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STUDIES
IN THE
SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5,39

EDITOR, Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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Studies in the Scriptures appeared without interruption from 1922 to 1953, each issue including six to eight articles addressing a different topic in a series. While virtually unknown to the Christian world when he died, his writings continue to grow in their influence upon God's people around the world, through their clarity, careful exposition, and Christ-centeredness.

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STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR, Arthur W. Pink

THE HOLY SPIRIT

24. The Spirit Comforting (Part 2)

One would naturally suppose that the good news of a free Saviour and a full salvation would readily be embraced by a convicted sinner. One would think that, as soon as he heard the glad tidings, he could not forbear exclaiming, in a transport of joy, “This is the Saviour I want! *His* salvation is every way suited to my wretchedness. What can I desire more? Here will I rest.” But as a matter of fact this is not always the case, yea, it is rarely so. Instead, the stricken sinner, like the Hebrews in Egypt after Moses had been made manifest before them, is left to groan under the lash of his merciless taskmasters. Yet this arises from no defect in God’s gracious provision, nor because of any inadequacy in the salvation which the Gospel presents, nor because of any distress in the sinner which the Gospel is incapable of relieving, but because the workings of self-righteousness hinder the sinner from seeing the fullness and glory of divine grace.

Strange as it may sound to those who have but a superficial and non-experimental acquaintance with God’s truth, awakened souls are exceedingly backward from receiving comfort in the glorious Gospel of Christ. They think they are utterly unworthy and unfit to come to Christ just as they are, in all their vileness and filthiness. They imagine some meetness must be wrought in them before they are qualified to believe the Gospel, that there must be certain holy dispositions in their hearts before they are entitled to conclude that Christ will receive them. They fear that they are not sufficiently humbled under a sense of sin, that they have not a suitable abhorrence of it, that their repentance is not deep enough—that they must have fervent breathings after Christ and pantings after holiness before they can be warranted to seek salvation with a well-grounded hope of success. All of which is the same thing as hugging the miseries of unbelief in order to obtain permission *to* believe.

Burdened with guilt and filled with terrifying apprehensions of eternal destruction, the convicted sinner, yet experimentally ignorant of the perfect righteousness which the Gospel reveals for the justification of the ungodly, strives to obtain acceptance with God by his own labours, tears, and prayers. But as he becomes better acquainted with the high demands of the law, the holiness of God, and the corruptions of his own heart, he reaches the point where he utterly despairs of being justified by his own strivings. "What *must* I do to be saved?" (Act 16:30) is now his agonized cry. Diligently searching God's Word for light and help, he discovers that "faith" is the all-important thing needed, but exactly what faith is, and how it is to be obtained, he is completely at a loss to ascertain. Well-meaning people, with more zeal than knowledge, urge him to "believe," which is the one thing above all others he desires to do, but finds himself utterly *unable* to perform.

If saving faith was nothing more than a mere mental assent to the contents of John 3:16, then any man could make himself a true believer whenever he pleased—the supernatural enablement of the Holy Spirit would be quite unnecessary! But *saving* faith is very much more than a mental assenting to the contents of any verse of Scripture; and when a soul has been *divinely* quickened and awakened to its awful state by nature, it is made to realize that no creature-act of faith, no resting on the bare letter of a text by a "decision" of his own will, can bring pardon and peace. He is now made to realize that "faith" is a "*divine gift*" (Eph 2:8-9), and not a creature work, that it is wrought by "the *operation of God*" (Col 2:12), and not by the sinner himself. He is now made conscious of the fact that if ever he is to be saved, the same God who invites him to believe (Isa 45:22), yea, who commands him to believe (1Jo 3:23), must also *impart* faith to him (Eph 6:23).

Cannot you see, dear reader, that if a saving belief in Christ was the *easy* matter which the vast majority of preachers and evangelists of today say it is, that the work of the Spirit would be *quite unnecessary*! Ah, is there any wonder that the mighty power of the Spirit of God is now so rarely witnessed in Christendom?—He has been grieved, insulted, quenched, not only by the skepticism and worldliness of "Modernists," but equally so by the creature-exalting freewillism and self-ability of man "to receive Christ as his personal Saviour" of the "Fundamentalists"! Oh how very few today *really* believe those clear and emphatic words of Christ, "No man *can* come to me, *except* the Father which hath sent me [by His Spirit] *draw* him" (Joh 6:44).

