praising the LORD? Why, His wondrous, glorious, perfect "works." Those "works" are indeed "great"—the *only* ones entitled to be so designated. Man is fond of describing *his* achievements by high-sounding terms, such as "marvellous achievements," "astounding exploits," "amazing productions," etc., but what are all of them in comparison with *the works of the LORD*? Man cannot so much as create a blade of grass, change the Ethiopian's skin, far less raise the dead. But God's "works" are "great" in wisdom, great in power, great in glory. There are none like unto His, which is freely acknowledged when "sought out of all that have pleasure therein."

"Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto *thy* works" (Psa 86:8). As a hint to our many preacher-friends, the wondrous "works" of JEHOVAH, first in creation, second in providence, third in grace, might be dwelt upon to advantage. As a word to the wise is sufficient, we will not here attempt to work out a complete outline for them, but trust that not a few will heed the hint and seek to make a sermon magnifying the goodness of God as evidenced in His wondrous "works." That which is in our own thoughts at the moment is the blessed working of the Lord's providence, particularly His continued grace in showing Himself strong on the behalf of this little magazine, which has no wealthy "backers" behind it, no denomination or even church to provide for its maintenance, but is entirely dependent upon the living God. Once again it is our happy privilege to make some report of how the God of all grace deigns to employ its pages in blessing to one and another of His people. We cannot exhibit this more effectively than by giving quotations from some of the many letters received.

"Please accept our thanks for the 'Studies.' Once again we thank God for them, for putting it into our hearts to desire them, and to pray that the Holy Spirit will graciously give us strength to obey willingly, and for bringing us in touch with you and the blessed unfolding of the Word. I often say to _____ how wonderful it is, that God in His mercy has opened a way whereby we can have (in our solitude and loneliness) such a wonderful teacher who so faithfully tends God's sheep. As you have pointed out, so many today are only giving out part of God's message to man—His love in giving His Son to die for our sins, but silent concerning His just and holy wrath. We pray that God will mercifully send out faithful servants who will not fail 'to declare all

the counsel of God' (Act 20:27) and to warn men to 'flee from the wrath to come' (Luk 3:7). The message in the 'Studies' is more and more searching, and often the thought comes to me that I cannot possibly live up to such a holy standard, but I know that it is the truth." (An isolated couple in Canada). What a holy privilege it is to minister to those who are entirely cut off from the public means of grace. We are in touch with quite a few such—pray their number may increase.

"I feel assured the Lord will make your 'Studies' profitable to many hungry souls. I find them most precious from the beginning to end, and am delighted with the articles on the Holy Spirit and Hebrews. We are not nearly through with the copies received, as they can be read and read over again. We are slow scholars" (A Sister in Canada).

"With much gratitude in my heart I forward you money order for your splendid work. The 'Studies' continue to be much appreciated. I must say I devour them with much relish, although they are very searching and humbling" (Brother in New Zealand).

"I write again to thank you for the help received from 'Studies,' and I do praise God for enabling you to send out food of the kind so sorely needed in these days of carelessness and indifference to the claims of God. May He be pleased to continue and bless abundantly your ministry to the saints, that it may be of Him and for Him, and rebound to the glory of His own blessed name" (Brother in Australia).

"While on our holiday we saw plenty of 'Churchianity,' all of the flesh, so we had to walk instead of talk religion, and I felt we were being watched all the time. You can understand how much I felt my need of wisdom, to walk so that we would not compromise or be a stumbling block to others, and I was very conscious of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst. 'Be not righteous over much,' I came upon in the 'Studies,' and I saw that if Satan could not make us loose in our walk, he could make us very narrow" (Sister in Australia).

"Just a few lines to let you know how very much I appreciate having received the 'Studies' through another year, and to record our thankfulness for the spiritual food we have received through its pages" (Brother in Australia).

"Once more the time has come when we feel the Lord would have us contribute our small part to the ministry of the Word, and we know of no better way of spreading a sure testimony than through your 'Studies in the Scriptures.' What rich spiritual food for the soul! In this day of spiritual famine your writings are indeed a blessing to the soul-hungry children of God" (Brother in California).

"I have just received the 'Studies' for which I am very thankful. I am certainly glad for the immense value of the food I get from them. How they teach me to form a true estimate of myself, and to realize the necessity of an inward cleanliness and not merely external righteousness. I pray God may more and more bring me into subjection to Him in all things and apply the spiritual truths I find in the 'Studies' to my heart and life. May God bless them to others as He has to me. Thank you Brother Pink for them, and for your faithfulness in proclaiming what is so distasteful to the flesh" (Brother in Michigan).

"I have enjoyed reading the various articles in the 'Studies' and have derived much help therefrom. I enclose a P.O." (Brother in Scotland).

"When I got your first copies, not knowing what they were, I was afraid and looked upon them with suspicion. But when I began to read them carefully, I felt my heart burn within me. For a long time previously I was in a very low spiritual condition, I am sorry to say. I could not read God's Word or pray, except in a dead sort of way. As I read on I began to hope the Spirit had not

ceased to strive with me after all. I found I could utter once more the prayer that the love of Christ might be shed abroad in my heart and that I might behold His beauty” (Sister in Scotland). Thank God for reviving and restoring one of His children.

“Thank you for the ‘Studies.’ I receive much light from God’s Word in reading them, also much that causes heart searching. Christ is precious, and I do want to be conformed to His will. I have just been re-reading the articles on Divine Guidance, and realize how true it is that unless we know God’s Word we cannot do His will” (Sister in Lincoln).

Our purpose in publishing the above excerpts is to evoke praise unto the Lord, that in this cloudy and dark day He is still ministering to His own, giving Seed to the sower, and then blessing the same unto the eater. We know not why the mighty God should condescend to use one so feeble and unworthy—sufficient for us that He is pleased to do so. Our longing is to be used more widely, in sending “portions” to a large number of Christ’s scattered and hungry sheep. Will you not pray more definitely, dear reader, that *this* may be so, and that God will graciously fit and furnish the writer. [Please pray this for the *publisher* of Brother Pink’s *Studies*—Mt. Zion Publications—a Ministry of Mt. Zion Bible Church.] Also that He will continue to send us the needful funds. Quite a number of liberal contributors have recently been called Home. A greatly increased number of our readers in the U.S.A. are now unable to give as they did formerly. We do not receive one penny for our own labours—*all* that is sent in, goes to defray the expenses of publishing. We long to see more of the readers having a personal part in this “work of faith and labour of love,” that there may be “fruit” to their account in that day (Phi 4:17).—A. W. and V.E. Pink.

August

THE HOLY SPIRIT

29. The Spirit Teaching (Part 2)

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

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

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

Why is it that so many professing Christians change their view so easily and quickly? What is the reason there are so many thousands of unstable souls who are “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie

in wait to deceive” (Eph 4:14)? Why is it that this year they sit under a man who preaches the truth and claim to believe and enjoy his messages, while next year they attend the ministry of a man of error and heartily embrace his opinions? It must be because they were *never taught of the Spirit*. “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it” (Ecc 3:14). What the Spirit writes on the heart remains, “The anointing which ye have received of him *abideth in you*” (1Jo 2:27), and neither man nor devil can efface it.

Why is it that so many professing Christians are unfruitful? Month after month, year after year, they attend upon the means of grace and yet remain unchanged. Their store of religious information is greatly increased, their intellectual knowledge of the truth is much advanced, but their lives are not transformed. There is no denying of self, taking up their cross, and following a despised Christ along the narrow way of personal holiness. There is no humble self-abasement, no mourning over indwelling sin, no mortification of the same. There is no deepening love for Christ, evidenced by a running in the way of His commandments. Such people are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2Ti 3:7), i.e. *that* “knowledge” which is vital, experimental, affecting, and transforming. They are not *taught of the Spirit*.

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

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

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

Second, the Spirit reveals to the soul the utter futility of all efforts to save itself. The first effect of conviction in an awakened conscience is to attempt the rectification of all that now appears wrong in the conduct. A diligent effort is put forth to make amends for past offences, painful penances are readily submitted to, and the outward duties of religion are given earnest

attendance. But by the teaching of the Spirit the heart is drawn off from resting in works of righteousness which we have done (Ti 3:5), and this, by His giving increasing light, so that the convicted soul now perceives he is a mass of corruption within, that his very prayers are polluted by selfish motives, and that unless *God* will save him, his case is beyond all hope.

Third, the Spirit reveals to the soul the suitability and sufficiency of Christ to meet its desperate needs. It is an important branch of the Spirit's teaching to open the Gospel to those whom He has quickened, enlightened, and convicted, and to open their understanding and affections to take in the precious contents of the Gospel. "He shall glorify me" said the Saviour, "for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you" (Joh 16:14). This is His prime function—to magnify Christ in the esteem of "His own." The Spirit teaches the believer many things, but His supreme subject is *Christ*—to emphasize His claims, to exalt His person, to reveal His perfections, to make Him superlatively attractive. Many things in nature are very beautiful, but when the sun shines upon them, we appreciate their splendour all the more. Thus it is when we are enabled to view Christ in the light of the Spirit's teaching.

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

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

92. Divine Chastisement (12:11)

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

"One of the platitudes of the present day is that religion is not a gloomy, but a cheerful thing. Although it is easy to see what was meant by him who first opposed this assertion, either to morbid and self-assumed gloom, or to the ignorant representation of the world. Yet as it is generally understood, nothing can be less true. Blessed are they that mourn. Woe unto you that laugh. Narrow is the way. If any man will serve Me, let him take up his cross, and follow Me. He

that seeketh his life shall lose it. Although the Christian anoints his head and washes his face, he is always fasting. The will has been broken by God, by wounding or bereaving us in our most tender point. The flesh is being constantly crucified. We are not born to be happy either in this world or in our present condition, but the reverse—to be unhappy—nay, to try constantly to be dead to self and the world, that the spirit may possess God, and rejoice in Him.

“As there is a false and morbid asceticism, so there is also a false and pernicious tendency to cover a worldly and shallow method of life under the phrase of ‘religion being joyous and no enemy to cheerfulness.’ To take a very simple and obvious instance. What is meant by a ‘cheerful, pleasant Sunday?’ No doubt men have erred on the side of strictness and legalism, but is a ‘cheerful Sunday’ one in which there is much communion with God in prayer and meditation on God’s Word, much anticipation of the joys of heaven in praise and fellowship with the brethren? Alas! too many understand by a cheerful Sunday a day in which the spiritual element is reduced to a minimum” (Adolph Saphir, 1831-1891).

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

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb 12:11). In this verse, the apostle concludes his discussion of that theme which is now so unwelcome to the majority of professing Christians. Therein he brings to a close all that he had said concerning those disciplinary afflictions which an all-wise God brings upon His people in this life, His gracious design in the same, and the duty incumbent upon them to receive these in a right spirit. He sums up his argument by balancing the good over against the evil, the future over against the present, the judgment of faith over against the feelings of the flesh.

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

happy issue. There are four things told us in the text about chastisement as it is viewed by human reason.

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

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

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

The case of Jacob is much to the point and should guard us against following his foolish example. After Joseph had been removed from his doting father, and when he thought he had lost Simeon too, viewing things in the light of “the present,” he petulantly said, “All these things are against me” (Gen 42:36). Such is often the mournful plaint which issues from our short-sighted unbelief. But later, Jacob discovered his mistake, and found that all those things had been working together for good to himself and his loved ones. Alas, we are so impatient and impetuous, so occupied with the present, that we fail to look forward and by faith anticipate the happy sequel. Then, too, the effects which afflictions have upon the old man, *disqualify* us to estimate them aright. If my heart is palpitating, if my mind is agitated, and my soul be cast down, then I am in no fit state to judge the quality and blessedness of divine afflictions. No, chastenings

for the present do not “seemeth to be joyous, but grievous” (Heb 12:11)—that is because we take such a short-sighted view of them and fail to look forward with the eyes of faith and hope.

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

They are not joyous in *the form* they assume. When the Lord smites, He does so in a tender place, that we may feel the smart of it. They are not joyous in *the force* of them. Oftentimes we are inclined to say, If the trial had not been quite so severe, or the disappointment had not been so great, I could have endured it. God puts just so much bitter herbs into our cup as to make the draught unpleasant. They are not joyous in *the time* of them. We always think they come at the wrong season. If it were left to our choosing, they would never come, but if we *must* have them, we would choose the time when they are the least grievous and thus miss their blessing. Nor are they joyous in *the instruments* used, “If it were an enemy, then I could have borne it,” said David, see Psa 55:12. That is what we all think. O if my trial were not just *that*! Poverty I could endure, but not reproach and slander. To have lost my own health would have been a hard blow, but I could have borne it, but the removal of that dear child, the light of my eyes, how can I ever rejoice again? Have you not heard brethren speak thus?

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

But let it be pointed out that these reasonings are *only* “seeming.” The Christian, by grace, eventually triumphs. Faith looks up at the cloud (though it is often very late in doing so) and says, The chastisement was not as severe as it might have been, certainly it was not as severe as I deserved, and truly it was nothing in comparison to what the Saviour suffered for me. O let faith expel carnal reason, and say, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” But note carefully that this is only “*while* we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen” (2Co 4:18). For much in the above four points the writer acknowledges his indebtedness to a sermon by Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) on the same verse.

“Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb 12:11). This is what the apostle sets over against the estimate of carnal reason and the feelings of our natural senses. Medicine may not be a pleasant thing to take, but if it be blest by God, the renewed health it gives is good compensation. The pruned vine at the end

of the winter presents a sorry appearance to the eye, but its heavily-laden branches in the autumn vindicates the gardener's efforts. Did not the "afterward" prove to Jacob that his doleful reasonings were quite unwarranted? Job squirmed under the rod, as well he might, but was not his end more prosperous than his beginning? Thank God for this "Nevertheless afterward."

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

Not all men are the gainers by afflictions, nor are Christians so always. Many seek to flee from trials and troubles, instead of being "exercised" thereby. Others are callous and do not yield, as Hebrews 12:5 intimates, they "despised" the chastenings of the Lord. There are some who imagine that, when visited with affliction, it is a display of courage if they refuse to be affected. They count it weakness to mourn over losses and weep over sorrows. But such an attitude is altogether un-Christian. Christ wept, and again and again we are told that He "groaned." Such an attitude is also foolish to the last degree, for it is calculated to counteract the very design of afflictions, and only calls for severer ones to break our proud spirits. It is no mark of weakness to acknowledge that we *feel* the strokes of an *Almighty* arm.

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

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

1. The *conscience* needs to be "exercised." There must be a turning unto the Sender of our trials, and a seeking from Him of the meaning and message of them. "There was a famine in the

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. *Love* must be “exercised.” It is the Father’s *love* which chastens us (Heb 12:5). Then ought not we to love Him in return for His care and patient training of us? Instead of doubting His wisdom or questioning His goodness, there should be an affectionate gratitude flowing out to the One who is seeking nought but our welfare. “We can never find any benefit in chastenings, unless we are *exercised* by them, that is, unless all our graces are stirred up by them to a holy, constant exercise” (John Owen, 1616-1683)—how different that, from the fatalistic inertia of many hyper-Calvinists!

What we have sought to bring out above is the fact that spiritual “fruit” *is not* the natural or spontaneous effect of affliction. Nay, have we not observed that few of those who suffer severe

financial reverses, heavy domestic bereavements, or personal bodily pain, are, spiritually, the gainers thereby. Yea, do we need to look any further than ourselves to perceive how little we have learned by and profited from past trials? And the cause is plain—we were *not duly exercised* thereby. May this word abide with each of us for the future.

What is meant by “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Heb 12:11)? If we took this expression by itself, it would signify *the effects* of righteousness, the fruit which righteousness itself brings forth. But in our text it is chastenings or afflictions which are specifically mentioned as producing this fruit. It is the Spirit tranquilizing and purifying the heart. “Righteousness” in our text is parallel with “His holiness” in verse 10. It may be summed up in the mortification of sin and the vivification of vital godliness. It is called the “*peaceable* fruit” because it issues in the taming of our wild spirits, the quieting our restless hearts, the more firmly anchoring of our souls. But this only comes when we truly realize that it is the Father’s *love* which has afflicted us. May the Spirit of God grant us all “exercised” hearts, so that we shall daily search ourselves, examine our ways, and be stripped of all that is displeasing to Him.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

44. His Exemplary Prayer

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

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

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

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

We cannot forbear from inserting a word of warning at this point concerning many of the so-called “prayer meetings” of this degenerate day. In our “Sound the Alarm” articles (some time ago), we urged our readers to separate themselves from those “churches” where Christ is dishonoured by false doctrine, by fleshly attractions, by worldly devices for raising money, by refusing to maintain a Scriptural discipline. Some of God’s people are more or less “outside the (apostate) camp,” yet feel free to attend undenominational “prayer meetings.” Alas, they little realize the spiritual dangers (diseases) to which they expose themselves, and the likelihood of their becoming infected by the evil example set before them. The “prayers” (?) they will hear, are, for the most part, highly insulting to the Lord—how can it be otherwise, when they issue from those who sit under erroneous teaching and are mixed up with the Laodicean abominations of the day.

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

Realizing his own nothingness and unworthiness (2Sa 7:18), viewing the future glories assured him (2Sa 7:19), knowing there was nothing in himself which merited any such blessings, David traces them to their true cause, “For thy word’s sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things” (2Sa 7:21). It is the *personal* “Word” which he had in mind, Him of whom it is declared, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the

Word was God” (Joh 1:1). It was an acknowledgment “for *Christ’s* sake” Thou hast so honoured me! “And according to thine own heart” signifies, according to His gracious counsels, out of His own mere good pleasure. Yes, those, and those alone, are the springs of all God’s dealings with us. He blesses His people for the sake of His beloved Son, “according to the riches of his grace” and “according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself” (Eph 1:7, 9).

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

God’s greatness should be duly acknowledged by us when we seek an audience with the Majesty on High. It is but ascribing to Him the glory which is His due. Prayer is reduced to a very low level if it is to be confined unto the presenting of requests. The soul needs to be so absorbed with the divine perfections that the worshipper will exclaim, “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Exo 15:11). God’s supreme excellency is to be reverently and freely owned by us. It was by Solomon, “LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath” (1Ki 8:23). It was by Jehoshaphat, “O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?” (2Ch 20:6). It was by Jeremiah, “Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O LORD; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?” (Jer 10:6-7). What examples are these for us to take to heart. The more we heartily acknowledge God’s greatness, the more likely is He to answer our requests.

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

Fourth, *the covenant of grace is celebrated*. “For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, LORD, art become their God” (2Sa 7:24). In light of the whole context, it is evident that the *spiritual* “Israel” is here in view, contemplated as being taken into covenant relationship with the triune JEHOVAH. For, whenever a people is said to be *God’s* people, and He avows Himself as their God, it is the covenant relationship which is in view. Thus it was in the promise to Abraham, “And I will establish my covenant between me and

thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee” (Gen 17:7). Thus it is under the new covenant, “I will be to them *a God*, and they shall be to *me a people*” (Heb 8:10). It greatly encourages and emboldens the praying soul to bear this in mind.

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

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

“Do as thou hast said” (2Sa 7:25). Faith has no other foundation to rest upon but the Word of God. One of God’s chief ends in giving us His Word was that His people might appropriate the same unto themselves (Joh 20:31, 1Jo 5:13). Nothing honours Him more than for us to count upon His making it good to us (Rom 4:20). Now whatever may be our case, there is something in the Word exactly suited thereto, and it is our privilege to lay hold of the same *and plead it* before God. Are we groaning under sin’s defilement? then plead Isaiah 1:18. Are we bowed down with a sense of our backslidings? then plead Jeremiah 3:22. Do we feel so weak as to have no strength for the performance of duty? then plead Isaiah 40:29-31. Are we perplexed as to our path and in urgent need of divine guidance? then plead Proverbs 3:6 or James 1:5. Are you sorely harassed with temptation? then plead 1 Corinthians 10:13. Are you destitute and fearful of starving to death? then plead Philippians 4:19. Reverently urge the promise and plead, “Do as thou has said” (2Sa 7:25).

Sixth, *the supreme desire—that God might be glorified*. “And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee” (2Sa 7:26-27). This must be the supreme desire and the chief in all our praying, “Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1Co 10:31). The prayer which Christ has given for our pattern begins with “Hallowed be thy name,” and ends with “thine is the glory” (Mat 6:9,13). The Lord Jesus ever practiced what He preached, “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say?...Father, *glorify thy name*” (Joh 12:27-28). So too at the beginning of His High Priestly prayer, “Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee”

(Joh 17:1). O that more of His Spirit may possess us, that the honour of God may be our great concern, His glory our constant aim.

Seventh, *a final pleading for God to make good His Word*. “And now, O Lord GOD, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant: therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O Lord GOD, hast spoken it: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever” (2Sa 7:28-29). David built his hopes upon the fidelity of God, “I entreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me *according to thy word*” (Psa 119:58)—I desire no more, I expect no less. We may be bold to ask for all God has engaged to give. As good old Matthew Henry (1662-1714) said, “It is by turning God’s promises into petitions that they are turned into performances.” How necessary it is then that we should diligently acquaint ourselves with the Scriptures, so that we ask not “amiss” (Jam 4:3). How necessary that the Word dwell in us richly, that we may act in faith, nothing doubting.

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

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

3. The Noahic (Completed)

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

See here also the aboundings of God’s mercy in proceeding with us by way of a *covenant*, binding Himself with a solemn oath that He would never again destroy the earth by water. He might well have exempted the world from this calamity, and yet never have *told* men that He would thus act. Had He not granted such assurance, the remembrance of the deluge would have been like a sword of terror suspended over their heads. But in His great goodness, the Lord sets the mind of His creatures at rest upon this score, by promising not to repeat the flood. Thus does He deal with His people, “That by two immutable things [His revealed purpose of grace and His

covenant oath], in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have *a strong consolation*, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb 6:18).

“‘I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake’ (Gen 8:21), was the word of God to Noah, when accepting the first offering presented to Him on the purified earth. It is, no doubt, to be understood relatively—not as indicating a *total* repeal of the evil, but only a mitigation of it—yet such a mitigation as would render the earth a much less afflicted and more fertile region than it had been before. This again indicated that, in the estimation of heaven, the earth had now assumed a new position, that by the action of God’s judgment upon it, it had become hallowed in His sight, and was in a condition to receive tokens of the divine favour, which had formerly been withheld from it” (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874). We pointed out the mystical significance of Genesis 8:21 in last month’s article.

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

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

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

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

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

First, it is of *God’s* ordering, “I do set my bow in the cloud” (Gen 9:13). So the covenant of grace is of God’s ordering, “I have made a covenant with my chosen” (Psa 89:3). Though it be our duty to “take hold of” the covenant (Isa 56:4) and to come under engagements through the grace thereof, yet *we* have no part in appointing or ordering it. The covenant of grace could no more have been made by man, than he can form a bow in the clouds. Second, the bow was set in the clouds upon God’s smelling a sweet savour in Noah’s sacrifice. So that covenant of grace is founded upon and sealed with the blood of the Lamb—a reminder thereof being set before us every time we sit down to partake of the Lord’s supper. Third, the rainbow is a divine security that the waters should return no more to destroy the earth. So the covenant of grace [everlasting covenant] guarantees against the deluge of God’s wrath, so that it shall never return again to destroy any soul that by faith flees to Christ, Isaiah 54:9.

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

Seventh, as the rainbow is a security against an universal deluge, so it is also a prognostic of refreshing showers of rain to the thirsty earth. So the bow of the covenant which encircles the throne of God, Revelation 4:3, not only secures against vindictive wrath, but gives assurance of the rain—the Spirit’s influences. Eighth, the visible appearance of the rainbow is but of a short continuance, for usually it appears only for a few minutes, and then vanishes. So the sensible and lively views which the believer gets of the covenant of grace are usually of brief duration. Ninth, although the rainbow disappears, and that for a long while together, yet we do not conclude therefrom that God’s covenant is broken, or that a flood will come and destroy the earth. So too the saint may not now be favoured with a sensible sight of the covenant of grace, yet the remembrance of former views thereof will keep the soul from fears of wrath. For these nine points we are indebted to a sermon by Ebenezer Erskine (1680-1754), preached about 1730.

The following paragraph is quoted from our work “Gleanings in Genesis,” written nearly twenty years ago. “There are many parallels between the rainbow and God’s grace. As the rainbow is the joint-product of storm and sunshine, so grace is the unmerited favour of God appearing on the dark background of the creature’s sin. As the rainbow is the effect of the sun shining on the drops of rain in a cloud, so divine grace is manifested by God’s love shining through the blood shed by our blessed Redeemer. As the rainbow is the telling out of the varied hues of the white light, so the ‘*manifold* grace of God’ (1Pe 4:10) is the ultimate expression of God’s heart. As nature knows nothing more exquisitely beautiful than the rainbow, so heaven itself knows nothing that surpasses in loveliness the wondrous grace of God. As the rainbow is the union of heaven and earth—spanning the sky and reaching down to the ground—so grace in the one Mediator has brought together God and man. As the rainbow is a public sign of God hung out in the heavens that all may see it, so ‘the grace of God that bringeth salvation *hath appeared to all men*’ (Ti 2:11). Finally, as the rainbow has been displayed throughout all the past forty centuries, so *in the ages to come* God will show forth ‘the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus’ (Eph 2:7).”

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

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

“And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald” (Rev 4:3). The canopy of God’s throne is a rainbow. We understand this vision in Revelation 4 to have immediate reference unto the glorious exercise of divine grace under the New Testament economy. There is a manifest allusion in it to Genesis 9. It signifies that God deals with His people according to *His covenant engagements*. Its emerald or green colour denotes that, because of the faithfulness of Him who sits upon the throne of grace, His covenant is ever the same, ever fresh, without any shadow of turning. “Its surrounding the throne denoted that the holiness, and justice of God, and all His dispensations as the Sovereign of all worlds, had respect to His covenant of peace and engagements of love, which He had ratified to His believing people, and harmonized with them” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

Thus the Noahic Covenant served to bring out in a new light, and establish on a firmer basis, the unfailing faithfulness of JEHOVAH and the immutability of His purpose. An assurance to that effect was specially needed just after the flood, for it was over that basic truth the judgment of the deluge had seemed to cast a shadow. But the promises made to Noah, solemnly given in covenant form, and sealed by the token of the rainbow, effectually re-established confidence, and stands out still, after all these many centuries, as one of the grand events in God’s dealings with men—assuring us that, however the sins of the world may provoke the justice of God, the purpose of His grace unto His chosen people stands unalterably sure.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

5. Its Solution (Completed)

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

Inasmuch as all men were given a holy nature—created into the image and likeness of God—in their representative and root, to be transmitted to them by him, *before* the law was given to Adam, it follows that the law requires a holy nature from each of us, and pronounces a curse whenever it finds the opposite. Though we are actually born into this world in a state of corruption and filth (Eze 16:3-6, etc.), yet the law will not abate its just demands upon us. In consequence of the sin which indwells us—which is so much a part and parcel of ourselves that

everything we do is defiled thereby—we are thoroughly unable to render unto the law that obedience which it requires. For while we are alienated from the life of God, it is impossible that any outward acts of compliance with the law's statutes can proceed from those principles which it alone can approve of, namely, disinterested love and faith unfeigned. Consequently, the state of the natural man, considered in himself, is entirely beyond hope.

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

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

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

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

“against thee...have *I* sinned” (Psa 51:4). Paul himself concludes Romans 7 by saying, “O wretched man that *I* am!”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

First, a “pure heart” is one which has experienced “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Ti 3:5). That takes place at the new birth and is maintained by the Spirit throughout the Christian’s life. All that this involves we cannot now state at any length. But negatively, it includes the purifying of the believer’s understanding, so that it is no longer fatally

blinded by Satan, but is supernaturally illumined by the Spirit. In consequence, the vanity of worldly things and the excellency of spiritual things is now perceived. The mind is, in great measure, freed from the pollution of error, and this, by the shining in of the light of God's truth. It includes, negatively, the cleansing of the affections, so that sin is no longer loved but loathed, and God is no longer shrunk from and avoided, but sought after and desired.

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

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

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

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

SELF-CRUCIFIXION

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

I. The class of persons here mentioned—“*they that are Christ’s*” (Gal 5:24). Clearly this descriptive statement does not include all men. It is not the entire human race, but a portion thereof. Who and what are they? The expression is intended to embrace the entire family of God—at least, such as are at any given time manifestively so. These are all Christ’s, and that for four different reasons.

First, because they were all given to Christ by His Father. This was in eternity, before the worlds were framed. Hence Jesus says, “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me” (Joh 17:6), and again, “Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him” (Joh 17:2). and again, “Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me” (Isa 8:18), Then, as God the Father gave them to Him, they must be His, hence He calls them “My sheep.” “They that are Christ’s.”

Second, because He Himself has purchased them. They are not only His by eternal and sovereign donation, He has also bought them, redeemed them, paid the full price for them. What we purchase we are apt to consider our own property, especially if we pay a high price for it. And if any person tries to take from us anything so purchased, we style such a person a thief or a robber, and we take great pains to secure our property against the attacks of men of that description. Jesus is almighty to protect His flock, and therefore can confidently say, for the comfort of them all, “No man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand” (Joh 10:29). He has redeemed them unto God by His blood, “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev 5:9)—redeemed them not “with corruptible things, as silver and gold” (1Pe 1:18), but with His own precious blood, “as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot” (1Pe 1:19). “They that are Christ’s” (Gal 5:24).

Third, because the Holy Spirit has brought each of them unto Him. The apostle is speaking not of those “that are Christ’s” according to God’s decree, who have not yet been quickened from the death of sin, but of those who have been thus quickened, for there comes a day in the earthly life of every one of these for bringing them unto Christ, according to that word of His own, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me” (Joh 6:37). And again, “Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me” (Joh 6:45). A point of time arises when they hear the Word of God with power, and “with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven” (1Pe 1:12). They are thus made to see their sinnership, to cry for mercy, to perceive the beauty that is in Christ and His salvation, and its exact suitability to their case. This brings them unto Christ, being led in spirit by the Holy Spirit, that they may find in Him “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1Co 1:30). “They that are Christ’s” (Gal 5:24).

Fourth, because they have each given themselves unto Him. Thus they are Christ’s by a fourfold right and “bound up in the bundle of life” (1Sa 25:29) with Him by a fourfold cord. His

people are all made “willing in the day of his power” (Psa 110:3). They gladly surrender themselves unto Him, they cheerfully take Him for their Lord and Master, wish to have the honour of being His disciples, and desire to prove their love to Him by obeying Him in His ordinances, and in all the precepts of His Word. Their language, therefore is

*“Chosen in Christ ere time began,
I’d choose Thee in return”
“They that are Christ’s.” Let us consider—*

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

First, what are we to understand by the term “flesh”? This does not mean the body, as a pure object of God’s creation, which is “fearfully and wonderfully made,” beautifully contrived, admirably adapted to all its surroundings, and which possesses pure appetites and desires, with which it was endowed by its wise and benevolent Creator, but rather what in Scripture is styled “the carnal man.” This is “the old man,” which is “corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,” and is, therefore, to be “put off” by the believer in Christ (Eph 5:14). It is mental as well as bodily, for we read of a “carnal mind” which is “enmity against God” (Rom 8:7). “Therefore,” says the apostle, when writing to the Corinthians, “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (2Co 7:1). Both body and mind, though originally good, have, through the fall and also through the habit of sin, become corrupt in nature, and depraved in taste, appetite, desire.

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

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

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

(b) *By constant soul-discipline and self-denial*. The Redeemer says that no man can possibly be His disciple who does not “deny himself, and take up his cross daily” (Luk 9:23). All that is carnal in him is to be continually denied, by the new birth he has been sanctified, and made to possess a holy nature. This is totally contrary to the “old man” of sin. Hence the inward conflict. But for our encouragement, we are told, “Sin shall not have dominion over you.”

The apostle does not say “the flesh” is *dead*. No, but it is “crucified,” and therefore dying—fastened, as it were, to the cross, so that it can no longer *rule* in the heart and life as it once did, though it often, alas! exerts considerable influence. But if not dead in the believer, it is doomed and already dying, and the believer is to reckon himself dead to it (Rom 6:11). The verb here is not in the perfect tense (Greek) as in Galatians 2:20. That was done *once for all* and by Christ for all them “that are Christ’s” (Gal 5:24), and the effects remain forever. Here the aorist is employed, and the meaning is that the believer has the flesh still, but in a state of crucifixion, as saith the apostle in 1 Corinthians 9:27—“I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.” In other places this self-crucifixion is called *mortifying* the deeds of the body (Rom 8:12-14; Col 3:5). That which is mortified is dead. The Christian life is one of continued mortification as regards the old and corrupt nature, and the more we die to sin, the more we live to God.

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

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

Now “they that are Christ’s” (Gal 5:24) have all these evil passions and desires like other people, but with this great difference—they have them in a state of crucifixion, mortification, abeyance. They are not delivered entirely from them yet, though they shall be.

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

But even now they are not so under the dominion of the carnal nature as they once were. Sin does not *reign* in their heart and life as it once did, though frequently, through infirmity, and sometimes through lack of watchfulness, it exercises sufficient influence to cause much anxiety, doubt, and sorrow of heart. But the time is hastening on when they shall be “delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom 8:21). Is this your hope? Is sin a *burden* to you? Then you may look forward with the feelings of the poet, when he sang—

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

SANCTIFIED AFFLICTION AND PRIDE CONTRASTED

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

A full account of the circumstances in Hezekiah’s experience, to which our text refers, will be found in 2 Kings 20, and a fuller still in Isaiah 38 and 39. It is thought that at that time he was about thirty-nine or forty years of age, and that the sickness and deliverance took place at the very time when Sennacherib, by Rabshakeh, was blaspheming JEHOVAH, and threatening the destruction of Jerusalem (compare Isa 38:6 with 37:35). Thus the afflicted king had trouble upon trouble, which God so often mysteriously permits—so much so that it has become a common adage that “misfortunes never come singly.” To hear the blatant blasphemies of Rabshakeh—to be reviled by him in the sight and hearing of the populace, and to read his insolent and threatening letter—surely these were troubles indeed. But to be presently confined to his bed with a mortal disease, and to be afflicted with a most painful carbuncle, or inflamed ulcer—this was “sorrow upon sorrow” (Phi 2:27).

Yet it is refreshing to discover the fact that these accumulated sorrows do not work repining, rebellion, or despair in the heart of the afflicted monarch, but lead to self-examination, tenderness of heart, and earnest supplication. Having the testimony, through grace, of “a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Act 24:16), i.e., as regards outward sin, he is comforted by the assurance that his afflictions have not been brought upon him by his own misconduct, but have come in the order of God’s inscrutable providence, therefore he feels that he can “commit his way unto the LORD” (see Psa 37:5). Yet he “weeps sore” (Jer 13:17)—not from a sense of unpardoned sin, for he acknowledges that God has cast all his sins behind His back, but because he yearns for life, as is natural. This might be from a longing hope, like that of Simeon, to see the Shiloh, or at least to be progenitor of Messiah (Isa 38:11), for as yet he appears to be childless

(Isa 39:7). Or his desire might be simply not to be “cut off” in the prime of his life, and before he had finished his projected reforms in the kingdom. So it would seem David felt when he wrote Psalm 39:13, “O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.”

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

But alas! how soon a change comes over him! “Lord, what is man?” (Psa 144:3). Truly, “the best of men are but men at the best.” How vastly different do we find even good and gracious men under different circumstances! King Hezekiah was in a far better and safer state of mind when taunted by the cruel words of Sennacherib, the city being besieged and threatened by his troops, and when tossed upon a bed of pain, afflicted with an incurable disease, than when visited and congratulated by the heathen emissaries of the king of Babylon. They came, we are told, “To inquire of the wonder that was done in the land” (2Ch 32:31). Their bringing “letters and a present” was perhaps to persuade Hezekiah to form an alliance with their king against the Assyrians. The name *Merodach* signifies “a warlike god,” similar to the Roman “Mars,” and *Baladan* means “Bel is his lord.” We read that “Hezekiah was glad at them,” and showed them all his treasures (Isa 39:2). The reason is given in our text, “his heart was lifted up” (2Ch 32:25), and the cause is stated in verse 31, “God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.” This discipline was necessary, the Lord saw that. He was, no doubt, pleased in his sickness not to be conscience-accused, because of any outward delinquency, and he had “walked in truth, and with a perfect heart,” (see 2Ki 20:3), i.e., in the sense of *sincerity*. But it was necessary he should “know *all* that was in his heart” (2Ch 32:31)—worldly mindedness, love of earthly treasures, pride, and forgetfulness of God. What believer has not these corruptions, and a thousand others, to lament? And so it pleased God to withdraw from Hezekiah for a time His supporting grace, as in the case of Peter—not that he might fall into sin, although, as a necessary consequence, he did so, but to teach him a valuable and life-long lesson.

Oh, how deceitful is the heart, even in a child of grace, who has been divinely renewed by the Spirit! Here was a man but just recovered from a most dangerous sickness, having been by that disease sorely tried and exercised in soul, and by it, through grace, brought very near to God, now “lifted up” with carnal pride. Can this indeed be the same man that has been miraculously and speedily healed, who has received a grant of fifteen years of added life from the mouth of the Almighty, confirmed by another miracle? Can this be he who penned by divine inspiration that noble Psalm, and who has so recently been singing His thanksgivings in the temple? What beautiful, spiritual utterances are discoverable in this “writing”? Is this the man who said, “We will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD”? (Isa 38:20). It seems quite incredible, and yet, believers, does it not exactly tally with our own experience? Such heavenly raptures on the Sabbath, such carnality of heart all the week—one hour praying, and trusting, and loving, and the next rebelling against God and doubting His

promises. Alas! “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer 17:9). How often are we obliged to say, with Paul, “When I would do good, evil is present with me”! (Rom 7:21). This feeling caused Erskine to pen these strange lines—

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

Hezekiah is flattered and “puffed up” in mind by the visit and the present and congratulations of the ambassadors, who had “come from a far country, even from Babylon” (2Ki 20:14), and in the pride of his heart, showed them all his “precious things.” The man who was so strong in spirit when weak in body, now that his body is strong again, is deplorably weak in spirit. He proudly and vainly talks to these idolaters about his earthly possessions, but says not one word about his soul-experiences under sickness, the wonderful mercy of God which he had experienced in answer to prayer, and the miracle that had been wrought to establish his faith. Oh, what a grand opportunity would this have been to magnify and praise the true God in the hearing of idolaters! There was no other god who could answer prayer and work in this marvelous manner. Here is a splendid opportunity utterly lost—an opportunity which, judging by his recent experience and language, we should have thought Hezekiah just the man to embrace. What folly may a gracious person be guilty of—aye, terrible sin—if God leaves him a prey to the corruptions of his own heart.

Dear fellow-believers, what need have we to “Watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation; for the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”! (see Mat 26:41). Verily, “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool” (Pro 28:26), and as one has well observed, “He that trusts in his grace is no better.” Our trust must not be in ourselves, nor even in grace already received, but solely in the Lord of all grace. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1Co 10:12). Lord, help us continually to cry, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe” (Psa 119:117).

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

*“Good when He gives—supremely good—
No less when He denies.”*

So holy Job, “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away” (Job 1:21), etc. So the Shunammite, “It is well” (2Ki 4:26). So Eli, “It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good” (1Sa 3:18). Here, then, is the triumph, after all, of faith over sense, of the spirit over the flesh.

But oh, Christless sinner, if God thus judges His own believing and worshipping people, do you think He will spare the wicked? If He thus terribly shows His displeasure on account of one sin in a child of grace, can you suppose that He will wink at all your unpardoned iniquities? Believe me, *He cannot—He will not*. He bears long with you, but by and by, He will certainly whet His “glittering sword” (Deu 32:41). and then it will be awful work indeed! When He arises “to shake terribly the earth” (Isa 2:19), how will you stand? Hear what He says to you, “Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the LORD have spoken it, *and will do it*” (Eze 22:14). “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1Pe 4:17-18). Ah! where indeed? If God is thus displeased on account of one sin in the heart of a “vessel of mercy” what must be His feelings towards the “vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?” (Rom 9:22-23). The subject is awful to contemplate, beyond words to describe or even fancy to paint. “The LORD *trieth* the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul *hateth*. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup” (Psa 11:5-6). Oh, that you might “flee from the wrath to come!”

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

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

GRIEVANCES

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

Most of the complaints are purely imaginary, the mere suspicions of a soured mind, the workings of a proud unhumiliated heart, the heavings of a restless, fretful spirit. But it sometimes happens that this not very amiable person has a *real* ground of complaint—that some injury, not perhaps a great, but a substantial wrong, has been done him. Now he is a man with a grievance, a real, well-grounded grievance. And now he is happy. He is like a married woman who, after a

long series of disappointments, at last gives birth to a living child. She has now something to nurse, to look at, to press to her bosom, to show to her husband and friends. So our discontented friend has now a living grievance to nurse, to press to his bosom, to feed, and to show about. An imaginary wrong is like a still-born child—it cannot be nursed or shown about. Nobody will take it up, and though the mother pine over it, it must be put out of sight, buried, and forgotten. But the living child may prove to the mother a worse sorrow than all her previous disappointments. Better have no child, than an untoward one, better be ever barren, than bare a son to his mother's grief and bitterness (Pro 17:25).

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

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

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

Do you not feel how dark your mind is, and how long it is since you had a visit from Jesus? But why all this darkness, barrenness, and death? Is there not a cause? Do not these increase the more you brood over your wrongs? And should not this lead you to fear lest you be holding an enemy to God to your bosom? In nursing your grievance, could you see the real state of the case, you would find that you are nursing *enmity, pride, and self-righteousness*; that you are walking contrary to the spirit and the precepts of the Gospel; that you are acting against the mind and

example of Christ, who forgave his murderers; and yet you who call yourself a Christian, cannot forgive your brother! “Yes, but he has treated me so unkindly, so cruelly, so unjustly.” All the more reason why you should forgive him. “But he has acted so inconsistently.” Well, reprove him for it, but let not *his* sin be an occasion for *you* to sin too. I dare say you think you have more grace than he, for you are sure *you* would not have treated him as he has treated you. Then show the superiority of your grace by freely forgiving him, if you believe him to be a brother. But whether you have sufficient grace for this or not, take this friendly piece of advice, if you can—*do not nurse your grievance*—for depend upon it, you can only do so, to the eventual grief of your own soul, to the inflicting upon yourself of a deeper wrong than that from which you are suffering, and an injury worse than any that your worst enemy could inflict upon you.—From “The Gospel Standard,” 1864.

September

THE HOLY SPIRIT

30. The Spirit Cleansing (Part 1)

The title of this article may possibly surprise some readers, who have supposed that cleansing from sin is by the blood of Christ alone. Judicially it is so, but in connection with experimental purging, certain distinctions need to be drawn in order to a clearer understanding. Here, the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit is the efficient cause, the blood of Christ is the meritorious and procuring cause, faith's appropriation of the Word is the instrumental cause. It is by the Holy Spirit our eyes are opened to see and our hearts to feel the enormity of sin, and thus are we enabled to perceive our need of Christ's blood. It is by the Spirit we are moved to betake ourselves unto that "fountain" which has been opened for sin and for uncleanness. It is by the Spirit we are enabled to trust in the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice now that we realize what hell-deserving sinners we are. All of which is preceded by His work of regeneration whereby He capacitates the soul to see light in God's light and appropriate the provisions of His wondrous mercy.

It is now our purpose to trace out the various aspects of the Spirit's work in purging the souls of believers, for we do not wish to anticipate too much the ground we hope to yet cover in our articles upon "Sanctification," yet this present series of papers would be incomplete were we to pass by this important phase of the Spirit's operations. We shall therefore restrict ourselves unto a single branch of the subject, which is sufficiently comprehensive as to include in it all that we now feel led to say thereon, namely, that of *mortification*. Nor shall we attempt to discuss in detail the varied ramifications of this important truth, for if we are spared we hope someday ere very long to devote a series of articles to its separate consideration, for it is far too weighty and urgent to be dismissed with this brief notice of it.

"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). A most solemn and searching verse is this, and one which we greatly fear has very little place in present-day preaching. Five things in it claim attention. First, the persons addressed. Second, the awful warning here set before them. Third, the duty enjoined upon them. Fourth, the efficient Helper provided. Fifth, the promise made. Those here addressed are regenerated believers, Christians, as is evident from the whole context—the apostle denominates them "brethren" (Rom 8:12).

Our text, then, belongs to the Lord's own people, who "are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh" (Rom 8:12), rather are they "debtors" to Christ (who redeemed them) to live for His glory, "debtors" to the Holy Spirit (who regenerated them) to submit themselves to His absolute control. But if an apprehension of their high privilege (to please their Saviour) and a sense of their bounden duty (to Him who has brought them from death unto life) fail to move them unto godly living, perhaps an apprehension of their awful danger may influence them thereto, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die"—die spiritually, die eternally, for "life" and "death" in Romans always signifies far more than natural life and death. Moreover, to restrict "ye shall die" to physical dissolution would be quite pointless, for *that* experience is shared by sinners and saints alike.

It is to be noted that the apostle did not say "If ye *have* lived after the flesh ye shall die," for every one of God's children did so before He delivered them from the power of darkness and translated them into the kingdom of His dear Son. No, it is, "If ye live after the flesh" now. It is a continual course, a steady perseverance in the same, which is in view. To "live after the flesh" means to persistently follow the inclinations and solicitations of inward corruption, to be wholly under the dominion of the depravity of fallen human nature. To "live after the flesh" is to be in love with sin, to serve it contentedly, to make self-gratification the trade and business of life. It is by no means limited to the grosser forms of wickedness and crime, but includes as well the refinement, morality, and religiousness of the best of men, who yet give God no real place in their hearts and lives. And the wages of sin is *death*.

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" (Rom 8:13). That is a rule to which there is no exception. No matter what your experience or profession, no matter how certain of your conversion or how orthodox your belief, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap. 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 6:7-8). O the madness of men in courting eternal death rather than leave their sinful pleasures and live a holy life. O the folly of those who think to reconcile God and sin, who imagine they can please the flesh, and yet be happy in eternity notwithstanding. "How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her" (Rev 18:7)—so much as the flesh is gratified, so much is the soul endangered. Will you, my reader, for a little temporal satisfaction run the hazard of God's eternal wrath? Heed this solemn warning, fellow-Christian—God means what He says, "IF ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" (Rom 8:13).

Let us now consider the duty which is here enjoined, "do mortify the deeds of the body" (Rom 8:13). In this clause, "the body" is the same as "the flesh" in the previous one, they are equivalent terms for the corruption of nature. The emphasis is here placed upon the body because it is the tendency of indwelling sin to pamper and please our baser part. The soul of the unregenerate acts for no higher end than does the soul of a beast—to gratify his carnal appetites. The "deeds of the body," then, have reference not only to the outward actions, but also the springs from which they proceed. Thus, the task which is here assigned the Christian is to "mortify" or put to death the solicitations to evil within him. The life of sin and the life of grace are utterly inconsistent and repellent. We must die to sin in order to live unto God.