Ah, my reader, when GOD truly takes a soul in hand, He brings him to *the end of himself*. He not only convicts him of the worthlessness of his own *works*, but He convinces him of the impotency of his *will*. He not only strips him of the filthy rags of his own self-righteousness, but He empties him of all self-sufficiency. He not only enables him to perceive that there is "no good thing" in him (Rom 7:18), but he also makes him feel he is "*without strength*" (Rom 5:6). Instead of concluding that *he* is the man whom God will save, he now fears that he is the man who *must* be lost forever. He is now brought down into the very dust and made to feel that he is no more able to savingly believe in Christ than he can climb up to heaven.

We are well aware that what has been said above differs radically from the current preaching of this decadent age, but we will appeal to the experience of the Christian reader. Suppose you had just suffered a heavy financial reverse and were at your wits' end to

know how to make ends meet—bills are owing, your bank has closed, you look in vain for employment, and are filled with fears over future prospects. A preacher calls and rebukes your unbelief, bidding you lay hold of the promises of God. *That* is the very thing which you *desire* to do, but *can* you by an act of your own will? Or a loved one is suddenly snatched from you—your heart is crushed, grief overwhelms you. A friend kindly bids you to “sorrow not even as others who have no hope.” Are you able by a “personal decision” to throw off your anguish and rejoice in the Lord? Ah, my reader, if a mature Christian can only “cast all his care” upon the Lord *by the Holy Spirit’s gracious enablement*, do you suppose that a poor sinner who is yet “in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity” can lay hold of Christ by a mere act of his own will?

Just as to trust in the Lord with all his heart, to be anxious for nothing, to let the morrow take care of its own concerns, is the *desire* of every Christian, but “*how to perform* that which is good” he “finds *not*” (Rom 7:18) until the Holy Spirit is pleased to graciously grant the needed enablement, so the one supreme yearning of the awakened and convicted sinner *is* to lay hold of Christ, but until the Spirit draws him *to* Christ, he finds he has no power to go out of himself, no ability to embrace what is proffered him in the Gospel. The fact is, my reader, that the heart of a sinner is as naturally indisposed for loving and appropriating the things of God as the wood which Elijah laid on the altar was to ignite, when he had poured so much water upon it, as not only to saturate the wood, but also to fill the trench round about it (1Ki 18:32-33)—a *miracle* is required for the one as much as it was for the other.

The fact is that if souls were left to themselves—to their own “free will”—after they had been truly convicted of sin, *none* would ever savingly come to Christ! A further and distinct operation of the Spirit is still needed to actually “draw” the heart to close with Christ Himself. Were the sinner left to himself, he would sink in abject despair. He would fall victim to the malice of Satan. The devil is far more powerful than we are, and never is his rage more stirred than when he fears he is about to lose one of his captives, *see* Mark 9:20. But blessed be His name, the Spirit does not desert the soul when His work is only half done—He who is “the Spirit of life” (Rom 8:2) to quicken the dead, He who is “the Spirit of truth” (Joh 16:13) to instruct the ignorant, is also “the spirit *of faith*” (2Co 4:13) to enable us to savingly believe.

And *how* does the Spirit work faith in the convicted sinner’s heart? By effectually testifying to him of the sufficiency of Christ for his every need, by assuring him of the Saviour’s readiness to receive the vilest who comes to Him. He effectually teaches him that no good qualifications need to be sought, no righteous acts performed, no penance endured in order to fit us for Christ. He reveals to the soul that conviction of sin, deep repentings, a sense of our utter helplessness, are *not* grounds of acceptance with Christ, but simply a consciousness of our spiritual wretchedness, rendering relief in a way of *grace* truly welcome. Repentance is needful not as inducing Christ to give, but as disposing us to receive. The Spirit moves us to come to Christ in the very character in which alone He receives sinners—as vile, ruined, lost. Thus, from start to finish “Salvation is *of the LORD*” (Jon 2:9)—of the Father in ordaining it, of the Son in purchasing it, *of the Spirit* in applying it.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

84. *The Object of Faith (12:2)*

The verse which is now to engage our attention continues and completes the important exhortation found in the one which was before us in the last article. The two verses are so closely related that only the requirements of space obliged us to separate them. The latter supplies such a blessed sequel to the former that it will be necessary to present a summary of our comments thereon. We saw that the Christian life, the life of faith and obedience, is presented under the figure of a “race,” which denotes that so far from its being a thing of dreamy contemplation or abstract speculation, it is one of activity, exertion, and progressive motion, for faith without works is dead. But the “race” speaks not only of activity, but of *regulated* activity, following the course which is “set before us.” Many professing Christians are engaged in multitudinous efforts which God has never bidden them undertake—that is like running round and round in a circle. To follow the appointed track means that our energies be directed by the precepts of Holy Writ.