Now there is a threefold power in sin unto which we must die. First, its damning or condemning power, whereby it brings the soul under the wrath of God. This power it has from the law, for "the strength of sin is the law" (1Co 15:56). But blessed be God, the sentence of the divine law is no longer in force against the believer, for that was executed and exhausted upon the head of his Surety, consequently "we are delivered from the law" (Rom 7:6). Though sin may still

hale Christians before God, accuse them before Him, terrify the conscience and make them acknowledge their guilt, yet it cannot drag them to hell or adjudge them to eternal wrath. Thus, by faith in Christ sin is “mortified” or put to death as to its condemning power (Joh 5:24).

Second, sin has a ruling and reigning power, whereby it keeps the soul under wretched slavery and continual bondage. This reign of sin consists not in the multitude, greatness, or prevalence of sin, for all those are consistent with a state of grace, and may be in a child of God, in whom sin does not and cannot reign. The reign of sin consists in the inbeing of sin *unopposed by a principle of grace*. Thus, sin is effectually “mortified” in its reigning at the first moment of regeneration, for at the new birth a principle of spiritual life is implanted, and this lusteth against the flesh, opposing its solicitations, so that sin is unable to dominate as it would (Gal 5:17), and this breaks its tyranny. Our conscious enjoyment of this is dependent, mainly, upon our obedience to Romans 6:11.

Third, sin has an indwelling and captivating power, whereby it continually assaults the principle of spiritual life, beating down the Christian’s defenses, battering his armour, routing his graces, wasting his conscience, destroying his peace, and at last bringing him into a woeful captivity *unless it be mortified*. Corruption does not lie dormant in the Christian, though it reigns not supreme (because of a principle of grace to oppose it) yet it molests and often prevails to a very considerable extent. Because of this the Christian is called upon to wage a constant warfare against it—to “mortify” it, to struggle against its inclinations and deny its solicitations, to make no provision for it, to walk in the Spirit so that he fulfill not the lusts of the flesh.

Unless the Christian devotes all his powers to a definite, uncompromising, earnest, constant warfare upon indwelling sin—unless he diligently seeks to weaken its roots, suppress its motions, restrain its outward eruptions and actions, and seeks to put to death the enemy within his soul, he is guilty of the basest ingratitude to Christ. Unless he does so, he is a complete failure in the Christian life, for it is impossible that both sin and grace should be healthy and vigorous in the soul at the same time. If a garden be overrun with weeds, they choke and starve the profitable plants, absorbing the moisture and nourishment they should feed upon. So, if the lusts of the flesh absorb the soul, the graces of the Spirit cannot develop. If the mind be filled with worldly or filthy things, then meditation on holy things is crowded out. Occupation with sin deadens the mind for holy duties.

But who is sufficient for such a task? Who can expect to gain the victory over such a powerful enemy as indwelling sin? Who can hope to put to death that which defies every effort the strongest can make against it? Ah, were the Christian left entirely to himself the outlook would be hopeless, and the attempt useless. But thank God, such is not the case. The Christian is provided with an efficient Helper, “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1Jo 4:4). It is only “*through the Spirit*” we can, in any measure, successfully “mortify the deeds of the body.”

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

93. A Call to Steadfastness (12:12-13)

The didactic (teaching) portions of Scripture are very much more than abstract statements of truth. They are designed not only for the instructing of the mind, but also for the influencing of the heart. This is far too little recognised in our day, when the craving for information is so often divorced from any serious concern as to the *use* to be made of the same. This, no doubt, is one of the evil fruits borne by the modern school methods, where instead of seeking to *draw out* (the meaning of the word “educate”) and develop the mind of the pupil, he is made to “cram” or fill his head with a mass of facts and figures, most of which are of no service to him in later life. Not such is God’s method. His method of instruction is to set before us moral and spiritual principles, and then show us how to *apply* them in a practical way, inculcate a motive, and thereby call into exercise our inward faculties. Hence, the test of Christian knowledge is not how much we understand, but how far our knowledge is affecting our lives.

It is one thing to possess a clear intellectual grasp of the doctrines of grace, it is quite another to experience the grace of the doctrines in a spiritual way. It is one thing to believe the Scriptures are the inspired and inerrant Word of God, it is another for the soul to live under the awe of their divine authority, realizing that one day we shall be judged by them. It is one thing to be convinced that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, it is another to surrender to His sceptre and live in personal subjection to Him. What does it profit me to be convinced that God is omnipotent, unless I am learning to lean upon His mighty arm? What avail is it to me that I am assured of God’s omniscience unless the knowledge that His eye is ever upon me acts as a salutary restraint to my actions? What does it advantage me to know that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, unless I am making the acquirement of holiness my chief concern and aim!

That which has been pointed out above has to do with no obscure and intricate subject which lies far above the reach of the rank and file of the common people, but is plain, self-evident, simple. Alas, that our hearts are so little impressed by it and our consciences so rarely exercised over it. When we measure ourselves by *that* standard, have we not all of us much cause to hang our heads in shame? Our intellects are stored with Scripture truth, but how little are our lives molded thereby. Our doctrinal views are sound and orthodox, but how little we know experimentally of “the truth which is after godliness” (Ti 1:1). Has not the Saviour much ground for saying to both writer and reader “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say?” (Luk 6:46). O that we may be duly humbled over our sad failures.

The above reflections have been suggested by the *use* which the apostle makes in our text of the subject he had been discussing in the previous verses. His opening “Wherefore” denotes that he was now going to make a practical application unto those whom he was writing to of the exposition just given of the truth of divine chastisement. In this we may see him following out the course he pursued in all his epistles, and which the servants of God are required to emulate today. No matter what was the doctrine under consideration, the apostle always turned it to a practical end, as his oft-repeated “Therefore” and “Wherefore” intimate. Was he contending for the

Christians' emancipation from the ceremonial law, then he adds, "Stand fast *therefore* in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Gal 5:1). Was he opening up the glorious truth of resurrection, then he concludes with "*therefore*...be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1Co 15:58). Was he setting forth the blessed hope of Christ's return, then he finishes with "*Wherefore* comfort one another with these words" (1Th 4:18).

It is this which urgently needs to be laid to heart—the *use* we make of the precious truths which the Most High has so graciously revealed to us. That is (partly, at least) what the Saviour had in mind when He said, "Take heed therefore *how* ye hear" (Luk 8:18)—see to it that your hearts are duly affected, so that the truth will regulate all your conduct. It is not sufficient that I assume a reverent demeanor when attending the means of grace, that I pay close attention to what I hear. It is the assimilation of the same, so that I go forth and live under the power thereof, which is the all-important matter. The same is true of our reading. It is not the book which adds to my store of information, or which entertains and thrills, but the one which stirs me up to godly living, which proves the most helpful. So it is with our response to the Scriptures, it is not how many difficult passages do I have light upon, nor how many verses have I memorized, but how many of its commands and precepts am I honestly endeavouring to obey.

This is the keynote struck by the apostle in the verses which are now to engage our attention. He had thrown not a little light on the distressing circumstance in which the Hebrews then found themselves, namely, the bitter persecution they were encountering at the hands of their unbelieving countrymen. He had pointed out that so far from their afflictions being exceptional, and a warrantable ground for consternation, they were, in some form or other, the common portion of *all* God's people, while they are left in this scene. He had set before them some most blessed truths, which were well calculated to strengthen their faith, comfort their hearts, and raise their drooping spirits. He had given an exposition of the subjection of divine chastisement, such as must bring peace and consolation to all who mix faith therewith. He had silenced every objection which could well be made against the duty to which he had called them. And now he presses upon them the practical profit to which they must turn the doctrine inculcated.

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Heb 12:12-13). Here we have, first, the conclusion drawn from the preceding premises. Second, the several duties enjoined. Third, the reason by which they are enforced. The duties are expressed in figurative language, yet in such terms as the meaning is not difficult to perceive. The enforcing reason or motive for compliance is taken from the evil effects which a non-compliance of their duty would have upon others, which plainly inculcates the importance and value of personal example, and the influence which it exerts upon our fellows.

"Wherefore" means, in view of what has been said—because of the preceding considerations a certain course of conduct ought to follow. There is, we believe, a double reference in this opening "wherefore," namely an immediate and a remote one. Immediately, it connects with the preceding verse, the most important word of which is "exercised." The apostle was alluding again to the well-known Grecian "Games." In the gymnasium the instructor would challenge the youths to combat. He was an experienced man, and knew how to strike, guard, wrestle. Many severe blows would the combatants receive from him, but it was part of their training, preparing them for their future appearance in the public contests. The youth whose athletic frame was prepared for the coming great venture, would boldly step forward, willing to be "exercised" by his trainer, but he who shirked the trial and refused to encounter the master, received no help at his hands—but the fault was entirely his own.

This, it seems to us, is the figure carried forward in our text, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are *exercised* thereby. *Wherefore* lift up the hands which hang down” (Heb 12:11-12). The Christian who gives way before trial, who sinks under affliction, who sulks or repines beneath persecution, will bring forth none of the “peaceable fruit of righteousness.” If he “faints” under chastisement, if his hands become idle and his legs no longer capable of supporting him, a profitable use cannot be made of the tribulation through which he is called upon to pass. Then let him pull himself together, gird up the loins of his mind and “*endure* hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2Ti 2:3). Let his attitude be, Now is the time of my training, so I will seek to play the man. I will seek grace from God to muster all my faith and courage and valiantly wrestle with whatever opposes and oppresses me.

More remotely, our opening “Wherefore” looks back unto *all* that has been said in the previous verses. Hebrews 12 opens with a stirring call for God’s people to persevere in the course of Christian duty, to go forward in the spiritual life, no matter what impediments might stand in their way—to “run with patience [or perseverance] the race that is set before us,” drawing strength from the Christ for enablement (Heb 12: 1-2). Then he anticipated an objection. We are being sorely oppressed, tempted to renounce our profession, hounded by our unbelieving brethren. To this he replies, Consider your Master, who went before you in the same path of suffering (Heb 12:3). Bear in mind that your lot has not become extreme—ye have not yet been called upon to experience a martyr’s death (Heb 12:4). Furthermore, you are losing sight of that scriptural exhortation, “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord” (Heb 12:5). This led the apostle to open to them, in a most precious manner, the whole subject of divine chastisement. Let us present a brief summary of the same.

The trials through which the children of God are called upon to pass are not divine punishments, but gracious discipline designed for their good. We are expressly bidden not to faint beneath them (Heb 12:5). The rod is wielded not in wrath, but in tender solicitude, and is a manifestation not of God’s anger, but of His love (Heb 12:6). Our duty then is to “endure” chastening as becometh the children of God (Heb 12:7). To be without chastisement, so far from being an evidence of our spiritual sonship, would demonstrate we were not sons at all (Heb 12:8). Inasmuch as we gave reverence to our earthly parents when they corrected us, how much more ought we to be in subjection to our heavenly Father (Heb 12:9). God’s design in our afflictions is our profit, that by them we might become increasingly partakers of his holiness in an experimental way. Though these chastenings are unpleasant to flesh and blood, nevertheless “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” issues therefrom when we are suitably “exercised thereby” (Heb 12:11).

Now from these considerations a very obvious conclusion is drawn, and by them a bounden duty is enforced. In view of the great “cloud of witnesses” by which we are encompassed (Heb 12:1), seeing that the saints of other days—in themselves as weak, as sinful, as much oppressed by the world as we are—fought a good fight, kept the faith, and finished their course, let us gird ourselves for the contest and strain every effort to persevere in the path of duty. In view of the fact that our Leader, the Captain of our salvation, has left us such an example of heroic endurance (Heb 12:3), let us earnestly seek to follow His steps and acquit ourselves like men. Finally, because God Himself is the Author and Regulator of our trials—the severest of our chastenings proceed from a loving Father, seeking our good—then let us not be cast down by the difficulties of the way nor discouraged by the roughness of the path, but let us nerve ourselves to steadfastness in the faith and fidelity to our Redeemer.

Thus the coherence of our opening “Wherefore” is perfectly obvious and the duty it presses so plain that there cannot be misunderstanding. In view of all the above-mentioned considerations, and particularly in view of the fact that the most precious fruits issue from afflictions when we are duly “exercised” by them, then let us not be dejected in our minds nor faint in our spirits by reason thereof. As the champions in the public “Games” used their hands and arms to the very best of their ability, and as the runners in the races used their legs and knees to the best possible effect—and in case their hands and knees began to fail and flag, exerted their wills to the utmost to rouse up their members to renewed effort—so should we be very courageous, zealous, and active, and in case our hearts begin to fail us through multiplied discouragements, we must marshal all our resolution and strive prayerfully and manfully against giving way to despair.

“Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down” (Heb 12:12). The duty here enjoined is set forth in figurative language, but the meaning is none the less obvious because of the graphic metaphors used. The apostle transferred unto members of our physical body the condition in which the faculties of our souls are liable to fall under certain trials. For the hands to hang down and the knees to become feeble are figurative expressions, denoting the tendency to abandon the discharge of our Christian duty because of the opposition encountered. For the hands of a boxer or fencer to hang down means that his arms are become weary to the point of exhaustion. For the knees to be feeble signifies that through the protracted exertions of the runner his legs have been debilitated by their nervous energy being spent. The spiritual reference is to a decay in the Christian’s courage and resolution. Two evils produce this—despondency as to success—when hope is gone, effort ceases; weariness in the performance of duty.

This same figure is employed in other passages of Scripture. In Ezekiel 7:16-17 we read, “But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity. All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak as water.” Here the reference is to that inertia which is produced by poignant conviction of sin after a season of backsliding. Again, in Ezekiel 21:7, we are told, “When they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shalt answer, For the tidings; because it cometh: and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water,” where we behold the paralyzing effects of consternation in view of the tidings of sore judgment. But in our text, the reference is to the disheartenment caused by fierce opposition and persecution. Despair and becoming weary of well-doing are the two evils in all our afflictions which we most need to guard against. It is failure at this point which has led to so many scandalous backslidings and cursed apostacies. Such an exhortation as the one before us intimates that the Hebrews had either already given way to an enervating spirit of gloom or were in great danger of so doing.

Now, “It is the duty of all faithful ministers of the Gospel to consider diligently what failures or temptations their flocks are liable or exposed to, so as to apply suitable means for their preservation” (John Owen, 1616-1683). This is what the apostle is seen doing here. In view of the lethargy of the Hebrews, he exhorts them to “*lift up* the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees” (Heb 12:12). The word “lift up” signifies not simply to elevate, but to “rectify” or set right again, restoring them to their proper state, so as to apply them to duty. It was a call to steadfastness and resolute perseverance. Be not dejected in your minds nor faint in your spirits by reason of the present distress, nor be so terrified of the threatening danger as to give up hope and be completely overwhelmed. Under sore trial and affliction, persecution and the prospect of yet sorer opposition, the temptation is for the heart to sink within us and the path of duty to be forsaken.

“Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees”—literally, “hands which are loose” or slack, dangling inert. “Feeble knees” is still stronger in the Greek, being almost the equivalent of palsied knees—enervated knees which need bandages to brace them. In view of which he calls them to arouse themselves, to stir up all their graces unto exercise, to refuse taking the line of least resistance, to renew their courage and bear up under their trials. Resolution will accomplish much to stimulate jaded nerves and flagging energies. The Christian life, from start to finish, is a struggle, a fight, an unceasing warfare against foes within and without, and only he who endures to the end shall receive the crown of life. To give way to dejection is harmful, to sink into despair is dangerous, to quit the discharge of our duties is the fore-runner of apostasy.

But the question arises *how* are we to set about this particular task? To say that we are helpless in ourselves affords no encouragement. In fact to affirm that the Christian is utterly impotent is to deny that there is any vital difference between himself and those who are dead in sins. Christians in their greatest weakness have *some* strength, some grace, some spiritual life—and where there is some life, there is some ability to stir and move. And God is pleased to assist where there is *sincere endeavour*. The believer is responsible to arm his mind against discouragements by considering God’s design in them, and the blessed fruits which issue from trials and afflictions when we are duly exercised by them. Of what value is a clear intellectual grasp of the nature and end of divine chastisements unless it produces a practical effect upon the heart and life? Let the distressed saint ponder anew the blessed considerations set before him in Hebrews 12:1-11 and find in them motives and incentives unto renewed courage, fidelity, and perseverance.

Let the hope of ultimate victory nerve you. Look forward to the goal. The determination to reach home is a powerful stimulus to a weary traveler. Earnestly endeavour to counteract every disposition to faintness and despondency by viewing your trials and persecutions as a part of God’s discipline for your soul. Then submit to them as such and seek to get them sanctified to your spiritual profit. Remember that you cannot fight with hands hanging down, nor run the race set before you if your knees give way. So summon all your resolution to remain steadfast in the discharge of every duty God has appointed and assigned you. Rest in the love of your heavenly Father, assured that all of the present distress is designed for your ultimate good, and this will reinvigorate the soul. Finally, seek grace to lay hold of and plead the promise, “They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength” (Isa 40:31).

It is to be noted that this exhortation is couched abstractly. It is not “lift up *your* hands,” which would restrict it individually; nor is it “lift up the hands of those who are dejected,” which would limit the exhortation to a ministry unto others. Worded as it is there is a *double* reference—it is a call to the individual Christian to persevering activity, and it is an exhortation for him to seek the well-being of his fellow-Christians. That our text *has* a reference to our seeking to encourage and strengthen fellow-pilgrims is clear from a comparison of Job 4:3-4 and Isaiah 35:3-4, with which 1 Thessalonians 5:14 may be compared. The best way for the individual Christian to strengthen the hands of his feeble fellows is by setting before them a worthy example of faith, courage, and steadfastness. In addition, he is to pray for them, speak words of encouragement, remind them of God’s promises, relate to them His gracious dealings and powerful deliverances in his own life.

“And make straight paths for your feet” (Heb 12:13). The previous verse concerns the inward frame and spirit of the believer’s mind. This one has respect to his outward conduct. As Albert Barnes (1798-1870) has well pointed out, the term used here signifies “straight” horizontally, that is level and plain, all obstacles are to be removed so that we do not stumble and fall—cf. Proverbs 4:25-27. The word for “paths” is derived from one meaning “a wheel” and signifies here “the

marks made by a wheel”—it is paths marked out for others, leaving the tracks which may be followed by them. The reference, then, is to the believer so manifesting his course that his fellows may see and follow it. The Christian course is *exemplary*, that is, it is one which impresses and influences others. How very careful should we be then as to our conduct!

Here, then, is an exhortation unto the Christian to see well to his *walk*, which means the regulating of all his actions by the revealed will of God, to be obedient unto the divine precepts, to follow not the ways and fashions of an evil world, but to cleave to the narrow way, and turn not aside from the Highway of Holiness. “It is our duty not only to be found in the ways of God in general but to take care that we walk carefully, circumspectly, uprightly, and diligently in them. Hereon depends our own peace and all our usefulness toward others. It is a sad thing when some men’s walk in the ways of God shall deter others from them or turn them out of them” (John Owen).

“And make straight paths for your feet” (Heb 12:13). A most timely word for us today when iniquity abounds and the love of many waxes cold, when the poor and afflicted in Zion stand in need of all the godly encouragement they can obtain. We are summoned by a “*crooked* generation,” both of professing and profane, whose evil ways we are but too apt to learn. We are beset on every hand by temptations to turn aside into what Bunyan termed “By-path Meadow,” to enter paths which God has prohibited, to feed on pride and indulge our lusts. How the heart of the mature Christian aches for the lambs of Christ’s flock, and how it behooves him to walk softly and carefully lest he put some stumbling block in their way. Solemn indeed is, “As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity” (Psa 125:5), and also, “They have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein *shall not know peace*” (Isa 59:8).

“Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way” (Heb 12:13). The word “lest” is a translation of two Greek words, “that not.” It is a word of caution and prevention, warning each of us that carelessness as to our own walk is likely to have an ill effect upon weaker Christians. The word “lame” is transferred from the body to some defects in our graces which unfits the soul for the discharge of Christian duty. One who is lame is ill-capacitated to run in a race, and one who is lacking in courage, zeal, and perseverance is ill-fitted to fight the good fight of faith. Walk carefully then, my brother, if for no other reason than for the sake of the feebler saints. Backslidden Christians are the plague of the church. Inconsistencies in God’s people spread discouragement among weak believers.

There are always some “lame” sheep in God’s earthly flock. While there are some Christians with strong and vigorous faith, so that they “mount up with wings as eagles, run and are not weary,” and make steady progress in practical holiness, all are not so highly favoured. In most families of any size there is one frail and sickly member. So it is in the various branches of the household of faith. Some are constitutionally gloomy, temperamentally vacillating, physically infirm, and these have a special claim upon the strong. They are not to be snubbed and shunned. They need an example of cheerfulness set before them, wise counsel given to them, their arms supported by prayer, and love’s solicitude for their good. Whatever is weak in their faith and hope, whatever tends to dishearten and discourage them, should be carefully attended to, so far as lies in our power. A stitch in time saves nine—many a sheep might have been kept from falling into the ditch, had one with a shepherd’s heart gone after it at the first sign of straying.

“But let it rather be healed” (Heb 12:13). “Heal” signifies to correct that which is amiss. It is the recovering of a lapsed one which is here in view. Instead of despising sickly Christians, exercise love’s sympathy toward them. While we should be thankful if God has granted us

healthy graces, we must beware of presumption, “If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; *considering thyself*, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal 6:1). To those groaning under the burden of sin, tell them of the sufficiency of Christ’s blood. To those fearful about the future, remind them of God’s faithfulness. To those who are despondent, seek to cheer by citing some of God’s precious promises. Study the holy art of speaking a word in season to the needy. You will be of great value to the church if you develop a spirit of compassion and the gift of lifting up those fallen by the wayside.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

45. His Conquests

2 Samuel 8 opens with, “And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Methegammah out of the hand of the Philistines. And he smote Moab...David smote also Hadadezer” (2Sa 8:1-3). The thoughtful reader may well ask, What is there here for me? Why are such matters as these recorded in God’s Word, to be read by His people in all generations? Are they merely a bare account of incidents which happened thousands of years ago? If so, they can hardly hold for me anything more than what is of historical interest. But such a conclusion will be far from satisfactory to a devout inquirer, who is assured there is something of profit for his soul in *every* portion of his Father’s Word. But how to ascertain the spiritual value and practical lessons of such verses is that which sorely puzzles not a few. May it please the Lord to now enable us to render them some help at this point.

Whilst it be true that none but the One who inspired the Holy Scriptures can open to any of us their hidden depths and rich treasures, yet it is also true that He places no premium upon sloth. It is the prayerful and meditative reader who is rewarded by the Holy Spirit’s illumination of the mind, giving him to behold wondrous things out of God’s law. “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the *diligent* shall be made fat” (Pro 13:4). If, then, any verse of Scripture is to really speak to our hearts, there has to be not only a crying unto God for the hearing ear, but there must be a girding up the loins of our minds and a careful pondering of each word in the verse.

“And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Methegammah out of the hand of the Philistines. And he smote Moab...David smote also Hadadezer” (2Sa 8:1-3). As he carefully weighs these statements, the spiritually-minded can hardly fail to discern One more eminent than David, even his greater Son and Lord. Here we may clearly behold in type the Lion of the tribe of Judah (to which tribe the son of Jesse belonged!), springing upon and overcoming His enemies. In figure, it is the Lord as “a man of war” (Exo 15:3), going forth “conquering, and to conquer” (Rev 6:2), of whom it is written “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet” (1Co 15:25). Yet, precious as this is, it fails to direct us to the practical application of the passage unto our own particular case.

The question, then, returns upon us, What direct message is there in these verses for the Christian today? Not simply what curious signification may be found to amuse him during a few minutes' recreation, but what practical lessons are here inculcated which can be turned to useful account in his struggle to live the Christian life. Nothing short of *that* should be before the Satan-harassed, sin-afflicted, temptation-tried soul, when he turns to the Word of God for help, instruction, strength, and comfort. Nor will God fail him if he seeks in the right spirit—confessing his deep need, pleading the all-prevailing name of Christ, asking God to grant him for the Redeemer's sake that wisdom, understanding, and faith he sorely craves. Yet, let us add, prayer is not designed to encourage laziness, for it is not a substitute for diligent effort—the Scriptures must be “searched” (Joh 5:39) and “studied” if they are to yield food to the soul.

But *how* is the devout and anxious reader to get at the spiritual meaning and practical value of the verses quoted above? Well, the first thing to observe is that the central thing in them is, *David overcoming his enemies*. Put in *that* form, the application to ourselves is obvious. David is here to be viewed as a type of the Christian who is menaced by powerful foes both within and without. These are not to be suffered to lord it over the believer, but are to be engaged in mortal combat. Second, we note that David is not said to have exterminated or annihilated those enemies, but to have “subdued” them (2Sa 8:1), which is true to the type and supplies a key to its practical interpretation. Third, we must pay due attention unto the time-mark which is given in the opening verse, “And *after this* it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines”—for this is another key which unlocks for us its meaning. It is by attending carefully unto such details that we are enabled to burrow beneath the surface of a verse.

“And *after this* it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines” (2Sa 8:1). These words look back to what was before us in 2Sa 7:1, “And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies.” May we not apply these words to the first coming of a sinner to Christ, heavily laden with a conscious load of guilt, sorely pressed by the malicious foes of his soul, now finding *spiritual rest* in the only One in whom and from whom it is to be obtained. Hitherto David had been assailed again and again by the surrounding heathen, but now the Lord granted him a season of repose. That season had been spent in sweet communion with God, in the Word (2Sa 7:4-17) and prayer (2Sa 7:18-29). Blessed indeed is that, but let it be duly noted that communion with God is intended to animate us for the discharge of duty. It is not upon flowery beds of ease that the believer is conducted to heaven. Being led beside the still waters and being made to lie down in green pastures is a blissful experience, yet let it not be forgotten that it is a means to an end—to supply strength for the carrying out of our obligations.

“And *after this* it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them” (2Sa 8:1). We may observe a very noticeable change here—previously the Philistines had been the aggressors. In 2 Samuel 5 we read, “But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David...the Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim...And the Philistines came up yet again” (2Sa 5:17-18, 22). From their assaults God had graciously given His servant “rest” (2Sa 7:1). But now he evidently received a commission from the Lord to make war upon them. Thus it is in the initial experience of the Christian. It is a sense of sin—its vileness, its filthiness, its guilt, its condemnation—which drives him to Christ, and coming to Christ, he finds “rest.” But having obtained forgiveness of sins and peace of conscience, he now learns that he must strive against sin (Heb 12:4) and fight the good fight of faith. Now that the young believer has been delivered from the wrath to come,

he discovers that he must “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2Ti 2:3), and spare not anything within him which opposes God.

“And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them” (2Sa 8:1). While these words may be legitimately applied to the *initial* experience of the believer, they are by no means to be restricted thereunto. They contain a principle which pertains to the Christian life as a whole and to every stage thereof. That principle is that, before we are fitted to engage our spiritual enemies, we must first spend a season in communion with God, only thus and only then can strength be obtained for the conflict which lies before us. Renewed efforts to subdue our persistent foes can only be made (with any degree of success) as we are renewed by the Spirit in the inner man, and that is only to be obtained by feeding on the Word (2Sa 7:4-17) and by prayer (2Sa 7:18-29)—the two chief means of communion with God.

“And David took Methegammah out of the hand of the Philistines” (2Sa 8:1). Here our passage passes from the general to the particular, and a most important practical truth is here inculcated. This is another case when Scripture has to be compared with Scripture in order to understand its terms. 1 Chronicles 18 is parallel with 2 Samuel 8, and by comparing the language of the opening verse of the former we are enabled to arrive at the meaning of our text, “Now after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them, and took *Gath and her towns* out of the hand of the Philistines.” Thus “Methegammah” has reference to “Gath and her towns.” Now Gath (with its suburbs) was the metropolis of Philistia, being a fortified city on a high hill (2Sa 2:24). In our text it is called “Methegammah” which means “the bridle of the mother city.” It had long acted as a “bridle” or curb upon Israel, serving as a barrier to their further occupation of Canaan. So much, then, for the etymological and historical meaning—now for the typical.

What was denoted spiritually by “Gath and her towns”? In seeking the answer to this question let us carefully bear in mind the three details mentioned above—Gath occupied a powerful eminence, it was the metropolis or mother-city, it had served as a “bridle” upon Israel. Surely the practical application of this to ourselves is not difficult. Is it not some *master* lust in our souls or *dominant* sin in our lives which is here represented? And is it not *this* which is to occupy first attention in the warfare against our spiritual foes? Of what avail is it to dress a wound while the blood-stream itself remains poisoned? What use would it be to guard chickens against cats and dogs when the wolf is allowed to assail them? Saul might slay all the other Amalekites, but for sparing “Agag *the king*,” the kingdom was rent from him (1Sa 15). Loudly ought that to speak unto our hearts today.

It is not the eyelashes which require trimming, but the “eye” itself which must be plucked out. It is not the fingernails which need paring, but the “right hand” which must be cut off (Mat 5:29-30), if the Christian would make any headway in overcoming his inward corruptions. It is to his special “besetting sin” he must direct his attention. No truce is to be made with *it*, no excuses offered for it. No matter how firmly entrenched it may be, nor how long it has held sway, grace must be diligently and persistently sought to conquer it. That darling sin which has so long been cherished by an evil heart must be slain. If it be “spared,” as Saul spared Agag, it will slay us. The work of mortification is to begin at the place where sin has its strongest hold upon us.

The subduing of the Philistines, and particularly the capture of Gath, was vitally essential if Israel was to gain their rights, for as yet they were not in full possession of the land to which, by the divine promise, they were entitled. Canaan had been given to them by God as their heritage, but valiant effort, hard fighting, was called for, in order to their occupation of the same. This is a point which has surely puzzled many. It is clear from Scripture that the land of Canaan was a

figure of heaven, but there is no *fighting* in heaven! True, but the believer is not yet in heaven, nevertheless, heaven ought to be in him, by which we mean that even now the believer should be walking in the daily enjoyment of that wondrous portion which is now his by having been made a joint-heir with Christ. Alas, how little is this fact appreciated by the majority of God's dear people today, and how little are they experimentally *possessing* "their possessions" (Oba 1:17).

It is greatly to be regretted that so many of the saints relegate to *the future* the time of their victory, joy, and bliss, and seem content to live in the present as though they were spiritual paupers. For example, how very generally are the words, "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2Pe 1:11) regarded as referring to the time of the believer's glorification. But there is nothing whatever in the context to warrant such a view, nothing required in it to understand that "abundant entrance" as belonging to a day to come, nothing to justify us postponing it at all in our thoughts. Instead, there is much against it. In the preceding verses the apostle is exhorting the believer to make his calling and election "sure," and this by adding to his faith "virtue" etc. (2Pe 1:5-7), assuring him that by so doing he shall "never fall," and adding "for *so* an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly."

Legally, the believer has already been delivered from the power of darkness, and hath translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col 1:13), but experimentally an "abundant entrance" thereinto is dependent upon his spiritual growth and the cultivation of his graces. The believer has already been begotten unto "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" for him (1Pe 1:4), but his practical *enjoyment* thereof turns upon the exercise of faith. "Abraham," said Christ, "rejoiced to see my day" (Joh 8:56), and *how* did the patriarch "see" it? Why, *by faith*, for there was no other way in which he could see it—by the exercise of faith in the sure promises of God. And what was the effect upon Abraham of this entrancing vision which faith brought to him? This, "and he saw it and *was glad*." In like manner, the believer now is to use the long-distance lens of faith and view his promised inheritance, and *rejoice* therein, then will "the joy of the LORD" be his "strength" (Neh 8:10).

Israel had a valid title to the land of Canaan. It was theirs by the gift of God. But enemies sought to prevent their occupation of it, and enemies seek to hinder the Christian from faith's appropriation and enjoyment of *his* "inheritance." And what are those enemies? Chiefly, the lusts of the flesh, sinful habits, evil ways. *Faith cannot be in healthy exercise while we yield to the lusts of the flesh*. How many a saint is sighing because his faith is so feeble, so spasmodic, so fruitless. Here is the cause—allowed sin! Faith and sin are opposites, opponents, and the one cannot flourish until the other be subdued. It is vain to pray for more faith until we start in earnest to mortify our lusts, crucify our Christ-dishonouring corruptions, and wrestle with and overcome our besetting sins, and that can only be accomplished by fervently and untiringly seeking enabling grace from on High.

"David *smote* the Philistines, and *subdued* them" (2Sa 8:1). In figure that represents the believer waging unsparing warfare upon all within him that is opposed to God, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts" in order that he may "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Ti 2:12). It represents the believer doing what the apostle speaks of in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "But I *keep under* my body, and bring it into subjection"—his "body" there referring not so much to the physical, as to the "old man" within, the "body of sin" (Rom 6:6), this "body of death" (Rom 7:24 margin), or as it is spoken of elsewhere as "the body of the sins of the flesh" (Col 2:11). Indwelling sin is spoken of in these passages as a "body" because it has, as it were, a complete set of members or faculties of its own, and these must be *subdued* by the

Christian, “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2Co 10:5).

“And David took Methegammah out of the hand of the Philistines” (2Sa 8:13). Typically this turns, as we have previously said, from the general unto the particular—from the work of mortification as a whole to the crucifying of a special sin which prevails against the saint. In figure, it represents the believer concentrating his attention upon and conquering his master lust or chief besetting sin, that “mother” evil which is the prolific source of so many iniquities, that “bridle” which has for so long hindered his entering into God’s best for him. But our space is exhausted. As the subject is of such vital moment we will continue it in our next.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

4. The Abrahamic

We are now to be engaged with one of the most illustrious characters set before us in the pages of Holy Writ, one who is expressly designated “the Friend of God” (Jam 2:23), and from whom Christ Himself derives one of His titles, “the son of Abraham” (Mat 1:1). Not only was he the one from whom the favoured nation of Israel sprang, but he is also “the father of all them that believe” (Rom 4:11). It is scarcely consonant with our present design to review here the remarkable life of this man, yet the history of Abraham—in its broad outlines, at least—is so closely bound up with the covenant which JEHOVAH made with him, that it is hardly possible to give any exposition of the latter without paying more or less attention to the former. Nevertheless, we shall be obliged to pass by many interesting episodes in his varied experience if our discussion of the Abrahamic Covenant is to be kept within anything like reasonable bounds.

A period of more than three hundred years passed from the time that the Lord made the covenant with Noah and the appearing of Abraham upon the stage of sacred history. We may here note briefly two things which occurred in that period, and we do so because of the bearing which they have and the light they throw upon our present subject. The first of these is the remarkable prophecy uttered by Noah, Genesis 9:25-27. Passing by the sad incidents which immediately preceded and gave rise to the prediction, we would observe particularly its pronouncements as they intimated the future development of God’s purpose of grace. This comes out first in the “Blessed be the LORD God of Shem” (Gen 9:26), or as it should more properly be rendered, “Blessed be [or “Praised be”] JEHOVAH, the God of Shem.” This is the first time in Scripture that we find God calling Himself the “God” of any particular person. Moreover, it was *as JEHOVAH* He should be related to Shem.

JEHOVAH is God made known in *covenant* relationship. It is God in His *manifested* personality as taking subjects into His free *favour*. It is God granting a revelation of His institutions for redemption. These were to be the specific portion of Shem—in sharp contrast from the “curse” pronounced upon Ham—not of Shem simply as an individual, but as the head of

a distinct section of the human race. It was with *that* section God was to stand in the nearest relation. It was a spiritual distinction which they were to enjoy, a covenant relation, a priestly nearness. A special interest in the divine favour is what was denoted in this primitive prediction concerning Shem. His descendants were to be the line through which the divine blessing was to flow. It was among them that JEHOVAH was to be known, and where His kingdom was to be set up and established.

“God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant” (Gen 9:27). The obvious meaning of the first clause is, God would give Japheth a numerous posterity, with widely extended territories, which has been fulfilled in the fact that they have not only gained possession of all Europe, North and South America, and Australia, but likewise a large portion of Asia. The stock of Japheth was to be the most energetic and ambitious of Noah’s descendants, giving themselves to colonization and diffusive operations, pushing their way and establishing themselves far and wide. But it is the second clause of Genesis 9:27 we are now more concerned with, “and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem”—he was to enjoy *fellowship* in the high spiritual privileges of Shem. Japheth was to come under the divine protection and be admitted to the blessings which were the peculiar but not exclusive portion of Shem.

Throwing the light of the New Testament upon this ancient prophecy, we find it clearly announced that it was through the line of Shem the gifts of grace and the blessings of salvation were more immediately to flow. Yet so far from them being confined unto that section of the human family, the larger portion of it (Japheth) would also share their good. The Shemites were to have them first hand, but the descendants of Japheth were also to participate in them. “The exaltation of Shem’s progeny into the nearest relationship to God, was not that they might keep the privilege to themselves, but that first getting it, they should admit the sons of Japheth, the inhabitants of the isles, to share with them in the boon, and spread it as wide as their scattered race should extend” (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874).

Here, then, in this early prediction through Noah we have the germ of what is more fully developed in the later Scriptures. Though couched in so few words, it was marvelously comprehensive in its scope. It was only by entering the tents of Shem that Japheth could enter the place where divine blessing was to be found, which, in the language of the New Testament, is only another way of saying that *from the Jews would salvation flow forth unto the Gentiles*. But before we develop that thought a little further, we would mention a very striking point brought out by E. W. Hengstenberg (1802-1869) in his most suggestive three-volume work on “The Christology of the Old Testament.” Amid his dry and technical notes on the Hebrew text, he shows how that “as the reaction against Ham’s sin had *originated with Shem* (Gen 9:23), Japheth only joining himself in it, so in the future, the rich home of salvation and piety would be with Shem, to whom Japheth, in the felt need of salvation, should come near.”

“And he [Japheth] shall dwell in the tents of Shem” (Gen 9:13). The earth was to be possessed and peopled by the three sons of Noah. Of them, Shem was the one selected to be the peculiar channel of divine gifts and communications, but these were to be not for his own exclusive benefit, but rather to the end that others might share in the blessing. The kingdom of God was to be established in Shem, but Japheth should be received into its community. Therein was intimated not only that “salvation is of the Jews” (Joh 4:22), but also the mystery of Romans 11:11, etc. Though “salvation is of the Jews,” nevertheless, Gentiles should be partakers of it. Though Shem alone be the real *root* and trunk, yet into their tree the Gentiles should be “grafted”! Though he appeared to speak dark words, yet, by the Holy Spirit, Noah was granted amazing light and was given a deep insight into the secret councils of the Most High.

The connection between what we have briefly dwelt upon above with our present subject is so obvious that few words are called for in connection therewith. The remarkable prophecy of Noah began to receive its historical unfolding when the Lord announced to the patriarch, “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen 12:3). Abraham was of the stock of *Shem* (Gen 11:1, 23, 26), and he was now made the depository of the divine promises (Gal 3:16). Yet God’s blessing was to be confined neither to himself nor to his lineal descendants, but “all families of the earth” were to be the gainers thereby. Yet, notwithstanding, it was only through Abraham that the Gentiles were to be advantaged, “*In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*”—the central promise in the Abrahamic Covenant. What was that but re-affirming, in more specific detail, “God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell *in the tents of Shem*” (Gen 9:27)? How perfect is the harmony of God’s wondrous Word!

The second thing to be noted, which happened during the interval between the Noahic and the Abrahamic Covenants, and which clearly had a bearing upon the latter, is the incident recorded in Genesis 11, namely, the building and overthrow of the Tower of Babel. It is a great mistake to regard that event as an isolated occurrence, rather is it to be considered as the heading up of an evil course and movement. Of the events which transpired from the Deluge to the call of Abraham—embracing an interval of over four centuries—the information we possess is brief and summary, yet enough is recorded to show that the character of man is unchanged, the same in principle and practice as it had been before the Flood. It might perhaps have been expected that so terrible a judgment would have left upon the survivors and their descendants for many generations a deep and salutary impression, which would have acted as a powerful restraint upon their evil propensities. Alas, what is man!

Even in the family of Noah, and while the remembrance of the awful visitation of God’s wrath was still fresh in their minds, there were indications which testified to both the existence and exercise of sinful dispositions, which the recent judgment had failed to eradicate or even curb. The sad failure of Noah himself, and the wicked behaviour of his son on beholding the fall of his father, afforded awful proof that the evil which is in the heart of fallen man is so deeply rooted and so powerful that nothing external, no matter how frightful, can subdue it, and supplied a distinct foreboding of what was soon made manifest on a wider scale and in a much worse form. Idolatry itself quickly found an entrance and speedily established itself among the inhabitants of the earth in their dispersion. Joshua 24:2 gives more than a hint of this, while Romans 1:21-23 casts a flood of light upon that dark situation.

Within a short time after the Deluge, human depravity resumed its old course and manifested itself in open defiance of heaven. As the population of the earth increased, evil schemes of ambition began to be entertained, and soon there appeared on the scene one who took the lead in wickedness. He is first brought before us in Genesis 10:8, “Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth.” It is to be noted that he belonged to the line of Ham, upon which the divine curse had been pronounced, and significantly enough “Nimrod” means “*the Rebel*”—suitable title for the one who headed a great confederacy in open revolt against God. This confederacy is described in Genesis 11, and that it *was* an organized revolt against JEHOVAH is clear from the language of Genesis 10:9, “Nimrod the mighty hunter *before the LORD*.” If that expression be compared with “The earth also [in the days of Noah] was corrupt *before God*” (Gen 6:11), the impression conveyed is, that this “Rebel” pursued his impious and ambitious designs in brazen defiance of the Almighty

Four times over we find the word “mighty” connected with Nimrod. First, in Genesis 10:8, it is said “he *began to be* a mighty one in the earth,” which suggests that he struggled for the pre-

eminence, and by force of will and ability obtained it. The “mighty one *in the earth*” intimates conquest and subjection, becoming a leader and ruler over men. This is confirmed by “the beginning of his kingdom was Babel” (Gen 10:10), so that he reigned as a king. In the previous verse we are told, “He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD” (Gen 10:9)—the reference probably is to his being a hunter *of men*. In so brief a description the *repetition* of those words “mighty hunter before the LORD” are significant. The word for “mighty” is “gibbor” and is translated in the Old Testament “chief” and “chieftain.” In 1 Chronicles 1:10, we are told, “And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be mighty upon the earth.” The Chaldee paraphrase of this verse says, “Cush begat Nimrod, who began to prevail in wickedness, for he slew innocent blood and rebelled against JEHOVAH.”

“And the beginning of his kingdom was *Babel*” (Gen 10:10). Here is the key to the first nine verses of the 11th chapter. In the language of that time, “Babel” meant “the gate *of God*” (see Young’s Concordance), but afterwards, because of the divine judgment inflicted there, it came to mean “Confusion.” By coupling together the various hints which the Holy Spirit has here given us, it seems quite clear that Nimrod organized not only an imperial government over which he presided as king, but that he also introduced a new and idolatrous worship, most probably demanding, under pain of death, that divine honours be paid his own person. As such he was an ominous and striking type of the Antichrist. “Out of that land he went forth into Assyria [margin] and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah” etc. (Gen 10:11-12). From these statements we gather the impression that Nimrod’s ambition was to establish *a world empire*.

Though Nimrod is not mentioned by name in Genesis 11, it is clear from 10:10 that *he* was the “chief” and “king” who organized and headed the movement and rebellion there described. “And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Gen 11:4). Here is discovered a concerted effort in most blatant defiance of God. He had said “Be fruitful, and multiply, *and replenish the earth*” (Gen 9:1), but Nimrod and his followers deliberately refused to obey that divine command, given through Noah, saying, “Let us make us a name, *lest we be scattered abroad* upon the face of the whole earth” (Gen 11:4).

It is clear from Genesis 10 that Nimrod’s ambition was to establish *a world empire*. To accomplish this, two things were necessary. First, *a centre* of unity, a city-headquarters; and second, *a motive* for the inspiration and encouragement of his fellows. The first was secured in “the beginning of his kingdom was Babel” (Gen 10:10); the second was supplied in the “let us make us a name” (Gen 11:4), which intimated an inordinate desire for fame. Nimrod’s aim was to keep mankind together under *his* leadership, “lest we be scattered abroad.” The idea suggested by the “Tower”—considered in the light of its whole setting—was that of *strength*, a stronghold—while its name “*the gate of God*” tells us that Nimrod was arrogating to himself divine honours. In it all, we may discern Satan’s initial attempt to forestall the purpose of God concerning His Christ, by setting up a universal ruler of men of *his* providing.

The response of heaven was swift and drastic. “And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth” (Gen 11:6-9). Once again the human race had been guilty of open apostasy, therefore did God intervene in

judgment, bringing to naught the ambitious scheme of Nimrod, confounding the speech of his subjects, and scattering them abroad on the face of the earth.

The effect of God's intervention was the origination of the different nations, and the formation of "the world" as it continued up to the time of Christ. Then it was that men were abandoned to their own devices, when God "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways" (Act 14:16). Then was executed that terrible judicial hardening, when "God also gave them up to uncleanness," when "God gave them up unto vile affections," when "God gave them over to a reprobate mind" (Rom 1:24, 26, 28). Then and thus it was that the way was cleared for the next stage in the outworking of the divine plan of mercy, for where sin had abounded, grace was now to superabound. Having abandoned (temporarily) the nations, God now singled out one man, Abraham, from whom the chosen nation was to spring.

Our Brother, Mr. O. T. Waite, 27 Mac Dade, Glen Olden, PA., has recently published several new tracts written by the editor. If American readers send him twenty-five cents, he will forward them a package of sample copies. He deserves to be encouraged in this good work. [A note to his readers of **1935** from Brother Pink!]

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

6. Its Nature

We have now reached what is, in several respects, the most important aspect of our theme. It is very necessary that we should seek after a clear and comprehensive view of the character of sanctification itself, what it really consists of—or, at best, our thoughts concerning it will be confused. Since holiness is, by general consent, the sum of all moral excellence, and the highest and most necessary attainment, it is of the utmost moment that we should well understand its real nature and be able to distinguish it from all counterfeits. How can it be discovered whether or not *we* have been sanctified, unless we really know what sanctification actually is? How can we truly cultivate holiness, until we have ascertained the real substance or essence of holiness? A right apprehension of the nature of sanctification or holiness is a great aid to the understanding of much in the Scriptures, to the forming of right conceptions of the divine perfections, and to the distinguishing of true religion from all that is false.

We have also now reached what is the most difficult and intricate aspect of our many-sided subject. The task of defining and describing the nature of sanctification is by no means a simple one. This is due, partly, to the many different aspects and angles which have to be borne in mind, if anything like a comprehensive conception is to be obtained. Scripture speaks of the believer being sanctified by God the Father. Other passages speak of being sanctified in Christ and by His sacrifice. Still others of being sanctified by the Spirit, by the Word, by faith, by chastisements. Of course these do not refer to so many different sanctifications, but to the various branches of one complete sanctification—which, nevertheless, need to be kept distinctly in our minds. Some

Scriptures present sanctification as an objective thing, others as subjective. Sometimes sanctification is viewed as complete, at others as incomplete and progressive. These varied phases of our subject will pass under review (Lord willing) in later articles.

As we have consulted the works of others on this subject, we have been struck by the paucity of their remarks on *the nature of* sanctification. While many writers have treated at length on the meaning of the term itself, the manner in which this gift has been provided for the believer, the work of the Spirit in imparting the same, the varying degrees in which it is manifested in this life, yet few indeed have entered into a clear description of what holiness actually *is*. Where false conceptions have been mercifully avoided, yet, in most cases, only partial and very inadequate views of the truth thereon have been presented. It is our conviction that failure at *this* point, inattention to this most vital consideration, has been responsible, more than anything else, for the conflicting opinions which prevail so widely among professing Christians. A mistake at this point opens the door for the entrance of all kinds of delusion.

In order to remove some of the rubbish which may have accumulated in the minds of certain of our readers, and thus prepare the way for their consideration of the truth, let us briefly touch upon the negative side. First, Scriptural sanctification is not a blessing which may be and often is separated from justification by a long interval of time. Those who contend for a “second work of grace” insist that the penitent sinner is justified the moment he believes in Christ, but that he is not sanctified until he completely surrenders to the Lord and then receives the Spirit in His fullness—as though a person might be converted without fully surrendering to Christ, or become a child of God without the Holy Spirit indwelling him. This is a serious mistake. Once we are united to Christ by the Spirit and faith, we become “joint heirs” with Him, having a valid title to *all* blessing in Him. There is no dividing of the Saviour. He is the holiness of His people as well as their righteousness, and when He bestows forgiveness, He also imparts heart purity.

Second, Scriptural sanctification is not a protracted process by which the Christian is made meet for heaven. The same work of divine grace which delivers a soul from the wrath to come fits him for the enjoyment of eternal glory. At what point was the penitent prodigal unsuited to the Father’s house? As soon as he came and confessed his sins, the best robe was placed upon him, the ring was put on his hand, his feet were shod, and the word went forth, “Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found” (Luk 15:23-24). If a gradual progressive work of the Spirit was necessary in order to fit the soul to dwell on high, then the dying thief was not qualified to enter Paradise the very day he first believed in the Lord Jesus. “But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus” (1Co 6:11)—those three things cannot be separated. “Giving thanks unto the Father, which *hath* made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col 1:12).

Third, Scriptural sanctification is not the eradication of the carnal nature. The doctrine of the “Perfectionists” hardens souls in delusion, calling evil good, and allowing themselves in sin. It greatly discourages sincere souls who labour to get holiness in the right way—by faith in Christ—and leads them to think they labour in vain, because they find themselves still sinful and far from perfect, when they have done their best to attain it. It renders meaningless many Scriptural exhortations, such as Romans 6:12; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 4:22; 2 Timothy 2:22—“flee also youthful lusts” (2Ti 2:22) shows plainly they were still present even in the godly Timothy! Was the carnal nature gone from the Christian, he would be quite unfitted for such duties as the confessing of sins (1Jo 1:9), loathing himself for them (Job 40:4), praying earnestly for the pardon of them (Mat 6:12), sorrowing over them with godly sorrow (2Co 7:10), accepting the

chastisement of them (Heb 12:5-11), vindicating God for the same (Psa 119:75), and offering Him the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart (Psa 51:17).

Fourth, Scriptural sanctification is not something wholly objective in Christ, which is not in anywise in ourselves. In their revolt against sinless perfectionism, there have been some who have gone to an opposite extreme—Antinomians argue for a holiness in Christ which produces no radical change for the better in the Christian. This is another deceit of the devil, for a deceit it certainly is for anyone to imagine that the *only* holiness he has is in Christ. There is no such thing in reality as a perfect and inalienable standing in Christ which is divorced from heart-purity and a personal walk in righteousness. What a flesh-pleasing dogma is it, that one act of faith in the Lord Jesus secures eternal immunity from condemnation and provides a lifelong license to wallow in sin. My reader, a faith which does not transform character and reform conduct is worthless. Saving faith is only proved to be genuine by bearing the blossoms of experimental godliness and the fruits of personal piety.

In our quest after the actual nature of holiness, certain definite considerations need to be kept steadily before us, as guide-posts along the track which we must follow. First, by noting what is holiness in God Himself, for the creature's holiness—be it the angels', Christ's, or the Christian's—must conform to the divine pattern. Though there may be many degrees of holiness, there cannot be more than one kind of holiness. Second, by ascertaining what Adam had and lost, and which Christ has regained for His people. While it be blessedly true that the Christian obtains far more in the Second Man than was forfeited by the first man, yet this is a point of considerable importance. Third, by discovering the true nature of sin, holiness is its opposite. Fourth, by remembering that sanctification is an integral and essential part of salvation itself, and not an extra. Fifth, by following up the clue given us in the threefold meaning of the term itself.

1. What is connoted by the holiness of God? In seeking an answer to this question very little help is to be obtained from the works of theologians, most of whom contented themselves with *a set of words* which expressed no distinct thing, but left matters wholly in the dark. Most of them say that God's holiness is His purity. If it be inquired, in what does this purity consist? the usual reply is, In that which is opposite to all sin, the greatest impurity. But who is the wiser by this? That, of itself, does not help us to form any positive idea of what God's purity consists of, until we are told *what* sin really *is*. But the nature of sin cannot be experimentally known until we apprehend what holiness is, for we do not fully learn what holiness is by obtaining a right idea of sin—rather must we first know what holiness is in order for a right knowledge of sin.

A number of eminent theologians have attempted to tell us what divine holiness is by saying, It is not properly a distinct attribute of God, but the beauty and glory of all His moral perfections. But we can get no concrete idea from those words, until we are told what is this "beauty and glory." To say it is "holiness" is to say nothing at all to the point. All that John Gill (1697-1771) gives us for a definition of God's holiness is, "Holiness is the purity and rectitude of His nature." Nathanael Emmons (1745-1840), the perfecter of the "New England" scheme of theology, tells us, "Holiness is a general term to express that goodness or benevolence which comprises everything that is morally amiable and excellent." Though sound in their substance, such statements are too brief to be of much service to us in seeking to form a definite conception of the divine holiness.

The most helpful description of God's holiness which we have met with is that framed by the Puritan, Stephen Charnock (1628-1680), "It is the rectitude or integrity of the divine nature, or that conformity of it in affection and action to the divine will, as to His eternal law, whereby He works with a becomingness to His own excellency, and whereby He hath a delight and

complacency in everything agreeable to His will, and an abhorrency of everything contrary thereto.” Here is something definite and tangible, satisfying to the mind, though perhaps it requires another feature to be added to it. Since the law is “a transcript” of the divine mind and nature, then God’s holiness must be His own harmony therewith—to which we may add, God’s holiness is His ordering of all things for His own glory, for He can have no higher end than that—this being His own unique excellency and prerogative.

We fully concur with Charnock in making the will of God and the law of God one and the same thing, and that His holiness lies in the conformity of His affections and actions with the same, adding, that the furtherance of His own glory being His design in the whole. Now this concept of the divine holiness—the sum of God’s moral excellency—helps us to conceive what holiness is in the Christian. It is far more than a “position” or “standing.” It is also and chiefly a moral quality, which produces conformity to the divine will or law, and which moves its possessor to aim at the glory of God in all things. This, and nothing short of this, could meet the divine requirements, and this is the great gift which God bestows upon His people.

2. What was it that Adam had lost? What was it which distinguished him from all the lower creatures? Not simply the possession of a soul, but that his soul had stamped upon it *the moral image* and likeness of his Maker. This it was which constituted his blessedness, which capacitated him for communion with the Lord, and which qualified him to live a happy life to His glory. And this it was which he lost at the Fall. And this it is which the Last Adam restores unto His people. That is clear from a comparison of Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:23—the “new man,” the product of regeneration, is “*renewed* in knowledge [in the vital and experimental knowledge of God Himself, Joh 17:3] after the image of him that created him,” that is, after the original likeness bestowed upon Adam, and that “new man” is distinctly said to be “created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Thus what the first Adam lost and what the Last Adam secured for His people, was the “image and likeness” of God stamped upon the heart, which “image” consists of “righteousness and holiness.” Hence to understand that personal and experimental holiness which the Christian is made partaker of at the new birth, we have to go back to the beginning and ascertain what was the nature or character of that moral “uprightness” (Ecc 7:29) with which God created man at the beginning. Holiness and righteousness was the “nature” with which the first man was endowed. It was the very law of his being, causing him to delight in the Lord, do those things which are pleasing in His sight, and reproduce in his creature measure God’s own righteousness and holiness—compare our recent articles upon the Adamic Covenant. Here again we discover that holiness is a moral quality, which conforms its possessor to the divine law or will, and moves him to aim only at the glory of God.

3. What is sin? Ah, what man is capable of supplying an adequate answer, “*Who can understand his errors?*” (Psa 19:12). A volume might be written thereon, and still much be left unsaid. Only the One against whom it is committed can fully understand its nature or measure its enormity. And yet, from the light which God has furnished us, a partial answer at least can be gathered. For example, in 1 John 3:4, we read, “sin is the transgression of the law,” and that such transgression is not confined to the outward act is clear from “the *thought* of foolishness is sin” (Pro 24:9). But what is meant by “sin is the transgression of the law”? It means that sin is a trampling upon God’s holy commandment. It is an act of defiance against the lawgiver. The law, being “holy and just and good” (Rom 7:12), it follows that any breach of it is an evil and enormity which God alone is capable of estimating.

All sin is a breach of the eternal standard of equity. But it is more than that—it reveals an inward enmity which gives rise to the outward transgression. It is the bursting forth of that pride and self-will which resents restraint, which repudiates control, which refuses to be under authority, which resists rule. Against the righteous restraint of law, Satan opposed a false idea of “liberty” to our first parents, “Ye shall be as gods.” And he is still playing the same argument and employing the same bait. The Christian must meet it by asking, Is the disciple to be above his Master, the servant superior to his Lord? Christ was “made under the law” (Gal 4:4), and lived in perfect submission thereto, and has left us an example that we should “follow his steps” (1Pe 2:21). Only by loving, fearing, and obeying the law, shall we be kept from *sinning*.

Sin, then, is an inward state which precedes the evil deeds. It is a state of heart which refuses to be in subjection to God. It is a casting off the divine law, and setting up self-will and self-pleasing in its stead. Now, since holiness is the opposite of sin, this helps us to determine something more of the nature of sanctification. Sanctification is that work of divine grace in the believer which brings him back into allegiance to God, regulating his affections and actions in harmony with His will, writing His law on the heart (Heb 10:16), moving him to make God’s glory his chief aim and end. That divine work is commenced at regeneration and completed only at glorification. It may be thought that, in this section, we have contradicted what was said in an earlier paragraph. Not so, in God’s light we see light. Only after the principle of holiness has been imparted to us, can we discern the real character of sin, but after it has been received, an analysis of sin helps us to determine the nature of sanctification.

4. Sanctification is an integral part of “salvation.” As this point was dwelt upon at length in the March article, there is less need for us to say much upon it here. Once it be clearly perceived that God’s salvation is not only a rescue from the penalty of sin, but is as well, and chiefly, deliverance from the pollution and power of sin—ultimating in complete freedom from its very presence—there will be no difficulty in seeing that sanctification occupies a central place in the process. Alas that while there are many who think of Christ dying to secure their pardon, so few today consider Christ dying in order to renew their hearts, heal their souls, bring them unto obedience to God. One is often obliged to wonder if one out of each ten professing Christians is *really* experimentally acquainted with the “*so great* salvation” (Heb 2:3) of God.

Inasmuch as sanctification is an important branch of salvation, we have another help towards understanding its nature. Salvation is deliverance from sin, an emancipation from the bondage of Satan, a being brought into right relations with God—and sanctification is that which makes this *actual* in the believer’s experience—not perfectly so in this life, but truly so, nevertheless. Hence sanctification is not only the principal *part* of salvation, but it is also the chief *means* thereto. Salvation from the power of sin consists in deliverance from the *love* of sin, and that is effected by the principle of holiness, which loves purity and piety. Again, there can be no fellowship with God, no walking with Him, no delighting ourselves in Him, except as we tread the path of obedience (see 1 John 1:5-7), and that is only possible as the principle of holiness is operative within us.

Let us now combine these four points. What is Scriptural sanctification? First, it is a moral quality in the regenerate—the same in its nature as that which belongs to the divine character—which produces harmony with God’s will and causes its possessor to aim at His glory in all things. Second, it is the moral image of God—lost by the first Adam, restored by the Last Adam—stamped upon the heart, which “image” consists of righteousness and holiness. Third, it is the opposite of sin. Inasmuch as all sin is a transgression of the divine law, true sanctification brings its possessor into a conformity thereto. Fourth, it is an integral and essential part of

“salvation,” being a deliverance from the power and pollution of sin, causing its possessor to love what he once hated, and to now hate what he formerly loved. Thus, it is that which experimentally fits us for fellowship with and the enjoyment of the Holy One Himself.

CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and 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). That all mankind are in the same condition as the apostle, in the days of his unregeneracy, was, is, a melancholy fact, of which every renewed soul is by sad consciousness too sensible. Born in the sinful likeness of fallen Adam, they are all partakers of the curse under which he brought himself and all his posterity by his transgression, namely, “thou shalt surely die.” But to every contrite soul awakened to its state of loss and ruin, the Gospel of the grace of God proclaims salvation from the curse, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

When this saving truth is brought home with power to the heart of a child of God, through the almighty working of the eternal Spirit, his understanding is enlightened to see himself in the position of the regenerated apostle in the language of our text, in which is to be observed he speaks of the change of which he had been the subject. He had been “dead in trespasses and sins,” but now he was dead to sin and alive unto God. Observe also with what energy he speaks of two persons—Christ and *me*—and with what determination he clings to Christ, and claims the merits of His death, the privileges of His life.

The first branch of the text is “I am crucified with Christ.” He claims to have fully paid the penalty of sin when Christ died, from which we gather: 1. That Christ, on the cross, was not a private, but a public person, representing all His people—so that when He died and suffered, we died and suffered in Him. As the first Adam did not sin only for himself, but for all his natural seed that should come of him, by ordinary generation, so the last Adam did not die for Himself at all, but for all His seed. 2. There is a real, spiritual, and indissoluble union between Christ and all His people that believe in Him, insomuch that His being crucified is the same as if they had been crucified in their person.

The second branch of the text is, “Nevertheless, I live.” It is not an annihilation of my being, but a renovation and reformation of my former being. Though I be crucified and dead, yet I live a new life. I am not what I was, nor whose I was, nor where I was. I am not what I was—I am not Saul the persecutor, but Paul the believer, the preacher. I am not whose I was—I was Satan’s, but now I am Christ’s. I am not where I was—I am living in another world, breathing another air—I live.

The third branch is, “Yet not I.” “Not I.” Who then? Why, what solemn contradictions are here! “I am crucified and dead.” Then there is an end, for death is the end of all. Nay, but hear him again, “Nevertheless I live.” Why, this is a short death that is so soon restored to life! Or is he at one and the same time both dead and alive? Yes, Paul is dead, and Paul lives. “I live.” It is not “I was crucified and dead,” but, “I am crucified with Christ.” “I am dead, and yet I am living,”

and “yet not I.” Here is another contradiction or paradox—“Not of myself but by the life of Another.” No soul can animate this body but my own, yet neither soul nor body can live but by God. Thus does he annihilate himself, that he may magnify his Master, and that Christ may be *all in all*.

The fourth branch of the text is, “Christ liveth in me.” Christ is the Root and Fountain of all spiritual life, having it so superabundant in Himself that He can convey it to all His members. Christ is said to live in the believer by virtue of the spiritual union, whereby He and they are one spirit. The soul doth not more properly live in the body than He doth quicken the soul, and will quicken the body. Christ is the Sun of Righteousness to the soul. His absence leaves us dead, His presence revives us, and happy he that can say, “Christ liveth in me.”

The fifth branch is, “The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.” “I live, and live in the flesh.” By “flesh” he means not the corruption of nature, for to that he was dead when “crucified with Christ,” but the mortal body. It is one thing to live in the flesh, another to live *to* the flesh or after the flesh. Paul did not lead such a life as he did before, for that was to the flesh. His life now is but *in* the flesh. In the former state he was dead while he lived, “but now I am alive,” says he. What a mercy were it if all who read this could say, they *live* before they go hence, and cease living.

But what sort of a life is it? “I live,” says he, “by the faith of the Son of God.” Here is life—“I live.” He was very sure of it, for he had said it before—“I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,” and here again, “I live.” Well, here is the means of this life, “I live by faith”—“by the faith of the Son of God.” We live primarily and properly by Christ, as the body by the soul, but mediately and instrumentally by faith, as by the spirits which are the bonds of soul and body. “He that hath the Son hath life” (1Jo 5:12). he that hath faith hath the Son.

Here further is the designation given to this faith. It is called “faith of the Son of God,” because, first, He is the revealer of it. Neither nature nor law could open the door of faith. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (Joh 1:17). “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (Joh 1:18). Secondly, He is the approver and favourer of faith. There is nothing more acceptable to Him. When He finds it strong in man or woman, He is ready to say, “O man, O woman, great is thy faith. Be it to thee even as thou wilt!” Thirdly, He is the Author of faith. He is both the Seeker and the Giver of it. Faith is the gift of God, and He that calls us to believe, He only works it in us. Fourthly, he is the increaser of it, therefore the disciples pray, “Lord, increase our faith” (Luk 17:5)—He that gives it, gives the increase of it. Fifthly, He is the “Finisher of our faith”—both the Author and Finisher (Heb 12:2). He that begins this good work, He perfects the work of faith with power. Sixthly, He is the object of faith. Faith desires to know nothing but “Christ, and him crucified” (1Co 2:2). On these accounts it may be called, “the faith of the Son of God” (Gal 2:20), where again you have the object of faith described from His glorious person. He is the Son of God, a person of quality, and of such quality as to be equal with God the Father, “higher than the highest, without beginning and without end, the faithful witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, which was, and which is, and which is to come, the Almighty, He who hath on His vesture and on His thigh this name written, KING of kings and LORD of lords.”

And then the object of faith is described from His works, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20), which is the sixth branch of the text. The apostle had, in the preceding words, challenged Christ for his own, “I am crucified with Christ, and I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” He engrosses Him to himself, as if He were his own, and no man’s else. “And the life I live I

live is by the faith of the Son of God, who is likewise mine, for He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” It is the noble art of faith to challenge Christ for his own, and that with an “I” and “me,” as if none else were concerned but itself, and hence this whole verse is made up of so many “I’s” and “me’s.” Oh glorious Lover! the Son of God! Oh gracious act! “He loved” and Oh strange object whom He loved—me—unlovely me! But how did He manifest His love? Even by His gift—He gave. What did He give? Himself. For whom? For me, unworthy me! Every word hath weight, and every act of faith hath a “me” in the bosom of it—Christ liveth in me, He loved me, and gave Himself for me.—An ancient Author, unknown.

UNION AND COMMUNION

3. Mystical

In the introductory article, we pointed out that “There are three principal unions revealed in the Scriptures which are the chief mysteries and form the foundation of our most holy faith. First, the union of three divine persons in one Godhead—having distinct personalities, being co-eternal and co-glorious, yet constituting one JEHOVAH. Second, the union of the divine and human natures in one person, Jesus Christ, Immanuel, being God and man. Third, the union of the church to Christ—He being the Head, they the members, constituting one mystical body. Though we cannot form any exact idea of any of these unions in our imaginations, because the depth of such mysteries is beyond our comprehension, yet it is our bounden duty to believe them all because they are clearly revealed in Scripture, and are the necessary foundation for other parts of Christian doctrine. Hence it is our holy privilege to prayerfully study the same, looking unto the Holy Spirit to graciously enlighten us thereon.”

Having shown in the previous articles—very stumblingly and inadequately—how that a plurality of persons in the Godhead made possible the mediatorial union, we are now ready to consider how the Son of God taking upon Himself our nature made possible the union of the church to Him. While orthodox theologians have written clearly upon the divine union which exists between the three persons in the Godhead, and while they have treated helpfully the nature of the mediatorial union, the same can hardly be said of their discussion of the union which exists between God’s elect and their glorious Head. Though not a little has been written thereon, most men have generalized far too much, failing to distinguish between the various aspects of that oneness which exists between Christ and His people. Not a few have jumbled together what needs to be considered apart, if a clear view is to be obtained thereof.

It is not to be expected that Arminians should have any clear grasp of the exceedingly precious subject which is now to engage our attention. Making man, rather than God, the centre of their system, they necessarily begin at the wrong place. They make the union of the believer with Christ to commence at his conversion, when faith lays hold of and makes Him ours. But this is to start at the middle, instead of at the beginning. They fail to recognize that there must be a *vital* union before there can be a fiducial one, that the soul must first be made alive spiritually before it

is capacitated to trust savingly in Christ. One who is dead in trespasses and sins has no more ability to perform spiritual acts—and appropriating the Lord Jesus as our own *is* a spiritual act—than a corpse in the grave is qualified to perform physical acts. Life itself must be present before there can be any evidence and exercises of it.

Calvinists do not fall into the error just pointed out above. They perceive that the sinner must first be quickened before he can savingly believe the Gospel. They insist that the Holy Spirit must unite the soul vitally to Christ ere there can be any drawing from the fullness which is in Christ. We must be livingly united to Him before any of His benefits become ours. I must be a son before I can be an heir. So far so good. But at this point not a few modern Calvinists fail to trace the effect back to its proper source. It is not sufficient to point out that faith necessarily presupposes spiritual life, for that spiritual life itself presupposes something else prior to the communication of it. The Holy Spirit does not regenerate all. *Who* are the ones He brings from death unto life? Galatians 4:6 tells us, “Because ye are *sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.” There is, then, a relation to God *prior to* regeneration.

Now a relation to God previous to regeneration necessarily presupposes *a relation to Christ* previous to regeneration, for we have no spiritual relation to God Himself apart from the Mediator. The elect are God’s “sons” because united to His Son, “Behold I and the children which God hath given me” (Heb 2:13) is His own language. Before He came into this world it was said, “Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mat 1:21)—those who were to be saved by Him were “His people” *before* He became incarnate. They were one with Him by an indissoluble bond long ere the Lord of glory took upon Himself human nature. There was a mystical and eternal union subsisting between Christ and the church, which formed the basis of that vital union which is effected by the Holy Spirit during a time state, the latter *making manifest* the former, the former being the ground upon which the latter is effected.

Not a few of the older Calvinists firmly adhered to this foundation truth of the mystical union subsisting between Christ and His church, but it is to be regretted that they did not define more definitely the *real nature* of that mystical union, and distinguish between the different elements which composed it, or rather, the various aspects which it comprises. Some have narrowed it down to a mere legal or federal union, failing to see that this also presupposed a prior relationship. Some have confined the oneness between Christ and His people to that of the Surety and those whom He represented. Others have spoken of the *covenant-union* between Christ and His church, without stating in detail *of what* that covenant-union consists. Still others, employed the expression “election-union,” which though coming nearer to the mark, still leaves the subject clouded in a certain vagueness.

The one writer who appears to have been blest with a clearer insight into this great mystery than most of his fellows was John Gill—to whom we are indebted for some of the leading thoughts in what follows—though he, in turn, received help, no doubt, from the writings of James Hussey, the high Calvinist of the seventeenth century. Those men rightly traced back the covenant and federal union which the church has with its Head to the eternal *love* of the Triune God, which, operating by His everlasting decree, gave them *an election-union* with Christ. It needs to be pointed out that the eternal decree of JEHOVAH gave Christ—as the God-man Mediator—a real subsistence before Him before the foundation of the world, and a real subsistence unto the elect in Him, so that “*before* the mountains were settled....while as yet he had not made the earth,” He could say “My delights were with the sons of men” (Pro 8:25-26, 31).

The technical name by which the oneness between Christ and His people is designated by theologians is “mystical union.” This term has been employed—for want of a better—not because

the union is vague or unreal, but because it far transcends all earthly analogies in its intimacy of fellowship and reciprocal partnership, both in the very nature of it, the power of its influence, and the excellency of its consequence. “On the one hand, this union does not involve any mysterious *confusion* of the person of Christ with the persons of His people, and on the other hand, it is not such a *mere association* of separate persons as exists in human societies” (Archibald A. Hodge, 1823-1886). It is a relation far more intimate than any which may be formed by any external bonds. This union is presented to us in Scripture as a matter of fact, without any explanation, to be credited on the ground of divine testimony.

But though the union between Christ and His church far transcends all natural analogies, the Scriptures set forth its variety and fullness, element by element, by means of several partial analogies. Because this union is so high and mysterious, it has pleased God to make use of various resemblances for the describing of it, that He might thereby make it more credible and intelligible to us. It is observable that the Holy Spirit has referred to various unions, natural, relative, and artificial, that He might by all of them more clearly and distinctly shadow out the grand union betwixt Christ and His saints. Yet let it be pointed out that useful as are these particular analogies as to the end designed, yet they all come short of the mystical union which they refer to. They may indeed illustrate it—so far as temporal and natural things can—but they cannot reach or equal it.

The first of these typical resemblances which may be mentioned is that of husband and wife. Upon the conjugal relation there is a very close and intimate conjunction. Now Christ and His people stand in this conjugal relation each to the other. He is their “Husband” (Isa 54:5), they are His “Wife” (Rev 19:7). They are “espoused” to Christ (2Co 11:2), “married” to Christ (Rom 7:4), “betrothed” to Him “for ever” (Hos 2:19), their name is “Hephzibah” (“My delight is in her”) and “Beulah”—“Married” (Isa 62:4). This marriage-union Paul applies to Christ and believers, “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Eph 5:28-30), to which the apostle adds, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32)—I am using this union between husband and wife to point to that higher and spiritual union which exists between Christ and His people—the husband and the wife are “one,” and Christ and the church are so much more.

The second of these natural analogies is found in the physical head and members. In the human body there is a close conjunction between these two, for they are joined the one to the other, and together form one and the same organism. Thus it is with Christ and believers in the body mystical, to which the Holy Spirit has repeatedly applied the terms pertaining to this physical adumbration—Christ is the Head, they are the several members belonging to that Head. Of Christ it is said, God “gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body” (Eph 1:22-23), “and he is the head of the body, the church” (Col 1:18). Of the members it is said, “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1Co 12:27), and “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Rom 12:5). As truly and as intimately as the head and members of the physical body are united, so truly and intimately are Christ and believers united also.

The third of these earthly adumbrations is found in that of the root and the branches growing out of the same. There is not only a connection between them, but a vital oneness, otherwise how should the one convey life, sap, growth to the other? So it is with Christ and His people—He is the Root, they are the tendrils issuing therefrom. “I am the vine, ye are the branches” (Joh 15:5).

To this analogy the Holy Spirit frequently makes reference, “We have been *planted together* in the likeness of his death” (Rom 6:5); “If the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree” (Rom 11:16-17), “Rooted and built up in him” (Col 2:7). Thus there is a blessed resemblance between Christ and His church and the root and its branches, both in point of union and of influence. The root is united to the branches and they to it. The root conveys life, nourishment, and fruitfulness to the branches, so does Christ to believers.

Another resemblance is found in the foundation and the building. Here again is union, for in a building all the stones and timbers are joined and fastened together upon the foundation, making but one entire structure. So it is with believers and Christ. This figure is also used in Scripture again and again. The Lord Himself likened the one who heard and obeyed His sayings to “a wise man, which built his house upon a rock” (Mat 7:24). The apostle Paul reminded the saints, “Ye are God’s building” and added, “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1Co 3:9, 11), and again they are said to be “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). As a man builds upon the foundation, laying the weight of the whole building upon it, so the faith and confidence of the Christian is built upon that sure foundation which God has laid in Zion (Isa 28:16).

Now as there is nothing in this natural world which more sweetly and securely knits souls together than *love*, so the cementing bond which unites Christ and the church must be traced back to the love of God. If love can be so effectual among men in binding one heart to another, how infinitely more powerful must love in the heart of God attract and unite the objects of it to Himself, giving them a nearness to Him such as finite minds are quite incapable of fully comprehending. *This* is the bond of union of saints one to another, for their hearts are “knit together in love” (Col 2:2), and therefore is love called “the bond of perfectness” (Col 3:14). *Love*, then, the everlasting love of the Father, Son, and Spirit, is the *origin* of the church’s union with Christ. “This is that cement which will never loosen, that union-knot which can never be untied, that bond which can never be dissolved, from whence there can be no separation” (John Gill).

Now *election* was the first and fundamental act of God’s love toward His people, giving them a subsistence in Christ from everlasting, “according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4). God does not love His people because He elected them, rather did He elect them because He had set His heart upon them. The divine order is plainly intimated in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, “Brethren *beloved* of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning *chosen* you to salvation.” The same precious truth is brought out again in Ephesians 1, “*In love*: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” (Eph 1:4-5). This was the supreme act and instance of everlasting love, by which the elect were considered in Christ and one with Him, He being chosen as the Head, they as His members—obviously we could not be *in* Christ without being one *with* Him.

“He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col 1:18). Yes, *Christ* was “the beginning” even in connection with election, there too He had “the preeminence.”

*“Be Thou My first elect He said,
Then chose the Church in Christ its Head.”*

Christ was not chosen for the church, but the church for Him. There was an *order* in God's counsels, as there is in all His works, and *Christ* occupies the first place therein. The ever-blessed and all-sufficient God was pleased to desire *creature* fellowship and society, instead of dwelling alone forever in His own infinite immensity. The eternal Father therefore ordained that His co-essential Son should take unto Himself a created nature, uniting the man Christ Jesus into indissoluble union to His divine person. God fixed upon the person of Christ, as God-man, as the one great and everlasting object of His love, delight, and complacency. He was as God-man "set up from everlasting," being possessed by JEHOVAH as "the beginning of his way" (Pro 8:22-23).

Next, God was pleased to decree that an elect number of Adam's race should be united to Christ and be for His glory. As the man Christ Jesus was JEHOVAH's "elect" in whom His soul "delighteth" (Isa 42:1), and as He was (by infinite grace) taken to be JEHOVAH's "fellow" (Zec 13:7), so those who were elected in Christ became His "delight" (Pro 8:31) and were to be His "fellows" (Psa 45:7), to be everlastingly glorified in and with Him. Though in the order of time Christ and His church were elected together, to form one complete mystical body, yet in the order of God's counsels Christ was elected first, and then His people were chosen in Him. "Christ was *the Head* of election, and of the elect of God—and so in order of nature elected first, though in order of time we were elected with Him. In the womb of election, He, the Head, came out first, and then we the members. He is therefore said *in predestination* to be the Firstborn of all His brethren—see Romans 8:29" (Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680). This is a profound depth, yet a most important truth, and needing further amplification.

"God in the act of election looked not at us apart and singly as in ourselves, so as by one act to choose us, and by another act to give us to Christ. But as of the soul it is by one and the same act of God's both created and infused into the body, as so subsists not one moment apart. Likewise God in the act of choosing us gave us to Christ, and in giving us to Christ He chose us. And thus, He never considering us apart, but as members of Christ and given to Him in the very act of choosing, hence our very choice itself is said to be 'in Him.' And so, on the other side, in the first view and purpose God took up concerning Christ, and in electing Him, He looked not at Him apart as a single person in Himself, but as a Head to us His body, chosen in Him and with Him. So it is not that Jesus Christ was chosen by one act to be man, and then to be a common person by another, but at the very *same instant* that He was chosen the one, He was chosen the other, under that very consideration to be a common person.

"It was in this as in the creation of Adam, Christ's shadow, who when he was first made, was not made as a single man, he was made 'a living soul' (1Co 15:45). What is that? To be a *public* person, to convey life to others as well as to have life personally in himself. That is the meaning, as appears by the following words, 'The last Adam,' that is, Christ 'was made a quickening spirit,' that is, not for Himself, but to others. So that the very first view that God in election took of Christ, was not of Him only as a single person considered, but as a common person. In a word, as in the womb, head and members are not conceived apart, *but together*, as having relation each to other, so were we in Christ, as making up one mystical body unto God, formed together in that eternal womb of election. So that God's choice did completely terminate itself on Him and us—us with Him, and yet us in Him—He having the priority to be constituted a common person and root to us" (Thomas Goodwin).

Now God's eternal decree gave His elect a super-creation subsistence before Him, so that they were capable of being "loved" (Jer 31:3) and of receiving a grant of grace, "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)—note well, it was not simply that God purposed to give His chosen people grace, but that grace “*was* given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” If, then, grace was actually “given us in Christ” ere time commenced, then we must have a real subsistence in Him before God from everlasting. This too, is above our powers to fully comprehend, yet is it a truth to be held fast on the ground of the divine testimony. In God’s eternal thoughts and foreviews, the elect were conceived and contemplated *in the divine mind* as real entities, in a state of pure creaturehood, above and beyond the consideration of the Fall.

October

THE HOLY SPIRIT

30. The Spirit Cleansing (Part 2)

Though the real Christian has been delivered from condemnation and freed from the reigning power of sin, yet there is a continual need for him to “mortify” or put to death the principle and actings of indwelling corruption. His main fight is against suffering sin to bring him into captivity to the lusts of the flesh. “Have *no* fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness”—enter into no truce, form no alliance with, “but rather reprove them” (Eph 5:11). Say with Ephraim of old, “What have I to do any more with idols?” (Hos 14:8). No real communion with God is possible while sinful lusts remain unmortified. Allowed sin draws the heart from God, entangles the affections, discomposes the soul, and provokes God to close His ears against our prayers, see Ezekiel 14:3.

Now it is most important that we should distinguish between mock mortification and true, between the counterfeit resemblances of this duty and the duty itself. There is a *pagan* “mortification,” which is merely suppressing such sins as nature itself discovers and from such reasons and motives as nature suggests (Rom 2:14). This tends to hide sin rather than mortify it. It is not a recovering of the soul from the world unto God, but only acquiring a fitness to live with less scandal among men. There is a *Popish* and superstitious “mortification,” which consists in the neglect of the body, abstaining from marriage, certain kinds of meat, and apparel. Such things have “a show of wisdom” and are highly regarded by the carnal world, but not being commanded *by God* they have no spiritual value whatsoever. They macerate the natural man instead of mortifying the old man. There is also a *Protestant* “mortification” which differs nothing in principle from the Popish—certain fanatics eschew some of God’s creatures, others demand abstinence when God requires temperance.

True mortification consists, first, in *weakening* sin’s root and principle. It is of little avail to chop off the heads of weeds while their roots remain in the ground. Nor is much accomplished by seeking to correct outward habits while the heart be left neglected. One in a high fever cannot expect to lower his temperature while he continues to eat heartily, nor can the lusts of the flesh be weakened so long as we feed or “make provision for” (Rom 13:14) them. Second, in *suppressing* the risings of inward corruptions—by turning a deaf ear to their voice, by crying to God for grace so to do, by pleading the blood of Christ for deliverance. Make conscience of evil thoughts and

imaginings—do not regard them as inevitable, still less cherish them. Turn the mind to holy objects. Third, in *restraining* its outward actings—“denying ungodliness,” etc. (Ti 2:12).

Though grace be wrought in the hearts of the regenerate, it is not in their power to act it. He who implanted it must renew, excite, and marshal it. “If ye *through the Spirit* do mortify” (Rom 8:13). First, He it is who discovers the sin that is to be mortified, opening it to the view of the soul, stripping it of its deceits, exposing its deformity. Second, He it is who gradually weakens sin’s power, acting as “the Spirit of burning” (Isa 4:4), consuming the dross. Third, He it is who reveals and applies the efficacy of the cross of Christ, in which there is contained a sin-mortifying virtue, whereby we are “made conformable unto his death” (Phi 3:10). Fourth, He it is who strengthens us with might in the inner man, so that our graces—the opposites of the lusts of the flesh—are invigorated and called into exercise.

The Holy Spirit is the effective Helper. Men may employ the aids of inward rigor and outward severity, and they may for a time stifle and suppress their evil habits, but unless the Spirit of God work in us, nothing can amount to true mortification. Yet note well it is not, “If the Spirit do mortify,” nor even “If the Spirit through you do mortify,” but “If ye through the Spirit do mortify” (Rom 8:13)! The Christian is not passive, but active in this work. We are bidden to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (2Co 7:1). We are exhorted to “building up yourselves on your most holy faith” and “keep yourselves in the love of God” (Jude 1:20-21). Paul could say, “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection” (1Co 9:27). It is by yielding to the Spirit’s impulses, heeding His strivings, submitting ourselves unto His government, that any measure of success is granted us in this most important work.

The believer is not a cipher in this work. The gracious operations of the Spirit were never designed to be a substitute for the Christian’s discharge of his duty. True, His influence is indispensable, though it relaxes us not from our individual responsibility. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1Jo 5:21) emphasizes our obligation, and plainly intimates that God requires from His people something more than a passive waiting for Him to stir them into action. O my reader, beware of cloaking a spirit of slothful indolence under an apparent jealous regard for the honour of the Spirit. Is no self-effort required to escape the snares of Satan by refusing to walk in those paths which God has forbidden? Is no self-effort to be made in breaking away from the evil influence of godless companions? Is no self-effort called for to dethrone an unlawful habit? Mortification is a task to which every Christian must address himself with prayerful and resolute earnestness. Nevertheless it is a task far transcending *our* feeble powers.

It is only “through the Spirit” that any of us can acceptably and effectually (in any degree) “mortify the deeds of the body” (Rom 8:13). He it is who works in us a loathing of sin, a mourning over it, a turning away from it. He it is who presses upon us the claims of Christ, reminding us that inasmuch as He died *for* sin, we must spare no efforts to die *to* sin, “striving against sin” (Heb 12:4), confessing it (1Jo 1:9), forsaking it (Pro 28:13). He it is who preserves us from giving way to despair, and encourages us to renew the conflict, assuring us that ultimately we shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved us. He it is who deepens our aspirations after holiness, causing us to cry “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Psa 51:10), and moving us to “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before” (Phi 3:13).

“If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye *shall live*” (Rom 8:13). Here is the encouraging promise set before the sorely-tried contestant. God will be no man’s debtor. “He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb 11:6). If, then, by grace, we deny the flesh and co-operate with the Spirit, if we strive against sin and strive after holiness, richly shall we be

recompensed. To say that Christians are unable to concur with the Spirit, is to deny there is any real difference between the renewed and those who are dead in sin. It is true that without Christ we can do nothing (Joh 15:5), yet it is equally true (though far less frequently quoted) that “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phi 4:13). Mortification and vivification are inseparable—dying to sin and living unto God are indissolubly connected, the one cannot be without the other. If we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, then, but only then, we shall “live”—live a life of grace and comfort here, and live a life of eternal glory and bliss hereafter.

Some have a difficulty here in that Romans 8:13 conditions “life” upon *our* performance of the duty of mortification. “In the Gospel there are promises of life upon the condition of our obedience. The promises are not made to the work, but to the worker, and to the worker not for his work, but for Christ’s sake according to his work. As for example, promise of life is made not to the work of mortification, but *to him* that mortifieth the flesh, and that not for his mortification, but because he is in Christ, and his mortification is the token *or evidence thereof*. And therefore it must be remembered that all promises of the Gospel that mention works include in them reconciliation with God in Christ” (William Perkins, 1558-1602). The conditionality of the promise, then, is neither that of causation or uncertainty, but of coherence and connection, or means and end. The highway of holiness is the only path that leads to heaven, “He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal 6:8).

But let it be pointed out that the sowing of a field with grain is not accomplished in a few minutes, it is a lengthy and laborious task, calling for diligence and patience. So it is with the Christian—mortification is a *lifelong* task. A neglected garden is neither easily nor quickly rid of weeds and much care is required for the cultivation of herbs and flowers. Nor is a long-neglected heart, with its indwelling corruptions and powerful lusts, brought into subjection to the Spirit by a few spasmodic efforts and prayers. It calls for painful and protracted effort, the daily denying of self, application of the principles of the cross to our daily walk, earnest supplication for the Spirit’s help. So “*Be not weary*,” etc. (See Gal 6:9).

In conclusion let us seek to meet the objection of the discouraged Christian. “If a true mortification must be not only a striving against the motions of inward corruptions, but also the weakening of its roots, then I fear that all my endeavours have been in vain. Some success I have obtained against the outbreakings of lust, but still I find the temptation of it as strong as ever. I perceive no decays in it, but rather does it grow more violent each day.” Answer, “That is because you are more conscious and take more notice of corruption than formerly. When the heart is made tender by a long exercise of mortification, a less temptation troubles it more than a greater did formerly. This seeming strengthening of corruption is not a sign that sin is not dying, but rather an evidence that you are spiritually alive and more sensible of its motions” (condensed from Ezekiel Hopkins, 1680, to whom we are indebted for several leading thoughts in the September section of this article).

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

94. A Call to Diligence (12:14)

The connection between the verses which were before us on the last occasion and that which is now to engage our attention is not apparent at the first glance. There the apostle made a practical application to his readers of the important considerations he had been setting before them in the preceding verses, calling them unto the duty of steadfastness. Here there is a lively exhortation unto the pursuit of peace and holiness. The relation between these exhortations and those which follow, is more intimate than a number of pearls strung together, rather is it more like that of the several members of our physical body, which are vitally joined and dependent upon one another. Failure to observe this fact results in loss, for not only do we fail to appreciate the living connection of one part with another, but we lose the motive and incentive which they mutually supply. It is the business of the teacher to point this out, that we may be duly affected thereby and rejoice together in the perfect handiwork of God.

“From his exhortation unto patient perseverance in the profession of the Gospel under sufferings and afflictions, the apostle proceeds unto a prescription of practical duties, and although they are such as are absolutely necessary in themselves at all times, yet they are here peculiarly enjoined with respect to the same end, or our constancy in professing the Gospel. For no light, no knowledge of the truth, no resolution or courage, will preserve any man in his profession, especially in times of trial, without a diligent attention unto the duties of holiness and Gospel obedience. And he begins with a precept, general and comprehensive of all others” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

The connection between Hebrews 12:14, etc., with verses 12 and 13 is threefold. First, the diligent pursuit of peace toward our fellows and of holiness toward God are timely aids unto perseverance in the faith and in consequence, powerful means for preservation from apostasy. The one is so closely joined to the other that the former cannot be realised without an eager striving after the latter. Second, inasmuch as love toward our neighbour (“peace,” with all that that involves and includes) and love toward God (“holiness”) is the sum of our duty, it is impossible that we should devote ourselves unto their cultivation and exercise so long as we are permitting afflictions and persecution to paralyze the mind. The spirit of resolute determination must possess us before we can develop our spiritual graces. Third, oppression and suffering provide an opportunity for the exercise and manifestation of our spiritual graces, and are to be improved by us to this very end. “If the children of God grow impatient under afflictions, they will neither walk so quietly and peaceably towards men nor so piously toward God as they should do” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

The first thing which needs to be borne in mind as we approach each verse of this epistle is the special circumstances of those immediately addressed, and to perceive the peculiar pertinency of the apostle’s instruction to those who were so situated, for this will the better enable us to make a correct application unto ourselves. Now the Hebrews were living among a people where their own espousal of Christianity had produced a serious breach, which had stirred up the fierce opposition of their fellow-countrymen. The attitude of these Hebrews towards Christ was neither

understood nor appreciated by the unbelieving Jews—so far from it, they were regarded as renegades and denounced as apostates from the faith of their fathers. Every effort was made to poison their minds against the Gospel, and where this failed, relentless persecution was brought to bear upon them. Hence, it was by no means an easy matter for them to maintain the *spirit* of the Gospel and live amicably with those who surrounded them. Instead, they were sorely tempted to entertain a bitter spirit toward those who troubled them so unjustly, to retaliate and avenge their wrongs. Here, then, was the need for them to be exhorted, “Follow peace with all men” (Heb 12:14)!

Now while it be true that Christians are now, for the most part, spared the severe suffering which those Hebrews were called upon to endure, yet faithfulness to Christ is bound to incur the hostility of those who hate Him, and will in some form or other issue in opposition. There is a radical difference in nature between those treading the narrow way to heaven and those following the broad road to hell. The character and conduct of the former condemn and rile the self-pleasing disposition and flesh-indulging ways of the latter. The children of the devil have no love for the children of God, and they delight in doing whatever they can to annoy and aggravate them, and nothing gives them more pleasure than to see successful their efforts to tempt them to compromise or stir up unto angry retaliation. Thus it is a timely injunction for *all* believers, in any age and in any country, to strive earnestly to live in peace with all men.

“Follow peace with all men” (Heb 12:14). This is a very humbling word that Christians require *to be told* to do this. Its implication is clear—by nature men are fractious, wrathful, revengeful creatures. That is one reason why Christ declared, “It must needs be that offences come” (Mat 18:7)—“must” because of the awful depravity of fallen human nature. Yet forget not that He at once added, “But woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” It is because of this contentious, envious, revengeful spirit which is in us, that we need the exhortation of our text, and in view of what is recorded in Scripture, even of saints, its timeliness is the more apparent. Have we not read of “the strife” between the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot which caused the patriarch and his nephew to part asunder? Have we not read of the discords and fightings between the tribes of Israel issuing in their kingdom being rent in twain? Have we not read of the “contention” between Paul and Barnabas which issued in their separating? These are solemn warnings, danger signals, which we all do well to take to heart.

“It is the duty of Christians to be at peace among themselves, to be on their guard against all alienation of affection towards each other, and there can be no doubt that the maintenance of this brotherly-kindness is well fitted to promote steadfastness in the faith and profession of the Gospel. But in the words before us there seems to be a reference not so much to the peace which Christians should endeavour to maintain among themselves, as that which they should endeavour to preserve in reference to the world around them. They are to ‘follow peace with *all* men’ (Heb 12:14).

“They live amidst men whose modes of thinking, and feeling, and acting are very different from—are in many points directly opposite to—theirs. They have been fairly warned, that ‘if they would live godly in this world, they must suffer persecution.’ (See 2Ti 3:12). They have been told that ‘if they were of the world, the world would love its own; but because they are not of the world, therefore the world hateth them.’ ‘In the world,’ says their Lord and Master, ‘ye shall have tribulation’ (Joh 16:33). But this, so far from making them reckless as to their behaviour towards the men of the world, ought to have the directly opposite effect. If the world persecute them, they must take care that this persecution has in no degree been provoked by their improper or imprudent behaviour. They must do everything that lies in their power, consistent with duty, to

live in peace with their ungodly neighbours. They must carefully abstain from injuring them. They must endeavour to promote their happiness. They must do everything but sin in order to prevent a quarrel.

“This is of great importance, both to themselves and to their unbelieving brethren. A mind harassed by those feelings which are almost inseparable from a state of discord is not by any means in the fittest state for studying the doctrines, cherishing the feelings, enjoying the comforts, performing the duties of Christianity, and on the other hand, the probability of our being useful to our unbelieving brethren is greatly diminished when we cease to be on good terms with them. As far as lies in us, then, if it be possible, we are to ‘live peaceably with all men’” (John Brown, 1872).

“Follow peace with all men” (Heb 12:14). The Greek word for “follow” is a very emphatic one, signifying an “earnest pursuit.” It is the eager chasing after something which flies from one, being used of hunters and hounds after game. The Christian is to spare no effort to live amicably with all men, and no matter how contentious and unfriendly they may be, he is to strive and overtake that which seeks to flee from him. *Peace* is one of the outstanding graces which the Christian is called upon to exercise and manifest. All things pertaining to the church are denominated things of *peace*. God is “the God of peace” (Heb 13:20), Christ is the “Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6), a believer is designated “the son of peace” (Luk 10:6), and Christians are bidden to have their “feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15).