The order presented in Hebrews 12:1 is the negative before the positive—there must be the “laying aside” of hindering weights, before we “run” the race set before us. This order is fundamental and is emphasized all through Scripture. There must be a turning from the world, before there can be a real turning unto the Lord (Isa 55:7). Self must be denied before Christ can be followed (Mat 16:24). There must be a putting off the old man, before there can be any true putting on of the new man (Eph 4:22-24). There has to be a “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,” before we can “live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world” (Ti 2:12). There has to be a “cleansing of ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,” before there can be any “perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1). We must “be not conformed to this world,” before we can be “transformed by the renewing of our mind,” so that we may “*prove* what is that good, and acceptable and perfect, will of God” (Rom 12:2-3).

Before the plants and flowers will flourish in the garden, weeds must be rooted up, otherwise all the labours of the gardener will come to naught. As the Lord Jesus taught so plainly in the parable of the sower, where the “thorns” are permitted to thrive, the good seed, the Word is “choked” (Mat 13:22), and it is very searching and solemn to note, by a careful comparison of the three records of it, that Christ interpreted this figure of the “thorns” more fully than any other single detail. He defined those choking “thorns” as “the *cares* of this world, and the *deceitfulness* of riches, and the lusts of *other* things” (Mar 4:19), and *pleasures* of this life. If those things fill and rule our hearts, our relish for spiritual things will be quenched, our strength to perform Christian duties will be sapped, our lives will be fruitless, and we shall be merely cumberers of the ground—the garden of our souls being filled with briars and weeds.

Hence it is that the *first* call in Hebrews 12:1 is, “Let us lay aside every weight” (Heb 12:1). “Inordinate care for the present life, and fondness for it, is a dead weight for the soul, that pulls it down when it should ascend upwards and pulls it back when it should press forwards” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). It is the practical duty of *mortification*

which is here inculcated, the abstaining from those fleshly lusts “which war against the soul” (1Pe 2:11). The racer must be as lightly clad as possible if he is to run swiftly—all that would cumber and impede him must be relinquished. Undue concern over temporal affairs, inordinate affection for the things of this life, the intemperate use of any material blessings, undue familiarity with the ungodly, are “weights” which prevent progress in godliness. A bag of gold would be as great a handicap to a runner as a bag of lead!

It is to be carefully noted that the laying aside of “every weight” *precedes* “and the sin which doth so easily beset us” (Heb 12:1), which has reference to indwelling corruption. Each Christian imagines that he is very anxious to be completely delivered from the power of indwelling sin. Ah, but our hearts are very deceitful and ever causing us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. A criterion is given in this passage by which we may gauge the sincerity of our desires—our longing to be delivered from indwelling evil is to be measured by our willingness and readiness to *lay aside the “weights.”* I may think I am earnestly desirous of having a beautiful garden, and may go to much expense and trouble in purchasing and planting some lovely flowers, but if I am too careless and lazy to diligently fight the weeds, what is my desire worth? So, if I disregard that word, “make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof” (Rom 13:14), how sincere is my desire to be delivered from “the flesh!”

“And let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1). For this two things are needed—speed and strength—“rejoiceth as a *strong* man to run a race” (Psa 19:5)—the one being opposed to sloth and negligence, the other to weakness. These are the prime requisites—strength in grace, diligence in exercise. Speed is included in the word “run,” but how is the strength to be obtained? This “race” calls for both the doing and suffering for Christ, the pressing forward toward the mark set before us, the progressing from one degree of strength to another, the putting forth of our utmost efforts, the enduring unto the end. Ah, who is sufficient for such a task? First, we are reminded of those who have preceded us, many, a “great cloud,” and *their* faith is recorded for our instruction, their victory for our encouragement. Yet that is not sufficient. Their cases afford us a motive, but they do not supply the needed power. Hence, we are next told:

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2). “The cloud of witnesses is not the object on which our heart is fixed. They testify of faith, and we cherish their memory with gratitude, and walk with a firmer step because of the music of their lives. Our eye, however, is fixed, not on many, but on One; not on the army, but the Leader; not on the servants, but the Lord. We see Jesus only, and from Him we derive our true strength, even as He is our light of life” (Adolph Saphir, 1831-1891). In all things Christ has the pre-eminence. He is placed here not among the other “racers,” but as One who, instead of exemplifying certain characteristics of faith, as they did, is the “author and finisher” of faith in His own person.