In this term “follow,” or pursue, the apostle continues to preserve the central figure of the entire passage, introduced in the first verse of our chapter of the running of a race. The same word is rendered, “I press toward” in Philippians 3:14. Peace may be elusive and hard to capture, nevertheless, strive after it, run hard in the chase thereof, for it is well worth overtaking. Spare no pains, strain every nerve to attain unto it. If this exhortation be duly heeded by us then Christians are plainly forbidden to embroil themselves or take any part in the strifes and quarrels of the world. Thus they are hereby forbidden to engage in politics, where there is little else than envy, contention, and anger. Still less may the Christian take any part in war. There is not a single word in all the New Testament which warrants a follower of the Prince of peace slaying his fellowmen. “Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it” (Psa 34:14).

The word “follow” or pursue does not imply the actual attainment of peace—the most eager hunters and hounds often miss their prey. Nevertheless, nothing short of our utmost endeavours are required of us. “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom 12:18), with fellow-Christians, with those who are strangers to Christ (Eph 2:19), with our enemies (Mat 5:44). Few things more adorn and beautify a Christian profession than exercising and manifesting the spirit of peace. Then let us prayerfully strive to avoid those things which occasion strife. Remember the old adage that, “It takes two to make a quarrel.” Therefore see to it that *you* provoke not others. Give no encouragement to those who love contention. Refrain from all argument—the things of God are too holy—debating is a work of the flesh. To “follow peace with all men” (Heb 12:14) presupposes *righteousness* in our dealings with them, for we most certainly are not entitled to expect them to treat us amicably unless we give unto each his due, and treat others as we would have them treat us.

Do not merely be placid when no one irritates you, but go out of your way to be gracious unto those who oppose. Be not fretful if others fail to render the respect which you consider to be your due. Do not be so ready to “stand up for your rights,” but *yield* everything except truth and the requirements of holiness. “If we would follow peace, we must gird up our loins with the girdle of *forbearance*. We must resolve that as we will not give offence, so neither will we take offence,

and if offence be felt, we must resolve to forgive” (Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892). Remember we cannot successfully “pursue peace” if the heavy burden of *pride* be on our shoulder. Pride ever stirs up strife. Nor can we “pursue peace” if the spirit of *envy* fills the heart. Envy is sure to see faults where they exist not, and make trouble. Nor can we “pursue peace” if we are loose-tongued, busybodies, talebearers.

Even when opposed, our duty is to be peaceful toward those who persecute—a hard lesson, a high attainment, yet divine grace (when earnestly sought) is “sufficient” even here. Remember the example which the Saviour has left us, and cry mightily unto God for help to emulate the same. “When he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not” (1Pe 2:23). He prayed for God to forgive His very murderers. “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (Eph 4:2). Ah, *there* are the prerequisites for the procuring of peace—the lack of which being the cause of so much confusion, strife, and war. If *love* reigns, our skirts will be clear, for, “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; Charity envieth not...doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil...beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things” (1Co 13:4-5, 7).

“Follow peace with all men” (Heb 12:14). This includes even more than we have intimated above. The Christian is not only to be a peace-keeper, but he should seek to be a peacemaker, such have the express benediction of Christ, “*Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God*” (Mat 5:9). Seek, then, to restore amicable relations between those who are at enmity and be used of God as a medium of their reconciliation. Instead of fanning the flames of dissension or driving the wedge of division further in, endeavour to cool them by the water of the Word, and by a gracious demeanor and wise counsel seek to smooth out difficulties and heal wounds. “And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace” (Jam 3:18). “Peaceable men do sow a seed that afterward will yield sheaves of comfort into their own bosoms” (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677).

“Follow peace with all men *and holiness*” (Heb 12:14). First, the cultivation of peace is a great *aid unto* personal and practical holiness—where discontent, envy, and strife dominate the heart, piety is choked. The two things are inseparably connected—where love to our neighbour is lacking, love to God will not be in exercise. The two tables of the law must not be divorced. God will not accept our worship in the house of prayer while we entertain in our heart the spirit of bitterness toward another (Mat 5:23-24). “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” (1Jo 4:20). O my reader, if we imagine that we are sincere in our quest after holiness while striving not to live peaceably with all men, we are cherishing a vain deceit.

“Some who have aimed at holiness have made the great mistake of supposing it needful to be morose, contentious, faultfinding, and censorious with everybody else. Their holiness has consisted of negatives, protests, and oppositions for opposition sake. Their religion mainly lies in contrarieties and singularities. To them the text offers this wise counsel, follow holiness, but also follow peace. Courtesy is not inconsistent with faithfulness. It is not needful to be savage in order to be sanctified. A bitter spirit is a poor companion for a renewed heart. Let your determination principle be sweetened by tenderness towards your fellow-men. Be resolute for the right, but be also gentle, pitiful, courteous. Consider the meekness as well as the boldness of Jesus. Follow peace, but not at the expense of holiness. Follow holiness, but do not needlessly endanger peace” (Charles H. Spurgeon, on text, 1870).

“Follow peace with all men, *and holiness*” (Heb 12:14). By a harmless, kind, and useful behaviour toward their unbelieving neighbours, the people of God are to conduct themselves. They must avoid that which fosters bitterness and strife, and make it manifest they are followers of the Prince of peace. Yet in pursuing this most needful and inestimable policy, there must be no sacrifice of principle. While peace is a most precious commodity, nevertheless, like gold, it may be purchased too dearly. “The wisdom that is from above *is first pure*, then peaceable” (Jam 3:17). Peace must not be severed from holiness by a compliance with any evil or a neglect of any duty. “First being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace” (Heb 7:2). “Peace has special relation to man and his good, holiness to God and His honour. These two may no more be severed than the two tables of the law. Be sure then that peace lacks not this companion of holiness. If they cannot stand together, let peace go and holiness be cleaved unto” (William Gouge, 1575-1653).

There may be the former without the latter. Men may be so determined to maintain peace that they compromise principle, sacrifice the truth, and ignore the claims of God. Peace must never be sought after at the price of unfaithfulness to Christ. “Buy the truth, *and sell it not*” (Pro 23:23) is ever binding upon the Christian. Thus, important though it be to “follow peace with all men” (Heb 12:14), it is still more important that we diligently pursue “holiness.” Holiness is devotedness to God and that temper of mind and course of conduct which agrees with the fact that we are “not our own, but bought with a price” (See 1Co 6:19-20). Peace with men, then, is not to be purchased at the expense of devotedness to God, “Infinitely better to have the whole world for our enemies and God for our Friend, than to have the whole world for our friends and God for our enemy” (John Brown, 1722-1787).

The Christian is not only to be diligent in his quest for peace, but he is to be still more earnest in his pursuit after personal and practical holiness. Seeking after the good will of our fellows must be subordinated unto seeking the approbation of God. Our chief aim must be conformity to the image of Christ. If He has delivered us from the wrath to come, we must endeavour by all that is within us to *follow Him* along the narrow way which leadeth unto life. If He be our Lord and Master, then He is to be unreservedly obeyed. To “follow” holiness is to *live* like persons who are devoted to God—to His glory, to His claims upon us, to His cause in this world. It is to *make it evident* that we belong to Him. It is to separate ourselves from all that is opposed to Him. It is to mortify the flesh, with its affections and lusts. It is to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (2Co 7:1). It is a life task from which there is no discharge while we remain in the body.

To urge us the more after holiness, the apostle at once adds, “without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14)—“which” is in the singular number, showing that the antecedent is “holiness.” The believer may fail to “follow peace with all men” (Heb 12:14), and though he will suffer loss thereby and bring himself under the chastening rod of his Father, yet this will not entail the loss of heaven itself. But it is otherwise with holiness—unless we are made partakers of the divine nature, unless there be personal devotedness to God, unless there be an earnest striving after conformity to His will, then heaven will never be reached. There is only one route which leads to the country of everlasting bliss, and that is the highway of holiness, and unless (by grace) we tread the same, our course must inevitably terminate in the caverns of eternal woe.

The negative here is fearfully emphatic, “without which [namely, “holiness”] no man shall see the Lord”—in the Greek it is still stronger—the negative being threefold—“not without, no man.” God Himself is essentially, ineffably, infinitely holy, and only holy characters shall ever “see” *Him*. Without holiness *no* man shall see Him—no, no matter how orthodox his beliefs, how

diligent his attendance upon the means of grace, how liberal he may be in contributing to the cause, nor how zealous in performing religious duties. How this searching word should make everyone of us quail! Even though I be a preacher, devoting the whole of my life to study and labouring for the good of souls, even though I be blest with much light from the Word and be used of God in turning many from Satan to Christ, yet without holiness—both inward and outward—I shall never see the Lord. Unless the earnest pursuit of holiness occupy all my powers, I am but a formal professor, having a name to live while being spiritually dead.

Without holiness men are strangers to God and cannot be admitted to His fellowship, still less to His eternal habitation. “Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary” (Eze 44:9)—such as have no holiness within and without, in heart or in life, cannot be admitted into the sanctuary. If God shut the door of His earthly sanctuary against such as were strangers to holiness, will He not much more shut the doors of His celestial tabernacle against those who are strangers to Christ? “For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?” (2Co 6:14-15).

Unholy persons have fellowship and are familiar with Satan, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (Joh 8:44), and again “The whole world lieth in the wicked one” (1Jo 5:19). It would be awful blasphemy to affirm that the thrice holy God would have fellowship with those who are in covenant with the devil. O make no mistake upon this point, dear reader, if you are not walking after the Spirit, you are walking after the flesh. If you are not living to please Christ, you are living to please self. If you have not been delivered from the power of darkness, you cannot enjoy the light. Listen to those piercing words of the Redeemer, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:3), and the new birth is holiness begun, it is the implantation of a principle of holiness in the heart, which is the life task of the Christian to cultivate.

The “holiness” referred to in our text is *not* imputed holiness, for we cannot be exhorted to “follow after” that! No, it is personal and practical holiness, which is not attained by standing still, but by an earnest, diligent, persistent pursuit after the same. “It will be well for us to remember that the religion of Jesus Christ is not a matter of trifling, that the gaining of heaven is not to be achieved by a few half-hearted efforts. And if we will at the same time recollect that all-sufficient succour is prepared for us in the Covenant of Grace we shall be in a right state of mind—resolute, yet humble, leaning upon the merits of Christ, and yet aiming at personal holiness. I am persuaded that if self-righteousness be deadly, self-indulgence is indeed ruinous. I desire to maintain always a balance in my ministry, and while combating self-righteousness, to war perpetually with loose living” (Charles H. Spurgeon).

But for the comfort of the poor and afflicted people of God, who find sin their greatest burden and who grieve sorely over their paucity of holiness, let it be pointed out that our text does not say, “without *the perfection of* holiness ‘no man shall see the Lord’” (Heb 12:14). Had it done so, we would not be writing this article, for then the editor had been entirely without hope. There is none upon earth who is fully conformed to God’s will. Practical holiness is a matter of growth. In this life holiness is but infantile, and will only be matured in glory. At present it exists more in the form of longings and strivings, hungering and efforts, rather than in realizations and attainments. The very fact that the Christian is exhorted to “follow” or pursue holiness, proves that he has not yet reached it.

“Without holiness no man shall *see the Lord*” (See Heb 12:14), spiritually, not corporeal—with an enlightened understanding and with love’s discernment, so as to enjoy personal

communion with Him. “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (1Jo 1:6). How clear is that! “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Mat 5:8). See Him in His holy ordinances, see His blessed image reflected, though dimly, by His saints, see Him by faith with the eyes of the heart, as Moses, who “endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27), and thus be prepared and capacitated to “see” Him in His unveiled glory in the courts above. O to be able to truthfully say, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psa 17:15). How we should labour after holiness, using all the means appointed thereto, since it is the medium for the soul’s vision of God.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

46. His Conquests

In last month’s article we pointed out that the central thing in 2 Samuel 8 is David overcoming his enemies, and this, in order that Israel might enter their rightful portion—occupy and enjoy the inheritance which God had given them. In order to this, hard fighting was entailed. We also called attention to the fact that 2 Samuel 8 opens with the word “And,” which requires us to observe what immediately goes before. In 2 Samuel 7, we find God giving David “rest round about from all his enemies” (v. 1), and that he spent this season of repose in communion with the Lord—over His Word, (vv. 4-17) and in prayer (vv. 18-29). Following which he evidently received a commission from on high to attack and conquer his most formidable foes, for we are next told “and after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them” (2Sa 8:1).

The spiritual application unto the believer of the above is very striking and blessed. The “rest” given to David from those who had assailed him typifies, first, the initial coming to Christ of a convicted and sin-weary soul, and finding rest in Him. And second, it typifies the restraining hand of God laid upon the sinful lusts of the Christian, granting him a little respite from their assaults. This is necessary if there is to be sweet and profitable communion with the thrice holy God, for the soul is in no condition to rejoice in His perfections while sin is raging within him. Therefore does the Lord, in His mercy, frequently lay His powerful hand upon us, subduing our iniquities (Mic 7:19). Then it is we should improve the opportunity, by feeding upon the Word of promise and pouring out our hearts before God in thanksgiving, praise, and adoring worship. Thus David used his “rest,” and so should we, for by so doing new strength will be obtained for further conflicts.

David’s smiting of the Philistines and subduing them is a figure of the work of mortification to which God calls the Christian, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness” (Col 3:5). The clear call of God to His people is, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Rom 6:12). The Christian must not suffer his fleshly lusts to lord it over him, but is to engage them in mortal combat, refusing to spare anything in him which

is opposed to God. David's taking of "Methegammah" (which means "the bridle of the mother") out of the hands of the Philistines, speaks of the believer devoting his special attention unto his master lust or besetting sin, for until *that* be (by grace) conquered, there can be no real experimental progress in spiritual things, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour....Let him that stole steal no more....Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth" (Eph 4:25, 28-29).

Now David's subduing of the Philistines and his capture of Methegammah, their chief stronghold, was imperatively necessary if Israel was to gain possession and occupy their inheritance, and it is *this* fact which we desire to press most upon the reader. The Christian has been begotten unto a blessed and eternal inheritance in heaven—from his eventual entrance into it Satan cannot keep him, but from his present possession and enjoyment thereof he seeks might and main to rob him. And unless the believer be duly instructed and steadfastly resists him, then the enemy will prove only too successful. Alas that so few of the Lord's people realize *what* their present privileges are. Alas that so many of them relegate unto the future what is theirs *now* in title. Alas that they are so ignorant of Satan's devices and so dilatory in seeking to resist the great robber of their souls.

The believer has, *even now*, a rich and wondrous portion in Christ. A portion which is available and accessible unto *faith*, "For all things *are* yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; *all* are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1Co 3:21-23). But O how little are we impressed by such glorious declarations as these. How little do we enter into them in a practical way. How little do we *appropriate* them. We are much like the man who died in poverty, knowing not that a valuable estate had been left to him. Instead of setting our affections upon things above, we act as though there was nothing there for us until we pass through the portals of the grave. "In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psa 16:11)—*now* as well as in the future!

O what a tremendous difference it makes whether or not the Christian be living in the present enjoyment of his eternal inheritance. What power could the attractions of this world have for one whose heart is on high? None at all, instead, they would appear to him in their true light, as worthless baubles. How little would he be affected by the loss of a few temporal things. Not making them his "treasure" or chief good, the loss of them could neither destroy his peace nor kill his joy, "And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing *in yourselves* that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (Heb 10:34). How little would tribulation and suffering move us from a steady pressing forward along the path of duty, "who for the joy *that was set before him* [by faith] endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb 12:2).

But for the present enjoyment of our eternal inheritance *faith* must be in exercise, for "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). Faith is that which gives visibility and tangibility to that which is invisible to sight. Faith is that which gives *reality* to the things which hope is set upon. Faith brings near what is far off. Faith lifts the heart above the things of time and sense, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: *for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward*" (Heb 11:24-26). Ah, the "recompense of the reward" was a living reality unto Moses, and under the elevating power thereof the flesh-inviting offer of Egypt's princess was powerless to drag him down. And, my

reader, if “our citizenship is in heaven” (See Phi 3:20) *in a practical way*, so far from the baits of Satan tempting us, they will repel.

But, as we pointed out in last month’s article, faith cannot be in healthy operation while the work of mortification be neglected. If we yield to the solicitations of our fleshly and worldly lusts, if we fail to crucify our besetting sins, if any evil be “allowed” by us, then faith will be suffocated and rendered inactive. Just as both the Canaanites and the Israelites could not possess the promised land at one and the same time—one being compelled to yield occupancy to the other—so neither can faith and sin rule the heart at one and the same time. The idolatrous Canaanites already had possession of the promised land when God gave it to them, and *only by hard fighting* could the Israelites secure it for themselves. In like manner, sinful lusts originally possess the heart of the Christian, and it is only by hard fighting that they can be dispossessed and the heart be filled with heaven.

As the Canaanites were vanquished, the Israelites occupied their places. Thus it must be spiritually. The mortification of sin is in order to the vivification of spirituality. The garden-plot must first be cleared of weeds and rubbish before it is ready for the vegetables and flowers to be planted therein. Hence the oft-repeated word is, “Cease to do evil; learn to do well” (Isa 1:16-17), “depart from evil, and do good” (Psa 34:14), “hate the evil, and love the good” (Amo 5:15)—the second cannot be attended to until the first be accomplished. “Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts...put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:22, 24). That is God’s unchanging order throughout. We must “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit” (2Co 7:1), if we would “perfect holiness in his fear.”

How instructive and how very striking is the order in Obadiah 17, “But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.” First, there is deliverance upon “mount Zion,” which is where *Christ* is, for in Psalm 2:6, God declares, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” Only by Christ can the sin-harassed believer obtain “deliverance” from those enemies which are ever threatening to destroy his peace, joy, and usefulness. Second, following the “deliverance” is the promise of “holiness,” which is a positive thing, a moral quality of purity, with the added signification of devotedness unto God. But note this cannot be before the “deliverance!” Third, there is then the assurance that God’s people shall “*possess* their possessions,” that is, actually enjoy them, live in the power thereof.

“And he smote Moab” (2Sa 8:2). In order to get at the practical application of this unto ourselves, it will be necessary to go back to earlier Scriptures. From Genesis 19:36-37, we learn that Moab was the incestuous son of backslidden Lot. Their territory was adjacent to the land of Canaan, the Jordan dividing them (Num 22:1; 31:12). It was Balak the king of the Moabites who hired Balaam to curse Israel (Num 22:4, 6). Her daughters were a snare to the sons of Israel (Num 25:1). Her land also proved to be a snare unto Naomi and her family (Ruth 1:1). God used the Moabites as one of His scourges upon His wayward people in the days of the Judges (Jud 3:12-14). No Moabite was suffered to enter into the congregation of the Lord unto the tenth generation (Deu 23:3). It was foretold that Christ would “smite” them (Num 24:17). In the last reference to them in Scripture, we read, “Surely Moab shall be as Sodom” (Zep 2:9).

From the above facts it is clear that the Moabites were a menace unto Israel, and that there should be no fellowship between them. But the particular point which we need to define is, exactly what do the Moabites symbolize? The answer to this question is not difficult to discover—they figured the world away from God, but more particularly, the world bordering on

the domain of faith. It is not the world-bordering church, but the church-bordering *world*, ever inviting the people of God to leave their own heritage and come down to their level. The Moabites were *near* to Israel both by birth and locality. There was a long and strong border-line between them, namely, the Jordan, the river of death, and *that* had to be crossed before the people of God could enter their domain. Moab, then, typifies the world *near* the church. In other words, Moab stands for a mere *worldly profession* of the things of God.

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal 6:14 RV). The cross of Christ is the antitype of the Jordan. It is by the cross the Christian is separated from the world. While the principle of the cross—the principle of self-sacrifice, death to sin—rules the Christian, he is preserved from the blandishments of the world. But as soon as the principle of the cross—mortification, the denying of self—ceases to dominate, we fall victims to the fair “daughters of Moab,” and commit spiritual adultery with them (Num 25:1). In other words, our testimony degenerates into a mere profession. We cease to be heavenly pilgrims, and vital godliness becomes a thing of the past. “Every fair attractive worldly delight that makes us forget our true home is a ‘daughter of Moab.’” (Frederic C. Jennings, 1847-1948).

“And he smote Moab” (2Sa 8:2). The spiritual application of this to us today is, we must be uncompromising in our separation from an apostate Christendom, and unsparingly mortify every desire within us to flirt with worldly churches and an empty profession. For a child of God to come under the power of “Moab” is to have his usefulness, power, and joy, replaced with wretchedness, impotency, and dishonour. Hence our urgent need of *obeying* that emphatic command, “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: *from such turn away*” (2Ti 3:5). It is not that we are called upon to *fight against* the modern “Moabites” (as Israel did under the Old Testament dispensation), but to *mortify* that within us which lusts after their attractions. In sparing one third of the Moabites and in receiving “gifts” from them, David temporized—the sad sequel is found in 2 Kings 3:4-5 and what follows.

We do not have sufficient light and discernment to follow out all the details of 2 Samuel 8 and give the spiritual application of them unto ourselves, but several other obvious points in the chapter claim our attention. “David smote also Hadadezer” (2Sa 8:3). “David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men” (2Sa 8:5). How *numerous* are the (spiritual) enemies which the people of God are called upon to engage! It is to be carefully noted that David did not quit when he had subdued the Philistines and the Moabites, but continued to assail other foes! So the Christian must not become weary in well-doing. No furloughs are granted to the soldiers of Jesus Christ. They are called on to be “steadfast, unmovable, *always* abounding in the work of the Lord,” (1Co 15:58), i.e., the work or task which the Lord has assigned them, which, as the immediate context shows, is to gain the victory over *sin*.

Let us now anticipate a criticism which some of the Lord’s people may feel ready to make against what we have said in this and last month’s article. Have you not been arguing in favour of self-sufficiency and creature-ability? No, indeed, yet, on the other hand, we are no advocate for Christian impotency, for there is a vital difference between the regenerate and unregenerate as to spiritual helplessness. The way to get more faith and more strength is to *use* what we already have. But we are far from affirming that the Christian is able to overcome his spiritual foes in his own might. So with David. Considering the vast numbers which composed the ranks of his numerous enemies, David and his small force could never have won such great victories had not *the Lord* undertaken for him.

“And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went” (2Sa 8:6). Note the exact repetition of these words in verse 14. Here is the explanation of David’s success—he fought not in his own strength. So the Christian, fighting the good fight of faith, though weak in himself, is energized by divine grace. David’s onslaught upon the Philistines and the Moabites was in line with the promises of God in Genesis 15:18 and Numbers 24:17, and most probably they nerved him for the battle. Thus it should be with the Christian. It is his privilege and duty to remind God of His promises and *plead* them before Him—such promises as, “I will subdue all thine enemies” (1Ch 17:10), and “sin shall not have dominion over you” (Rom 6:14). O to be able to say, “Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me” (Psa 18:39).

We have space to consider only one point, “Which also king David did dedicate unto the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued” (2Sa 8:11). While David destroyed the idols, he dedicated to God all the vessels of silver and gold which he took from his enemies. So while the Christian strives to mortify every lust, he must consecrate unto the Lord all his natural and spiritual endowments. Whatever stands in opposition to God must be crucified, but that which may glorify Him must be dedicated to His service. This point is a very blessed one—David entirely *changed the destination* of this silver and gold. What had previously adorned the idolaters, was afterwards used in the building of the temple. The spiritual application of this is found in “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). May the Lord graciously add His blessing unto all that has been before us.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

4. The Abrahamic (Continued)

“And therefore will the LORD *wait*, that he may be gracious” (Isa 30:18)—wait until the most suited time, wait until the stage is prepared for action, wait until there is a fit background for Him to act from—wait, very often, until man’s extremity has been reached. “When the *fullness of the time* was come, God sent forth his Son” (Gal 4:4). Winter’s frost and snows must do their work before vegetation is ready to bud and blossom. As it is in the material creation so it is in the realm of divine providence. There is a wonderful *order* in all God’s works, an all-wise *timing* of the divine actions. Not that the Almighty is hampered or hindered by finite creatures of the dust, but that His wondrous “ways” may be the more admired by those who are granted spirituality to discern them. “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways” (Rev 15:3).

Having dealt in *judgment* at Babel, God was then pleased to manifest His *grace*. This has ever been, and will ever be, true of all God’s dealings. According to His infinite wisdom, judgment (which is God’s “strange” work) only serves to prepare the way for a greater and grander outflow of His redeeming love. Having abandoned (temporarily) the nations, God now singled out the man from whom the chosen nation was to spring. Later, God’s rejection of Israel resulted in the

enriching of the Gentiles. And we may add, that the judgment of the great white throne will be followed by the new heaven and new earth, wherein righteousness “shall dwell” (See 2Pe 3:13). and upon which the tabernacle of God shall be with men. Thus it was of old—the overthrow of the tower of Babel and the dispersion of Nimrod’s impious followers was succeeded by the call of Abraham, through whom, ultimately, the divine blessing should flow to all the families of the earth.

The lesson to be learned here is a deeply important one—the *connection* between Genesis 11 and 12 is highly significant. The Lord God determined to have a people of His own by the calling of grace, a people which should be taken into privileged nearness unto Himself, and which should show forth His praises, but it was not until all the claims of the natural man had been repudiated by his own wickedness, not until his utter worthlessness had been clearly exhibited, that divine clemency was free to flow forth on an enlarged scale. Sin was suffered to abound in all its hideousness, before grace super-abounded in all its blessedness. In other words, it was not until the total depravity of men had been fully demonstrated, first by the antediluvians and then again by the concerted apostasy at Babel, that God now dealt with Abraham in sovereign grace and infinite mercy.

That it *was* grace, grace alone, sovereign grace, which called Abraham to be the friend of God, appears clearly from his natural state and circumstances when the Lord first appeared to him. Abraham belonged not to a pious family, where JEHOVAH was acknowledged and honoured, instead his progenitors were idolaters. It seems that once more “*all* flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth” (Gen 6:12). The house from which Abraham sprang was certainly no exception to the rule, for we read, “Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they *served other gods*” (Jos 24:2). There was nothing whatever, then, in the object of the divine choice to commend him unto God, nothing in Abraham that merited His esteem. No, the *cause* of election is always to be traced unto the discriminating will of God, for election itself is “*of grace*” (Rom 11:5), and therefore it depends in no wise upon any worthiness in the object, either present or foreseen—if it did it *would not be* “of grace.”

That it was not at all a matter of any goodness or fitness in Abraham which moved the Lord to single him out to be the special object of His high favour is further seen from Isaiah 51:1-2, “Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you.” While it be true that God never acts capriciously or at random, nor arbitrarily, that is, without some wise and good reason for what He does, yet the *spring* of all His actions is His own sovereign pleasure. The moment we ascribe any of God’s exercises unto aught *outside* of Himself, we are guilty not only of impiety, but of affirming a gross absurdity. The Almighty is infinitely self-sufficient, and can no more be swayed by the creatures of His own hand, than an entity can be influenced by non-entities. O how vastly different is the deity of Holy Writ from the “God” which present-day Christendom dreams about!

“The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee” (Act 7:2-3). The divine title employed here is a remarkable one, for we regard it is intimating that the Shekinah itself was manifested before Abraham’s wondering gaze. God always suits the revelation which He makes of Himself according to the effect which is to be produced. Here was a man in the midst of a heathen city, brought up in an idolatrous home. Something vivid and striking, supernatural and unmistakable, was required, in order to suddenly change the whole course of his life. “The God of glory”—in

blessed and awesome contrast from the “other gods” of his sires—“*appeared* unto our father Abraham.” It was probably the first of the Theophanic manifestations, for we never read of God “appearing” to Abel or Noah.

If our conclusion be correct, and this was the earliest of all the Theophanic manifestations (God appearing in *human* form, cf. Genesis 32:24, Joshua 5:13-14, etc.) that we read in the Old Testament, which anticipated the incarnation itself, as well as marked the successive revelations of God to men, and if this Theophany was accompanied by the resplendent glory and majesty of the Shekinah, then great indeed was the privilege now conferred upon the son of Terah. Nothing in him could possibly have merited such an amazing display of divine grace. The Lord was here “found” of one that “sought him not” (See Isa 65:1), as is the case with each of all those who are made the recipients of His everlasting blessing, for “there is *none that seeketh after God*” (Rom 3:11). It is not the lost sheep which seeks the Shepherd, but the Shepherd who goes after it, and reveals Himself unto it in all His love and grace.

God said unto Abraham, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee” (Act 7:3). Those were the terms of the divine communication originally received by our patriarch. This command from the Most High came to Abraham in Mesopotamia, in the city of Ur of the Chaldeans, which was situated near the Persian Gulf. It was a call which demanded absolute confidence in and full obedience to the word of JEHOVAH. It was a call for definite separation from the world. But it was far more than a bare command issuing from the divine authority—it was an *effectual* call which demonstrated the efficacy of divine grace. In other words, it was a call accompanied by the divine power, which wrought mightily in the object of it. This is a distinction which is generally lost sight of today. There are two kinds of the divine call mentioned in Scripture, the one which falls only on the outward ear and produces no definite effect—the other which reaches the heart, and moves unto a real response.

The first of these calls is found in such passages as, “Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man” (Pro 8:4), and “For many be called” (Mat 20:16). It reaches all who come under the sound of God’s Word. It is a call which is addressed to the hearer’s responsibility. It is the call of the law, which presses upon the creature the claims of God, and the call of the Gospel which reveals the requirements of the Mediator. This call is universally unheeded. It is unpalatable to fallen human nature, and is rejected by the unregenerate, “I have called, and ye refused” (Pro 1:24). “And they all with one consent began to make excuse” (Luk 14:18). The second of these calls is found in such passages as, “Whom he called, them he also justified” (Rom 8:30), “Called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1Pe 2:9).

The first call is general, the second particular. The first is to all who come under the sound of the Word. The second is made only to the elect, bringing them from death unto life. The first makes manifest the enmity of the carnal mind against God. The second reveals the grace of God toward His own. It is *by the effect produced* that *we* are able to distinguish between them. “He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice” (Joh 10:3-4)—“follow” the “example” which he hath left them (1Pe 2:21). They “follow him” along the path of self-denial, of obedience, of living to the glory of God. Here, then, is the grand effect wrought upon the soul when it receives the effectual call of God—the understanding is illuminated, the conscience is convicted, the hard heart is melted, the stubborn will is conquered, the affections are drawn out unto Him who before was despised.

Such an effect as we have just described is supernatural. It is a miracle of divine grace. The proud Pharisees humbled into the dust, the stout-hearted rebel is brought into subjection, the lover of pleasure is now made a lover of God. He who before kicked defiantly against the pricks, bows submissively and cries, “Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?” (Act 9:6). But let it be said emphatically, nothing but the immediate power of God working upon the heart can produce such a blessed transformation. Neither financial losses, family bereavements, nor a dangerous illness, can effect it. *Nothing external* will suffice to change the depraved heart of fallen man. He may listen to the most faithful sermons, the most solemn warnings, the most winsome invitations, and he will remain unmoved, untouched, unless the Spirit of God is pleased to first quicken him into newness of life. Those who are spiritually dead can neither hear, see, nor feel *spiritually*.

Now it is this *effectual* call that Abraham was the subject of when JEHOVAH suddenly appeared to him in Ur of Chaldea. This is evident from the effect produced in him. He was bidden to “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee” (Act 7:3). Think of what *that* involved—to forsake the land of his birth, to sever the nearest and dearest of all natural ties, to make a complete break with his old manner of life, and to step out on what appeared unto carnal reason to be an uncertain venture. What was his response? This, “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Heb 11:8). Ah, my reader, *that* can only be satisfactorily accounted for in one way—all-mighty power had wrought within him, invincible grace had conquered his heart.

Before proceeding further let us pause and take stock of our own souls. Have *we* experienced anything which at all corresponds to this radical change in the life of Abraham? Have you, have I, been made the subjects of a divine call which has produced a right-about-face in our lives? Have we been the subjects of a divine miracle, so that grace has wrought effectually upon our hearts? Have we heard something more than the language of Scripture falling upon our outward ears? have we heard God Himself speaking in the most secret recesses of our souls, so that it may be said, “The ‘gospel came not unto you in word only, but also *in power*, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance’” (1Th 1:5)? Can it be said of us, “The word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1Th 2:13)? Is the Word working “effectually” in us, so as to *govern* our inner and outer man, so as to produce an obedient walk, and issue in fruit to God’s glory?

Though the response made by Abraham to the call which he had received from the Lord clearly demonstrated that a miracle of divine grace had been wrought within him, nevertheless, God suffered sufficient of the “flesh” to appear in him so as to evidence that he was still a sinful and failing creature. While regeneration be indeed a wonderful and blessed experience, yet it is only *the beginning* of God’s “good work” in the soul (Phi 1:6), and requires His further operations of sanctification to carry it forward to completion. Though a new “nature” is imparted when the soul is brought from death unto life, the old “nature” is not removed; though the principle of holiness be communicated, the principle of sin is neither annihilated nor exterminated. Consequently, there is not only a continual conflict produced by these contrary principles, but their presence and exercise prevents the soul from fully attaining its desires and doing as it would (Gal 5:17).

Abraham’s obedience to the divine command was both partial and tardy. God had bidden him to leave his own country, separate from his kindred, and “come into the land” which He would show him (Act 7:3). His failure is recorded in Genesis 11:31, “And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son’s son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram’s wife; and

they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.” He left Chaldea, but instead of leaving behind his kindred, his father and nephew accompanied him. This was the more excuseless because Isaiah 51:2 expressly declares that God had called Abraham “alone.” It is significant to note that the word “Terah” means “*delay*,” and such his presence occasioned Abraham, for instead of entering the land of Canaan at once, he stopped short at Haran, and there he remained for five years until Terah died (Gen. 11:32; 12:4-5).

And why did the Lord suffer the “flesh” in Abraham to mar his obedience? To indicate to his spiritual “children” that absolute perfection of character and conduct is not attainable in this life. We do not call attention to this fact so as to encourage loose living or to lower the exalted standard at which we must ever aim, but to cheer those who are discouraged because their honest and ardent efforts after godliness so often fall below that standard. Again, there is only One who has walked this earth in *perfect* obedience to God in thought and word and deed, and that not occasionally, but constantly and uninterruptedly, and He *must* “have the pre-eminence in all things” (See Col 1:18). Therefore God will not suffer Christ’s glory to be reduced by fashioning others to honour Him as *He* did. Finally, God’s permitting the flesh to exist and be active in Abraham further magnified the divine grace, by making it still further manifest that it was through no excellency in him that he had been called.

“Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land” (Act 7:4). Though God had suffered the flesh in Abraham to mar his obedience, yet He would not allow it to completely triumph. Divine grace is not only magnified by the unworthiness of its object, but it is glorified in triumphing over the flesh and producing that which is contrary thereto. The hindrance to Abraham’s obedience was removed, and now we see him actually entering the place to which God had called him. And there, for the present, we must stop.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

6. Its Nature (Continued)

5. The threefold signification of the term “to sanctify.” Perhaps the simplest and surest method to pursue in seeking to arrive at a correct understanding of the nature of sanctification is to follow up the meaning of the word itself, for in Scripture the names of things are always in accurate accord with their character. God does not tantalize us with ambiguous or meaningless expressions, but the name He gives to a thing is a properly descriptive one. So here. The word “to sanctify” means to consecrate or set apart for a sacred use, to cleanse or purify, to adorn or beautify. Diverse as these meanings may appear, yet as we shall see they beautifully coalesce into one whole. Using this, then, as our principal key, let us see whether the threefold meaning of the term will open for us the main avenues of our subject.

Sanctification is, first of all, an act of the Triune God, whereby His people are *set apart* for Himself—for His delight, His glory, His use. To aid our understanding on this point, let it be noted that Jude 1 speaks of those who are “sanctified by God the Father,” and that this precedes their being “preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” The reference there is to the Father choosing His people for Himself out of the race which He purposed to create, separating the objects of His favour from those whom He passed by. Then in Hebrews 10:10 we read, “We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” His sacrifice has purged His people from every stain of sin, separated them from the world, consecrated them unto God, setting them before Him in all the excellency of His offering. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13 we are told, “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” This refers to the Spirit’s quickening work by which He separates the elect from those who are dead in sin.

Sanctification is, in the second place, a *cleansing* of those who are to be devoted to God’s use. This “cleansing” is both a legal and an experimental one. As we prosecute our subject, it needs to be constantly borne in mind that sanctification or holiness is the opposite of *sin*. Now as sin involves both guilt and pollution, its remedy must meet both of those needs and counteract both of those effects. A loathsome leper would no more be a fit subject for heaven, than would one who was still under the curse. The double provision made by divine grace to meet the need of God’s guilty and defiled people is seen in the “blood and water” which proceeded from the pierced side of the Saviour (Joh 19:34). Typically, this twofold need was adumbrated of old in the tabernacle furniture—the laver to wash at was as indispensable as the altar for sacrifice. Cleansing is as urgent as forgiveness.

That one of the great ends of the death of Christ was the moral purification of His people is clear from many Scriptures. “He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again” (2Co 5:15). “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Ti 2:14). “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb 9:14). “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness” (1Pe 2:24). From these passages it is abundantly plain that the purpose of the Saviour in all that He did and suffered, was not only to deliver His people from the *penal* consequences of their sins, but also to cleanse them from the *pollution* of sin, to free them from its enslaving power, to rectify their moral nature.

It is greatly to be regretted that so many when thinking or speaking of the “salvation” which Christ has purchased for His people, attach to it no further idea than deliverance from condemnation. They seem to forget that deliverance from *sin*—the cause of condemnation—is an equally important blessing comprehended in it. “Assuredly it is just as necessary for fallen creatures to be freed from the pollution and moral impotency which they have contracted, as it is to be exempted from the penalties which they have incurred, so that when re-instated in the favour of God, they may at the same time be more capable of loving, serving, and enjoying Him forever. And in this respect the remedy which the Gospel reveals is fully suited to the exigencies of our sinful state, providing for our *complete* redemption from sin itself, as well as from the penal liabilities it has brought upon us” (Thomas J. Crawford on “The Atonement,” 1871). Christ has procured sanctification for His people as well as justification.

That *cleansing* forms an integral element in sanctification is abundantly clear from the types. “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean,

sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh” (Heb 9:13). The blood, the ashes, the sprinkling, were all God’s merciful provision for the “unclean” and they sanctified “to the purifying of the flesh”—the references being to Leviticus 16:14, Numbers 19:2, 17-18. The antitype of this is seen in the next verse, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, *purge your conscience* from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb 9:14). The type availed only for a temporary and ceremonial sanctification, the antitype for a real and eternal cleansing. Other examples of the same thing are found in, “Go unto the people, and *sanctify* them today and tomorrow, and let them *wash* their clothes” (Exo 19:10). “I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest’s office” (Exo 29:44)—for the accomplishment of this see Exodus 40:12-15, where we find they were “washed with water,” “anointed” with oil, and “clothed” or adorned with their official vestments.

Now the substitutionary and sacrificial work of Christ has produced for His people a threefold “cleansing.” The first is judicial, the sins of His people being all blotted out as though they had never existed. Both the guilt and the defilement of their iniquities are completely removed, so that the church appears before God “as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun” (Song 6:10). The second is personal, at “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Ti 3:5). The third is experimental, when faith appropriates the cleansing blood and the conscience is purged, “purifying their hearts by faith” (Act 15:9), “having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22). Unlike the first two, this last is a repeated and continuous thing, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to *cleanse* us from all unrighteousness” (1Jo 1:9). We hope to amplify these different points considerably when we take up more definitely our sanctification by Christ.

Sanctification is, in the third place *an adorning* or beautifying of those whom God cleanses and sets apart unto Himself. This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit in His work of morally renovating the soul, whereby the believer is made inwardly holy. That which the Spirit communicates is the life of the risen Christ, which is a principle of purity, producing love to God, and love to God implies, of course, subjection to Him. Thus, holiness is an inward conformity to the things which God has commanded, as the “pattern,” (or sample) corresponds to the piece from which it is taken. “For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For *this* is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1Th 4:2-3) i.e., your sanctification consists in a conformity to His will. Sanctification causes the heart to make God its chief good and His glory its chief end.

As *His glory* is the end God has in view in all His actions—ordering, disposing, directing everything with this design—so conformity to Him, being holy as He is holy, must consist in setting *His glory* before us as our ultimate aim. Subjective sanctification is that change wrought in the heart which produces a steady desire and purpose to please and honour God. This is not in any of us by nature, for self-love rules the unregenerate. Calamities may drive the unsanctified toward God, yet it is only for the relief of *self*. The fear of hell may stir up a man to cry unto God for mercy, but it is only that *he* may be delivered. Such actions are only the workings of mere nature—the instinct of self-preservation—there is nothing spiritual or supernatural about them. But at regeneration a man is lifted off his own bottom and put on a new foundation.

Subjective sanctification is a change or renovating of the heart so that it is conformed unto God—unto His will, unto His glory. “The work of sanctification is a work framing and casting the heart itself into the Word of God (as metals are cast into a die or mould), so that the heart is made of the same stamp and disposition with the Word” (Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680). “Ye have obeyed from the heart that form [or “pattern”] of doctrine which was delivered you” (Rom

6:17). The arts and sciences deliver unto us rules which we must conform unto, but God's miracle of grace within His people *conforms them unto* the rulings of His will, so as to be formed by them—softening their hearts so as to make them capable of receiving the impressions of His precepts. Below we quote again from the excellent remarks of Thomas Goodwin.

“The substance of his comparison comes to this, that their hearts having been first, in the inward inclinations and dispositions of it, framed and changed into what the Word requires, they then obeyed the same Word from the heart naturally, willingly, and the commandments were not grievous, because the heart was framed and moulded thereunto. The heart must be made good ere men can obey from the heart, and to this end he elegantly first compares the doctrine of law and Gospel delivered them, unto a pattern or sampler, which having in their eye, they framed and squared their actings and doings unto it. And he secondly compares the same doctrine unto a mould or matrix, into which metal is being delivered, have the same figure or form left on them which the mould itself had, and this is spoken in respect of their hearts.”

This mighty and marvellous change is not in the substance of faculties of the soul, but in its disposition. For a lump of metal being melted and moulded remains the same metal it was before, yet its frame and fashion is greatly altered. When the heart has been made humble and meek, it is enabled to perceive what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God, and approves of it as good for him, and thus we are “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom 12:2). As the mould and the thing moulded correspond, as the wax has on it the image by which it was impressed, so the heart which before was enmity to every commandment, now delights in the law of God after the inward man, finding an agreeableness between it and his own disposition. Only as the heart is supernaturally changed and conformed to God is it found that “His commandments *are not* grievous” (1Jo 5:3).

What has just been said above brings us back to the point reached in last month's article (or more correctly, the first sections of this article), namely, that holiness is a moral quality, an inclination, a “new nature,” a disposition which delights itself in all that is pure, excellent, benevolent. It is the shedding abroad of God's love in the heart, for only by *love* can His holy law be “fulfilled.” Nothing but disinterested love (the opposite of self-love) can produce cheerful obedience. And as Romans 5:5 tells us, “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts *by the Holy Ghost*.” We are sanctified by the Spirit indwelling us, His producing in and through us the fruits of holiness. And thus it is that we read, “But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is *godly* for himself” (Psa 4:3).

In the preceding portion of this article, we asked, “How can it be discovered whether or not *we* have been sanctified, unless we really know what sanctification actually is?” Now let it be pointed out that our sanctification by the Father and our sanctification by Christ can only be known to us by the sanctification *of the Spirit*, and that, in turn, can only be discovered by its *effects*. And this brings us to the ultimate aspect of *the nature* of our sanctification, namely, that holy walk, or course of outward conduct, which makes manifest and is the effect of our inward sanctification by the Spirit. This branch of our subject is what theologians have designated our “practical sanctification.” Thus, we distinguish between the act and process by which the Christian is set apart unto God, the moral and spiritual state into which that setting apart brings him, and the holy living which proceeds from that state. It is the last we have now reached. As the “setting apart” is both privative and positive—from the service of Satan, to the service of God—so holy living is separation from evil, following that which is good.

Thomas Manton (1620-1677), than whom none of the Puritans are more simple, succinct, and satisfying, says, “Sanctification is threefold. First, *meritorious* sanctification is Christ's meriting

and purchasing for His church the inward inhabitation of the Spirit, and that grace whereby they may be sanctified, Hebrews 10:10. Second, *applicatory* sanctification is the inward renovation of the heart of those whom Christ hath sanctified by the Spirit of regeneration, whereby a man is translated from death to life, from the state of nature to the state of grace. This is spoken of in Titus 3:5. This is the daily sanctification, which, with respect to the merit of Christ, is wrought by the Spirit and the ministry of the Word and sacraments. Third, *practical* sanctification is that by which those for whom Christ did sanctify Himself, and who are renewed by the Holy Spirit, and planted into Christ by faith, do more and more sanctify and cleanse themselves from sin in thought, word, and deed (1Pe 1:15; 1Jo 3:3).

“As to sanctify signifieth to consecrate or dedicate to God, so it signifieth both the fixed inclination or the disposition of the soul towards God as our highest lord and chief good, and accordingly a resignation of our souls to God, to live in the love of His blessed majesty and a thankful obedience to Him. More distinctly (1) it implieth a bent, a tendency, or fixed inclination towards God, which is habitual sanctification. (2) A resignation, or giving up ourselves to God, by which actual holiness is begun—a constant using ourselves to Him, by which it is continued, and the continual exercise of a fervent love, by which it is increased in us more and more, till all be perfected in glory.

“As to sanctify signifieth to purify and cleanse, so it signifies the purifying of the soul from the love of the world. A man is impure because, when he was made of God, he doth prefer base trifles of this world before his Maker and everlasting glory, and so he is not sanctified that doth despise and disobey his Maker. He despiseth Him because he preferreth the most contemptible vanity before Him, and doth choose the transitory pleasure of sinning before the endless fruition of God. Now he is sanctified when his worldly love is cured, and he is brought back again to the love and obedience of God. Those that are healed of the over-love of the world are sanctified, as the inclinations of the flesh to worldly thing are broken.”

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Th 5:23). There was probably a threefold reference in the apostle’s request. First, he prayed that all the members of the Thessalonian church, the entire assembly, might be sanctified. Second, he prayed that each individual member might be sanctified entirely in his whole man, spirit and soul and body. Third, he prayed that each and all of them might be sanctified more perfectly, moved to press forward unto complete holiness. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 is almost parallel with Hebrews 13:20-21. The apostle prayed that all the parts and faculties of the Christian might be kept under the influence of efficacious grace, in true and real conformity to God—so influenced by the truth as to be fitted and furnished, in all cases and circumstances, for the performance of every good work. Though this be our bounden duty, yet it lies not absolutely in our own power, but is the work of God in and through us, and thus is to form the subject of earnest and constant prayer.

Two things are clearly implied in the above passage. First, that the *whole nature* of the Christian is the subject of the work of sanctification, and not merely part of it—every disposition and power of the spirit, every faculty of the soul, the body with all its members. The *body* too is “sanctified.” It has been made a member of Christ (1Co 6:15), it is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Co 6:19). As it is an integral part of the believer’s person, and as its inclinations and appetites affect the soul and influence conduct, it must be brought under the control of the spirit and soul, so that “every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour” (1Th 4:4), and “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).

Second, that this work of divine grace *will be* carried on to completion and perfection, for the apostle immediately adds, “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1Th 5:24). Thus the two verses are parallel with, “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). Nothing short of every faculty and member of the Christian being devoted to God is what he is to ever aim at. But the attainment of this is only completely realized at his glorification, “We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him” (1Jo 3:2)—not only inwardly but outwardly, “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Phi 3:21).

A MORNING PRAYER

O eternal God and merciful Father, which art the light that no man can attain unto, and by Thy marvellous lightness drivest away the darkness of the night and shadow of death, and by Thy grace enlightenest all those that being in darkness come unto Thee, I Thy unworthy servant, do bless and praise Thy most holy name for all the mercies and gracious benefits from time to time I have received from Thee, and most humbly thank Thee that Thou has vouchsafed me this favour, to pass this night in so quiet and comfortable rest, and hast brought me again to see and enjoy the light of the morning. And now I beseech Thee, O Lord, of Thine infinite goodness and mercy, by the merits of my blessed Saviour, that Thy merciful compassion may this day be extended to me, that, being enlightened with Thy grace, I may not be carried away by the power of darkness, to spend this day after the lusts and pleasures of my own corrupt mind; but that I may, with all conscience, follow Thy Fatherly will, which Thou hast revealed unto me in Thy Holy Word. Increase in me, O Lord, all spiritual gifts and graces, and beat down in me all carnal and corrupt affections.

Enable me by Thy blessed Spirit, in some measure, both to withstand that which is evil, and to perform what is good and pleasing unto Thee; and that neither by my own negligence, nor the power of any temptation, which either the world, the flesh, or the devil shall present unto me, I be driven away from a true faith, but may lay hold of those gracious promises that Thou hast made unto me in Jesus Christ my Saviour. Dispel, O Lord, the thick mists and clouds of my sins, which corrupt my soul, and darken my understanding; and wash them away, I most humbly beseech Thee, in the precious blood of Thy Son’s passion; that so I may be acknowledged for one of Thine elect, when I shall appear before Thy judgment-seat. Give me a will carefully to follow my vocation, and let Thy blessing be upon me in the same. Bless me in my body, in my soul, and in whatsoever belongs unto me: lighten my mind, and inflame my heart with a love of those things that are good. And as my body, by Thy power, is risen from sleep, so let my soul daily be raised from the slumber of sin and the darkness of this world, that so both together may enjoy that everlasting light which Thou hast provided for Thy saints, and purchased with the blood of Thy dear Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom with Thee, O Father, and the blessed Spirit, be all honour and glory for evermore. Amen.—(Henry Smith, 1590).

AN EVENING PRAYER

O Almighty and everlasting God, the Father of mercies and God of all consolation, that by Thy merciful providence defendest all those that walk before Thee, and put their trust in Thee; I, poor and miserable sinner, unworthy of the least of Thy favours, do yet presume, in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ, to present myself before Thee, and to offer up this poor sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving unto Thee; that Thou hast nourished and preserved me by Thy power, and hast guided and governed me by Thy Word and Spirit; and, as for all other Thy blessings, so far that mercy which hath this day accompanied me, whereby I have both been preserved from many sins that the wickedness of my nature was inclined unto, and also delivered from many punishments that the sins I have committed have deserved. I most humbly beseech Thee, in the merits of Christ Jesus, to pardon and forgive me all my sins, which either in thought, word, or deed, I have this day, or any time heretofore, committed against Thee; whether they be the sins of my youth or of my age, sins of omission or commission, whether wittingly or ignorantly committed; good Lord, pardon them unto me, and let them not cause Thee this night, as justly Thou mayest do, take vengeance of me; but be merciful unto me, O Lord, in forgiving the evil I have committed, and in supplying the good that I have omitted, in restoring me to that which I have lost, in healing my sores, in enlightening my blindness, in cleansing my filthiness, and in altering the whole course of my corrupt mind; that I may be diverted from that which is evil, and enabled to perform that which is agreeable to Thy blessed will and Word. And Lord, as Thou hast this day preserved me and kept me in safety, so I most humbly beseech Thee to protect me this night from all danger, both bodily and spiritually, and to give me such quiet and comfortable rest, as may enable me to walk on in that vocation wherein Thou hast placed me, and that I may both be delivered from the darkness of this present night, and may also escape that everlasting darkness which Thou hast provided for those that without repentance continue in their sins from which, good Lord, deliver me, and all those that belong unto Thee; and that for the merits of the death of my blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, in whose name I continue my prayers, for myself and the whole church. Amen. (Henry Smith, 1590).

PERFECT PEACE

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isa 26:3). What is signified by a mind “stayed on” the Lord? At least three things. First, *to make the Lord the portion of my soul*. All around us are those vainly seeking contentment in *things*—such as money, and what it can buy, social prestige, fame, pleasures, etc.—all of which are broken cisterns which hold no water. Only the One who made us can satisfy the heart. Only as our affection is set upon “things above” do we drink of the fountain of living waters. Just in proportion as, “Delight thyself also in the LORD” (Psa 37:4) will “perfect peace” be mine now.

Second, *to receive from God's hand whatsoever enters my life*. I need to cultivate the habit of looking beyond all secondary causes, all intermediary agents and human instruments, recognizing that “of him, and through him, and to him, are ALL things” (Rom 11:36). “Cease ye from man” (Isa 2:22). Conclude no more it is Satan who is seeking to disturb your rest, but say, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it!” (Joh 18:11). Just in proportion as we are enabled to say from the heart “It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good” (1Sa 3:18) will “perfect peace” be ours in this world of sin and turmoil.

Third, *to leave the future entirely with God*. And why not? Are not my “times” in His hand (Psa 31:15)? Has He not graciously cared for me and faithfully supplied my every need hitherto? Then why be fearful of what lies ahead? Has He not promised never to leave nor forsake me! Just in proportion as I live a day at a time, and “Take therefore no thought for the morrow” (Mat 6:34) will “perfect peace” be mine even now. But each of these three things is dependent upon the exercise of FAITH, as the text says “because he *trusteth* in thee” (Isa 26:3). O to know more of this experimentally.

UNION AND COMMUNION

3. Mystical

The everlasting love of the Triune God is *the origin* of the church's union to Christ, election being the first and fundamental act of that love toward its members, that election giving them a subsistence in their Head, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4). In election, God made it manifest that He was pleased to desire *creature* fellowship and society, instead of dwelling alone forever in His own infinite self-sufficiency. First, He ordained that His beloved Son should take manhood into union with His own Person, and that as God-man He should be the Head of a people given to Him for His glory. This *order* in the divine counsels is marvelously adumbrated in the physical realm—the head and members of the human body are conceived *together* in the womb, as Christ and the members of His church were chosen to form one body—yet as the head comes out *first*, so Christ was given the pre-eminence from the womb of God's decrees.

However difficult it be for us to grasp, it is important we should recognize that God's eternal decree gave the elect a super-creation subsistence before Him, so that they were capable of being loved and of receiving a grant of grace. In other words, in God's eternal thoughts and foreviews, the elect were conceived and contemplated by Him in the divine mind as real entities in a state of pure creaturehood, above and beyond any consideration of the fall. Even then they were “Blessed...with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” and “accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:3, 6). It is of great moment that the church should thus be first considered by us, that we never lose sight of the *original* dignity and loveliness of the church, anointed and blessed in Christ before the foundation of the world. Her state by the fall *was not her original one*, any more than her present state is the final one.

“Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me” (Isa 8:18). Such were “sons” *before* God sent forth the Holy Spirit into their hearts (Gal 4:6). They were “children” while “scattered abroad” *before* Christ died for them (Joh 11:51-52). They were “children” *before* the Redeemer became incarnate (Heb 2:14). The elect were “children” *from* all eternity and decreed to be so *unto* all eternity. They did not lose their sonship by the fall, neither by any corruption derived from that fall in their nature. “Children” they continued, though *sinful* children, and as such, justly exposed to wrath. Nevertheless, this relationship could not be revoked by any after-acts in time. United to Christ from all eternity, they were always one with Him. It is a remarkable fact that never once has the Holy Spirit used the prepositional form “into Christ” with reference to God’s *election* of the church, although “eis” occurs in the epistles over six hundred times—it is always “in [Gk. “en”] Christ,” because the church was *never out of Christ!*

From all eternity the church stood in Christ as His mystical body and bride. A union between the members and their Head was then established which neither sin, Satan, nor death could sever. We say again, it is of vast importance that we do not lose sight of the original glory and beauty of the church. The fall of the church in Adam did not and could not alienate the church from Christ, but it gave occasion for redemption, thereby affording the means and opportunity for the honour of Christ, by His work, death, and resurrection bringing a greater revenue of glory to the Almighty Author of salvation than had the fall of man never taken place. Wondrous indeed are all the ways of God. In the ultimate outcome, He was no loser by Adam’s defection, but the gainer—as it is written, “The LORD hath made all things *for himself*: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Pro 16:4), and again, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee” (Psa 76:10).

“God’s love to His elect is not of yesterday. It does not begin with their love to Him, ‘We love him, because he first loved us’ (1Jo 4:19). It does not commence in time, but dates back from eternity, and is the ground and foundation of the elect’s being called in time out of darkness into marvelous light, ‘I have loved thee,’ says the Lord to the church, ‘with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee’ (Jer 31:3), that is, in effectual vocation. Many are the instances which might be given in proof of the antiquity of God’s love to His elect, and as it is antecedent to their being brought out of a state of nature. God’s choosing them in Christ before the foundation of the world was an act of His love towards them, the fruit and effect of it. His making an everlasting covenant with His Son, ordered in all things and sure, on account of those He chose in Him; His setting Him up as the Mediator of the covenant from everlasting; His donation of grace to them in Him before the world began; His putting their persons into His hands, and so making them His care and charge, are so many demonstrative proofs of His early love to them.

“There are also instances to be given of God’s love to His elect while they are in a state of nature. ‘When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly....God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us’ (Rom 5:6, 8). Now certainly these persons were in a state of nature who are said to be ‘without strength,’ etc., and yet God commended His love towards them when and while they were such, in a matchless instance of it. John makes use of this circumstance respecting the state of God’s elect, to magnify the greatness of God’s love, ‘Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins’ (1Jo 4:10). Again, the quickening of God’s elect when dead in trespasses and sins, the drawing of them to Christ with the cords of powerful and efficacious grace in effectual vocation, are instances of His special grace and favour, and fruits and effects of His everlasting love to them.

“If God did not love His elect while in a state of nature, they must forever remain in that state, since they are unable to help themselves out of it, and it is only the love, grace, and mercy of God which engage His almighty power to deliver them from thence. There are three gifts and instances of God’s love to His people before conversion, which are not to be matched by any instance or instances of love after conversion. The one is the gift of God Himself to them in the Everlasting Covenant, which covenant runs thus, ‘I will be their God, and they shall be my people.’ The second is the gift of His Son to suffer and die in their room and stead, and so obtain eternal redemption for them. The third is the gift of His Spirit to them, to convince them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. And now what greater instance is there of God’s love to His people after conversion? If the heavenly glory, with all the entertaining joys of that delightful state, should be fixed upon, I deny it to be a greater instance of God’s love, than the gifts of Himself, His Son, and Spirit, and indeed, all that God does in time, or will do to all eternity, is only *telling* His people how much He loved them *from everlasting*” (John Gill, 1697-1771).

Now it was this eternal love of the Triune God which gave the church an election-union in Christ from everlasting, for that love ever considered them in Christ. As it is written, nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, *which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Rom 8:39). Christ as God-man, was loved by the Father as the supreme object of His complacency (Pro 8:30; Isa 42:1), which was manifested in His election of Him, and the church was the secondary object of God’s love as viewed in Christ. The Lord Jesus declared to the Father, Thou “*hast loved them, as thou hast loved me....thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world*” (Joh 17:23-24). Therefore as eternal election is a display of God’s everlasting love to His people, so it is also an instance and evidence of their eternal union to Christ. The one cannot be without the other—if loved *in Christ*, the church must have been one *with Him*.

It is not that election was a fore-appointing of persons *unto* a union with Christ, as stones are selected *to be* used in a building, or as a slip is chosen for engrafting into a tree. Ephesians 1:3-4 *does not* say, “According as he has chosen us to be in him” or “that we should be in him.” Instead we read, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world”—the church was blessed with all spiritual blessings *in Christ* “according as” they were chosen in Him. Election was not the original uniting act, for *that* was the everlasting love of God. Yet the two must not be separated—they went together. Nevertheless, as in election the church is considered *in Christ*, so it is a proof of their eternal union to Him. Now there are several things which *arise from* and are *branches of* this everlasting love-union of the church to Christ, which it will now be our joy to consider. First and chief of these is *the marriage* between Christ and the church.

It pleased the Father to choose for His Son, as God-man, the church, to be not only His body, but also His bride, who was to receive from Him and share with Him His honours, glories, and privileges. Having chosen the church in Christ, the Father set her before Him in the glass of His decrees, according to the uttermost purpose of His love and grace toward her, causing her to shine with excelling brightness and loveliness in the view of His Son, giving Him to see how high she was in the Father’s estimation, and presenting her to Christ as His choicest gift to Him. This drew out the heart of the God-man towards her, caused Him to open His arms and heart to receive her, to set His affections and delight upon her, to regard and esteem her according to the high value which the Father Himself had placed upon her.

“Thine they were,” said Christ to His Father, “And thou *gavest them me*” (Joh 17:6), to be My heritage, My portion, My bride. Here was the grand originating cause of Christ’s love for His

church—the fact that she was the Father’s love-gift to Him. Viewing the church from eternity as thus presented to Him by the Father, He could not but regard her as supremely worthy of His affection and delight. His language was, “I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD” (Hos 2:19-20)—let it be carefully borne in mind that the record of His words in Holy Scripture are but the *open* transcript of what He said in secret before the world began. Many examples of this might be given, but we here only state the bare fact.

“The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold” (Psa 45:13). Observe well the glorious title which the church here bears, and mark carefully what is necessarily presupposed and clearly implied in it. The “King” is God the Father, of whom we read “a certain king, which made a marriage for his son” (Mat 22:2). That “marriage” was made from everlasting, and therefore could the divine Bridegroom say to His celestial bride, “thy Maker is thine husband” (Isa 54:5). Now it is by virtue of this marital union between Christ and His people that the church is here designated “the King’s *daughter*,” because the Father is *Christ’s* “Father,” He is the church’s “Father” (Joh 20:17). Because Christ is the Father’s *Son*, and the church is wedded to Him, therefore the church is the Father’s “daughter!”

Most marvelously and blessedly was all of this shadowed out in connection with our first parents. Adam, in his creation and formation, was a type of Christ, Eve of the church. Before Adam’s creation, we read of a council held between the Eternal Three concerning him, “And God said, Let *us* make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen 1:26). So it was in connection with the last Adam (Heb 10:5, 9). Adam’s body was supernaturally produced out of the virgin earth, as Christ’s body was miraculously conceived by the Virgin Mary. The union between the soul and body of Adam (Gen 2:7) adumbrated the incomprehensible union between the eternal Son of God and His assumption of our nature into oneness with His own Person. Adam’s lordship, or his being given dominion over all mundane creatures (Gen 1:28), prefigured Christ’s universal headship over all things to His church (Eph 1:22-23). But it is the formation of Eve and her union with Adam to which we would now direct particular attention.

“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him....And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen 2:18, 21-23). First, behold here the tender solicitude of God toward Adam, “It is not good that man should be alone.” In this a deeper mystery is opened unto those who have eyes to see. It is a revelation on the earth plane of what had passed secretly in the eternal councils of heaven. Christ, as God-man—“the beginning” of JEHOVAH’s way (Pro 8:22; Col 1:18), the fountain-head of all His decrees (Isa 42:1; Eph 3:11)—was the grand object of JEHOVAH’s love. All His vast designs concentrated in Him, concerned Him, and were designed for His manifestative glory from all eternity—“all things were created by him, *and for him*” (Col 1:16).

Second, we discover here God’s purpose to provide a suitable companion for Adam, “I will make him an help meet for him.” This affords us a yet fuller insight into that which had passed in the divine mind before the foundation of the world. God thought it not meet that the God-man (“set up” in heaven before the world was, Pro 8:23-24) should be alone, therefore did He ordain and choose a bride for Him. Third, God created Eve *out of Adam*, taking one of his ribs and from

it and the flesh cleaving thereto made He the first woman. This also was a most striking acting out in time of what had transpired ere time began. God had chosen the church in Christ, she was *in Him* before the foundation of the world. Christ having been “foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1Pe 1:20) to become incarnate, and His human nature having a covenant subsistence before God, the church, as thus considered in Him, received her human nature from Him, and hence that expression, “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Eph 5:30) is language which most evidently refers us back to Genesis 2:23.

Fourth, out of Adam’s rib the Lord God made, or as the margin more correctly renders it “*buildd*” the woman, for she is of a more curious and delicate frame than the man. Now Christ is “the foundation” (1Co 3:11) and the church is His “building”—built up for Him and upon Him, with heavenly art, by an infinitely wise Architect, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house” (1Pe 2:5). Fifth, God then set Eve before Adam, “and brought her unto the man” (Gen 2:22). and this, in order to effect *a marriage union* between them. What blessed light this casts upon the high mystery of grace, when God the Father presented the elect unto Christ. It was *to that* He referred when He said, “Thine they were, and *thou gavest them me*” (Joh 17:6)—as He gave Eve to Adam!

In our endeavour to view the eternal transactions of divine love and grace, we must contemplate the church as she was before Adam’s defection. We must view her first, not as fallen, but as unfallen—not as involved in sin and ruin, but as the pure and spotless bride of Christ, given by the Father to Him as His spouse. Most blessedly was this typed out in Eve as she was brought and given to Adam in all her spotless innocence. O how surpassingly fair must Eve have appeared in the morning of her creation, as she came fresh from the hand of her Maker! What could Adam do but love her and delight in the admirable bride which the Lord God had so graciously provided for him! So Christ viewing, in the glass of God’s decrees, the bride selected for Him, loved and delighted in her, betrothed Himself unto her, took her as thus presented by God unto Himself in a deed of marriage-settlement as the gift of the Father.

Let it be fully noted that Adam was joined to Eve in marriage *before* the fall, and not after it. How this exposes the makeshift compromise of sublapsarians! Ephesians 5:31-32 in the light of Genesis 2:23 unequivocally establishes the fact that the making of Adam and Eve *before* sin entered the world, prefigured the marriage-union of Christ and His church, decreed of God prior to any consideration of the fall. Nor does this stand alone. In Leviticus 21:13-14 is another precious type equally definite and plain. There we read, “And he [namely, the high priest of verse 10] shall take a wife in her virginity. A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a *virgin* of his own people to wife.” Now as the high priest under the law was a figure of the great high priest over the house of God, we must see in this divine prohibition a typical intimation that the church was espoused to the God-man in all her *virgin purity* as she stood before JEHOVAH in her native innocence.

But to return unto the exquisite scene set before us in Genesis 2. We observe, sixth, that Adam *owned* the relation which now existed between himself and Eve, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen 2:23). In like manner Christ received the elect at the Father’s hands, became their Husband, and from thence owned them as His everlasting spouse. His love for her is blessedly told out in, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you” (Joh 15:9)—eternally, infinitely, unchangeably. He speaks of her as “in whom is all my delight” (Psa 16:3); and “How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!” (Song 7:6). Seventh, as Adam was not created for Eve, but she for him, so God did not foreordain and “set up” Christ, as God-man, for the church, but the church was

ordained for Him, “For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man” (1Co 11:8-9).

Finally, though Adam was not taken out of the woman nor created for her, nevertheless it was not good that he should be “alone.” Eve was his necessary complement, his companion, his help meet. Yea, as we are told, “the woman is *the glory of the man*” (1Co 11:7). In like manner, Christ, as God-man, would be incomplete without His bride—considered as His mystical body, she is called “the fullness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph 1:23). Christ needed a vessel which He might fill, that should reflect His glory, hence we read, “the messengers of the churches, and *the glory of Christ*” (2Co 8:23), and again, “Israel *my glory*” (Isa 46:13) He calls her. In the last reference made to her in Holy Writ we read, “Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife....descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious” (Rev 21:9-11). In and by and through the church, Christ will be glorified to all eternity.

We must leave for our next article (D.V.) the consideration of how the marriage of the church to Christ gave her communion with His honours and interests, as we must the effects which her fall in Adam did and did not produce in her.

November

THE HOLY SPIRIT

31. The Spirit Leading (Part 1)

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom 8:14). This verse presents to us another aspect of the varied work of the blessed Holy Spirit. In addition to all His other functions, He performs the office of guide unto the godly. Nor is this peculiar to the present dispensation. He so ministered during the Old Testament times. This is brought out clearly in Isaiah 63, “Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his holy spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, *the spirit of the LORD* caused him to rest: *so* didst thou *lead* thy people, to make thyself a glorious name” (Isa 63:11-14). Moses was no more able, by his own power, to induce the Hebrews to pass between the divided waters of the Red Sea and to cross the trackless desert, than by the mere extending of the rod he could divide those waters. Moses was simply the human instrument—the Holy Spirit was the efficient Agent.

In the above passage we have more than a hint of *how* the Holy Spirit “leads.” It is by means of an inward impulse, as well as by external directions. Among his comments upon Romans 8:14, Matthew Henry (1662-1714) says, “Led by the Spirit as a scholar in his learning is led by his tutor, as a traveler in his journey is led by his guide, as a soldier in his engagements is led by his captain.” But such analogies are inadequate, for they present only the *external* side, leaving out of account the internal operations of the Spirit, which are even more essential. “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). By nature we are not only ignorant of God’s way, but reluctant to walk therein even when it is shown us, and therefore we find the church praying, “*Draw me, we will run after thee*” (Song 1:4). Ah, we never seek unto God, still less “run after him,” till we are divinely drawn.

This humbling truth was well understood by David of old. First, he prayed, “Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes....Give me understanding” (Psa 119:33-34). But second, he realised that something more than divine illumination was needed by him, therefore did he add, “*Make me to go* in the path of thy commandments....*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies,*” (Psa 119:35-36). By nature our hearts are averse from God and holiness. We can be worldly of ourselves, but we cannot be heavenly of ourselves. The power of sin lies in the love of it, and it is

only as our affections are divinely drawn unto things above that we are delivered from sin's dominion. Moreover, our *wills* are perverse, and only as supernatural grace is brought to bear upon them are they "inclined" Godwards. Thus, to be "*led* by the Spirit of God" is to be *governed* by Him from within, to be subject unto His secret but real impulses or strivings.

Not only are our hearts inclined *by nature* unto temporal, material, worldly, and evil things, rather than unto eternal, spiritual, heavenly, and holy things, but they are by inveterate *custom* too. As soon as we are born, we follow the bent of our natural appetites, and the first few years of our life are governed merely by sense—and the pleasures begotten by gratifying our senses become deeply ingrained in us. Moreover, by constant living in the world and long contact with material things, the tendency increases upon us and we become more strongly settled in a worldly frame. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are *accustomed* to do evil" (Jer 13:23). Custom becomes a "second nature" to us. The more we follow a certain course of life, the more we delight in it, and we are only weaned from it with very great difficulty.

Natural lusts and appetites being born and bred in us from infancy, continue to cry out for indulgence and satisfaction. The will has become bent to a carnal course and the heart craves material pleasures. Hence, when the claims of *God* are presented to us, when the interests of our *souls* and the things of *eternity* are brought before us, when the "beauty of *holiness*" (Psa 96:9) is presented to our view, they find our wills already biased in the contrary direction and our heart prepossessed with other inclinations, which by reason of long indulgence bind us to them. The heart being deeply engaged with and delighting in temporal and worldly things, is quite unable to respond to the dictates of reason and set itself upon that which is heavenly and divine. And even the voice of conscience is unheeded by the soul, which prefers the insidious lullaby of Satan. Naught but the Almighty power of the Holy Spirit can turn ("lead") the heart in a contrary direction.

Now the heart is *inclined* toward God when the habitual bent of our affections is more to holiness than to worldly things. As the power of sin lies in the love of it, so it is with indwelling grace. Grace prevails over us when we so love the things of God that the bent of the will and the strength of our affections is carried after them. When the course of our desires and endeavours, and the strength and stream of our souls runs out after holiness, then the heart is "inclined" Godwards. And how is this brought to pass, how does God reduce our rebellious hearts and mould them to the obedience of His will? The answer is, by His Word and by His Spirit—or putting it another way, by moral persuasion and by gracious power.

"And I will put my spirit within you, and *cause* you to walk in my statutes" (Eze 36:27). This God does by combining together the invincible might and gentle inducements. God works upon us morally, not physically, because He will preserve our nature and the principles thereof. He does not force us against our wills, but sweetly draws us. He presents weighty reasons, casting into the mind one after another, till the scales be turned and then all is made efficacious by His Spirit. Yet this is not a work which He does in the soul once for all, but is often renewed and repeated—and that because the "flesh" or sinful nature remains in us, unchanged, even after regeneration. Therefore do we need to ask God to *continue* inclining our hearts toward Himself.

This brings us to notice the intimate connection which exists between our present text and the verse immediately preceding it. "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)—if we yield ourselves to the Spirit's impulses to restrain our evil propensities and our proneness to indulge them, then heaven will be our portion, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom

8:14). Thus Romans 8:14 is said in confirmation and amplification of verse 13—only those who are *ruled by the Spirit* give evidence that they are the “sons of God.” To be “led by the Spirit,” then, means, as the whole context clearly shows, to “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom 8:4), to “mind the things of the Spirit” (see Rom 8:5), to “through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body” (Rom 8:13). Suitably did Calvin remark on Romans 8:14, “Thus the empty boasting of hypocrites is taken away, who without any reason assume the title of sons of God.”

Thus we are “led by the Spirit” both actively and passively—actively, with respect to His prompting, passively on our part, as we submit to those promptings. Actively, by His pressing upon us the holy requirements of the Scriptures—passively, as we yield ourselves unto those requirements. The Spirit is our guide, but we must obey His motions. In the immediate context it is His *restraining* motives which are in view, moving us to the mortifying of sin. But His “leading” is not to be restricted to that. He exercises *inviting* motives, encouraging us unto the perfecting of holiness. And this being guided and governed by the Holy Spirit is an infallible proof that we are living members of God’s family.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

95. A Call to Examination (12:15)

We had first thought of giving a brief exposition of this verse at the close of last month’s article. But we felt this would scarcely satisfy some of our more critical readers. Nor is it our custom to dodge difficulties, and this presents a real difficulty unto not a few. Those Arminians who are ready to grasp at a straw have appealed to it in support of their favourite tenet, “falling from grace.” On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that the replies given by Calvinists thereon have often been unsatisfactory. It seems therefore that a more careful consideration and fuller elucidation of its contents are called for. Following, then, our usual practice, we shall endeavour, as God assists, to bring out the meaning of its several terms and apply them to our consciences and lives.

The following are the points upon which our attention needs to be concentrated. First, the connection between our present verse and its context. Second the duty enjoined—“looking diligently.” Third, the danger to be avoided—“lest any man fail of the grace of God.” Fourth, the evil warned against—“lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you.” Fifth, the resultant consequence if the evil be tolerated—and thereby many be defiled.” In considering these points it will have to be carefully ascertained what it is about which we are here exhorted to be “looking diligently.” What is signified by “lest any man fail of the grace of God,” and if that be the correct translation, or whether the Greek requires us to accept the marginal alternative of “falling from the grace of God.” And finally, what is denoted by the “root of bitterness springing up.” May wisdom be granted us from on High.

First, then, *the connection* between our present verse and its context. We will first consider its more general and remote relation, and then its more specific and immediate. The link between

Hebrews 12:15 and that which precedes may be thus exhibited—if the afflictions which fidelity to Christ occasion and the chastenings of the Father are not duly improved by professing Christians, they are almost certain to become a serious stumbling-block in the way of personal piety, yea, a temptation to apostasy itself. This, we believe, is the first reference in the “looking diligently” (Heb 12:15). Unless professing Christians are duly “exercised” (Heb 12:11) over God’s disciplinary dealings with them, they are very apt to misconstrue them, chafe against them, call into question the divine goodness, and sink into a state of despair, with its accompanying inertia.

What has just been pointed out above receives confirmation from the verses which immediately follow, for verses 16 and 17 are obviously a continuation of our present text. There we find a solemn exhortation against apostasy itself, pointed by the awful case and example of Esau. Here we are warned against that, which if neglected, has a fearful tendency unto apostasy. Most of us know from painful experience how easily we become discouraged when things do not go as we want, how ready we are to “faint” (Heb 12:5) when the rod of adversity is laid upon us, how real is the temptation to compromise or forsake the path of duty altogether when trials multiply or opposition and persecution is all that our best efforts meet with. Real, then, is our need for heeding this exhortation, “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God” (Heb 12:15).

It is unspeakably solemn to note that in the case of Esau his temptation to sell his birthright—apostatize—was occasioned by his *faintness*, for we are told that he said to Jacob, “Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint” (Gen 25:30). And is it not when we are faint in our minds, cast down by the difficulties of the way, disheartened by the lack of appreciation our efforts meet with, and crushed by one trial on top of another, that Satan bids us give up the fight of faith and “get what pleasure we can out of life” by indulging the lusts of the flesh? Looked at thus, our text points out the *spring* of apostasy—failing of the grace of God. The *nature* of apostasy—a “root of bitterness springing up” (Heb 12:15), and the *result* of apostasy—“many be defiled” (Heb 12:15).

Considering now the more specific and immediate connection of our verse with its context. First, unless “the hands which hang down” be lifted up and “the feeble knees” strengthened (Heb 12:12), there will be a failing of the grace of God. And unless straight paths are made for our feet and that which is “lame” be prevented from being “turned out of the way” (Heb 12:13), then a “root of bitterness” (an apostate) will spring up, and in consequence, “many will be defiled.” Second, in verse 14 we are exhorted to “follow” two things, namely, “peace” and “holiness,” while in verse 15 we are warned to avoid two things, namely, “fail of the grace of God” and suffering a “root of bitterness springing up.” The opening “Looking diligently” clearly denotes that our avoidance of the two evils of verse 15 turns or is dependent upon our earnest pursuit of the spiritual graces inculcated in verse 14.

We are now ready to contemplate the duty which is here enjoined—“looking diligently” (Heb 12:15). This is a call to examination—first, to self-examination. Its immediate force is derived from the closing words of the preceding verse, where the solemn and searching statement is made that “without which [namely ‘holiness’] no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). No matter though I am in fellowship with the people of God, a member of a Scriptural church, a regular attendee upon the means of grace, a firm believer in all the doctrines of the Word, yet, if I have never been sanctified by the Spirit of God, if I am not diligently and earnestly cultivating practical holiness, both of heart and life, then I shall never enter heaven, and enjoy the beatific vision. Hence the pertinency and urgency of this exhortation, “*Looking diligently* lest any man fail of the

grace of God” (Heb 12:15). There is far too much at stake to remain in uncertainty upon such a vital matter, and only the religious trifler will disregard this imperative summons.

The call to careful self-examination receives its urgency from the very great danger there is of *self-deception*. Sin darkens the understanding, so that man is unable to perceive his real state before God. Satan “hath blinded the minds of them which believe not” (2Co 4:4). The deep-rooted pride of our hearts makes us think the best of ourselves, so that if a question is raised in our hearts, we are ever prone to give ourselves the benefit of the doubt. A spirit of sloth possesses us by nature, so that we are unwilling to go to the trouble which real self-examination calls for. Hence the vast majority of religious professors remain satisfied with a head knowledge of the truth, with outward attention to forms and ceremonies, or resting on a mere consent to the letter of some verse like John 3:16, refusing to “make their calling and election *sure*.”

God has warned us plainly in His Word that, “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness” (Pro 30:12). He has set before us those who say, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” and who know not that they are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev 3:17). And let it be duly noted that *those* were in church association, and that at a time before the last of the apostles had left the earth. Christ has told us that, “*Many* will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works” (Mat 7:22)? Yea, that they will affirm, “We have eaten and drunk in thy presence” (Luk 13:26), yet will He answer them, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mat 7:23). How such words as those should make *each of us* tremble! How it behooves us to be “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God” (Heb 12:15). Alas that such words—written first to those who had been addressed as “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb 3:1)—should, for the most part, fall upon unheeding ears.

The fact is that our diligence and honesty in self-examination will largely be determined by the value which we set upon our soul and its eternal interests. Alas, the vast majority of professing Christians today are far, far more concerned about their bodies than their souls, about carnal pleasures than spiritual riches, about earthly comforts than heavenly consolations, about the good opinion of their fellows rather than the approbation of God. But a few—and O *how few*—are made serious, become in deadly earnest to examine well their foundations, and test every inch of the ground they stand on. With them religion is not something to be taken up and laid down according to their fitful moods. *Where will they spend ETERNITY* is their all-absorbing concern. Every other interest in life sinks into utter insignificance before the vital consideration of seeking to make sure that they have “the root of the matter” (Job 19:28) in them.

O my reader, can you be satisfied with the cheap, easy-going religion of the day, which utterly ignores the claimant call of the Son of God, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate” (Luk 13:24)? Can you rest content with the “smooth things” (Isa 30:10) now being proclaimed from well-nigh every pulpit, which assures those who are at enmity with God they can become Christians more easily than a youth can join the army, or a man become a “free mason” or “odd fellow”? Can you follow the great crowd who claim to have “received Christ as their personal Saviour” when no miracle of grace has been wrought in their hearts, while the Lord Himself declares, “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and *few* there be that find it” (Mat 7:14)? Dare you rest upon some “decision” made when you were deeply stirred by some anecdotes addressed to your emotions? Have you nothing more than some change in your religious views or some reformation in your outward ways to show that you are “a new creature in Christ Jesus?” Slight

not, we beseech you, this pressing word, “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God” (Heb 12:15).

But the word “Looking diligently” has a wider signification than self-examination—it also points out our duty toward each other. The Greek term means “overseeing,” exercising a jealous care for one another. This seems to have misled Owen (John, 1616-1683) and several others who confined the exhortation unto “the body of the church or society of the faithful” in their mutual relation. But as Spurgeon (C. H., 1834-1892) pointed out on the text, “In the church of God each one should be on his watchtower for himself and for others. The first person who is likely to fail in the church is *myself*. Each one ought to feel that—the beginning of the watch should therefore be at home.” Our text is very similar to the exhortation found in Hebrews 3:12-13, which is first unto the individual and then to the assembly—Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily.”

Earnestly endeavouring to look well unto my own going, it is then both my duty and privilege to exercise watchfulness over others. “How many persons might be saved from backsliding by a little oversight! If we would speak to the brother kindly and considerately, when we think he is growing a little cold, we might restore him. We need not always speak directly to him by way of rebuke, but we may place a suggestive book in his way, or speak generally upon the subject. Love can invent many ways of warning a friend without making him angry, and a holy example will also prove a great rebuke to sin. In the church we ought to bear one another’s burden, and so fulfill the law of Christ, exercising the office of bishops over one another, and watching lest any man fail of the grace of God” (C. H. Spurgeon).

How little of this loving solicitude for the spiritual well-being of our fellow-pilgrims is in evidence today! How little earnest and diligent praying for one another! How little faithfulness in counseling, warning, exhorting! Probably one principle reason for this is the hyper-touchiness of so many professing Christians in this generation. No matter how tactfully the counsel be tendered, how faithfully the warning be given, or how lovingly the rebuke be administered—no matter though it be given by an experienced senior to one he is on familiar terms with, yet in nine cases out of ten his efforts are resented, and he is told—by attitude if not in words—to “mind his own business.” Never mind, even if a single ear be gained and a single soul helped, it is worth the disappointments of being repulsed by the others. Only one leper out of the ten appreciated Christ’s kindness!

“Lest any man fail of the grace of God” (Heb 12:15). This is the clause which has occasioned controversy, though really it affords no warrant for it, nor will the Greek permit of the marginal rendering. The root word which is here rendered “fail” occurs many times in the New Testament, but never once has it the force of “fall from.” It means “to lack” or “be deficient of.” In Romans 3:23, it is rendered “come short of,” in Mark 12:44, to “want,” in 2 Corinthians 12:11, come “behind,” in Philippians 2:30, “lack,” in Philippians 4:12, “suffer need,” in Hebrews 11:37, to be “destitute.” Thus there is no room for uncertainty as to the meaning of this exhortation, “Looking diligently lest any man fail”—come short of, be deficient in, lack—the grace of God.”

But to what does “the grace of God” here refer? That is not quite so easy to answer, for sometimes “grace” is to be regarded objectively, sometimes subjectively. In some passages it refers to the free favour of God, in others to His benevolent operation within the heart, in still others to the effects produced thereby. In our present passage, it seems to the writer to be used more abstractly, having a comprehensive scope as it is applicable to widely different cases. We feel it safest to regard the clause thus, for God’s commandment is “exceeding broad” (Psa 119:96), and very often a single word has a twofold or threefold reference, and therefore we need

to be constantly on our guard against *limiting* the meaning or restricting the application of any utterance of Holy Writ. According to our light we will endeavour to show some of the different cases to which this exhortation belongs.

“By ‘the grace of God,’ God’s gracious favour and acceptance in Christ, as it is proposed and declared by the Gospel, is intended. Herein all spiritual mercies and privileges, in adoption, justification, sanctification, and consolation, do consist. For these things, proceeding from the love, grace, and goodness of God in Christ, and being effects thereof, are called the grace of God. The attaining and participation of these things is that which in the faith and profession of the Gospel, men aim at and design; without which, both the one and the other are in vain. This grace, under all their profession of the Gospel, men may fail of, and this is the evil cautioned against” (John Owen).

Man may “fail of the grace of God,” then, by *not submitting* themselves to the terms of the Gospel. Those terms are repugnant to the natural man. They are distasteful to his carnal lusts, they are humbling to his pride. But it is at the former of these two points that the majority “fail.” The Gospel calls upon sinners to repent, and they cannot do that with sincerity unless they throw down the weapons of their rebellion against God. The thrice holy God will pardon no man so long as he is determined to please himself and continue in a course of sinning. Again, the Gospel calls on sinners to receive Christ Jesus as *Lord*—to give Him the throne of their hearts, to bow to His sceptre. The holy Redeemer will save no man who is unwilling for Him to “reign over” him (Luk 19:14).

Second, to “fail of the grace of God” is to be satisfied with *something short of* divine grace communicated to and ruling in the heart. It is to be contented with a religious substitute for it. How many are deceived by “a form of godliness” who know nothing of its “power” (2Ti 3:5). How many mistake a head-knowledge of the truth for a miracle of grace wrought in the heart. How many substitute outward forms and ceremonies for an experimental acquaintance with the substance of them. How many confuse an external reformation of life with the divine regeneration and transformation of the soul. Alas, of how very many does it have to be said, “He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul” (Isa 44:20). O how few there are who know “the grace of God *in truth*” (Col 1:6). Do you, my reader? Do you?

“Some have maintained an admirable character to all appearance all their lives, and yet have failed of the grace of God because of some secret sin. They persuaded even themselves that they were believers, and yet they were not truly so. They had no *inward* holiness, they allowed one sin to get the mastery, they indulged in an unsanctified passion, and so, though they were laid in the grave like sheep, they died with a false hope, and missed eternal life. This is a most dreadful state to be in, and perhaps some of us are in it. Let the prayer be breathed, ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.’ Are ye earnest in secret prayer? Do ye love the reading of the Bible? Have ye the fear of God before your eyes? Do you really commune with God? Do you truly love Christ? Ask yourselves these questions *often*, for though we preach the free Gospel of Jesus Christ, I hope as plainly as any, we feel it to be just as needful to set you on self-examination and to excite in you a holy anxiety. It ought to be often a question with you, ‘Have I the grace of God, or do I fall short of it? Am I a piece of rock crystal which is very like the diamond, but yet is not diamond?’” (C. H. Spurgeon).

Third, multitudes “fail of the grace of God” by *not persevering* in the use of the outward means. They are very earnest and zealous at first, but become careless and slothful. “There are some persons who for a time appear to possess the grace of God, and for a while exhibit many

outward evidences of being Christians, but at last *the* temptation comes most suitable to their depraved tastes, and they are carried away with it. They fail of the grace of God. They appear to have attained it, but they fail at last—like a man in business who makes money for a time, but fails in the end. They fail of the grace of God—like an arrow shot from the bow, which goes straight towards the target for a time, but having too little impetus, fails to reach the mark. There are some who did run well, what doth hinder them that they should not obey the truth?” (C. H. Spurgeon).

Finally, genuine Christians themselves “fail of the grace of God” (Heb 12:15) by *not improving* that which God has already bestowed upon them. Faith has been imparted to them, but how little they exercise it. There is an infinite fullness in Christ for them, but how little do they draw upon it. Wondrous privileges are theirs, but how little do they use them. Light has been communicated to them, but how little do they walk in it. They fail to watch and pray lest they enter into temptation (Mar 14:38). They fail to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (2Co 7:1). They fail to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus (2Pe 3:18). They fail to keep themselves from idols (1Jo 5:21). They fail to keep themselves in the love of God (Jude 1:21). And by so failing, their peace is disturbed, their joy is diminished, their testimony is marred, and frequent chastenings are brought upon them.

“Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you,” (Heb 12:15). This is the evil warned against. Observe how abstractly this also is worded. It is not “lest any root of bitterness spring up *in* you,” or “*among* you,” but simply “spring up.” The reference, we believe, is again a double one. First to the individual himself, and then to the corporate company. This second “lest” is obviously related intimately to the first—if we “fail of the grace of God” then “a root of bitterness springing up” is to be surely expected. Nor can there be any doubt as to what is signified by this figure of a “root of bitterness springing up”—the uprisings of evil is evidently that which is in view. This is what we are here to guard against. Failure to do so will bring “trouble” upon us and occasion a stumbling block to others.

The first thing to be noted here is the expression “root of bitterness.” Now the root of a tree is that part of it which is underground, hence the reference is to that which is *unseen*. It points to *indwelling sin*, which continues in a man even after he is regenerated. That is why the Christian is exhorted, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Rom 6:12). And if *that* is to be obeyed, then it is imperative we heed the word “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23). Every stirring of sin within is to be resisted, every defiling effect of it confessed to God. If the weeds be not kept down, the flowers and vegetables will be choked. If the Christian fails in the work of *mortification*, then the cultivation of his graces will be arrested.

“Lest any root of bitterness spring up” (Heb 12:15) The “springing up” is the appearance of its stalk above the ground. It is the open manifestation of sin in the life, issuing from an *unmortified* lust in the soul, which is here in view. What is unjudged before God in secret usually ends in becoming open before men. “Be sure your sin will find you out” (Num 32:23) is a solemn word for each of us on this point. “Lest *any* root” emphasizes the need of constant watchfulness against *every* sin, for many branches and sprigs are ready to issue from the main trunk of indwelling corruption. Our safeguards are to yield ourselves *wholly* to God without reserve at any point, to be well-instructed in practical godliness, to preserve a tender conscience, to be more distrustful about ourselves, to cultivate closer daily communion with God, to fix our affections upon things above.

“Lest any root of *bitterness* springing up” (Heb 12:15). By nature, sin is pleasant and delightful to us, but in the end it “biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder” (Pro 23:32). Particularly is this the case with the Christian. God will not long suffer him to indulge his lusts, without making him taste the bitter consequences of the same. The lashings of his conscience, the convictions of the Spirit, the wretchedness of his soul, will cause him to say, “He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood” (Lam 3:15). As our text says, “lest any root of bitterness spring up *trouble*” (Heb 12:15). That which is contrary to God’s holiness and offends His majesty, He makes a source of trouble to us, either in our minds, bodies, estates, or families. “And many be defiled” (Heb 12:15)—sin is like leaven—its influence spreads, “evil communications corrupt good manners” (1Co 15:33).

The second half of our text also refers to the local church. In it there is, no doubt, an allusion to Deuteronomy 29:18. Great watchfulness needs to be exercised and a strict discipline maintained therein. Unregenerate professors are ever seeking to creep into the assembly of the saints. If God’s servants sleep, the enemy will sow his tares among the wheat. When the suspicion of church officers is aroused, prayer for discernment and guidance is called for. Where the one suspected breaks out in corrupt doctrine or in loose living, he is to be dealt with promptly. Delay is dangerous. The allowance of a “little leaven” will soon corrupt the whole lump. At no point does the local church fail more deplorably today than in its refusal to maintain Scriptural discipline.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

47. His Kindness to Mephibosheth

2 Samuel 9 presents to us one of the loveliest scenes in the life of David. To properly appreciate it we need to recall his earlier experiences, particularly the unkind treatment he received from the hands of Saul. We will only refer briefly now to the jealousy which was awakened in that king’s heart when he heard the women celebrating in song the victory of Jesse’s youthful son over Goliath. How that later he sought to kill David again and again by throwing a javelin at him. Finally, how that David had to flee for his life and how relentlessly the king pursued him, determining to kill him. But things had been completely altered. Saul and his sons were slain in battle, and David has ascended the throne of Israel. A most admirable spirit did our hero now display—instead of using his royal power tyrannically or maliciously, he put it to a most noble use—to return good for evil, to extend pity to the descendant of his foe, to befriend one who might well have feared death at his hands, was David’s next act.

“And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?” (2Sa 9:1). First of all, let us observe the pathos of such a question. 1 Chronicles 8:33 furnishes a list of Saul’s sons, but now his family has been so reduced by the judgments of God that inquiry has to be made “is there yet *any* that is left of the house of Saul?” How true it is that “the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children” (see Exo 20:5)—O that

more parents would take this to heart. But second, let us note the benevolent design of David. He sought any possible survivor of Saul's family, not that he might imprison or slay, but that he might show him "kindness." Let our dispensational friends note that this was under the era of law!—even then, wherever the Holy Spirit possessed a soul, the spirit triumphed over the flesh. Blessedly did it do so in the case now before us.

It seems evident from what follows in the sacred narrative that none of the courtiers could answer their royal master's question. It is not at all likely that *they* were interested in such matters. No doubt they remembered the trouble which the opposition of Ishbosheth—the last of Saul's sons—had caused, and hoped that his family had now become entirely extinct. But David was not to be deterred, and continued asking. It was no passing whim which had actuated him. "Jonathan" was before his heart, and for *his* "sake" he was determined to show clemency and display his magnanimity. At length they brought to David an old retainer of Saul's family, who knew well the sad state into which it was fallen, and to him also David said, "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him?" (2Sa 9:3).

But beautiful as was David's conduct on this occasion, something yet more blessed was shadowed forth by it, and upon that we would particularly concentrate our attention. As other writers on this sweet incident have pointed out, David as monarch over Israel suggests to us God upon His throne in heaven. David showing kindness to the family of his arch-enemy, foreshadowed God's dealing in grace with sinners. The name of the one whom David befriended, the place he had hitherto occupied, the condition he was then in, the wondrous portion he received, all typified the case of those upon whom God bestows saving mercy. The picture here presented is perfect in its accuracy in every detail, and the more closely it be examined, the more clearly will its evangelical character appear. O that our hearts may be melted by its exquisite light and shade.