Our text presents the Lord as the supreme example for racers, as well as the great object of their faith, though this is somewhat obscured by the rendering of the A.V. Our text is *not* referring to Christ begetting faith in His people and sustaining it to the end, though that is a truth plainly enough taught elsewhere. Instead, He is here viewed as the

One, who Himself began and completed the whole course of faith, so as to be Himself the one perfect example and witness of what faith is. It was because of "the joy set before him" (Heb 12:1)—steadily and trustfully held in view—that *He* ran His race. *His* "enduring of the cross" was the most complete trial and most perfect exemplification of faith. In consequence, He is now seated at the right hand of God, as both the pattern and object of faith, and His promise is "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev 3:21).

It is to be duly noted that the little word "our" is a supplement, being supplied by the translators. It may without detriment, and with some advantage, be omitted. The Greek word for "author" does not mean so much one who "causes" or "originates," as one who "takes the lead." The same word is rendered "*Captain* of their salvation" in Hebrews 2:10, and in Acts 3:15, the "*Prince* of life." There its obvious meaning is Leader or Chief, one going in advance of those who follow. The Saviour is here represented as the Leader of all the long procession of those who had lived by faith, as the great pattern for us to imitate. Confirmation of this is found in the Spirit's use of the personal name "Jesus" here, rather than His title of office—"Christ." Stress is thereby laid upon His humanity. The man Jesus was so truly made like unto His brethren in all things that the life which He lived was the life of faith.

Yes, the life which Jesus lived here upon earth was a life of faith. This has not been given sufficient prominence. In this, as in all things, He is our perfect model. "By faith He walked, looking always unto the Father, speaking and acting in filial dependence on the Father, and in filial reception out of the Father's fullness. By faith He looked away from all discouragements, difficulties, and oppositions, committing His cause to the Lord, who had sent Him, to the Father, whose will He had come to fulfill. By faith He resisted and overcame all temptation, whether it came from Satan, or from the false Messianic expectations of Israel, or from His own disciples. By faith He performed the signs and wonders in which the power and love of God's salvation were symbolized. Before He raised Lazarus from the grave, He, in the energy of faith, thanked God, who heard Him alway. And here we are taught the nature of all His miracles—He trusted in God. He gave the command, 'Have faith in God,' out of the fullness of His own experience" (A. Saphir).

But let us enter into some detail. *What is a life of faith?* First, it is a life *lived in complete dependence upon God*. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him" (Pro 3:5-6). Never did any so entirely, so unreservedly, so perfectly cast himself upon God as did the man Christ Jesus, never was another so completely yielded to God's will. "I live by the Father" (Joh 6:57) was His own avowal. When tempted to turn stones into bread to satisfy His hunger, He replied, "Man shall not live by bread alone" (Mat 4:4). So sure was He of God's love and care for Him, in face of all contrary appearances, He held fast to His trust and waited for Him. So patent to all was His absolute dependence upon God, that the very scorers around the cross turned it into a bitter taunt—"He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him" (Psa 22:8).

Second, a life of faith is a life *lived in communion with God*. And never did another live in such a deep and constant realization of the divine presence as did the man Christ

Jesus. "I have set the LORD *always* before me" (Psa 16:8) was His own avowal. "He that sent me is *with* me" (Joh 8:29) was ever a present fact to His consciousness. He could say, "I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly" (Psa 22:10). "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there *prayed*" (Mar 1:35). From Bethlehem to Calvary, He enjoyed unbroken and unclouded fellowship with the Father, and after the three hours of awful darkness was over, He cried "Father, into thy hands I commit my Spirit."