"And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake" (2Sa 9:1)? Let us first observe that *David* was the one who here *took the initiative*. No overtures were made unto him by the one remaining descendant of Saul—the king himself was the one to make the advance. So it is in the antitype—it is not the sinner, but God, who makes the first move. Through the Gospel He makes overtures of mercy, and in each instance of salvation He is found of them that seek Him not. "All we *like sheep* have gone astray" (Isa 53:6), and it is the nature of a lost sheep to wander farther and farther afield. The shepherd must do the seeking, for sheep astray never go after the shepherd—true alike both naturally and spiritually. It was God who sought out Abraham in Ur, Jacob at Bethel, Moses in Midian, Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, and not they who sought unto Him.

Next, we may notice *the object* of David's quest. It was not one who had befriended him during the days of his own dire need. Nor was it one whom men of the world would call "a deserving case." Nor was it one from whom David could expect anything in return. Instead, it was one immediately descended from his most merciless and implacable foe. It was one who was hiding away from him. It was one who had nothing of his own, having lost his heritage. How accurate the picture! The Gospel of God's grace is not seeking those who have something of their own to commend them unto the Lord, nor does it offer salvation in return for service to be rendered afterwards. Its inestimable riches are for worthless wretches, spiritual paupers, lost and undone sinners—and those riches are freely proffered "without money and without price."

But let us pay attention to *the motive which actuated David*. Very beautiful is this line in our typical picture. "And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness *for Jonathan's sake*?" (2Sa 9:1). Here was what moved the king to make overtures

of mercy toward the house of his sworn enemy. Though there was nothing whatever in Saul's survivor to commend him unto the royal favour, David found a reason *outside* of him, in that bond of love and friendship which existed between his own heart and Jonathan. And thus it is too in the antitype, "For we ourselves also *were* sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that *the kindness* and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, *not by works of righteousness which we have done*, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly *through Jesus Christ our Saviour*" (Ti 3:3-6). It is because of Another that God is gracious to His people, "God *for Christ's sake* hath forgiven you" (Eph 4:32).

One more item completes this point, and a very striking one it is. When Ziba, Saul's servant, had been found and brought to David, the king asked, "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show *the kindness of God* unto him?" (2Sa 9:3). This language goes further than his words in the first verse. It takes us back to 1 Samuel 20. There we find Jonathan acted the part of a *mediator* between Saul and David (1Sa 20:27-34). There too we read of a solemn "covenant" (1Sa 20:16-17, 42) between Jonathan and David, in which the latter swore to show "kindness unto the house of the former forever. Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul" (1Sa 20:17). It was to *that* incident the words of David, "that I may show the kindness *of God* unto him" looked back. It was that kindness of which God Himself had been the witness. It was *covenant* "kindness" which he had promised to exercise.

Thus, the one who here obtained kindness at the hands of the king, received favour not because of anything *he* had done, nor because of any personal worthiness he possessed, but wholly on account of a covenant promise which had been made *before he was born*. So it is with those toward whom God now acts in free and sovereign grace. It is not because of any personal claims they have upon Him, but because of the love He bears toward the Mediator, that He shows "kindness." Nor is that all. Long, long before they first saw the light, God entered into a covenant with Christ, promising to extend mercy unto all who belonged to His "House." "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show 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). It is "through the blood of *the everlasting covenant*" that God makes His people "perfect in every good work to do his will" (Heb 13:20-21).

Next, let us look more closely at this one to whom David showed "the kindness of God"—covenant-kindness. First, his name, for no detail here is meaningless. The son of Jonathan was called "Mephibosheth" (2Sa 9:6), which signifies "*a shameful thing*." How accurately does that appellation describe the natural man! "We are all as an unclean thing" (Isa 64:6) says God's Word—polluted by sin. We are by birth and practice thoroughly depraved and corrupt. Our understanding is darkened so that we cannot apprehend spiritual things, our wills are opposed to God's, our hearts are desperately wicked, our consciences are seared, our strength spent in the service of Satan. And in the sight of the Holy One our very righteousnesses are "as filthy rags." A shameful thing, then, we truly are—from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness" in us by nature, but instead "wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores" (Isa 1:6). O what cause have we to cry with the leper, "Unclean! unclean!" and say with Job, "I am vile" (Job 40:4).

Second, Mephibosheth was a *fugitive from David*. When news reached the survivors of his family that Saul and his sons had been slain in battle, and David had ascended the throne,

Mephibosheth and his nurse fled in terror. “He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, *and fled*” (2Sa 4:4). They were anxious to keep out of David’s way. So it is with the sinner. He is afraid of God, and seeks to banish Him from his thoughts. The knowledge of God’s holiness, power, and omniscience fills him with dismay, and he seeks to have nothing to do with Him. “The wicked flee when no man pursueth” (Pro 28:1). It was thus with Adam at the beginning. After his transgression, no sooner did he hear the voice of the Lord, than he hid himself among the trees of the garden. A guilty conscience renders God an object of terror to the wicked.

Third, Mephibosheth was *a cripple*. He was “lame of his feet” (2Sa 4:4), as the closing words of our chapter state, he “was lame on *both* his feet” (2Sa 9:13). How accurately that portrays the condition of those who are out of Christ! The natural man is *unable* to run in the path of God’s commandments, or tread the narrow way which leadeth unto life. He is a spiritual cripple—“without strength” (Rom 5:6). The utter inability of the unregenerate to meet God’s requirements and walk acceptably before Him, is a truth writ plain across the Scriptures, though it is given little place indeed in modern preaching. The greatness of man, the freedom of his will, his ability to accept Christ any time, is now the sweet opiate which is chloroforming millions. “No man *can come to me, except* the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Joh 6:44). How those words of Christ attest the solemn fact that the sinner is “lame of *both* his feet!”

Fourth, Mephibosheth became a cripple *through a fall*, “and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and *became* lame” (2Sa 4:4). What a truly marvellous book the Bible is! Yet how it needs eyes anointed by the divine Inspirer in order to perceive its wonders and beauties! How obvious it is to those favoured with spiritual discernment that we have here far more than an historical account pertaining to a single individual—that it is rather a *typical* picture having a *universal* application. Man was not originally created in the condition he is now in. Man was very far from being “lame on both his feet” (2Sa 9:13) when his Maker proclaimed him “very good.” The faculties of man’s soul have become spiritually crippled as the result of *the fall*—our fall in Adam. In consequence of that fall, “They that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:8).

Fifth, *the place where Mephibosheth resided*. It was not at Jerusalem, no indeed—none out of Christ live there. Jerusalem signifies “the foundation of peace” and as Holy Writ truly declares, “There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked” (Isa 48:22). How can there be while they despise Him in whom alone peace is to be found? “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest” (Isa 57:20)—discontented, dissatisfied. No, it was not at Jerusalem that poor Mephibosheth resided. Instead, he dwelt at “Lo-debar” (2Sa 9:4), which means “the place of *no pasture*.” What a significant line in our picture is this, so obviously drawn by more than a human artist. How aptly does it portray the world in which we live, the world which is away from God, which lieth in the wicked one. It is a world which provides no food for the soul. It is a great “howling wilderness” so far as spiritual provisions are concerned. Yet how little is that fact realized by those who are in it and of it.

“Lo-debar” is written across all the varied fields of this world, though the great masses of people realize it not. Multitudes are seeking to find something to fill that void in the heart which God should occupy. They seek satisfaction in sport, in novel reading, in an endless round of pleasure, in making money, in fame, but soul satisfaction is not to be found in such *things*—things which perish with the using of them. Despising Him who is “the true bread,” the “bread of life,” no food is to be found here but “the *husks* that the swine” feed upon. The prodigal son

discovered that when he left his patrimony and went into the far country, “I perish with hunger” (Luk 15:17) was his plaintive cry. Life, peace, joy, satisfaction, are to be found only in the Lord.

One other point and we must conclude this article—the *provision* David made for Mephibosheth. There was this poor creature, belonging to a family that was in rebellion against David, lame in both feet, and dwelling in the place of no pasture. And here was the king upon his throne, with purpose of heart to show him kindness for the sake of another. What, then, was the next move? Did David send a message of welcome, inviting him to come to Jerusalem? Did he notify Mephibosheth that if he “did his part” mercy should be accorded him? Did he forward the cripple a pair of crutches, bid him make use of them, and hobble to Jerusalem as best he could? No, indeed—had anything like *that* been David’s policy, our typical picture had failed completely to exhibit “the kindness of God” unto those on whom He bestows His so great salvation. God does much more than provide “means of grace.”

“Then king David sent, and *fetched* him” (2Sa 9:5). This blessed item shadows forth the efficacious work of the Holy Spirit in those whom God brings unto Himself. Had He done nothing more than give His Son to die for sinners, and then sent forth His servants with the Gospel invitation, *none* had ever been saved. This is clear from the parable of the great supper—men were bade to come and assured that “all things were now ready.” And what was their response? This, “they all with one consent began to make excuse” (Luk 14:18). But God was not to be foiled, and said to the servant (the Spirit), “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, *and bring in* hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind” (Luk 14:21). Thank God for *bringing* grace—that He does *all*, both for and in His people.

“’Twas the same grace that spread the feast
That gently forced me in;
Else I had still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin.”

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

4. The Abrahamic (Continued)

The first thing recorded of Abraham after he had actually entered the land of Canaan is the Lord’s appearing unto him and his building an altar, “And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. 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” (Gen 12:6-7). There are several details here which claim our attention. First, Abraham did not settle down and enter into possession of the land, but “passed through it,” as Acts 7:5 tells us, “And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on.” Second, the presence there of “the Canaanite”—to challenge and contest the possession of it. So it is with the believer—the flesh, the devil, and the world unite in opposing his *present*

enjoyment of the inheritance unto which he has been begotten, while hosts of wicked spirits in the heavnlies wrestle with those who are partakers of the heavenly calling (Eph 6:12).

Third, “the LORD appeared unto Abram” (Gen 12:7). He had done so originally as the “God of glory,” when He revealed Himself to the patriarch in Chaldea. There is no intimation of Abraham receiving any further revelation from God during his delay at Haran, but now that God’s call had been fully obeyed, he was favoured with a fresh manifestation of Him. And now Abraham’s obedience is rewarded. At the beginning the Lord had said, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will *show* thee” (Gen 12:1), now He declared, “Unto thy seed will I *give* this land” (Gen 12:7). This brings before us a most important principle in the “ways” of God, which has often been lost sight of by men who only stress one side of the truth. That principle is that divine *grace* never sets aside the requirements of divine *righteousness*. God never shows mercy at the expense of His holiness.

God is “light” as well as “love,” and each of these divine perfections is exemplified in all His dealings with His people. Moreover, in the exercise of His *sovereignty* God ever enforces the *responsibility* of the creature, and unless we keep *both* of these steadily in view, we not only become lopsided, but lapse into real error. The grace of God must not be magnified to the beclouding of His righteousness, nor His sovereignty pressed to the exclusion of human accountability. The balance can only be preserved by our faithfully adhering to the Scriptures. If we single out “favourite” verses and ignore those which are unpalatable to the flesh, we are guilty of handling the Word of God deceitfully, and fall under the condemnation of “according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been *partial* in the law” (Mal 2:9). The principles of law and Gospel are not contradictory, but supplementary, and neither can be dispensed with except to our irreparable loss.

What has been pointed out above supplies the keys to a right understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant, and unless those dual principles be steadily kept before us in our contemplation of the same, we are certain to err. Some writers when referring to the Abrahamic Covenant speak of it as “a covenant of pure grace,” and such it truly was—for what was there about Abraham to move the God of glory to so much as notice him? Nevertheless, it would be equally correct to designate the Abrahamic Covenant “a covenant of righteousness,” for it exemplified the principles of the divine *government* as actually as it made manifest the benignity of the divine *character*. Other writers have referred to the Abrahamic Covenant as an “unconditional one,” but in this they erred, for to talk of “an unconditional *covenant*” is a flat contradiction in terms. Suffer us to quote here from our first article on the Covenants.

“Let us point out the *nature* of a ‘covenant,’ in what it consists. ‘An absolute complete covenant is a voluntary convention, pact, or agreement between distinct persons, about the ordering and dispensing of things in their power, unto the mutual concern and advantage’ (John Owen). Blackstone, the great commentator upon English law, speaking of the parts of a deed, says, ‘After warrants, usually follow *covenants*, or conventions, which are clauses of agreement, contained in a deed, whereby either party may stipulate for the truth of certain facts, or may bind himself to perform, or give something to the other’ (Vol. 2, p. 20)—so that he includes three things: the parties, the terms, the binding agreement. Reducing it to still simpler language, we may say that a covenant is the entering into of a mutual agreement a benefit being assured on the fulfillment of certain conditions.”

We supplement by a quotation from Hermann Witsius (1636-1708), “The covenant does, on the part of God, comprise three things in general. 1st. A *promise* of consummate happiness in eternal life. 2nd. A designation or *prescription* of the condition, by the performance of which man

acquires a right to the promise. 3rd. A *penal sanction* against those who do not come up to the prescribed condition....Man becomes the other party when he consents thereto—embracing the good promised by God, engaging to an exact observance of the condition required; and upon the violation thereof, voluntarily owning himself obnoxious to the threatened curse.”

Let it now be pointed out that in *this* article we are turning to another side of the subject from what we have mainly dwelt upon in the previous ones. In those we amplified what we said in the fourth and fifth paragraphs of the second article. Having dwelt so largely upon the divine sovereignty and divine grace aspects, we need to weigh carefully the divine righteousness and human responsibility elements. Having shown how the various covenants which God made with men adumbrated the central features in the Everlasting Covenant which He made with Christ, we are now required to consider how that in them God maintained the claims of His righteousness by what He required from the responsible agents with whom He dealt. It was not until *after* Noah did “according to all that God commanded him” (Gen 6:22) by preparing an ark “to the saving of his house” (Heb 11:7), that God confirmed His, “with thee *will* I establish my covenant” (Gen 6:18) by “I establish my covenant” (Gen 9:9)—Noah having fulfilled the divine stipulations, God was now prepared to fulfill His promises.

The same thing is clearly seen again in connection with Abraham. There is no hint in Scripture that the Lord entered into any covenant with him while he was in Ur of Chaldea. Instead, the land of Canaan was then set before him *provisionally*. “The LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land *that I will* show thee” (Gen 12:1). The *order* there is unmistakably plain. First, God acted in *grace*, sovereign grace, by singling out Abraham from his idolatrous neighbours, and by calling him to something far better. Second, God made known the requirements of His *righteousness* and enforced Abraham’s *responsibility* by the demand there made upon him. Third, the promised *reward* was to follow Abraham’s response to God’s call. These three things are conjoined in Hebrews 11:8, “By faith Abraham, when he was called [by divine grace] to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance [the reward], obeyed [the discharge of his responsibility]; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.”

Nor does what has just been said in anywise conflict with what was pointed out in previous articles. The above elements just as truly shadowed forth another fundamental aspect of the Everlasting Covenant as did the different features singled out from the Adamic and Noahaic. In the Everlasting Covenant, God promised a certain reward unto Christ upon His fulfilling certain conditions—executing the appointed work. The inseparable principles of law and Gospel, grace and reward, faith and works, were most expressly conjoined in that compact which God entered into with the Mediator before the foundation of the world. Therein we may behold the “manifold wisdom of God” (Eph 3:10) in combining such apparent opposites. And instead of carping at their seeming hostility, we should admire the omniscience which has made the one the handmaid of the other. Only then are we prepared to discern and recognize the exercise of this dual principle in each of the subordinate covenants.

Not a few writers supposed they magnified the grace of God and honoured the Mediator when affirming that Christ Himself so fulfilled the conditions of the Covenant and so met every requirement of God’s righteousness that His people have been entirely freed of all legal obligations, and that nothing whatever is left for them to do but express their gratitude in lives well-pleasing to Him. It is far easier to make this mistake than it is to expose it. It is true, blessedly true, gloriously true, that Christ *did* perfectly discharge His covenant-engagements, magnified the law and made it honourable, that God received from Him a full satisfaction for all

the sins of His people. Yet that does not mean that the law has been repealed, that God rescinds His righteous claims upon the creature, or that believers are placed in a position of privilege from which obligation is excluded. Nor does it involve the idea that saints are freed from covenant duties. Grace reigns, but it reigns “through righteousness” (Rom 5:21), and not at the expense of it.

Christ’s obedience has not rendered ours unnecessary, rather has it rendered ours acceptable. In that sentence lies the solution to the difficulty. The law of God will accept nothing short of perfect and perpetual obedience, and such obedience the Surety of God’s people rendered, so that He brought in an everlasting righteousness which is reckoned to their account. Yet that is only one half of the truth on this subject. The other half is not that Christ’s atonement has inaugurated a regime of lawlessness or license, but rather has it placed its beneficiaries under additional obligations. But more—it has procured the needed grace to enable those beneficiaries to discharge their obligations—not perfectly; nevertheless, acceptably to God. And how? By securing that the Holy Spirit should bring them from death unto life, impart to them a nature which delights in the law, and work in them both to will and to do of God’s good pleasure. And *what is* God’s “good pleasure” (Eph 2:13). for His people? The same as it was for His incarnate Son—to be perfectly conformed to the law in thought, word, and deed.

God has one and the same standard for the Head and the members of His church, and therefore we are told, “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1Jo 2:6). In 1 Peter 2:21 we read, “Christ also suffered for us”—with what end in view? that we might be relieved from all obligation to God? that we might pursue a course of lawlessness under the pretence of magnifying “grace”? No, indeed, but rather “leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.” And what is the nature of that “example” which Christ has left us? What, but “fulfilling the law” (see Mat 5:17), loving the Lord His God with all His heart and mind and strength, and His neighbour as Himself? But in order to this there must be *a nature* in harmony with the law and not enmity against it. As Christ could declare, “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:8), so can each of His redeemed and regenerated people say, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom 7:22). And were there nothing else in them but the new man, they would render perfect obedience to the law. Such *is* their honest desire, but the presence of the old man thwarts them.

The Everlasting Covenant was, in its nature and contents, a *mixed* one, for the principles of both law and grace were operative therein. It was grace pure and simple which ordained that any from Adam’s fallen race should be saved, as it was amazing and infinite grace that provided the Son of God should become incarnate and serve as their Surety. But it was law pure and simple that the Surety should earn and purchase their salvation by His rendering unto God a perfect satisfaction on their behalf. Christ was “made under the law” (Gal 4:4). His whole life was perfectly conformed to the precepts of the law, and His death was an enduring the penalty of the law, and all of this was in fulfillment of His covenant-engagements. In like manner, these two principles of grace and law are operative in connection with the *administration* of the Everlasting Covenant, that is, in the *application* of its benefits to those on whose behalf Christ transacted. “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (Rom 3:31).

The work of Christ has released the believer from the law as a procuring cause of his justification, but it has in nowise abolished it as his rule of life. Divine grace does not set aside its recipient’s responsibility, nor does the believer’s obedience render grace any the less necessary. God requires obedience (conformity to His law) from the Christian as truly as He does from the non-Christian. True, we are not saved *for* (because of) our obedience, yet it is equally true that we

cannot be saved *without* it. Unless Noah had heeded God and built the ark, he had perished in the flood, yet it was by the goodness and power of God that the ark was preserved. It is through Christ, and Christ alone, that the believer's obedience is acceptable to God. But it may be asked, Will God accept an imperfect obedience from us? The answer is, Yes, if it be sincere, just as He is pleased to answer our poor prayers when presented in the all-meritorious name of His Son.

Once again we would point out that any "covenant" necessarily signifies a *mutual* agreement, *with terms to be carried out* by both parties. A vivid but most solemn example of this is found in the case of Judas and the chief priests of the Jews, concerning whom we read, "They *covenanted* with him for thirty pieces of silver" (Mat 26:15). That is to say, in return for his fulfilling the contract to betray his Master into their hands, they would pay him this sum of money, which, in Acts 1:18, is denominated "the *reward* of iniquity." It is only by paying close attention to *all* the expressions used in Scripture of God's covenant and of our relation thereto, that we can obtain a right and full conception thereof. We read of those that "*take hold of my covenant*" (Isa 56:4, 6), "that thou shouldest *enter into* covenant with the LORD thy God" (Deu 29:12), "those that have *made* a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Psa 50:5), "mercy and truth unto such as *keep* his covenant and his testimonies" (Psa 25:10), "be ye *mindful* always of his covenant" (1Ch 16:15), "Ye *break* my covenant" (Lev 26:15), "them that *forsake* the holy covenant" (Dan 11:30).

Against what has been said above it may be objected—But this reduces the Covenant of Grace to one and the same level with the Covenant of Works. Not so, we reply—for though those covenants have something in common, yet there is a real and radical difference between them. Each of them maintains the claims of God's righteousness by enforcing the requirements of the law, but the Covenant of Works had no "Mediator," nor was any provision made for those who failed under it—whereas the Covenant of Grace supplies both. Moreover, under the Covenant of Works obedience was rendered unto an absolute God, whereas under the Covenant of Grace it is given to God in Christ, and there is a world of difference between these two things. The application of these principles to the case of Abraham we must consider next.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

6. Its Nature (Completed)

That which we have laboured to show in the previous sections of this article is the fact that the sanctification of the Christian is very much more than a bare setting apart of him unto God. It is also, and chiefly, a work of grace wrought in his soul. God not only *accounts* His people holy, but actually *makes* them so. The various materials and articles used in the tabernacle of old, when dedicated to God, were changed only in their *use*, but when man is dedicated to God he is changed in his *nature*, so that not only is there a vital difference between him and others, but a radical difference between him and himself (1Co 6:11)—between what he was, and now is. That change of nature is a real necessity, for the man himself must be made holy before his actions can be so. Grace is planted in the heart, from whence its influence is diffused throughout all

departments of his life. Internal holiness is an hatred of sin and a love of that which is good, and external holiness is the avoiding of the one and the pursuing of the other. Wherever there be a change of heart, fruits will appear in the conduct.

Like “salvation” itself—according to the use of the term in Scripture (see 2Ti 1:9, salvation in the past; Phi 2:12, salvation in the present; Rom 13:11, salvation in the future) and in the actual history of the redeemed—so sanctification must be considered under *its three tenses*. There is a very real sense in which all of God’s elect have already *been* sanctified—Jude 1, Hebrews 10:10, 2 Thessalonians 2:13. There is also a very real sense in which those of God’s people on earth are daily *being* sanctified—2 Corinthians 4:16, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:23. And there is also a very real sense in which the Christian’s (complete) sanctification is yet *future*—Romans 8:30, Hebrews 12:23, 1 John 3:2. Unless this threefold distinction be carefully borne in mind our thoughts are bound to be confused. Objectively, our sanctification is already an accomplished fact (1Co 1:2), in which one saint shares equally with another. Subjectively, our sanctification is *not* complete in this life (Phi 3:12) and varies considerably in different Christians, though the promise of Philippians 1:6 belongs alike to all of them.

Though our sanctification be complete in all its parts, yet it is not now perfect in its degrees. As the new-born babe possesses a soul and body, endowed with all their members, yet they are undeveloped and far from a state of maturity. So it is with the Christian, who (in comparison with the life to come) remains throughout this life but a “babe in Christ” (see 1Pe 2:2). We know but “in part” (1Co 13:12), and we are sanctified but in part, for “there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed” (Jos 13:1). In the most gracious there remains a double principle—the flesh and the spirit, the old man and the new man. We are a mixture and a medley during our present state. There is a conflict between operating principles (sin and grace), so that every act is mixed—there is tin mixed with our silver and dross with our gold. Our best deeds are defiled, and therefore we continue to feed upon the Lamb *with* “bitter herbs” (Exo 12:8).

Holiness in the heart discovers itself by godly sorrowings and godly aspirations. “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Mat 5:4)—“mourn” because of the swellings of pride, the workings of unbelief, the surgings of discontent; “mourn” because of the feebleness of their faith, the coldness of their love, their lack of conformity to Christ. There is nothing which more plainly evidences a person to be sanctified than a broken and contrite heart—grieving over that which is contrary to holiness. Rightly did the Puritan John Owen say, “Evangelical repentance is that which carrieth the believing soul through all its failures, infirmities, and sins. He is not able to live one day without the constant exercise of it. *It is as necessary unto the continuance of spiritual life as faith is.* It is that continual, habitual, self-abasement which arises from a sense of the majesty and holiness of God, and the consciousness of our miserable failures.” It is this which makes the real Christian so thankful for Romans 7, for he finds it corresponds exactly with his own inward experience.

The sanctified soul, then, is very far from being satisfied with the measure of experimental holiness which is yet his portion. He is painfully conscious of the feebleness of his graces, the leanness of his soul, and the defilements from his inward corruption. But, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Mat 5:6), or “they that are hungering and thirsting” as the Greek reads, being the participle of the present tense—intimating a *present* disposition of soul. Christ pronounces “blessed” (in contrast from those under “the curse”) they who are hungering and thirsting after His righteousness imparted as well as imputed, who thirst after the righteousness of sanctification as well as the righteousness of justification—i.e., the Spirit infusing into the soul holy principles, supernatural graces, spiritual qualities, and then

strengthening and developing the same. Such has been the experience of the saints in all ages, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Psa 42:1-2).

One of the things which prevents so many from obtaining a right view of the nature of sanctification is that scarcely any of the bestowments of the Gospel are clearly defined in their minds, all being jumbled up together. While every spiritual privilege the believer enjoys is the fruit of God’s electing love and the purchase of Christ’s mediation, and so are all parts of one grand whole, yet it is our loss if we fail to definitely distinguish them one from the other. Reconciliation and justification, adoption and forgiveness, regeneration and sanctification, all combine to form the present portion of those whom the Father draws to the Son. Nevertheless, each of these terms stands for a specific branch of that “great salvation” to which they were appointed. It makes much for our peace of mind and joy of heart when we are able to apprehend these things severally. We shall therefore devote the remainder of this article unto a comparison of sanctification with other blessings of the Christian.

1. *Regeneration and sanctification.* It may appear to some who read critically our articles on “Regeneration” (1931 issues) and who have closely followed what has been said in our discussion of the nature of sanctification, that we have almost, if not quite, obliterated all real difference between what is wrought in us at the new birth and what God works in us at our sanctification. It is not easy to preserve a definite line of distinction between them, because they have a number of things in common. Yet the leading points of contrast between them needs to be considered if we are to differentiate them in our minds. We shall therefore occupy the next two or three paragraphs with an examination of this point, wherein we shall endeavour to set forth the relation of the one to the other. Perhaps it will help us the most to consider this by saying that, in one sense, the relation between regeneration and sanctification is that of the infant to the adult.

In likening the connection between regeneration and sanctification to the relation between an infant and an adult, it should be pointed out that we have in mind our practical and progressive sanctification, and not our objective and absolute sanctification. Our absolute sanctification, so far as our state before God is concerned, is simultaneous with our regeneration. The essential thing in our regeneration is the Spirit’s quickening of us into newness of life. The essential thing in our sanctification is that thenceforth we are an habitation of God, through the indwelling of the Spirit, and from *that* standpoint all the subsequent progressive advances in the spiritual life are but the effects, fruits, and manifestations of that initial consecration or anointing. The consecration of the tabernacle, and later of the temple, was a single act, done once and for all—after, there were many evidences of its continuance or perpetuity. But it is with the *experimental* aspect we would here treat.

At regeneration a principle of holiness is communicated to us—practical sanctification is the *exercise* of that principle in living unto God. In regeneration the Spirit imparts saving grace. In His work of sanctification, He *strengthens and develops* the same. As “original sin” or that indwelling corruption which is in us at our natural birth, contains within it the seeds of all sin, so that grace which is imparted to us at the new birth contains within it the seeds of all spiritual graces. And as the one develops and manifests itself as we grow, so it is with the other. “Sanctification is a constant, progressive renewing of the whole man, whereby the new creature doth daily more and more die unto sin and live unto God. Regeneration is the birth, sanctification is the groweth of this babe of grace. In regeneration, the sun of holiness rises. In sanctification it keepeth its course and shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day (Pro 4:18). The former is a specifical change from nature to grace (Eph 5:8)—the latter is a gradual change from one degree

of grace to another (Psa 84:7), whereby the Christian goeth from strength to strength till he appear before God in Zion” (George Swinnock, 1660).

Thus, the foundation of sanctification is laid in regeneration, in that a holy principle is then first formed in us. That holy principle evidences itself in conversion, which is turning away from sin to holiness, from Satan to Christ, from the world to God. It continues to evidence itself under the constant work of mortification and vivification, or the practical putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new, and is completed at glorification. The great difference then between regeneration and experimental and practical sanctification is that the former is a divine *act*, done once and for all, while the latter is a divine *work* of God’s grace, wherein He sustains and develops, continues and perfects the work He then began. The one is a birth, the other the growth. The making of us practically holy is the design which God has in view when He quickens us. It is the necessary means to this end, for sanctification is the *crown* of the whole process of salvation.

One of the chief defects of modern teaching on this subject has been in regarding the new birth as the summum bonum of the spiritual life of the believer. Instead of its being the goal, it is but the starting-point. Instead of being the end, it is only a means to the end. Regeneration must be supplemented by sanctification, or otherwise the soul would remain at a standstill—if such a thing were possible. For it seems to be an unchanging law in every realm that where there is no progression, there must be retrogression. That spiritual growth which is so essential, lies in progressive sanctification, wherein all the faculties of the soul are more and more brought under the purifying and regulating influence of the principle of holiness which is implanted at the new birth, for thus alone do we “grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph 4:15).

2. *Justification and sanctification.* The relation between justification and sanctification is clearly revealed in Romans 3 to 8—that epistle being the great doctrinal treatise of the New Testament. In the fifth chapter we see the believing sinner declared righteous before God and at peace with Him, given an immutable standing in His favour, reconciled to Him, assured of his preservation, and so rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. Yet, great as are these blessings, something more is required by the quickened conscience, namely, deliverance from the power and pollution of inherited sin. Accordingly, this is dealt with at length in Romans 6, 7, 8, where various fundamental aspects of sanctification are treated of. First it is demonstrated that the believer has been *judicially* cleansed from sin and the curse of the law, and that, in order that he may be *practically* delivered from the dominion of sin, so that he may delight in and serve the law. Union with Christ not only involves identification with His death, but participation in His resurrection.

Yet though sanctification is discussed by the apostle *after* his exposition of justification, it is a serious error to conclude that there may be, and often is, a considerable interval of time between the two things, or that sanctification is a consequent of justification—still worse is the teaching of some that, having been justified we must now seek sanctification, without which we must certainly perish—thus making the security of justification to depend upon a holy walk. No, though the two truths are dealt with singly by the apostle, they are inseparable. Though they are to be contemplated alone, they must not be divided. Christ cannot be halved. In Him the believing sinner has both righteousness and holiness. Each department of the Gospel needs to be considered distinctly, but not pitted against each other. Let us not draw a false conclusion, then, because justification is treated of in Romans 3 to 5 and sanctification in 6 to 8—the one passage supplements the other—they are two halves of one whole.

The Christian's regeneration is not the cause of his justification, nor is justification the cause of his sanctification—for *Christ* is the cause of all three. Yet there is an *order* preserved between them, not an order of time, but of nature. First we are recovered to God's image, then to His favour, and then to His fellowship. So inseparable are justification and sanctification that sometimes the one is presented first and sometimes the other, see Romans 8:1 and 13, 1 John 1:9, then Micah 7:19, and 1 Corinthians 6:11. First, God quickens the dead soul—being made alive spiritually, he is now capacitated to act faith in Christ, by which he is (instrumentally) justified. In sanctification the Spirit carries on and perfects the work in regeneration, and that progressive work is accomplished under the new relation into which the believer is introduced by justification. Having been judicially reconciled to God, the way is now open for an experimental fellowship with Him, and that is maintained as the Spirit carries forward His work of sanctification.

“Though justification and sanctification are both of them blessings of grace, and though they are absolutely inseparable, yet they are so manifestly distinct, that there is in various respects a wide difference between them. Justification respects the person in a legal sense, is a single act of grace, and terminates in a relative change—that is, a freedom from punishment and a right to life. Sanctification regards him in an experimental sense, is a continued work of grace, and terminates in a real change, as to the quality both of habits and actions. The former is by a righteousness without us, the latter is by holiness wrought in us. Justification is by Christ as a priest, and has regard to the guilt of sin, sanctification is by Him as a king, and refers to its dominion. Justification is instantaneous and complete in all its real subjects, but sanctification is progressive” (Abraham Booth, 1813).

3. *Purification and sanctification.* These two things are not absolutely identical—though inseparable, they are yet distinguishable. We cannot do better than quote from George Smeaton (1814-1892), “The two words frequently occurring in the ritual of Israel ‘sanctify’ and ‘purify,’ are so closely allied in sense, that some regard them as synonymous. But a slight shade of distinction between the two may be discerned as follows. It is assumed that ever-recurring defilements, of a ceremonial kind, called for sacrifices of expiation, and the word ‘purify’ referred to these rites and sacrifices which removed the stains which excluded the worshipper from the privilege of approach to the sanctuary of God, and from fellowship with His people. The defilement which he contracted excluded him from access. But when this same Israelite was purged by sacrifice, he was readmitted to the full participation of the privilege. He was then *sanctified*, or *holy*. Thus the latter is the consequence of the former. We may affirm, then, that the two words in this reference to the old worship, are very closely allied, so much so, that the one involves the other. This will throw light upon the use of these two expressions in the New Testament—Ephesians 2:15-16, Hebrews 2:11, Titus 2:14. All these passages represent a man defiled by sin and excluded from God, but readmitted to access and fellowship, and so pronounced holy, as soon as the blood of sacrifice is applied to him.” Often the term “purge” or “purify” (especially in Hebrews) includes justification as well.

Objective holiness is the result of a *relationship* with God, He having set apart some thing or person for His own pleasure. But the setting apart of one *unto God*, necessarily involves the separating of it from all that is opposed to Him. All believers were set apart or consecrated to God by the sacrifice of Christ. Subjective holiness is the result of a *work* of God wrought in the soul, setting that person apart for His use. Thus “holiness” has two fundamental aspects. Growing out of the second is the soul's apprehension of God's claims upon him, and his presentation of himself unto God for His exclusive use (Rom 12:1, etc.), which is *practical* sanctification. The

supreme example of all three is found in Jesus Christ, the *Holy* One of God. Objectively, He was the One, “whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world” (Joh 10:36), subjectively, He received “the Spirit without measure” (Joh 3:34), and practically, He lived for the glory of God, being absolutely devoted to His will—only with thus tremendous difference—*He* needed no inward purification as we do.

To sum up. Holiness, then, is both a relationship and a moral quality. It has both a negative and a positive side—cleansing from impurity, adorning with the grace of the Spirit. Sanctification is, first, a position of honour to which God has appointed His people. Second, it is a state of purity which Christ has purchased for them. Third, it is an endowment given to them by the Holy Spirit. Fourth, it is a course of devoted conduct in keeping therewith. Fifth, it is a standard of moral perfection, at which they are ever to aim, 1 Peter 1:15. A “saint” is one who was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4), who has been cleansed from the guilt and pollution of sin by the blood of Christ (Heb 13:12), who has been consecrated to God by the indwelling Spirit (2Co 1:21-22), who has been made inwardly holy by the impartation of the principle of grace (Phi 1:6), and whose duty, privilege, and aim is to walk suitably thereto (Eph 4:1).

UNPARDONABLE SIN

We feel that a separate though brief word on this subject needs to be added to what we said in the Hebrews’ article (December, 1934 issue). The particular point we are here concerned with is to remove any possible misconception from the mind of the reader as to *why* there is no hope of forgiveness after a sinner has passed a certain bound, as to *why* certain sins are unpardonable. We say certain “sins,” for as pointed out in the Hebrews article the “unpardonable sin” is not some one specific offense, but varies considerably in different cases—blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is one form of it, total apostasy from the truth is another, suicide is yet another. The sin of Esau was quite different from that of Cain’s, and each of theirs from that of King Saul’s. This fact of itself surely intimates that *the unpardonableness* of any sin lies not in the character of the offence itself, but must be sought for elsewhere. In this conclusion we differ from other writers on the subject.

Negatively, the unpardonableness of any sin lies not in the enormity of it abstractly considered. By which we mean, it is not because the guilt of it is so great that the mercy of God cannot remit it. This should be obvious from a careful examination of those cases which God *has pardoned*. Take such an one as Manasseh. Peruse the dark record of his life, and bear in mind that he lived not amid the gross darkness of heathendom, but in the favoured land of Israel where God was known, that he was not a private person, but king in Jerusalem, where his evil example exerted an incalculable influence for harm, and that he was guilty of not only one or two isolated crimes, but persisted in a steady course of vile conduct for many years. Compare the recorded sins of Cain, Esau or Saul, with what is said of this monster of wickedness.

He did “that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made

groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and *dealt with a familiar spirit*, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. And he set a carved image, *the idol* which he had made, *in the house of God*....So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and *to do worse than the heathen*, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: *but they would not hearken*” (2Ch 33:2-7, 9-10).

Surely if any man had sinned away the day of grace, Manasseh must have done so. Surely if the intrinsic evil of any offences renders them unpardonable, those committed by this man must have been such. Surely if there are some crimes too high for the mercy of God to reach unto, it must have been those perpetrated by this Satan-controlled king. Surely if one may sink too low for the Holy Spirit to deliver him, it must have been this wretch, who so grievously provoked JEHOVAH. Ah, read the sequel, “And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him: and *he was entreated of him*, and heard his supplication” (2Ch 33:12-13).

If, then, the case of Manasseh demonstrates that the unpardonableness of sin lies not in the enormity of it abstractly considered, the history of Saul of Tarsus makes it equally evident that it is not because the crimson of certain crimes is of too deep a dye for the atoning blood of Christ to cleanse it. This man, who by the Spirit of inspiration, denominated himself “the chief of sinners” (see 1Ti 1:15), was present at the brutal stoning of the godly Stephen—his murderers laying down their clothes at Saul’s feet (Act 7:58). He would, therefore, hear not only that proto-martyr’s sermon, but also his dying prayer. That a deep impression must have been left on his mind we cannot doubt, but instead of yielding to the convictions made upon his conscience, he resisted them, as is evident from the Lord’s words, “It is hard for thee to *kick against the pricks*” (Act 9:5).

“And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him” (Act 8:2). But so far from “the chief of sinners” being melted by such a tragic spectacle, he added sin to sin, “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison” (Act 8:3). Nor did *that* content him, “And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem” (Act 9:1-2). What a vivid picture do those words “breathing out threatenings and slaughter” set before us—as of one possessed with an insatiable thirst for blood, like a ravenous beast seeking its innocent prey. Hear his own account at a later date. “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were *put to death*, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them *oft* in every synagogue, and *compelled them to blaspheme*; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities” (Act 26:9-11).

Now my reader compare these atrocious deeds with the recorded sins of Cain, Esau, or Saul king of Israel. What comparison is there between them? If *they* angered God so that He gave them up to final impenitency—which He did—suppose you not that Saul of Tarsus provoked Him yet

more sorely? Did, then, this “chief of sinners” commit offences which no atoning sacrifice could reach unto? Are there some sins too black, too heinous, too heaven-insulting, for the blood of Christ to cleanse? If there are, must they not have been perpetrated by Saul of Tarsus? In view of the fact that *he* found mercy of the Lord, that even *his* dreadful crimes received forgiveness, are we not obliged to conclude that the unpardonableness of any sin *lies not* in its being beyond the reach of propitiation?

We are therefore shut up to one alternative—the unpardonableness of any sin must be attributed to the *sovereign will* of the divine Judge. So He Himself affirms, “Therefore hath he mercy on whom *he will* have mercy, and whom *he will* he hardeneth” (Rom 9:18). The exercise of divine mercy, the provision of an atoning sacrifice, the application of its virtues to particular cases, lies entirely within the good pleasure of a sovereign God. This has not been recognised and acknowledged as it ought to have been. Even good men, well taught in the Scriptures, have been guilty of speaking about what God was *obliged* to do, and what He *could not* do. The fact that Scripture repeatedly affirms that “with God all things are possible” (Mat 19:26), should curb us from limiting the Holy One of Israel, even in our thoughts. Talk not of “impossibilities” in the presence of Him who is both omnipotent and omniscient.

There is only one thing which God “cannot” do (we stoop not to such absurdities as to whether He can make two and two equal five), and that is, *act contrary to* His own infinite perfections. And therein lies His ineffable uniqueness—God cannot lie, God cannot deny Himself, God cannot be tempted with evil. And why not? Because He, and He alone, is *immutable*. Apart from acting contrary to His own perfections, God can do anything and everything He pleases. He is under no restraint whatsoever. His actions are circumscribed or constrained neither by His “nature,” His “law,” or “the good of the universe,” but are regulated solely by His own imperial *will*. The only reason why there is a universe, is because God was pleased to will it into existence. The only reason there was a law given by God to His creatures, is because it so pleased Him to enact one. True, *having given* the law, God now deals with His creatures according to its requirements. But there could have been no reason outside Himself why, in the first instance, He purposed to place His creatures under law, and therefore His *will* must be the sole source of it.

What saith the Scriptures? This, that God “worketh *all* things after the counsel of his own WILL” (Eph 1:11). This foundational fact is exemplified and illustrated at every point. Why were the elect chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world and predestinated unto the adoption of children? Because such was “according to the good pleasure of his *will*” (Eph 1:5). Again, “What if God, *willing* to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” (Rom 9:22). Let our Sublapsarian friends note that the exercise of God’s wrath—His punitive justice—proceeds not from any moral “necessity,” but is ascribed purely to the divine *will*. Observe again those words “that *will* by no means clear the guilty” (Exo 34:7), and dare not to change them to “who *can* by no means clear the guilty.” Both justice and mercy are regulated solely by God’s *will*.

Again we ask, What saith the Scriptures? This, “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he *will* have mercy, and whom he *will* he hardeneth” (Rom 9:18). And again we affirm, divine mercy and divine justice are regulated solely by God’s imperial will. While it be true, blessedly true, that God cannot act *contrary to* His own perfections or attributes, yet it is equally true that God is under no restraint or constraint in the *exercise* of them. Patience and power are among the excellencies of God’s nature or being, but is there ever a time when He is *obliged* to *exercise* them? Perish the thought. The same is true of every other divine perfection—the *exercise* of them

is determined by nothing outside of God's own will. He is supreme sovereign, doing as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases—though never doing wrong. Nor are *we* in anywise competent to decide *what* is right and what is wrong in the conduct of the Most High. What He does *is right* simply because HE does it.

The absolute *sovereignty of God* supplies the key, and nothing else does, to the *unpardonableness* of any sin. God has sovereignly assigned the limits to which He will suffer each rebellious creature to go—and that limit varies considerably in different cases. He has sovereignly determined when any sinner shall be finally deserted by the Holy Spirit and given over to hopeless impenitency. He has sovereignly determined when sin becomes unpardonable in the life of each transgressor. It is *this* which makes the subject so unspeakably solemn, for men have no means of knowing whether or not their very next act may seal their doom irrevocably. When Christ said to the Pharisees, “Ye ‘*shall* die in your sins’” (Joh 8:21), they might be allowed to live on another fifty years, and hear the apostle Paul preach the Gospel, yet *their* day of grace was over. The sins of Manasseh and Paul were pardoned because God had *sovereignly decreed* they should be. The sins of the Pharisees were unpardonable because God had so *sovereignly ordained*. Beware then of trifling with God. Beware of continuing to provoke the Most High. He will not be mocked with impunity.

UNION AND COMMUNION

3. Mystical (Completed)

In the previous two articles on this subject we pointed out that the everlasting love of the Triune God is *the origin* of the church's union to Christ, and that election was the first and fundamental act of that love toward its members—that election giving them a super-creation subsistence in their glorious Head. In God's eternal thoughts and foreviews, the elect were conceived and contemplated in the divine mind as real entities in a state of pure creaturehood, above and beyond any consideration of the fall. Even then they were blessed “with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” and “accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:3,6). It is much to be deplored that this *original* dignity and loveliness of the church, as anointed, graced, and blest in Christ before the foundation of the world, has almost entirely disappeared from the theology even of the “orthodox” during the past century. A glorious relationship was established between Christ and the church in eternity past, which neither sin, Satan, nor death could sever. This alone provides the key to all of God's dealings with her in a time state.

We also pointed out that several things arise from and are branches of the everlasting love-union between Christ and the church. First and chief of these is the *marriage* between them, marvelously and blessedly shadowed out in connection with our first parents before the fall. We will now endeavour to point out that that marital union gave the church *communion with Christ* in His honours and interests. A wide field—hinted at in the Introductory article—is here set before us, which, because of our spiritual feebleness, we are not able to fully explore. Christ admits His

church into fellowship with Himself in His names, titles, relations, grace, fullness, salvation, blessings, and benefits. As God in choosing the church in Christ gave her a relation to His Person, giving her being in Him, so in accepting her in Him God gave Christ to her, so that she should live with Him, have communion with Him, and be like Him forever, the everlasting object of His unchanging love.

See how this is exemplified in the church's sharing of Christ's names and titles. As Christ is by His co-existence in the Godhead, the essential *Son of God*, so by predestination His brethren are the adopted *sons* of God, and by virtue of the marriage-union between Christ and them, they have His Father as their Father, and His God for their God (Joh 20:17). In Colossians 1:15 Christ, as God-man, is designated "*the firstborn* of every creature," while in Hebrews 12:23, His people are said to be the "church of the *firstborn*, which are written in heaven." Is Christ the "heir of all things" (Heb 1:2), so believers are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17). Is Christ denominated "the *stone* of Israel" (Gen 49:24), His people are also called "lively *stones*" (1Pe 2:5). Has Christ acquired a name which no one knoweth but himself (Rev 19:12), so also has the believer, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Rev 2:17). So precious is this aspect of the truth that we take leave to copy from our introductory article:

In Jeremiah 23:6 we read, "And this is his name whereby *he* shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS," and in Jeremiah 33:16 we are told, "And this is the name wherewith *she* shall be called, The LORD our righteousness"—this by virtue of her oneness with Him. So again in 1 Corinthians 12:12, the church is actually designated the "Christ," while in Galatians 3:16 and Colossians 1:24, the Head and His church forming one body are conjointly referred to as "Christ." Hence when Saul of Tarsus was assaulting the church, its Head protested, "Why persecutest thou *me*?" (Act 9:4). But what is yet more remarkable, we find the Lord Jesus given the name of His people—in Galatians 6:16 the church is denominated, "the *Israel* of God," while in Isaiah 49:3, we hear God saying *to the Mediator* "Thou art my servant, O *Israel*, in whom I will be glorified"!