Third, a life of faith is a life lived *in obedience to God*. Faith worketh by love (Gal 5:6), and love delights to please its object. Faith has respect not only to the promises of God, but to His precepts as well. Faith not only trusts God for the future, but it also produces present subjection to His will. Supremely was this fact exemplified by the man Christ Jesus. "I do always those things that please him," (Joh 8:29) He declared. "I must be about my Father's business" (Luk 2:49) characterized the whole of His earthly course. Ever and anon we find Him conducting Himself "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled" (Joh 19:28). He lived by *every* Word of God. At the close He said, "I have [kept] my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (Joh 15:10).

Fourth, a life of faith is a life *of assured confidence in an unseen future*. It is a looking away from the things of time and sense, a rising above the shows and delusions of this world, and having the affections set upon things above. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1), enabling its possessor to live now in the power and enjoyment of that which is to come. That which enthralls and enchains the ungodly had no power over the perfect Man, "I have overcome the world," (Joh 16:33) He declared. When the devil offered Him all its kingdoms, He promptly answered, "Get thee hence, Satan" (Mat 4:10). So vivid was Jesus' realization of the unseen, that, in the midst of earth's engagements, He called Himself "the Son of man which *is* in heaven" (Joh 3:13).

"And so, dear brethren, this Jesus in the absoluteness of His dependence upon the Father, in the completeness of His trust in Him, in the submission of His will to that supreme command, in the unbroken communion which He held with God, in the vividness with which the unseen ever burned before Him, and dwarfed and extinguished all the lights of the present, and in the respect which He had 'unto the recompense of the reward,' nerving Him for all pain and shame, has set before us all the example of a life of faith, and is our pattern as in everything, in this too.

"How blessed it is to feel, when we reach out our hands and grope in the darkness for the unseen hand, when we try to bow our wills to that divine will; when we seek to look beyond the mists of 'that dim spot which men call earth,' and to discern the land that is very far off; and when we endeavour to nerve ourselves for duty and sacrifice by bright visions of a future hope, that on this path of faith too, when He 'putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them'(Joh10:4), and has bade us do nothing which He Himself has not done! 'I will put my trust in him'(Heb 2:13). He says first, and then He turns to us and commands, 'Believe in God, believe also in me'" (Joh 14:1). (Alexander Maclaren, 1826-1929, to whom we are indebted for much of this article).

Alas, how very little real Christianity there is in the world today! Christianity consists in being conformed unto the image of God's Son. "Looking unto Jesus" constantly, trustfully, submissively, lovingly—the heart occupied with, the mind stayed upon Him—that is the whole secret of practical Christianity. Just in proportion as I am occupied with the example which Christ has left me, just in proportion as I am living upon Him, and drawing from His fullness, am I realizing the ideal He has set before me. In Him is the power, from Him must be received the strength for running "with patience" or steadfast perseverance, the race. Genuine Christianity is a life lived in communion with Christ, a life lived by faith, as His was. "For to me to live is Christ" (Phi 1:21). "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)—Christ living in me and through me.

There are four things said in our text about the Saviour's life, each of which we need to ponder carefully. First, *the motive or reason which prompted Jesus to do and suffer*, wherein He is presented as our example and encouragement, "who for the joy that was set before him" (Heb 12:2). Here is made known to us what was the final moving cause in His mind which sustained the Saviour to a persevering performance of duty, and of the endurance of all the sufferings that duty entailed. Various definitions have been given of that "joy," and probably all of them are included within its scope. The glory of God was what the Redeemer preferred above all things, Hebrews 10:5-9, but that glory was inseparably bound up with the personal exaltation of the Redeemer, and the salvation of His Church following the accomplishment of the work given Him to do. This was "set before him" in the everlasting covenant.

Thus the "joy" that was set before Jesus was the doing of God's will, and His anticipation of the glorious reward which should be given Him in return. Hebrews 12:2 sustains the figure used in the previous verse. It is as the model Racer our Saviour is here viewed. At the winning-post hung a crown, in full view of the racers, and this was ever before the eye of the Captain of our salvation, as He pursued the course appointed Him by the Father. He steadily kept before Him the cheering and blissful reward. His heart laid hold of the Messianic promises and prophecies recorded in Holy Writ. He had in steady prospect that satisfaction with which the travail of His soul would be fully compensated. By faith Abraham looked forward to a "city" (Heb 11:10), by faith Isaac anticipated "things to come" (Heb 11:20), by faith Moses "had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb 11:26), and by faith Jesus lived and died in the enjoyment of that which was "set before Him."