In Colossians 3:12, Christians are exhorted to, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies." Each of those titles are given to the saints because of their *union with Christ*. They are "the elect of God" because *He* is God's "Elect" (Isa 42:1). They are "holy" because conjoined to God's "Holy One" (Psa 16:10). They are "beloved" because married to Him of whom the Father says, "This is my beloved Son" (Mat 3:17). Again, we are told that God "hath made *us kings and priests*" (Rev 1:6), which is only because we are *united to Him* who is "the king of kings" and the "great high priest." Is Christ called "the Sun of righteousness" (Mal 4:2)? so we are told, "Then shall the righteous shine forth *as the sun* in the kingdom of their Father" (Mat 13:43)! Does the Redeemer declare, "I am the rose of Sharon" (Song 2:1)? then He promises of the redeemed, "The desert [their fruitless state by nature] shall rejoice, and blossom *as the rose*" (Isa 35:1)—the only two occasions the "rose" is mentioned in Holy Writ!

Having sought to show that the church had a super-creation excellency, that before the foundation of the world its members were chosen in Christ, united to Christ, and blessed with all spiritual blessings, we must now point out that *sin has drawn a veil* which makes it very difficult for us to discern the *original* purity, dignity, and glory of Christ's mystical Body and Bride. It is much easier for us to apprehend our ruin and misery, and our redemption from it by the incarnation, obedience, and sacrifice of the Son of God, than it is to realize what the church was in the purpose, counsel, and mind of God before sin entered the world. It is only by receiving into the mind what is revealed thereon in the Scriptures of truth and by mixing faith therewith, that we

can in any measure obtain a conception of this transcendent and glorious mystery. It is only as the Holy Spirit is pleased to shine upon our understandings that we can see the light in His light.

As Eve was united to Adam in her virgin purity and became his wife *before* she ate of the forbidden fruit, so in the will and eternal counsels of God the church was wedded to Christ, over and above any foreviews of the fall. As Eve disobeyed the divine prohibition and fell from her pristine uprightness, and lost her original beauty, so the church shared in the defection of the whole human race when its federal head (Adam) apostatized from his Maker. In God's infinite prescience He foresaw the fall, having predetermined to permit it, and upon the foresight of that fall, He entered into an everlasting covenant with Christ, the spiritual Head of the elect, to raise them up from the ruins of the fall, by the incarnation and finished work of Christ. In this the illustrious wisdom of God was discovered and displayed in a way which would serve to be the marvel of time and the admiration of saints in heaven to all eternity.

In Adam, the church was brought into this world by creation pure, holy, and righteous. From that *creature* purity, holiness, and righteousness, she fell by Adam's first act of transgression, and became in her own nature and person, simply considered (that is, viewed apart from her eternal standing and state in Christ), impure, unholy, and unrighteous. Therefore do we read that the elect are "by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph 2:3)—that is, because of sin, their *nature* is repellent unto divine holiness, and falls under the condemning sentence of divine justice. It was to redeem or deliver the church from the state of sin and misery, and in order to raise her up again to the enjoyment of her original state and glory, to which she was decreed or predestined, that her Head and Husband, her Lord and Saviour, became actually incarnate, taking upon Him humanity, tabernacling personally in the same, and having imputed to Him the transgressions of His people, with all the guilt thereof.

Herein we may behold not only the fathomless love and amazing condescension of Christ, but also the wondrous wisdom of God, who designed that there should be *an accurate conformity* of the church *to* its Head, between the mystical wife and her celestial Husband. By their fall in Adam, a veil was drawn over the elect, so that they cannot in their ruined state be known by themselves or by others, to be the Lord's. In their natural condition there is nothing to distinguish the elect from the non-elect—their "life is *hid* with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). They are born into this world the same as others, with no halo of glory around their heads to mark them out as the high favourites of heaven, with nothing to show that they are the beloved Bride of Christ. Instead, according to human observation, there is everything to the contrary—they are shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, and live in a way of open revolt from the Lord.

In like manner, a veil was drawn over Christ when He appeared on the earth. As the God-man, He had a glory with the Father "before the world was" (Joh 17:5), and lived a life of blessedness inconceivable by us. Yet He laid aside that glory and took upon Him the form of a servant. When He was born into this world, it was not in a palace, but a cattle-shed. Ah, my reader, what was there about the Babe of Bethlehem, hanging upon His mother's breast, to indicate that He was the Maker of heaven and earth? Witness the vile attempt upon His life and the consequent flight into Egypt, and what was there to show that He had previously been worshipped by all the hosts of heaven? See Him later, in the lowly peasant-home of Joseph and Mary in Nazareth, and who among the companions of His boyhood dreamed He was the incarnate Son of God? View Him in early manhood, labouring at the carpenter's bench, and wherein did it appear that He was JEHOVAH's "Fellow"? Was not the Sun of Righteousness eclipsed for a season when He was in all things "made like unto his brethren" (Heb 2:17)!

When the Lord of glory became incarnate, He came under a cloud, if we may so express it. He suspended the shinings forth of His essential glory, due to the dignity of His Person, and appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh, coming not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give His life a ransom for many, that He might complete the work of redemption by which He was to redeem His spouse, and wash away her deformity and stains. In this lay the depths of Christ's humiliation—that the Father's co-equal should make Himself “of no reputation” (Phi 2:7), be made in the likeness of men, be made “under the law,” and so humble Himself as to be “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi 2:8). In Him “dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col 2:9), but for a season—except when its beams darted forth on the Mount of Transfiguration—the breakings forth thereof were withheld. Incomprehensible grace! such as will fill the saints in heaven with astonishment through the ages of eternity. Alas, that our hearts are so feebly moved by it now.

Herein, then, we may perceive *the conformity* between Christ and the church—each had a celestial glory before the foundation of the world—a veil was cast over that glory when each appeared on the earth. When the elect were brought forth into creature-existence and open being (having subsisted previously in the secret counsels of God), they were pure, holy, righteous, perfect in their natural head. Yet, being in Adam, not only by seminal union but by federal representation, when he broke the Covenant of Works and fell from God, the elect also fell in and with him into a state of sin, misery, and alienation from the Lord. Therefore the spouse of Christ became wholly unlike herself and unlike her divine and heavenly Bridegroom, so that she became in her natural head, and inherently in herself, altogether unholy and unrighteous, becoming sinful and impure, having undergone an eclipse of her glory, suffering the loss of the moral image of God, in which she was created—all of which is to be justly ascribed to the mutability of the creature's will—proving that no creature has whereof to glory before God.

Estranged as the church became in her affections and obedience to her Lord, by reason of her sunken and degraded condition through the fall, yet the union existing between her and her celestial Husband remained the same. The very fall of the whole human race in Adam, by virtue of the mutability of the creature, only made more evident the absolute necessity of *Christ's* Headship, to the end that *by Him* the elect were so united to God by everlasting bonds as to be beyond the possibility of hazard or miscarriage or by finally falling from Him—having been blessed with super-creation grace, and that, that Christ might be the more honoured and magnified. It is His sole prerogative, as God-man, to have life *in Himself*, “For as the Father [the self-existent One] hath life in himself; so hath he *given* to the Son [as Mediator] to have life in himself” (Joh 5:26). No creature, either angel or man, “anointed cherub” or Adam when made “very good,” is able to stand one moment of himself. Those who have an eternal standing before God owe it alone to Christ.

The fall of the elect of mankind (in the decree of JEHOVAH) was *subordinated to the glory of Christ*, it being thereby contrived to show forth and exalt His wondrous perfections. To mention here only one—consider Christ's *love for the church*. Christ had a view of the church in the glass of God's decrees before the world began. He saw her as graced in Himself, and destined to eternal glory. He saw her as presented to Himself by the Father as His love gift. This drew out His heart to her. He saw her as “the king's daughter is all glorious within” (Psa 45:13). She was given to Him. They were made one by marriage-union in the everlasting settlements of heaven. The Father blest her in Christ with all spiritual blessings. Hear Him speak as God-man before time began, “Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always

before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and *my delights were with the sons of men*" (Pro 8:30-31).

Certainly Christ's "delights" were *not* with "the sons of men" regarded as *fallen* creatures. No, He was there contemplating them in their supralapsarian state, in their original purity and beauty. Oh how vastly different must the church have next appeared in His eyes, when He viewed her as fallen, depraved, and filthy! Yet so knit was His heart to her, such was His affection for her, that it neither destroyed nor abated the same by the foreviews He took of her apostasy in Adam. Yea, as He viewed the members of His body in their debased and vile condition, His heart was drawn out in pity and compassion toward them. Therefore was He willing to be their Surety, assume all their liabilities, fully discharge their debts, and make a complete atonement for them. Their fall in Adam occasioned an opportunity for their eternal Lover to display the changelessness of His infinite love for and to them.

"It is among the mysteries of grace, such as belong to the deep things of God, that the elect, though they fell from God by reason of sin, through the fall of the first man, by means of their union to him and interest in him—from whence they received and partook of the same equal corruption and total ruin of their natures by the infection of sin, with the rest of mankind—having in themselves the same fountain and principle of sin which the very reprobate hath. *Yet they fell not from* the grace of personal election, nor from the everlasting favour of God, nor did they lose their interest in their heavenly Father's love thereby.

"Their union and relation to the person of Christ, their eternal Head, and interest in Him, were not dissolved nor impaired hereby, nor did they cease to be the beloved of Immanuel's soul. Though they, by the fall, lost all that was given them, in Adam as their nature-head, and nature-root, yet, the grace of election still continued the same as ever, and Jesus Christ, their ever-living Head, in whom is their spiritual, everlasting life, happiness, and glory, was Alpha and Omega to them—their beginning, their eternal spring, who, as such, broke forth towards them in their fallen state, and still continues His kindness in dispensing all grace to them, to whom it will be continued with all its glorious fruits and blessings by Him to eternity" (S. E. Pierce, 1746-1829).

Christ was first the "Head" and then the "Saviour" of the church (Eph 5:23). All is eternally secured in the Person of the Lord Jesus. When God permitted the fall of all mankind in Adam, the elect fell in him, yet they fell not from the heart and arms of Christ. They lost in Adam the creature blessings of purity, holiness, and righteousness, which as their natural head he should have conveyed to them, and received from him instead an impure and sinful nature, the fruits of which are as justly deserving of divine wrath as are the sins of the non-elect. In that state they are, in themselves, without hope and help. This it is which made way for their need of redemption, to be delivered out of it, and which provided an occasion for their Husband to become their Redeemer, which He engaged to be before the foundation of the world. "On his head were *many* crowns" (Rev 19:12), each representing a separate and distinctive glory, which it is the joy of saints to separately contemplate.

"The elect lost their all that was given unto them and bestowed upon them in their nature-head. But they lost not their interest in the grace of election in the Person of Christ, in the supernatural spiritual blessings which had been bestowed upon them in Christ their eternal Head. And this secured them from everlasting ruin and misery. The love of God to His elect in Christ was not weakened, nor the union-knot between Christ and His church loosed, by all which befell them and came upon them by the fall. Christ being the Head of the church, the life, light, grace, holiness, righteousness, glory, and blessings in Christ, could not undergo any hazard or damage by the fall.

“The Body being defiled with sin, the glorious Head and Husband who had loved His spouse as Himself, having viewed her as the object of His Father’s complacency and delight, descended from heaven, by His mysterious incarnation, to fulfill His covenant stipulations on her behalf, and act a part of Redeemer and Saviour” (From “Christ’s love to His Church” by S. E. Pierce, to whom we gladly own our indebtedness for much in this article).

December

THE HOLY SPIRIT

31. The Spirit Leading (Part 2)

It is the office of JEHOVAH the Spirit in the covenant of redemption, after He has called the elect out of the world, to place Himself at their head and undertake their future guidance. He knows the only path which leads to heaven. He knows the difficulties and dangers which beset us, the intricate maze of life's journey, the numerous false routes by which Satan deceives souls, and the proneness of the human heart to follow that which is evil, and therefore does He, in His infinite grace, take charge of those who are "strangers and pilgrims" in this scene, and conduct them safely to the Celestial Country. O what praise is due unto this heavenly guide! How gladly and thankfully should we submit ourselves unto His directions! How hopeless would be our case without Him! With what alacrity should we follow His motions and directions!

As we have already pointed out, the blessed Spirit of God "leads" both objectively and subjectively—by pointing us to the directive precepts of the Word, that our actions may be regulated thereby, and by secret impulses from within the soul, impressing upon us the course we should follow—the evils to be avoided, the duties to be performed. The Spirit acts upon His own life in the renewed soul. He works in the Christian a right disposition of heart relating to truth and duty. He maintains in the believer a right disposition of mind, preparing and disposing him to attend unto the revealed will of God. He speaks effectually to the conscience, enlightens the understanding, regulates the desires, and orders the conduct of those who submit themselves unto His holy suggestions and overtures. To be "led by the Spirit of God" (Rom 8:14). is to be under His guidance and government.

The wayward child and the self-willed youth is guided by his own unsanctified and unsubdued spirit. The man of the world is controlled by "the spirit of the world." The wicked are governed by Satan "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph 2:2). But the Christian is to yield himself unto "the still small voice" of the Holy Spirit. Yet a word of caution is needed at this point, for in our day there are many fanatics and impious people who do that which is grossly dishonouring to God under the plea that they were "prompted by the Spirit" so to act. To be "led by the Spirit of God" (Rom 8:14) does not mean being influenced by unaccountable suggestions and uncontrollable impulses which result in conduct displeasing to

God, and often injurious to ourselves and others. No, indeed—not so does the Spirit of God “lead” any one.

There is a safe and sure criterion by which the Christian may gauge his inward impulses and ascertain whether they proceed from his own restless spirit, an evil spirit, or the Spirit of God. That criterion is the written Word of God, and *by it* all must be measured. The Holy Spirit never prompts any one to act contrary to the Scriptures. How could He, when He is the Author of them! *His* promptings are always unto obedience to the precepts of Holy Writ. Therefore, when a man who has not been distinctly called, separated, and qualified by God to be a minister of His Word, undertakes to “preach,” no matter how strong the impulse, it proceeds not from the Holy Spirit. When a woman “feels led” to pray in public where men are present, she is moved by “another spirit” (2Co 11:4), or if one claimed “guidance” in assuming an unequal yoke by marrying an unbeliever, 2 Corinthians 6:14 would prove conclusively that it was *not* the “guidance” of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit fulfills His office of Guide by three distinct operations. First, He communicates life and grace, a new “nature”; second, He stirs that life unto action, and gives “more grace”; third, He directs the action into performance of duty. Life, motion, and conduct are inseparable in nature and grace alike. First, the Holy Spirit quickens us into newness of life, infusing gracious habits into the soul. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you” (Eze 36:26). Second, He moves upon the soul and assists the new nature to act according to its own gracious habits and principles. He “worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13). Third, He *directs* our actions by enlightening our understandings, guiding our inclinations, and moving our wills to do that which is pleasing unto God. It is the last two we are now considering.

Divine direction is *promised* the saints, “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way” (Psa 25:9), and this not only by general directions, but by particular excitations. “I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go” (Isa 48:17). Divine guidance is *desired* by the saints as a great and necessary blessing, “Show me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day” (Psa 25:4-5). Mark the earnestness of this prayer, “show me, teach me, lead me.” Note the argument, “Thou art the God of my salvation,” and as such, pledged to undertake for me. Observe the importunity, “on thee do I wait all the day,” as if he would not be left for a moment to his own poor wisdom and power. Even the “new nature” is utterly dependent upon the Holy Spirit.

Though the children of God are “light in the Lord” (Eph 5:8) and have a general understanding of the way of godliness, yet much ignorance and darkness still remains in them, and therefore in order to a steady and constant course of obedience they need to be guided by the Holy Spirit, so that their light may be both directive and persuasive. Though Christians have a general understanding of their duty, yet to perform it in particular cases much grace from God is needed by them. If left to themselves, their own corruptions would blind and govern them, and therefore do they pray, “Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me” (Psa 119:133). The way to heaven is a “narrow” one, hard to find and harder still to be kept, except God teach us *daily* by His Spirit. Wisdom from on high is continually needed to know how to apply the rules of Scripture to all the varied details of our lives. The Holy Spirit is the only fountain of holiness, and to Him we must constantly turn for directions.

But something more than knowledge is needed by us—the Spirit must persuade and incline our hearts, and move our wills. How strong are our inclinations to sin, how easily fleshly

impulses override our better judgment, how weak we are before temptation! We know what *we should* do, but are carried away by corrupt affections to the contrary. It is at *this* point the Holy Spirit governs from within. First, by His restraining motions, bidding us to avoid and mortify sin. Second, by His quickening motions, inviting us to the pursuit of holiness. And just so far as we *yield* to His “strivings” are we “*led* by the Spirit of God.” As moral agents we are responsible to co-operate with the Spirit and respond to His gentle sway over us. Alas, we so often fail to do so. But though He suffers this up to a certain point—for our humbling—yet by His invincible power He prevents our making shipwreck of the faith, and after many chastenings, conducts us safely to Glory.

In conclusion we will seek to supply answer to the following question, *How* may Christians know whether they be among those who are “led by the Spirit of God?” In general, those who are directed by this divine Guide are moved to examine their hearts and take frequent notice of their ways, to mourn over their carnality and perverseness, to confess their sins, to earnestly seek grace to enable them to be obedient. They are moved to search the Scriptures daily to ascertain the things which God has prohibited and the things which He enjoins. They are moved to an increasing conformity to God’s holy law, and an increasing enablement to meet its requirements is wrought in them by the Spirit blessing to them the means of grace. But to be more specific.

First, just so far as we are governed by the Spirit of God are we *led from ourselves*—from confidence in our own wisdom, from dependence upon our own strength, and from trust in our own righteousness. We are led from self-will, self-pleasing, self-aggrandizement. The Spirit conducts away from self unto God. Yet let it be pointed out that this weaning us from ourselves is not accomplished in a moment, but is a perpetual and progressive thing. Alas, God has at best but a portion of our affections. It is true there are moments when we sincerely and ardently desire to be fully and unreservedly surrendered to Him, but the ensnaring power of some rival object soon discovers how partial and imperfect our surrender has been.

Second, just so far as we are governed by the Spirit of God are we *brought to occupation with Christ*. To whom else, in our deep need, can we go? Who so well-suited to our misery and poverty? Having severed us in some degree from ourselves, the Spirit brings us into a closer realisation of our union with the Saviour. Are we conscious of our filth and guilt?—the Spirit leads to the blood of Christ. Are we sorely tried and oppressed?—the Spirit leads unto Him who is able to succour the tempted. Are we mourning our emptiness and barrenness?—the Spirit leads to the One in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. It is the special office of the Spirit to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us.

Third, just so far as we are governed by the Spirit of God are we *conducted along the highway of holiness*. The Spirit leads the Christian away from the vanities of the world, to the satisfying delight which is to be found in the Lord. He turns us from the husks which the swine feed upon unto spiritual realities, drawing our affections unto things above. He moves us to seek after more intimate and more constant communion with God, which can only be obtained by separation from that which He abhors. His aim is to conform us more and more to the image of Christ. Finally, He will conduct us to heaven, for of it the Spirit is both the pledge and the earnest.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

96. A Warning against Apostasy (12:16-17)

The verses which we are now to consider are among the most solemn to be found in the Word of God. They present a most pointed warning against apostasy. They bring before us what is to all tender consciences a terror-provoking subject, namely, *sin for which there is no forgiveness*. It is indeed to be deplored that recent writers have dealt with it like they do with most matters—very superficially or quite erroneously. Either they have limited themselves unto two or three passages, ignoring many others directly relating to the theme, or they have wrongly affirmed that no one can commit “the unpardonable sin” during this present dispensation. On the other hand, most of the old writers seem to have devoted their efforts to re-assuring weak and fearing Christians that *they* had not committed this awful offence, rather than in making any attempt to define the character of the transgression itself.

The subject is admittedly a difficult one, and we believe God has permitted a measure of obscurity to rest upon it, and that in order to deter men from rashly venturing too near the brink of this terrible precipice. It therefore becomes us to approach it in fear and trembling, with modesty and humility, seeking grace and wisdom from on high to deal with it in a faithful, clear, and helpful manner. For this is no easy thing, if we are to avoid error and preserve the balance of truth. Two extremes have to be guarded against—a blunting of its fearful point so that the wicked would be encouraged to continue trifling with God and sporting with their eternal destiny, or failing to write with sufficient definiteness so that awakened and contrite sinners would not be delivered from sinking into despair beneath Satan’s lying misuse of it against them.

Before turning to the positive side it seems necessary to briefly point out wherein they seriously err, who insist that no one ever sins beyond the possibility of divine pardon during this present era of grace. There are quite a number of passages in the New Testament epistles which clearly show the contrary. In 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12, we read, “For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” In Hebrews 6:4, 6, it is said of some, “It is impossible...to renew them again unto repentance.” In Hebrews 10:26-27 it is said, “For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” While in 1 John 5:16, we are expressly informed, “There is a sin unto death.” In our judgment each of these passages refers to a class of offenders who have so grievously provoked God that their doom is irrevocably sealed while they are yet here upon earth.

Against the testimony of the above Scriptures an appeal has often been made to, “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from *all* sin” (1Jo 1:7). But the Word of God does not contradict itself, and it is an evil practice which cannot be too strongly condemned to pit one passage against another. Any attempt to neutralize one text by another is handling the truth deceitfully. With regard to 1 John 1:7, three things need to be pointed out. First, the precious blood of Christ was never designed to cleanse from every sin—was it designed to cleanse Judas from his betrayal of the Saviour! Its application is no wider than its impetration—its virtue does not extend beyond *the*

purpose for which it was shed. Second, it does not say, “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin,” instead, it is strictly qualified—“cleanseth *us* from all sin,” that is, God’s own people. It is dishonest to appropriate these words to unbelievers. Third, the promise is further limited in the preceding clause, “But *if* we walk in the light, as he is in the light” (1Jo 1:7).

Nor do we at all agree with those writers who, while allowing that “the unpardonable sin” may be committed during this present dispensation, yet affirm it is a very rare occurrence, a most exceptional thing, of which only one or two isolated cases may be found. On the contrary, we believe that the Scriptures themselves clearly intimate that *many* have been guilty of sins for which there was no forgiveness either in this world or the world to come. We say “sins,” for a careful and prolonged study of the subject has convinced us that “the unpardonable sin” is *not* one particular act of committing some specific offence, like maliciously ascribing to Satan the works of the Holy Spirit (which, no doubt, is one form of it), but that it varies considerably in different cases. Both of these conclusions of the present writer will receive illustration and confirmation in what follows.

The first human being who was guilty of unpardonable sin was Cain. He was a professor or outward worshipper of God, but because Abel’s offering was accepted and his own rejected, he waxed angry. The Lord condescended to expostulate with him, and went so far as to assure him that if he did well he should not lose his pre-eminence as the firstborn. But so far from doing well, he persisted in wickedness, and his enmity against God was evidenced by his hatred of His child, ending in the murder of him. Whereupon the Lord said unto him, “The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou *cursed* from the earth....a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth” (Gen 4:10-12). To which Cain answered, “Mine iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven” (Gen 4:13 margin).

The record of Genesis 6 makes it clear that a whole generation of the world’s inhabitants had transgressed beyond all hope of remedy or forgiveness. “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth...And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth” (Gen 6:5-7), which was duly accomplished by the flood. The whole of mankind in the days of Nimrod sinned so grievously (Rom 1:21-23) that “God gave them up” (Rom 1:24-26), for His Spirit “will not always strive with man” (Gen 6:3).

A whole generation of the Hebrews were also guilty of “the great transgression.” In Exodus 23:20-21, we read, “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will *not pardon* your transgressions: for my name is in him.” Alas they heeded not this solemn word, “Our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt” (Act 7:39). Consequently the Lord said, “Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest” (Heb 3:10-11).

It seems evident to the writer that there have been some in every age who have gone beyond the bounds of divine mercy. Passing by such individual cases as Pharaoh, Balaam, and Saul, we would observe that the Pharisees of Christ’s day—the bulk of them at least—were guilty of sin for which there was no forgiveness. It is clear from John 3:2, they recognised Him as “a teacher come from God” and from John 11:47 that they could not gainsay His miracles. Nay more, it is plain from Mark 12:7 that they *knew* the righteousness of His claims, “But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him.” Thus they acted with their eyes

wide open, sinning against their own confession, against light and knowledge, against the strong conviction His miracles produced, and against His holy life spread before them. Therefore did Christ say to them, “I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall *die in your sins*: whither I go, ye cannot come” (Joh 8:21).

“Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression” (Psa 19:13). Here the unpardonable sin is denominated “the great transgression.” It is called such because this is what a bold and audacious defiance of God necessarily culminates in, unless sovereign grace intervenes. “Presumptuous” sins, are committed by those who, while professing God’s name and avowing a claim upon His mercy, persist in a known course contrary to His word. Such rebels, presuming upon God’s patience and goodness, are mocked by Him, being suffered to go beyond the bounds of His forgiveness. It is also called “blasphemy against the Holy Ghost” (Mat 12:31), “resisting the Holy Ghost” (Act 7:51), “doing despite unto the Spirit of grace” (Heb 10:29). The “new testament” or “covenant” is “the ministration of the Spirit” (2Co 3:8), which far exceeds in glory the legal dispensation. To be guilty of the great transgression is to sin willfully against and to speak maliciously of the Holy Spirit, who is revealed and promised in the Gospel. It is a quenching of His convictions, resisting His enlightenment, defying His authority.

It is called “a sin unto death” (1Jo 5:16) because its perpetrator is now out of reach of the promise of eternal life, having made the Gospel, which is a proclamation of divine grace unto those who will submit themselves to its requirements, a “savour of death unto death” to himself. He was convicted by it that he was legally dead, and because of his impenitence, unbelief, hard-heartedness, and determination to go on having *his own* way, he is left spiritually dead. Unto others God grants “repentance unto life” (Act 11:18), but when once “sin unto death” has been committed, it is “impossible...to renew them again unto repentance” (Heb 6:4-6). By his opposition to the Gospel and refusal to receive Christ’s “yoke,” the guilty rebel has trampled underfoot the blood of God’s Son, and as *that* alone can procure forgiveness, there is now no pardon available for him.

The very fact that it is designated “*a* sin unto death” (1Jo 5:16) rather than “*the* sin unto death” confirms what we said in a previous paragraph, namely that it is not some specific offence but rather that the particular form it takes varies in different cases. And herein we may perceive how the *sovereignty* of God is exercised in connection therewith. God allows some to go to greater lengths of wickedness than others. Some evil-doers He cuts off in youth, while other workers of iniquity are permitted to live unto old age. Against some He is more quickly and more strongly provoked than others. Some souls He abandons to themselves more readily than He does others. It is *this* which renders the subject so unspeakably solemn. No man has any means of knowing how soon *he may cross the line which marks the limits of God’s forbearance with him*. To trifle with God is hazardous to the last degree.

That the sovereignty of God is exercised in this matter appears very clearly from the cases of those whom He is pleased to save. What fearful crimes Manasseh was guilty of before divine grace renewed him! What dreadful sins Saul of Tarsus committed ere the Lord Jesus apprehended him! Let the writer and the reader review their own unregenerate days. How dreadfully did we provoke the Majesty on High. How long did we persevere in a course of open rebellion—against what restraints, privileges, light and knowledge, warnings and entreaties, did we act! How many of the godless companions of our youth were cut off in their guilt, while we were spared. Was it because *our* sins were less crimson? No, indeed, so far as we can perceive, our sins were of a

deeper dye than theirs. Then why did God save us? and why were they sent to hell? “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Mat 11:26) *must* be the answer.

A sovereign God has drawn the line in every life which marks the parting of the ways. When that line is reached by the individual, God does one of two things with him—either He performs a miracle of grace so that he becomes “a new creature in Christ Jesus,” or henceforth that individual is *abandoned* by Him, given up to hardness of heart and final impenitency—and *which* it is, depends entirely upon His own imperial pleasure. And none can tell how near he may be to that line, for some reach it much earlier in life than others—according as God sovereignly decreed. Therefore it is the part of wisdom for each sinner to promptly heed that word, “Seek ye the LORD *while he may be found*” (Isa 55:6), which plainly denotes that soon it may be too late—as Proverbs 1:28-31 and Matthew 25:8-12 plainly show.

This solemn distinction which God makes between one case and another was strikingly shadowed out under the law. We refer to a remarkable detail concerning the *jubilee* year, a detail which seems to have escaped the notice of those who have preached and written on the subject. Those in Israel who, through poverty, had sold their possessions, had them restored at the year of jubilee, see Leviticus 25:25-28. That was a wondrous and beautiful figure of the free grace of God towards His people in Christ, by which, and not because of anything of their own, they are restored to the divine favour and given a title to the heavenly inheritance. But in connection therewith there was *an exception*, designed by God, we doubt not, to adumbrate that which we are here treating upon. That exception we will briefly notice.

“If a man sell a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; within a full year may he redeem it. And if it be not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city shall be established for ever to him that bought it throughout his generations: *it shall not go out in the jubilee*” (Lev 25:29-30). We cannot now attempt an exposition of this interesting passage or dwell upon its leading features. No part of the “land” could be sold outright (see Lev 25:23), for that was the free gift of *God’s* bounty—there can be no failure in divine grace, but houses in the city were the result of *their* labour—human responsibility being in view. If the house was sold and not repurchased within a year, it passed *beyond the reach of redemption*, its forfeiture being irrevocable and irrecoverable! Symbolically, the “house” spoke of security under the divine covenant, for in all generations God in covenant has been the “dwelling place” of His people (Psa 90:1). To part with his house typified a professor selling himself to work presumptuous wickedness (1Ki 21:20), and so selling his soul, his God, his all. To such an one the Spirit will never “proclaim liberty” of the jubilee, for Satan holds him fast, and divine justice forbids his discharge—when God “shutteth up a man, there can be *no opening*” (Job 12:14).

In view of all that has been before us, how softly we should tread, how careful we should be of not provoking the Holy One! How earnestly we should pray to be kept back from “presumptuous sins!” How diligently should the young improve their privileges. How they should heed that warning, “He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that *without remedy*” (Pro 29:1)! How careful we should be against adding sin to sin, lest we provoke God to leave us unto final impenitency. Our only safeguard is to heed the voice of the Lord *without delay*, lest He “sware in his wrath” that *we* “should not enter into his rest!” How we need to beg God to write those words upon our hearts, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12), for there is no hope whatever for the apostate.

A word now unto those with tender consciences that fear *they* may have committed sin for which there is no forgiveness. The trembling and contrite sinner is the farthest from it. There is not one instance recorded in Scripture where any one who was guilty of “the great transgression” and had been given up by God to inevitable destruction, ever repented of his sins, or sought God’s mercy in Christ. Instead, they all continued obstinate and defiant, the implacable enemies of Christ and His ways unto the end. While there be in the heart any sincere valuing of God’s approbation, any real sense of His holiness which deters from trifling with Him, any genuine purpose to turn unto Him and submit to His requirements, any true fearing of His wrath, *that* soul *has not* been abandoned by Him. If you have a deep desire to obtain an interest in Christ, or become a better Christian, if you are deeply troubled over sin, if your heart grieves over its hardness, if you yearn and pray for more tenderness of conscience, more yieldedness of will, more love and obedience to Christ, then you have *no cause* to suspect you have committed the “unpardonable sin.”

“Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears” (Heb 12:16-17). These verses continue what was before us in the preceding one and complete the series of exhortations begun in verse 12. As we pointed out at the close of last month’s article, the ultimate reference in verse 15 is first a warning against that which if disregarded would end in apostasy, and second, a caution against suffering one who evidences the symptoms of an apostate to remain in the assembly—its language being an allusion unto Deuteronomy 29:18. That warning and caution is now exemplified by citing the fearful example of Esau, who, though born among the covenant people and receiving (we doubt not) a pious upbringing, committed a sin for which there was no forgiveness, and became an apostate.

First of all, two particular sins are here warned against—“fornication” and “profanity,” each of which is “a root of bitterness,” which if permitted to “spring up” will cause “trouble” to the guilty one and “defile many” with whom he is associated. Both “fornication” and “profanity” are opposed unto the *holiness* exhorted unto in verse 14. Fornication is a sin against the second table of the law, and profanity a breach of its first table. As in verse 14, the apostle had enjoined the Hebrews to “follow peace” which has respect to *man* and “holiness” which regards our relation to *God*, so now he forbids two sins, the first of which would be committed against man, the second against God. The two sins go together, for where a course of moral uncleanness is followed, profanity almost always accompanies it. And on the other hand, profane persons habitually think lightly of immorality. The forsaking of either sin by sincere repentance is exceedingly rare.

The term “profane” has a more specific meaning and wider application than it is commonly accorded in our speech today. “Holy things are said to be profaned when men take off the veneration that is due unto them and expose them to common use or contempt. To ‘profane’ is to violate, to corrupt, to prostitute to common use things sacred, either in their nature or by divine institution. A profane person is one that despiseth, sets light by, or condemneth sacred things. Such as mock at religion, or who lightly regard its promises and threatenings—who despise or neglect its worship, who speak irreverently of its concerns, we call profane persons, and such they are, and such the world is filled with at this day. This profaneness is the last step of entrance into final apostasy. When men, from professors of religion, become despisers of and scoffers at it, their state is dangerous, if not irrevocable” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

An instance of this evil is given in Esau, and a fearfully solemn case his is, one which should warn us not to put our trust in *external* privileges. “He was the firstborn of Isaac, circumcised

according to the law of that ordinance, and partaker of all the worship of God in that holy family, yet an outcast from the covenant of grace and the promise thereof” (Owen). The particular offence with which he is here charged is that “for one morsel of meat” he “sold his birthright.” Now the birthright or privilege of the firstborn carried with it the following things—the special blessing of his father, a double portion of his goods, dominion over his brethren, and priestly functions (Num 3:41) when the father was absent from home. The “birthright” was regarded as a very special thing, being typical of the primogeniture of Christ, of the adoption of saints, and of a title to the heavenly inheritance. All of this Esau despised.

The historical account of Esau’s sin is recorded in the closing verses of Genesis 25. The heinousness of it is exhibited in our text. Esau preferred the gratification of the flesh rather than the blessing of God. He relinquished all claims to the privileges contained in and annexed to his being the firstborn, for a trifling and temporary enjoyment of the body. Alas, how many there are like him in the world today. What vast numbers prefer carnal pleasures to spiritual joys, temporal advantages to eternal riches, physical gratification to the soul’s salvation. By calling Esau “profane,” the Holy Spirit reveals that he placed no higher value upon sacred things than he did upon those which were common. That which he received as the price of his wickedness is termed “meat,” to indicate that satisfying of the flesh was his motive, and a “morsel,” to emphasize the paltriness of his choice.

The enormity of the sin of “profanity” is determined by the sacredness of the objects to which it is opposed. Let the reader carefully compare Leviticus 18:21; 21:9; Nehemiah 13:17; Ezekiel 22:26. The “profane” are guilty of trampling God’s pearls beneath their feet. To spurn the Scriptures, to desecrate the Sabbath, to revile God’s servants, to despise or ridicule the Gospel, to mock at the future state, are all so many forms of this unspeakable wickedness. As helps against it we would mention the need of being well-instructed from the Word, so that we may know *what are* “holy” things. To bring our hearts to realize the superlative excellency of holiness. To meditate seriously and frequently upon God’s indignation against those who slight what He highly esteems.

“For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears” (Heb 12:17). This takes us back to the closing section of Genesis 27, where we learn the consequences which his sin entailed. Isaac had pronounced the patriarchal benediction upon Jacob, which, when his brother learned thereof deeply agitated him, “He cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry” (Gen 27:34). It was then that his “tears” were shed, but they proceeded not from anguish of heart because he had sinned so grievously against God, rather did they flow from a sense of self-pity—they expressed his chagrin for the consequences which his *folly* had produced. Similar are the lamentations of probably ninety-nine out of a hundred so called “deathbed repentances.” And such will be the “weeping and wailing” of those in hell—not because *God* was so slighted and wronged by them, but because of the eternal suffering which their sins have justly resulted in.

Esau’s “tears” were of no avail, “he was rejected.” His appeal *came too late*: Isaac had already bestowed the blessing upon Jacob. It was like an Israelite seeking to recover his property eighteen months after he had sold it, see again Leviticus 25:30. Isaac, who was a prophet of God, His mouthpiece, refused to be moved by Esau’s bitter wailing. In like manner, the Lord says of those who have sinned away the day of grace, “Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me” (Pro 1:28), and “Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, *yet will I not hear them*” (Eze 8:18). O what point that gives to the call, “Seek ye the

LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him *while he is near*” (Isa 55:6). Reader, if you have not yet genuinely responded to that call, do so at once. Delay is fraught with the utmost peril to your soul.

The apostle was here addressing professing Christians, and the fearful case of Esau is set before them (and *us!*) as a warning against departing from the narrow way, of exchanging the high privileges of the faithful for the temporary advantages of a faithless world. The doom of the apostate is irretrievable. To lightly esteem, and then despise, sacred things, will be followed “afterward” by bitter regret and unavailing anguish. To reject the terms of the Gospel in order to gratify the lusts of the flesh for a brief season, and then suffer forever and ever in the lake of fire, is the height of madness. No excuse could palliate Esau’s profanity, and nothing can extenuate the wickedness of him who prefers the drudgery of Satan to the freedom there is in Christ. Esau’s rejection by Isaac was the evidence of his reprobation by God. May it please the Lord to use this article to *search the heart* of every reader.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

48. His Kindness to Mephibosheth

Behind the noble magnanimity exercised by David toward the last descendant of his arch-enemy Saul, we may perceive the shining forth of the glory of God’s grace unto His fallen and sinful people. Alas, how feeble are our apprehensions of this wonderful attribute of God, how altogether inadequate our best efforts to set forth its excellency! Those who are the most indebted to the divine favour, are most conscious of the poverty of their language to express the gratitude and praise, the admiration and adoration which is due from them. When the poor outcast and crippled son of Jonathan was brought from Lo-debar to Jerusalem, and was received not only with kindness, but accorded a place in the king’s family and given a seat at David’s own table, he must have found words to utterly fail him. And when a slave of sin and captive of Satan is not only set free by Christ but made a joint-heir with Him, he is lost in wonderment. Eternity will be required to render unto God that worship to which He is entitled.

Grace is the opposite of justice. Justice gives to each his exact due. It shows no favour and knows no mercy. It gives impartially to all the precise wages which they have earned. But grace is free favour, unwarranted and unmerited by the recipients of it. Grace is the very last thing to which rebellious sinners are entitled—to talk of *deserving* “grace” is a contradiction in terms. Grace is purely a matter of charity, exercised sovereignly and spontaneously, attracted by nothing praiseworthy in its object. Divine grace is the free favour of God in the bestowment of mercies and blessings upon those who have no good *in* them, and concerning whom no compensation is demanded *from* them. Nay more—divine grace is not only shown to those who have no merit, but who are full of positive demerit. It is not only bestowed upon the ill-deserving, but the hell-deserving.

How completely grace sets aside *every* thought of personal desert may be seen from a single quotation of Scripture, “Being justified freely by his grace” (Rom 3:24). The word “freely” gives intensity to the term “grace,” though the Greek does not convey the thought of abundance, but rather emphasizes its gratuitousness. The same word is rendered “without a cause” in John 15:25. There was nothing whatever in the Lord Jesus to deserve such vile treatment from the hands of His enemies, nothing whatever that He had done warranting such awful enmity on their part. In like manner, there is nothing whatever in any sinner to call forth the favourable regard of a holy God, nothing done by him to win His love—instead, everything to the contrary. Grace, then is gratis—a free gift.

The very expression “the grace of God” implies and denotes that the sinner’s condition is desperate to the last degree, and that God may justly leave him to perish—yea, it is a wonder of wonders that he is not already in hell. Grace is a divine provision for those who are so depraved they cannot change their own nature, so averse from God they will not turn to Him, so blind they can neither see their malady nor the remedy, so dead spiritually that God must bring them out of their graves on to resurrection ground if ever they are to walk in newness of life. Grace is the sinner’s last and only hope. If he is not saved by grace, he will never be saved at all. Grace levels all distinctions and regards the most zealous religionist on the same plane as the most profligate, the chaste virgin as the foul prostitute. Therefore God is perfectly free to save the chiefest of sinners and bestow His mercy on the vilest of the vile.

In last month’s article, we got as far as Mephibosheth being actually brought into the presence of David. What a meeting was that! For the first time in his life this man now sees the one whom his grandfather had so mercilessly and unrighteously persecuted. “Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence” (2Sa 9:6). Fitting position was this to take for one whose very life hung upon the mere mercy of the king. What could he expect but to hear from his lips the sentence of death! There he lies, aptly portraying a trembling sinner, who, in his understanding and conscience, is brought, for the first time, face to face with the thrice holy God, with the One whom he has so long slighted, so wickedly ignored, so grievously offended. It was thus with Saul of Tarsus when the Lord first appeared to him, “he fell to the earth” (Act 9:4). Reader, have you ever taken your place before Him in the dust?

Most probably David had never before seen Mephibosheth, yet he now addressed him in the most intimate terms, “And David said, Mephibosheth” (2Sa 9:6). It is blessed to see that the king was the first one to break the silence, showing us in type how God *takes the initiative* at every point in connection with the saving of His people. This recalls to us that word of the apostle’s to the Galatians, “But now, after that ye have known God, *or rather* are known of God” (Gal 4:9). A single word was all that David yet uttered—“Mephibosheth”—yet how much was expressed by it! How it reminds us of that precious declaration from the lips of the Good Shepherd, “He calleth his own sheep *by name*” (Joh 10:3). When, at the burning bush, the Lord first revealed Himself to Israel’s deliverer from Egypt, He said, “Moses, Moses” (Exo 3:4). The first word of the Saviour to the one in the sycamore tree was “Zacchaeus” (Luk 19:5). When He made known Himself unto the tear-blinded seeker at His sepulchre, it was by the single word, “Mary” (Joh 20:16.) His first word to the persecutor of His church was “Saul” (Act 9:4). Thus it was in our present incident. “And Mephibosheth answered, Behold thy servant.”

But the next word of David’s was yet more blessed, “Fear not” (2Sa 9:7) he said to the cripple prostrate before him. There was no rebuke for his having so long kept away from him, no reproaching him because he was of the house of Saul, but instead, a word to assure him, to put

him at his ease. O how this should comfort every contrite soul. We have nothing whatever to fear, once we take our place in the dust before the Lord. “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (Jam 4:6). Was it not thus with the Father, when the penitent prodigal cast himself on His mercy! No word of censure left His lips, instead He quickly assured him of His love. How this “fear not” of David to Mephibosheth reminds us of the same language found so often on the lips of the Redeemer when addressing His own! Wondrous is it to observe that, when the glorified Saviour appeared unto John in Patmos, when that apostle fell at His feet as dead, it was the same old familiar “Fear not” (Rev 1:17) which reassured him.

Not only did David address Mephibosheth by name, and quiet his heart with a “Fear not,” but he also added, “For I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually” (2Sa 9:7). This was grace pure and simple, wondrous grace, the “exceeding riches of grace” (see Eph 2:7). There was no contingency here, no bargain made, no conditions stipulated, but instead, “I will *surely* show thee kindness” (2Sa 9:7). David did not say, “If you do this or that” or “If you will keep your part of the contract, I will adhere to mine.” No, no, it was free favour, gratuitous mercy, unmerited bounty—everything for nothing. David acted royally, like a king, for it becomes not a monarch to barter. How much more is this the case with the King of kings. He is “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10), and eternal life is a *gift* (Rom 6:23) wherever He is pleased to bestow it. To preach salvation by works is not only to mock impotent sinners, but is to grossly insult the ineffable JEHOVAH.

And what effect did this astonishing kindness have upon Mephibosheth? Did it puff him up with self-importance, and cause him to act as though he was other than a poor cripple? No, indeed, such is never the effect of divine grace applied to the heart, though often it is the case where airy notions of it sink no deeper than the head. “And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?” (2Sa 9:8). Is not that truly beautiful? The exceeding kindness of David did not work in him self-elation and self-exaltation, but self-abasement. It wrought in him a deeper consciousness of his utter unworthiness before such unthought of favours. He was amazed that the king should even notice, much less favourably regard, such a worthless creature as he felt himself to be. Did he not now conduct himself in suitable accord with *his name*, when he called himself “a dead dog,” for “Mephibosheth” signifies “a shameful thing.” And what is the name which Scripture gives to me?—sinner! do I, by my attitude, own the truthfulness of it?

This line in our picture calls for particular notice in such a day as we are living in, wherein there is so much self-esteem, creature boasting, Laodicean complacency, and Pharisaic self-righteousness. O what a stench in the nostrils of the Almighty must be the reeking pride of modern Christendom. How little practical exemplification of that principle, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Phi 2:3). How few feel, like Paul did, that they are “the chief of sinners” (see 1Ti 1:15). And why is this? Because the hearts of so very few are *really* touched and affected by the grace of God. Grace ever humbles. The goodness of God leadeth to repentance (Rom 2:4). Where the kindness of God is truly felt in the soul we are “little in our own eyes.” Just as the royal magnanimity of David bowed Mephibosheth before him, causing him to own that he was but “a dead dog,” so when the love of God melts our hard hearts, we realize and own what unworthy wretches, vile creatures, and corrupt worms we are.

We must now consider the wondrous *portion* which was bestowed upon Mephibosheth as the result of the great kindness which David showed him, for this was a striking figure of the “riches”

which divine grace imparts to those who are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ. First, there was *life* for him, for the king refused to slay him when he was in his power. That his life was spared him was a notable act of clemency on the part of the monarch. Blessedly did this illustrate the abounding mercy of God unto those who have flouted His authority, broken His laws, and deserved naught but unsparing judgment at His hands—though the wages of sin is death, yet the gift of God is “eternal life” through Jesus Christ our Lord. Second, there was *peace* for him. David’s “Fear not” was designed to allay his terror, quieten his heart, and set him at perfect ease in the presence of the king. So it is with the believer, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God” (Rom 5:1).

Third, there was *an inheritance* for him. “Then 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” (2Sa 9:9). What a truly wonderful line in our typical picture is that!—one, we are again constrained to say, which no merely human artist could have drawn. How it portrays to us the bounty of our God in bestowing upon poor bankrupt paupers the riches of His grace. Though we come to Him empty-handed, He does not suffer us to remain so. But there is something there yet more definite. Mephibosheth had restored to him the *forfeited* inheritance. The heritage which had originally belonged to Saul had been lost to his family. In like manner, through our first father’s apostasy, we lost our primitive heritage, even the life, image, and blessing of God. Nor could we possibly do anything to regain it. But as David “for Jonathan’s sake” (2Sa 9:1). restored unto Mephibosheth the estate of his fathers, so God for Christ’s sake gives back to His people all that they lost in Adam.

Fourth, there was a *wondrous portion* granted him. Said David to Mephibosheth, “Thou shalt eat bread at my table continually” (2Sa 9:7). What a tremendous contrast was that from being an outcast at Lo-debar—“the place of no pasture”—now to feast at the king’s own table, and that, not merely for once, but “continually!” Truly it *was* the “kindness of God” which David showed unto him. How forcibly this reminds us of what we find at the close of the parable of the prodigal son, when he who, having been “in want” in the far country, after his return in penitence, is feasted by his Father with the “fatted calf” (Luk 15:22). Nothing short of giving us His best will satisfy the great heart of “the God of all grace” and what is His “best” but *fellowship with Himself*, which eating at His table is the symbol of.

Fifth, there was *an honoured position* for him, “As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, *as one of the king’s sons*” (2Sa 9:11). He eats not as an alien or stranger, but as a member of the royal family. Not only was he sumptuously fed, but highly honoured—a place in the king’s own palace was now his, and that, not as a servant, but as a son. How this makes us think of “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that *we* should be called *the sons of God*” (1Jo 3:1)! O what a marvelous place does divine grace give unto those that are the objects of it. All believers stand accepted as the children of God, the subjects of His everlasting favour. That is something which Saul never enjoyed, but for Jonathan’s sake Mephibosheth now gained more than he had previously lost. So through Christ the believer obtains far, far more than he lost in Adam. Where sin abounds, grace does *much more* abound. “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 5:21). Under the king’s table the crippled feet of Mephibosheth were *lost to sight*—in Christ all our deformities are hid!

There is a sequel, both pathetic and blessed, recorded in the later chapters of 2 Samuel which we will here briefly notice, for it provides a lovely completeness to all which has been before us. First, in 2 Samuel 16:1-4, we learn that when David fled from Absalom, Ziba the servant of

Mephibosheth met the king with a liberal provision of food for his men. When David inquired where Mephibosheth was, Ziba answered him, “Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, Today shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father” (2Sa 16:3). This is one of many warnings given to the saints in Scripture that they must be prepared for calumny and unkind treatment, often—as was the case here—by those from whom it should be the least expected.

Second, after Absalom’s death, there went forth a company to do honour to the returned king. Among them was Mephibosheth, of whom it is said, that he “had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace” (2Sa 19:24). What a lovely picture does that present to us of a loyal soul, whose heart had remained true to the (temporarily) rejected king! How clearly Mephibosheth’s condition evidenced *where his affections* had been during David’s absence! David now repeated the tale which Ziba had told him and is informed it was utterly false. Mephibosheth then cast himself on the spiritual discernment and sovereign pleasure of his royal master (2Sa 19:27-28). The king then put his heart to the test, suggesting that the land be divided between Mephibosheth and his servant—the same in principle as Solomon’s proposal that the living child be divided between the two women who claimed it as hers.

Had Mephibosheth been the false-hearted wretch which Ziba had painted him, he had acquiesced promptly to David’s suggestion, glad to escape so easily—“a wise settlement” he would have exclaimed. Instead, he nobly replied, “Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house” (2Sa 19:30). How that gave the lie to Ziba’s accusation. How it demonstrated Mephibosheth was clear of any carnal covetousness. It was not *land* which he wanted, now that his beloved master had returned, he was quite satisfied. O how this should speak to and search us—are *our* affections set upon the Person of the absent King? Is it *His* presence that *we* long for above everything else?

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

4. The Abrahamic (Continued)

In the application unto Abraham of those divine principles considered in last month’s article, it should be quite obvious that the law of his obedience was attended with both promises and threatenings, rewards and punishments, suited unto the goodness and holiness of God, and fitted for the discharge of his moral responsibility. It may be asked, Where is there any hint in Scripture of any provisos and terms attached to the Abrahamic Covenant, or any clear statement that God stipulated any terms to him? Such a question is capable of several answers. In the first place, unless there *were* such provisos and terms, no “*covenant*” had been made at all. Second, the extreme brevity of the Genesis account must be borne in mind, and instead of expecting a full categorical statement, its fragmentary details need to be carefully pieced together. Third, Genesis 12:1 shows plainly that Canaan was first set before him *provisionally*.

In addition to what has just been said, we would point out what the Lord declared in connection with the sign and seal of this covenant, “The uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath *broken* my covenant” (Gen 17:14). Here, then, it is clear that a “condition” *was* stipulated, the failure to meet which “broke the covenant.” Again, in Genesis 18:19, we find God saying, “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; *that* [in order that] the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.” Abraham had to “*keep* the way of the LORD,” which is defined as “to *do* justice and judgment,” that is, walk *obediently*, in subjection to God’s revealed will, if he was to receive the fulfillment of the divine promises. Once more, we read “Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws” (Gen 26:5). Thus, while God dealt with Abraham in pure grace, it is plain that he was also placed under the law.

Some readers are likely to object, This is a wretched subversion of the glorious covenant of grace—by your “conditions,” “terms,” and “provisos” you reduce it to a contingency and uncertainty, instead of its being “ordered in all things and *sure*.” Our first rejoinder is that, *We* have not introduced the “conditions” and “provisos” into the covenant, instead, they are so stated in the Scriptures. God did not make an absolute grant of Canaan unto Abraham when He first revealed Himself to him in Chaldea. Rather was he required to tread the path of obedience unto that land “which he should *after* receive for an inheritance.” Nor does God make an absolute (or unconditional) grant of heaven when the sinner first believes in Christ. Instead, He requires him to walk the narrow way which alone leadeth unto life, and faithfully warns him that it is to his imminent peril if he converges therefrom.

It may be replied, But this is to leave all at an uncertainty. It all depends upon the angle from which you view it. Considered as the object of God’s everlasting love, as chosen in Christ, as redeemed by Him, as indwelt and sealed by the Spirit, the believer’s safely reaching heaven is placed beyond all peradventure. But consider the believer as a responsible agent, as still having the “flesh” in him, living in a world where he is beset by temptation on every side, called upon to “fight the good fight of faith” and to “lay hold on eternal life,” and the matter appears in quite another light—and the one viewpoint is just as *real and actual* as is the other! The difficulty here, as to whether or not the believer’s “keeping” or “breaking” the covenant renders all insecure, is precisely the same as showing the consistency between divine *preservation* and Christian *perseverance*. Though the “ifs” of John 8:31 and Colossians 1:23 do *not* annul the promise of Philippians 1:6, nevertheless, they are *there*, and must be taken into account by us.

From the divine side, the covenant of grace *is* “ordered in all things and *sure*” (2Sa 23:5). There is not the slightest possibility of anything in it failing. Christ *will* “see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied” (Isa 53:11) and not one of those given to Him by the Father before the foundation of the world will be lost. But that does not alter the fact that while the elect are left here in this world they are bidden to “*make* their calling and election *sure*” (see 2Pe 1:10), “*if* they may apprehend [lay hold of] that for which also they were apprehended of Christ Jesus” (see Phi 3:12). The covenant has provided for the communication of *effectual* grace to secure the saints’ obedience and perseverance, yet that does not alter the fact that God still enforces His righteous claims upon them and deals with them as moral agents, who are required to heed His warnings, obey His precepts, and *use the means* He has appointed for their preservation.

Some experience difficulty in fitting together those Scriptures which present “eternal life” as the present and inalienable possession of the believer, with other passages that place it in the future and as only being attained unto by following a course of self-denial—such verses as John

5:24 and Romans 6:23 are quite simple to them, but Romans 6:22; 8:13; Galatians 6:8; Jude 1:21, they are at a loss to know what to do with. But there is nothing inconsistent between a believer acting from a principle of grace and life *already* communicated to him by the Holy Spirit, and his so acting that he *may* live. A man must be alive before he can eat, yet he must eat in order that he may live—were he to cease entirely from the taking of food would there be any life for him in a month's time? Neither would the Christian enter heaven if he entirely neglected the means of grace appointed for his spiritual preservation.

Of old Moses said unto Israel, "The LORD thy God *will* circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live" (Deu 30:6). Was he, then, "inconsistent" when, at the close of the same address, he declared, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed *may* live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he *is* thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them" (vv. 19, 20). Was Moses there setting before them a "yea and nay Gospel?" Emphatically, No—for he was the mouthpiece of JEHOVAH Himself. Nor was this appeal a "legal" one, but a strictly "evangelical" one. Alas, that so many today err "not knowing the Scriptures." "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him *and keep his commandments* to a thousand generations"—not merely from Moses till Christ! (Deu 7:9)—yes, and with no others. This verse is just as much a part of the Holy and inspired Word of God as is Ephesians 2:8-9, and the one is needed by us as much as the other.

Should it be objected, This is bringing in a legalistic inducement and inculcating a mercenary spirit to put the believer upon using means in order to his preservation, and setting before him heaven or eternal life as a "reward" for his faithfulness. In reply, let us quote from the renowned and evangelical Dutch theologian—"A mercenary baseness is certainly unworthy of the highborn sons of God, but their heavenly Father does not forbid them to have any regard to *their own* advantage in the exercise of holiness. David himself confesseth that, 'the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether....by them is thy servant warned: and *in keeping of them* there is great *reward*' (Psa 19:9, 11). And the faith of Moses is commended because 'he had respect unto the recompense *of the reward*' (Heb 11:26). Yea, *that* faith is required of all who come to God, that they '*must* believe that he is a *rewarder* of them that diligently seek him'—Hebrews 11:6" (from "Irenicon" by Hermann Witsius, 1696).

To anticipate one more objection—not with any expectation of convincing the carping critic, but rather in the hope of helping some who are in a state of bewilderment from the one-sided teaching of our unhappy day—But does not all of the above inculcate the principle of human *merit*? No, for it is due alone to divine *grace* that the believer has had communicated to him a principle of obedience—a heart or nature which desires to please God. Furthermore, it is solely for *Christ's* sake that God so liberally rewards the sincere endeavours of His people, for apart from the Mediator and *His* merits, they could not be accepted by Him. Finally, there is no proportion whatever between the Christian's obedience and the "reward" he receives—the inheritance infinitely exceeding his poor efforts—any more than there was in God's giving Canaan to Abraham and his seed because he left Chaldea.

Coming closer now to our immediate theme, it should be pointed out that the Abrahamic Covenant is *not* to be regarded as a thing apart, having no direct connection with what went before or what followed it, but rather is it to be viewed as a part of and a further step in the

unfolding unto God's people of His eternal counsels. The call of Abraham was a most important step in the outworking of God's purpose. It was one of those remarkable epochs in the history of the church which produced a new order of things, in perfect keeping with, yet greatly in advance of, what had previously been communicated. The work of preparation for the appearance of the Messiah now assumed a more tangible form and entered on a phase bearing more visibly upon the attainment of the ultimate result. The line from which the promised seed was to spring was now more definitely defined, while the scope of divine grace was more clearly revealed.

The declaration made by the Lord God in Eden after Adam's transgression, that the "seed" of the woman should triumph over and destroy the serpent, had been the ground of the saints' faith and the object of their hope during the first two thousand years' history of the world. Until the time of Abraham, nothing more had been revealed concerning the person of the coming Deliverer (so far as Scripture records) than that He was to be of the human race—but of what particular family, or even of which nation, no one was informed. Where men were to look for Him, whether in Egypt, in Babylon, or in some other land, did not yet transpire. But in the covenant which God made with Abraham, not only was the promise of a Saviour renewed, but His family and place was now made known. For this great honour the "Friend of God" (Jam 2:23) was selected—to him it was revealed that the Messiah should spring from *his* stock, and that the land of *Canaan* would be the scene of His glorious mission.

Not only should the Abrahamic Covenant be regarded as part of a greater whole rather than an isolated transaction, but attention must not be restricted to any single episode in the patriarch's life or God's dealings with him. We fully agree with William Kelly (1821-1906) when he said, "If we would form an accurate estimate of that covenant, and of the truth which it was the means of revealing, we must not confine ourselves to any one particular transaction in which allusion is made to it, however important that transaction may have been. Our examination must embrace all the incidents recorded. We must bear in mind that everything that occurred to Abraham, from his call to the close of his life, was intended to explain and illustrate the nature of the Covenant."

It was not by one specific communication that the mind of God was fully disclosed unto Abraham. Several were made at different times, all relating to the same subject, and unfolding the import of the covenant—while the character of Abraham himself—shaped by the various trials through which he was called to pass and molded by grace though faith—throws important light upon the conceptions which he entertained of what had been revealed to him. All these form one homogeneous whole, and from them, thus considered, we are to form our views of the covenant. When Abraham was first called by the Lord, a bare hint was given him of the divine purpose, which, under the Spirit's blessing, was the means of quickening his faith and producing the decision which he made. Yet only a *glimpse* was then afforded him of what God designed. It was not the formal establishment of the covenant—that event took place subsequently, after an interval of some years.

What has just been said appears to receive confirmation from Galatians 3:16-17, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." "Four hundred and thirty years" prior to the giving of the law at Sinai takes us back to *the beginning* of God's dealings with Abraham, recorded in Genesis 12, though the actual *term* "covenant" is not found in that chapter. It is not until we reach Genesis 15:18 that we find the transaction itself, "In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land." Then in Genesis 17, we find the sign

and seal of the covenant—circumcision—given. To the covenant there are other references in the chapters which follow—in Genesis 22 the covenant is confirmed. Thus, in fact, the covenant received important and successive enlargements during the intercourse which God, in infinite condescension, continued to have with His servant. Hebrews 6:13-18 links together the great “promise” of Genesis 12:3 and the “oath” of Genesis 22:15-18.

In our endeavour, then, to obtain a correct and comprehensive view of the divine transaction in the Abrahamic Covenant, we are required to carefully examine *all* the information which the Genesis narrative supplies, the leading events in Abraham’s own life (which are designed as a contribution for imparting an explanation), and the light which the New Testament casts upon them both, and regard all in its entire unity as illustrative of the covenant. To confine ourselves to one passage, however important it may seem to be, would be doing injustice to the subject. It is failure at *this* point which has resulted in so many superficial, inadequate, and one-sided discussions of the same by various writers. Those who approach the examination and consideration of the Abrahamic Covenant (or any other Scriptural theme) with a single pet theory or idea in their minds, which they are determined to establish at all costs, cannot expect to obtain a right and full view of the covenant as a whole.

We shall, then, regard the Abrahamic Covenant as a striking advance in the development of God’s gracious purpose toward men, and yet as only a part of a greater and grander whole. In so doing, that which will claim our special attention is, What was the particular nature and what the amount of the truth, which it was the means of revealing? Upon these points a very wide diversity of opinion obtains, both among the older and more recent writers. Exactly *what* did the Abrahamic Covenant make manifest to the minds and hearts of God’s people of old? and *how far* does the same apply to us now? The proper answers to these questions must be drawn from Holy Writ itself, fairly interpreted. Perhaps our best course (God Willing) is to single out the leading particulars, and then comment thereon as each may seem to require.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

7. Its Author

God Himself is the alone source and spring of all holiness. There is nothing of it in any creature but what is immediately from the Holy One. When God first created man, He made him in His own image, that is, “in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24 and cf. Col 3:10). The creature can no more produce holiness of himself than he can create life—for the one he is just as much dependent upon God as he is for the other. How much less, then, can a *fallen* creature, polluted and enslaved by sin, sanctify himself? More easily could the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots, than a moral leper make himself pure. Where any measure of real holiness is found in a human heart its possessor must say with Paul, “By the grace of God I am what I am” (1Co 15:10). Sanctification, then, is the immediate work and gift of God Himself.

No greater delusion can seize the minds of men than that defiled nature is able to cleanse itself, that fallen and ruined man may rectify himself, or that those who have lost the image of God which He created in them, should create it again in themselves by their own endeavours. Self-evident as is this truth, yet pride ever seeks to set it aside. Self-complacency assumes that obligation and ability are co-extensive. Not so. It is true that God requires and commands us *to be holy* for He will not relinquish His rights or lower His standard. Yet His command no more denotes that we have the power to comply, than His setting before us a perfect standard implies we are able to measure up to the same. Rather does the one inform us that we are *without* what God requires, while the other should humble us into the dust because we come so far short of the glory of God.

But so self-sufficient and self-righteous are we by nature it also needs to be pointed out that the very fact God promises to *work in His people* by His grace both indicates and demonstrates that of themselves they are quite unable to meet His demands. Ponder for a moment the following: “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer 31:33), “I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and 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. 32:39-40), “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes” (Eze 36:26-27). In those blessed assurances, and nowhere else, is contained the guarantee of our sanctification—all turns upon *God’s* power, grace, and operations. He is the alone accomplisher of His own promises.

The author of our sanctification is the Triune God. We say “the *Triune God*,” because in Scripture the title “God,” when it stands unqualified, is not used with an uniform signification. Sometimes “God” refers to the first Person in the Trinity, sometimes to the second Person, and sometimes to the Third. In other passages, like 1 Corinthians 15:28, for instance, it includes all the three Persons. Each of the Eternal Three has His own distinctive place or part in connection with the sanctification of the church, and it is necessary for us to clearly perceive this if we are to have definite views thereof. We have now reached that stage in our prosecution of this subject where it behooves us to carefully trace out the particular operations of *each* divine Person in connection with our sanctification, for only as these are discerned by us will we be prepared to intelligently offer unto each One the praise which is His distinctive due.

In saying that the author of sanctification is the Triune God, we do not mean that the Father is the sanctifier of the church in precisely the same way or manner as the Son or as the Holy Spirit is. No, rather is it our desire to emphasize the fact that the Christian is equally indebted unto each of the three divine Persons, that his sanctification proceeds as truly from the Father as it does from the Holy Spirit, and as actually from the Son as it does from either the Spirit or the Father. Many writers have failed to make this clear. Yet it needs to be pointed out that, in the economy of salvation, there is an *official order* observed and preserved by the Holy Three, wherein we are given to see that all is *from* the Father, all is *through* the Son, all is *by* the Holy Spirit. Not that this official order denotes any essential subordination or inferiority of one Person to another, but that each manifests Himself distinctively, each displays His own glory, and each is due the separate adoration of His people.

It is most blessed to observe there is a beautiful *order* adopted and carried on by the Eternal Three through all the departments of divine love to the church, so that each glorious Person of the

Godhead has taken part in every act of grace manifested toward the mystical body of Christ. Though all Three work conjointly, yet there are distinct personal operations, by which they make way for the honour of each other—the love of the Father for the glory of the Son, and the glory of the Son for the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus it is in connection with the subject now before us. In the Scriptures we read that the church is “sanctified by God *the Father*” (Jude 1:1), and again, “Wherefore Jesus also, that *he* might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate” (Heb 13:12), and yet again, “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification *of the Spirit*” (2Th 2:13). Each Person of the Godhead, then, is our sanctifier, though not in the same manner.

This same co-operation by the Holy Three is observable in many other things. It was so in the creation of the world, “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth” (Act 17:24), where the reference is plainly to the Father. Of the Son it is affirmed, “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (Joh 1:3). While in Job 26:13, we are told, “By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens.” So with the production of the sacred humanity of our Redeemer. The supernatural impregnation of the Virgin was the immediate effect of the Spirit’s agency (Luk 1:35), yet the human nature was voluntarily and actively assumed by Christ Himself. He “took upon him the form of a servant” (Phi 2:7 and cf. “took part” in Heb 2:14). While in Hebrews 10:5, we hear the Son saying to the Father, “a body hast thou prepared me.”

Our present existence is derived from the joint operation of the divine agency of the blessed Three. “Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?” (Mal 2:10). Of the Son it is said, “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth” (Col 1:16). While in Job 33:4 we read, “The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.” In like manner, the “eternal life” of believers is indiscriminately ascribed to each of the divine Persons. In Romans 6:23, it is attributed to the bounty of the Father, 1 John 5:11 expressly assures us that it “is in the Son,” while in Galatians 6:8, we read, “He that soweth to the Spirit shall *of the Spirit* reap life everlasting.” By the Father we are justified (Rom 8:33), by Christ we are justified (Isa 53:11), by the Spirit we are justified (1Co 6:11). By the Father we are preserved (1Pe 1:5), by the Son we are preserved (Joh 10:28), by the Spirit we are preserved (Eph 4:30). By the Father we shall be raised (2Co 1:9), by the Son (Joh 5:28), by the Spirit (Rom 8:11).

The actions of the Persons in the Godhead are not unlike to the beautiful colours of the rainbow. Those colours are perfectly blended together in one, yet each is quite distinct. So it is in connection with the several operations of the Holy Three concerning our sanctification. While it be blessedly true that the Triune God is the author of this wondrous work, yet, if we are to observe the *distinctions* which the Holy Scriptures make in the unfolding of this theme, they require us to recognize that, in the economy of salvation, *God the Father* is, in a special manner, *the Originator* of this unspeakable blessing. In connection with the whole scheme of redemption, God the Father is to be viewed as the fountain of grace—all spiritual blessings originating in *His* goodness and are bestowed according to the good pleasure of His sovereign will. This is clear from Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

That the Father is the sanctifier of the church is obvious from 1 Thessalonians 5:23, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Here He is acknowledged as such, by prayer being made to Him for the perfecting of this gift and grace. So again in Hebrews 13:20-21, we find the apostle addressing Him as follows, “Now the God of peace, that brought

again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.” It is the furthering of this work within His people for which the apostle supplicates God. In both passages it is the Father who is sought unto. “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb 10:10). Here the sanctification of the church is traced back to the sovereign will of God as the supreme originating cause thereof, the reference again being to the eternal gracious purpose of the Father, which Christ came here to accomplish.

Further proof that the first Person in the divine Trinity is the immediate author of our sanctification is found in Jude 1:1, “To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” Note it is not simply “them that are sanctified by God,” but more specifically “By God *the Father*.” Before attempting to give the meaning of this remarkable text, it needs to be pointed out that it is closely connected with those words of Christ’s in John 10:36, “Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?” Our Lord was there referring to Himself not as the second Person of the Godhead absolutely considered, but as the God-man Mediator, for only as such was He “sent” by the Father. His being “sanctified” *before* He was “sent,” has reference to a transaction in heaven ere He became incarnate. Before the foundation of the world the Father set apart Christ and ordained that He should be both the Head and Saviour of His church, and that He should be plenteously endowed by the Spirit for His vast undertaking.

Reverting to Jude 1:1, we would note particularly *the order* of its statements—the “sanctified by God the Father” *comes before* “preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” This initial aspect of our sanctification antedates our regeneration or effectual call from darkness to light, and therefore takes us back to the eternal counsels of God. There are three things in our verse—taking them in their inverse order, there is first, our “calling,” when we were brought from death unto life; that was preceded by our being “preserved in Jesus Christ,” i.e., preserved from physical death in the womb, in the days of our infancy, during the recklessness of youth; and that also preceded by our being “sanctified” by the Father, that is, our names being enrolled in the Lamb’s book of life, we are given to Christ to be loved by Him with an everlasting love and made joint-heirs with Him forever and ever.

Our sanctification by the Father was *His eternal election of us*, with all that the term connotes and involves. Election was far more than a bare choice of persons. It included our being predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself (Eph 1:5). It included our being made “vessels unto honour” and being “afore prepared to glory” (Rom 9:21, 23). It included being appointed “to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Th 5:9). It included our being separated for God’s pleasure, God’s use, and “that we should be to the praise of his glory” (Eph 1:12). It included our being made “holy and without blame before him” (Eph 1:4). This eternal sanctification by God the Father is also mentioned in 2 Timothy 1:9, “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*.”

As we pointed out in the last paragraph of last month’s article, “Sanctification is, first, *a position of honour* to which God hath appointed His people. That position of honour was their being chosen *in Christ* ‘before the foundation of the world’ (Eph 1:4), when they were constituted members of His mystical body by the eternal purpose of God.” O what an amazing honour was that! A place in glory higher than that of the angels being granted them. Our poor minds are staggered before such wondrous grace. Here, then, is the link of connection between John 10:36

and Jude 1:1, Christ was not alone in the mind of the Father when He “sanctified” Him—by the divine decree, Christ was separated and consecrated as the Head of a sanctified people. In the sanctification of Christ, all who are “called saints” were, in Him, eternally set apart, to be partakers of His own holy standing before the Father! This was an act of pure sovereignty on the Father’s part.

As it is not possible that anything can add to God’s *essential* blessedness (Job 22:2-3; 35:7), so nothing whatever outside of God can possibly be a motive unto Him for any of His actions. If He be pleased to bring creatures into existence, His own supreme and sovereign will must be the sole cause, as His own *manifestative* glory is His ultimate end and design. This is plainly asserted in the Scriptures, “The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Pro 16:4), “Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev 4:11), “Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom 11:35-36). So it is in the ordaining of some of His creatures unto honour and glory, and appointing them to salvation in bringing them to that glory—nought but God’s sovereign will was the cause, nought but His own manifestative glory is the end.

As we have shown in previous articles, to “sanctify” signifies to consecrate or set apart for a sacred use, to cleanse or purify, to adorn or beautify. Which of these meanings has the term in Jude 1:1? We believe the words “sanctified by God the Father” include all three of those definitions. First, in that eternal purpose of His, the elect were *separated* from all other creatures, and predestinated unto the adoption of sons. Second, in God’s foreviews of His elect falling in Adam, the corrupting of their natures, and the defilement which their personal acts of sin would entail, He ordained that the Mediator should make a full atonement for them, and by His blood *cleanse* them from all sin. Third, by choosing them in Christ, the elect were *united to* Him and so made one with Him that all *His* worthiness and perfection becomes theirs too—and thus they were *adorned*. God never views them apart from Christ.

“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:6). The Greek word for “accepted” is “charitoo,” and Young’s Concordance gives as its meaning “to make gracious.” It occurs (as a passive participle, rather than in its active form, as in Eph 1:6) again only in Luke 1:28, where the angel said to the Virgin, “Hail, thou that art *highly favoured*,” which Young defines as “to give grace, to treat graciously,” and in his Index “graciously accepted or much graced.” This, we believe, is the exact force of it in Ephesians 1:6, “according as he hath *much graced* us in the beloved.” A careful reading of the immediate context will show that this was *before* the foundation of the world, which is confirmed by the fact that the elect’s being “much graced in the beloved” comes *before* “redemption” and “forgiveness of sins” in verse 7!—note too the “hath” in verses 3, 4, 6 and the change to “have” in verse 7!

Here, then, is the ultimate reference in “*sanctified* by God the Father” (Jude 1:1). As we have so often pointed out in the previous articles, “sanctification” is not a bare act of simply setting apart, but involves or includes the adorning and beautifying of the object or person thus set apart, so *fitting it for* God’s use. Thus it was in God’s eternal purpose. He not only made an election from the mass of creatures to be created, He not only separated those elect ones from the others, but He chose them “in Christ,” and “much graced them in the beloved!” The elect were made the mystical body and bride of Christ, so united to Him that whatever grace Christ hath, by virtue of their union with Him, His people have: and therefore did He declare, “Thou...hast loved *them*, AS thou hast loved *me*” (Joh 17:23). O that it may please the Holy Spirit to so shine upon our feeble understandings that we may be enabled to lay hold of this wondrous, glorious, and

transcendent fact. “Sanctified by God the Father”—set apart by Him to be body and bride of Christ, “much graced” in Him, possessing His own holy standing before the throne of heaven.

UNION AND COMMUNION

4. Federal

Once more we would point out that *the origin* of that union which subsists between the church and Christ was the everlasting love of God. This it was which cemented Head and members together. The loving purpose of God gave the church an election-union to Christ, which (for the want of a better term) we have styled the “mystical.” Inseparably connected with the election-standing of the church before God, was its marriage to Christ, and upon that marital relationship we dwelt at length in last month’s article. We are now to consider further what branched out of the mystical union in view of the church’s fall in its nature-head. Having in His high sovereignty predetermined the apostasy of Adam, upon His foreviews of the same, God engaged in an everlasting covenant with Christ, the spiritual Head of the elect, to raise them up from the ruins of their fall. What that involved and included it will now be our joy to consider.

In contemplating the Covenant of Grace [the Everlasting Covenant] which was made between God and the Mediator, it is very necessary to recognize that Christ acted therein as *the Head* of the church. This it is which determined the title of our present article. The elect had not only a mystical union with Christ in the womb of God’s decrees, but they had an actual oneness together in the sight of the divine law. That oneness has been variously designated by different writers—“covenant union,” “legal union,” “representative union,” “federal union,” all which signify much the same. The grand point to be apprehended here is, that Christ and His people were one in divine election, He the Head and they the members of the mystical body, and so likewise they are to be regarded in the Everlasting Covenant. The Covenant was made with Christ, not as a single person, but as a common Head, representing all the elect who were given to Him in a federal way—so that what He promised in the covenant, He promised for them and on their account; and what He was promised, He received on their behalf.

This federal oneness which exists between Christ and the elect from everlasting, means that they are one in a legal sense. Or to state it yet more simply, Christ and His people are looked at as one by the eyes of the law, as surety and debtor are one. The bond of this union is Christ’s *suretyship*. “A relation is formed between a surety and the person for whom he engages, by which they are thus far considered as one, that the surety is liable for the debt which the other has contracted, and his payment is held as the payment of the debtor, who is *ipso facto* absolved from all obligation to the creditor. A similar connection is established between our Redeemer and those who are given to Him by His Father. He became answerable for them to the justice of God, and it was stipulated that, on account of His satisfaction to its demands, they should receive the pardon of their sins” (John Dick, 1764-1833).

The federal union between Christ and the elect gave them a covenant-subsistence in Him, for it was as their Head and Representative that He contracted to serve. The Everlasting Covenant flowed from and was the fruit of the love and grace of God. The ordering thereof pre-supposed *sin*, for its provisions had respect to the fall, and its effects upon the church. It was made with Christ not as a private or single person, but as a public and common Person. As the Covenant of Works was made with the first Adam as the federal head of his posterity—so that he was “the figure of him that was to come” (Rom 5:14)—so the Covenant of Grace was made with Christ as the last Adam as the federal Head of His spiritual offspring. The elect, then, had a representative union to Christ in the Covenant, for all that He engaged to do, He engaged in their name and on their account, and when *He* performed its stipulations it was the same with God as if it had been done by *them*.

The bond, then, of the federal, legal, and representative union between Christ and His people, is suretyship for them. Christ’s entering upon that office on their behalf gave full proof of His deep and unchangeable affection to them. He loved them “with an everlasting love” (Jer 31:3), and as Song of Solomon 8:7 declares, “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.” So it was here—not even His foreviews of the church’s apostasy in Adam, its fall into a state of degradation and defilement, could change the heart of Christ toward His Bride. Her defection in Adam and her alienation from God only provided opportunity unto her eternal Lover to manifest the infinite affection He bore to her. Christ drew nigh unto God on the behalf of His church, gave His bond, and placed Himself under obligation to pay all the debts of His people and satisfy for their sins.

Though the church fell in Adam from her state of native innocence, she did not fall from the heart or arms of her heavenly Bridegroom. “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph 5:25). Note “loved” *before* “gave Himself for it.” And when did He first love the church? Hear His own answer, “I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (Joh 17:26). That declaration establishes two points—the eternality and the nature of Christ’s love for His church. Christ has been loved by the Father “before the foundation of the world” (Joh 17:24), and He had been loved with a love which delighted in the excellency of His Person. Such was Christ’s love toward His church. It was not a love of compassion in view of the wretchedness occasioned by her fall in Adam, but a love of *complacency*, when He first viewed her as “all glorious within” (Psa 45:13). His “delights” with the sons of men (Pro 8:31) were precisely the same as the Father’s “delight” in Him (Pro 8:30). Blessedly did He display that love when, in foreviews of the fall, He presented Himself to the Father to serve as “Surety” on behalf of His church, who was immersed in debt which she could never discharge.

Then it was that the Father said, “Who is this that *engaged* [or, as the Hebrew word is rendered, “be surety for” in Psa 119:122; Pro 11:15] His heart to approach unto me?” (Jer 30:21). That the reference here is to Christ Himself, and that His undertaking to serve as Surety was infinitely wellpleasing to God, is clear from the first part of the verse, “Their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me.” It was then that Christ became “a surety of a better testament” (Heb 7:22), substituting Himself in the place and stead of His fallen people, placing Himself under obligation to fully discharge their legal responsibility, pay their debts, satisfy for their sins, and procure for them all the blessings of grace and glory. It was then that Christ offered to “finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting

righteousness” (Dan 9:24). This being accepted of by God, henceforth Christ and His elect were looked upon by the law as one person.

What was then transacted in the secret councils of eternity was, “when the fullness of the time was come” (Gal 4:4), openly manifested on earth. In order to discharge His suretyship, it was necessary for there to be a natural union (a union in human nature), between Christ and His people, for “both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all *of one*”—one nature (Heb 2:11). Before the Son of God could take upon Him the sins of the elect, He must first assume their nature. It was meet that the divine law should be magnified and made honourable by One in the same nature as those by whom it had been disobeyed and dishonoured. Moreover, it was only by becoming incarnate that the second Person in the Trinity could be “made under the law.” Therefore do we read, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14).

The incarnation of Christ may therefore be called “manifestative union,” for at His birth there was *openly displayed* the oneness which existed between Him and His church. “Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the *sins of the people*” (Heb 2:17). The elect, who had fallen in Adam, could not be conformed unto the image of Christ until He had—by amazing grace—been conformed to their image. The nature which Christ assumed was the same as that which we have, for it was the “seed” of the woman—save that it was entirely free of sin’s taint. Though this union was supernaturally effected in time, yet it was the fruit of Christ’s love for the church and the fulfillment of His covenant-engagements on her behalf before time began. Though the nature Christ assumed is one that is common to all mankind, yet as Hebrews 2 so plainly intimates, it was taken by Him with a peculiar regard to the elect—His “brethren,”—the “children,” the seed “of Abraham.”

Before proceeding further, let it be pointed out that the election union, the marital union, the federal union which the church had with Christ, and the manifest union which the incarnation gave Him to the church, are only so many branches of and all take their rise from the everlasting *love union*. Everything is founded upon and grows out of the eternal love of the Triune God unto the elect. *This* is the grand original, the strong and firm bond of union between the Head and His members, and is the spring of all that communion and fellowship which the church has with Christ (and God in Him) in time, and shall have to all eternity. All is antecedent to our faith union with Christ. It is from hence that the Holy Spirit is sent down into their hearts to renew them and work faith in their souls. Faith does not give them a being in Christ, but is only one of the fruits, effects, and evidences of their being in Christ and of their union to Him.

It is true that the elect do not, and cannot, *know of* their being eternally in Christ, nor of their union to Him before the foundation of the world, until they are given to savingly believe in Him, and that, by Christ’s sending the quickening Spirit into their hearts. Only then is that which before was concealed from them, revealed to them. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2Co 5:17). But being made a “new creature,” does not put a man into Christ, rather is it *the evidence of* his being there, and without which he cannot know it. “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom 8:9). Nevertheless, I may be one of Christ’s chosen and redeemed ones, though I have not yet the Spirit indwelling me. The *full* manifestation of our union to Christ will only appear in heaven itself, when His prayer in John 17:20-24 is fulfilled. But to return unto the present aspect of our subject.

Christ is the Friend who “*sticketh closer* than a brother” (Pro 18:24) to His people. Nothing could dissolve the tie which had been established between them ere the world began. Nothing could quench His love to them, for “having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (Joh 13:1). Therefore, when He viewed the church in its fallen estate, He willingly became incarnate, entered the office of Surety on their behalf, and engaged to put away all their sins and bring in a perfect righteousness for them. Christ undertook to conquer Satan, death, and hell for His church, and to present her before the high throne of God holy and without spot, as though she had never been defiled. This is a greater work than His making all things out of nothing, or the upholding of all things by the word of His power. This work is the admiration and marvel of angels, and the theme of heaven’s new song.

JEHOVAH Jesus, the God-man, with all the love of the Godhead in His heart, in His incarnate state, stood in the law-place, room, and stead of His sinful people as their Sponsor, lived and obeyed the law for them. He was here as their Representative, and His perfect fulfillment of the law in thought and word and deed, constitutes their everlasting righteousness. When Christ had magnified the law and made it honourable, the Lord caused to meet on Him the iniquities of all His people, so that He was imputatively, “made sin” (see 2Co 5:21) for them. JEHOVAH the Father alone could dispose of iniquity, and gather all the sins of all the elect and place them on Christ. He “the judge of all” (Heb 12:23) was the one immediately sinned against, and therefore the only one who could provide and accept an atoning sacrifice. “*God was in Christ*, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2Co 5:19).

As “the Lamb of God” Christ was appointed and prepared from eternity as is clear from Revelation 13:8 and 1 Peter 1:19-20. The atoning death of Christ, then, was a grand article of the Everlasting Covenant between the Father and the Son. This was decreed by God, agreed upon by the Mediator, and published by the Spirit in the Scriptures. The transferring of sin from the persons of the elect to the Person of Christ was shadowed forth under the Old Testament sacrifices, they being substituted in the room of sinners and offered for sin—the sins of the offenders being laid upon them in a typical way, see Leviticus 4:4 and 16:21. The curse and vengeance of God’s wrath which was to fall upon Christ when He should have the sins of His people laid upon Him, and be borne by Him in His own body to and on the tree, was set forth by the fire which lighted upon and consumed the sacrifices under the law.

The covenant oneness of Christ and His church was adumbrated by the relation which obtained between Adam and the human race, for though Christ’s actual discharge of His suretyship was historically afterwards, yet in the order of God’s decrees it was before it. This is clear from Romans 5:18-19, “Therefore *as* by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; *even* so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For *as* by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, *so* by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Believers are made righteous through the obedience of Christ on precisely the same principles of all of Adam’s posterity were made sinners by the disobedience of their natural head. There was an identity of legal relations and reciprocal obligations and rights. In each case it was the one that was acting on the behalf of many and doing so because of his federal union with the many.

When God accepted Christ as the federal Head of His people, they were henceforth considered as legally one—this, and this alone, being the foundation for the imputation of their sins to Him and of His righteousness to them. *This* was the foundation of all which Christ did and suffered for them, and for them alone—and for all the blessings of grace which are or shall be bestowed on them—which blessings are denied all others. To discharge their legal liabilities, Christ entered

upon the office of Surety, in consequence of which He became responsible to the law for His people—so truly so, that the benefit of His transactions redounds to them. As Adam's transgression was imputed to us because we were legally one with him, so our iniquities were imputed to Christ because He stood before the law as our Sponsor, and in like manner, His obedience and its reward is reckoned to our account, "For he [God] hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2Co 5:21).

It is of vast importance to perceive that the saving-work of Christ was performed not only *for* His people, but that He did it as *in union with* them, so that the church has such an interest in all her Head did and suffered for her sake, that she was one with Him, yea, *in Him*, in all His actions and sufferings. He loved *them*, was born for them, lived for them, died for them, rose from the grave for them, and ascended into heaven for them. But more. They were one with Him at every point. They were crucified "*with Christ*" (Gal 2:20), "buried with him" (Col 2:12), "and hath raised us up *together*, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6). These expressions indicate not only the *intimacy* of the federal union, but the efficacy of the same, for the validity and virtue of His actions are reckoned to her. In Christ the church is holy and righteous, pure and spotless, "Ye are complete *in him*" (Col 2:10).

In the grand fact of federal union, and nowhere else, do we obtain an adequate answer to the age-long question of infidels, "How could Christ, a perfectly innocent person, *justly* suffer the curse of the law? If He were guiltless in Himself, then how could the Judge of all the earth *righteously* cause His sword to smite Him?" This objection loses its air of plausibility once the clear light of Christ's Covenant Headship is thrown upon it. Christ *voluntarily* suffered in the room and stead of others. If it be asked, What righteous principle justified His dying as a *Substitute*? "the just for the unjust?" the answer is, That gracious substituting of Himself as a victim for His people was the discharge of His *Suretyship*. If the inquiry be pressed further back still, "And what justified Christ's entering upon His office of Surety? the answer is, *His covenant-oneness* with His people. And what moved Him to enter into His covenant engagement? LOVE, love to His bride as He foresaw her fallen into sin.

In view of what has just been pointed out, must we not join the apostle in exclaiming, "O *the depth* of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Rom 11:33). Contrariwise, are we not also obliged to lament, "O the dreadful *superficiality* of present-day preaching (?) of the cross!" It was by a voluntary act on Christ's part, out of love to God and His people, that He offered to serve as the Surety of His elect, substitute Himself in their fallen stead, and bear the full punishment due their sins. Because their guilt was imputed to Him, the Father, without the slightest impeachment of His holiness and justice, exacted satisfaction from the Sponsor. In like manner, in perfect righteousness, God imputes Christ's merits to them. Therefore, no one considered as innocent, suffered—and none, considered guilty, escaped. The blood shed by Christ was "the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb 13:20), and therefore has God promised Christ, "By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth *thy* prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" (Zec 9:11).

The *effect* of this federal union is the church's *communion* with Christ in all the benefits which His infinitely-meritorious work as Surety procured. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are *in Christ Jesus*" (Rom 8:1). "In the LORD have I righteousness and strength" (Isa 45:24). "And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace" (Joh 1:16). The elect have a community with their Head in His covenant standing and rights—*His* God and Father is *their* God and Father (Joh 20:17). The one Spirit who sanctified, anointed, sealed, and graced Him, does the same (according to their measure) for them. They have fellowship with Him now in His

sufferings, and shall have fellowship with Him in His glory throughout eternity. May writer and reader be enabled to “mix faith” with this blessed truth to the praise and glory of Him “who loved us and gave himself for us.”

OUR ANNUAL LETTER

“For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice” (Zec 4:10). Three lines of thought are suggested by these words. First, in the history of the church there *are* periods which may justly be termed, “the day of small things.” Second, the temptation arises to *disparage* God’s work at such times, because of its “smallness.” Third, assurance is here given that despondency shall give place to gladness and they who lightly esteemed the lesser displays of God’s gracious power shall be followed by those who “rejoice.”

It was “the day of small things” (Zec 4:10) when the little remnant of Israel returned from their captivity, repaired the walls of Jerusalem, and built the house of God. The temple of Solomon far surpassed in splendour the one erected by Zerubbabel. As God said to the Jews through Haggai, “Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?” (Hag 2:3). Yea, when many of the ancient men saw its foundation laid, they “wept with a loud voice” (Ezr 3:12). Nevertheless, the Lord *was* working, and therefore did He issue this challenge to their hearts “*Who* hath *despised* the day of small things?” Even the minor displays of God’s power and the lesser blessings of His mercy are not to be disparaged.

Our lot is also cast in a “day of small things.” When present spiritual conditions are compared with those of fifty years ago, the difference is most marked—in the number of faithful preachers of the truth, in the number of homes where the family altar is maintained, in the demand for really helpful literature. The *cause* for this contrast may be looked for in two directions. First, in the *sovereignty* of God, for He does not act uniformly. Some seasons enjoy a much more bounteous supply of rain and sunshine than others, as it is in the natural realm, so it is in the spiritual. Second, the *unfaithfulness* of the Lord’s people. Where light is given and it be not walked in, where great privileges are granted and there be no corresponding fruit, the Holy Spirit is grieved and quenched, and further blessings are withheld. *Both* of these factors explain the present situation.

Yet God *is* still working. In various places there are “showers” of blessing, even though the “former rains” be withheld. While there is much that calls for exercise of heart, humiliation of soul, and confession to God, yet there is no warrant for abject despair. The question asked in Zechariah 4:10 is a challenge, and perhaps a *rebuke* to some of us—shall we “despise” what God is now doing because it be a “day of *small* things?” If God is still maintaining a testimony for the truth, and a few souls are being blest here and there, that is proof He has not entirely abandoned Christendom. Moreover, a divine promise is coupled with the challenge, O for faith to lay hold of it—“for they *shall* rejoice.” Brighter days are ahead. Christ will yet crush the serpent’s head beneath His feet!

It is in the spirit of Zechariah 4:10 that we desire grace from on high to carry on this work. The past year has been one of severe testing. [Brother Pink wrote this to his readers in *late 1935*.]

Hitherto the Lord has moved many of the readers to send in their contributions early in the year (which, for the magazine, begins December 1), so that by the end of March only a smaller amount was needed each month to meet expenses. But this year it was otherwise. All through it has been a case of “from hand to mouth,” and sometimes the meal in the barrel was almost—though not quite!—exhausted. Yet to the praise of our faithful God be it recorded, that He *has* graciously moved different ones to send in something each week (Four pounds—20 dollars—is needed every week, the year round), so that only one bill is before us, and before that is due (Nov. 7) we fully expect to have sufficient on hand to more than meet it.

We have also been much exercised over the smallness of our circulation. As each year passes, we are finding it harder and harder to locate those who really relish spiritual literature. The popular demand is for that which is light and superficial, or for that which is startling and sensational. Many prefer anecdotes, brief articles, or comments upon the latest doings of Hitler and Mussolini. Few are willing to *study* that which calls for concentration of mind, and fewer still articles which search the conscience. But we dare not lower the standard. Many of our older readers have been called Home, and it is very difficult to find new ones to replace them. Very few *co-operate* with us in seeking to make this magazine known to fellow-Christians. How many would *really* be sorry if we are obliged to cease publishing for lack of support? How many are endeavouring to *prevent* this by their efforts?

We have now to remove from our list several hundred names, to whom we have sent “Studies” this year—those whose names were given us by friends, or who applied personally themselves, but who have manifested no appreciation of its contents—owing to the smallness of our circulation, it costs 3/6 (90 cents) to send to each person for a year. *Where* are we going to find new readers to fill their places? Unless we do so in the near future, we will not have sufficient names on our book to carry on! We know that some readers have done their best to interest others, but there are many quite indifferent. If half of our readers could introduce us to just one Christian who would welcome this Magazine, it would be a great relief to our minds. Show your copies to those likely to be interested—not to those looking for something for nothing, but those hungry for soul food. Do please carefully consider this appeal.

Another thing which has deeply concerned the editor is that no doors have been opened for oral ministry. From the human side, two things place us at a great disadvantage. First, having lived almost all our Christian life in the U.S.A. and Australia, we are virtually unknown in Great Britain. Second, not being prepared to “join” any denomination or sect, makes most of the “churches” unwilling to use us. Do any of our readers know of any undenominational cause or “independent” church, anywhere in Great Britain, where a man of truth would be welcome, or any “Mission,” conducted on Scriptural lines, where there would be openings for Bible Conference addresses? Our preaching is along the same lines as our magazine articles. Some readers have a wide acquaintance and may know of suitable openings, and God may use them to give us contact with places that would welcome an uncompromising and soul-edifying message. Please pray over this *and write us*.

The days are evil, the need is great, many of Christ’s sheep are being starved, very little real Gospel is now preached. Soon our race will be run. What little time is yet left us, we desire to be used wholly for the Lord, and to be made a blessing to His people. Many “churches” and places we could not enter because of their heterodoxy and worldliness. How are we to make contact with *sound* ones for a week’s special meetings? Cannot *you* be of assistance here? If not, will you please definitely supplicate the throne of grace on our behalf? By the mercy of God we have both

been preserved from all illness through another year. Earnestly soliciting your prayers, with hearty Christian greetings and with 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 has republished the *Studies* beginning with the year 1932 through 1953. 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/periodicals

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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 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

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.

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. 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

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.

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

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

⁴ *The Life of Arthur W. Pink*, by Iain H. Murray, The Banner of Truth Trust, p 49

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 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.

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).

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

Erroll Hulse served as Associate Pastor at Leeds Reformed Baptist Church in Leeds, England. Since 1970, he edited and wrote extensively for Reformation Today, a bi-monthly international digest. He authored numerous books and articles. Pastor Hulse studied theology at the London Bible College and benefited from the ministry of Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

⁶ *ibid.*

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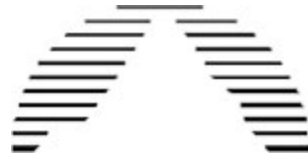
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