Second, He "endured the cross." Therein we have *the Commander's example to His soldiers* of heroic fortitude. Those words signify far more than that He experienced the shame and pain of crucifixion. They tell us that He stood steadfast under it all. He endured the cross not sullenly or even stoically, but in the highest and noblest sense of the term—with holy composure of soul. He never wavered or faltered, murmured or complained, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (Joh 18:11)! And He has left us an example that we should "follow his steps" (1Pe 2:21), and therefore does He declare, "If any man will come after *me*, let him deny himself, and take up *his* cross" (Mat 16:24). Strength for this task is to be found by "looking unto Jesus," by keeping steadily before faith's eye the crown, the joy awaiting us.

Third, “despising the shame.” Therein we see *the Captain’s contempt of whatever sought to bar His progress*. We scarcely think of associating this word “despising” with the meek and lowly Jesus. It is an ugly term, yet there are things which deserve it. The Saviour viewed things in their true perspective. He estimated them at their proper worth. In the light of the joy set before Him, He regarded hardship, ignominy, persecution, sufferings from men, as trifles. Here, too, He has left us “an example.” But alas, instead of scorning it, *we* magnify and are intimidated by “the shame.” How many are ashamed to be scripturally baptized and wear His uniform. How many are ashamed to openly confess Christ before the world. Meditate more upon the reward, the crown, the eternal joy—that outweighs all the little sacrifices we are now called upon to make.

Fourth, “and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Here we witness *the Captain’s triumph*, His actual entrance into the joy anticipated, His being crowned with glory and honour. His “sitting down” denoted three things. First, *rest* after finished work, the race run. Second, being invested with *dominion*. He now occupies the place of supreme sovereignty, Matthew 28:18, Philippians 2:10. Third, being intrusted with the prerogative of *judgment*, John 17:2, Acts 17:30. And what have these three things to do with us, His unworthy followers? Much indeed—eternal rest is assured the successful racer, Revelation 14:13. A place on Christ’s throne is promised the overcomer, Revelation 3:21. Dominion too is the future portion of him who vanquishes this world, Revelation 2:26-27. Finally, it is written, “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” (1Co 6:3). “Joint-heirs with Christ; *if so be that we suffer with him*, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom 8:17).

One other word in our text yet remains to be considered, “looking unto Jesus the *author* [Captain] and *finisher* [Perfecter] of our faith” (Heb 12:2). We have already seen from the other occurrences of this term (in its various forms) in our epistle, that it is a very full one. Here, we believe, it has at least a twofold force. First, Completer—Jesus is the *first* and the *last* as an example of confidence in and submission unto God. He is the most complete model of faith and obedience that can be brought before us. Instead of including Him with the heroes of faith in chapter eleven, He is here distinguished from them, as being above them. He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending. As there was none hitherto who could be compared with Him, so there will be none hereafter. “Author and Finisher” or “Captain and Completer” means Jesus is beyond all comparison.

The fact that we are bidden to be looking unto Jesus *as* “the Leader and Finisher of faith” also denotes that He perfects our faith. How? First, by His grace flowing into us. We need something more than a flawless Model set before us. Who can in his own strength imitate the perfect Man? But Christ has not only gone before His own, He also dwells in their hearts by faith, and as they yield themselves to His control (and only so) does He live *through* them. Second, by *leading us* (Psa 23:3) along the path of discipline and trial, drawing our hearts away from the things of earth, and fixing them upon Himself. He often makes us lonesome here that we may seek *His* companionship. Finally, by actually conducting us to glory. He will “come again” (Joh 14:3) and conform us to His image.

“Looking unto Jesus.” The person of the Saviour is to be the “mark” on which the eyes of those who are pressing forward for the prize of the high calling of God are to be fixed. Be constantly “looking” to Him, trustfully, submissively, hopefully, expectantly. He is the

fountain of all grace (Joh 1:16). Our every need is supplied by God “according to his riches in glory *by Christ Jesus*” (Phi 4:19). Then seek the help of the Holy Spirit that the eye of faith be steadfastly fixed on Christ. He has declared, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” then let us add, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb 13:5-6). Salvation is by grace, *through faith*. It is through “faith” we are saved, not only from hell, but also from this world (1Jo 5:4), from temptation, from the power of indwelling sin—by coming to Christ, *trusting* in Him, drawing from *Him*.

What are the things which *hinder* us running? An active devil, an evil world, indwelling sin, mysterious trials, fierce opposition, afflictions which almost make us doubt the love of the Father. Then call to mind the “great clouds of witnesses” (Heb 12:1). They were men of like passions with us, they encountered the same difficulties and discouragements, they met with the same hindrances and obstacles. But they ran “with patience,” they overcame, they won the victor’s crown. How? By “looking unto Jesus,” see Hebrews 11:26. But more—look away from difficulties (Rom 4:19), from self, from fellow-racers, unto Him who has left us an example to follow, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, so that *He is able* to succour the tempted, strengthen the weak, guide the perplexed, supply our every need. Let the heart be centered in and the mind stayed upon HIM.

The more we are “looking unto Jesus” the easier will it be to “lay aside every weight.” It is at this point so many fail. If the Christian denies self of different things *without an adequate motive (for Christ’s sake)*, he will still secretly hanker after the things relinquished. Or ere long return to them, or become proud of his little sacrifices and become self-righteous. The most effective way of getting a child to drop any dirty or injurious object, is to proffer him something better. The best way to make a tired horse move more quickly, is not to use the whip, but to turn his head toward *home*! So, if our hearts be occupied with the sacrificial love of Christ for us, we shall be “constrained” thereby to drop all which displeases Him, and the more we dwell upon the joy set before us, the more strength shall we have to run “with patience the race that is set before us.”

THE LIFE OF DAVID

36. *His Victory over the Philistines*

“But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David” (2Sa 5:17). The civil war in Israel, which had continued for several years, having been brought to an end, and the whole nation being now united under the government of David, he had thereby become much more powerful. Probably hearing, too, of David’s capture of Jerusalem (2Sa 5:7) and of the friendship shown him by Hiram king of Tyre (2Sa 5:11), the Philistines now thought it was high time to bestir themselves and put an end to his prowess. Accordingly they assembled a great army against him, but were overthrown, though not annihilated.

The typical significance of the above (by which we mean its prophetic and dispensational foreshadowings) points to much that is recorded in the Book of Acts, which, in turn, presages that which was to obtain more or less throughout the whole of this Christian era. As soon as the kingdom of Christ had been set up in the world, it was vigorously attacked by the powers of darkness, which, by the combined forces of Jews and Gentiles, sought to overthrow it. Definite proof of this is found in Acts 4, where we read of the arrest of Peter and John, their being summoned before the Sanhedrin, being threatened by them, and subsequently released. On returning to their own company and reporting their experiences, they all “with one accord” quoted from the second Psalm, which some—probably with good reason—conclude was written by David just after his victory over the Philistines.

That part quoted from the second Psalm was, “Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the LORD, and against his Christ” (Act 4:25-26). This is a clear intimation from the Spirit Himself that the substance of these verses is by no means to be restricted unto the opposition made by the powers of evil (through their human emissaries) against Christ personally during the days of His flesh, but include also Christ mystical, His church, and is a prophetic intimation of the continuous enmity of the serpent against the woman’s seed, i.e., Christ and His people. But as the remainder of the second Psalm shows, all such opposition will prove futile, for “He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet” (1Co 15:25).

In this article, however, we do not propose to develop at length the prophetic application of David’s victories over the Philistines, but rather shall we endeavour to concentrate upon the spiritual and practical bearings of the same. Surely *this* is what our poor hearts stand most in need of in this “cloudy and dark day” (Eze 34:12)—that which, under God’s blessing, will better equip us to fight the good fight of faith, that which will instruct and encourage for running the race that is set before *us*. There is a “time” and “season” for everything. While it is our happy privilege to admire and study the handiwork of God in creation, yet neither the pleasure of beholding the beautiful flowers nor investigating the mystery of the planets would be in order if an enemy were at our doors, and we were called upon to defend our lives. The same principle applies to concentrating upon one or more of the many different departments of Scripture study.

It was to carry forward the conquest of Canaan—begun by Joshua, but long interrupted, see Judges 1:21-36—that God had raised up David. “And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you: now then do it: for the LORD hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies” (2Sa 3:17-18). Chief among Israel’s enemies were the Philistines. They had long been a serious menace to God’s people, and eventually succeeded in slaying Saul and his sons, 1 Samuel 31:1-6. But now the time had come for God to stain their pride, fight against them, and overthrow their forces. “The triumphing of the wicked is short” (Job 20:5), so discovered Pharaoh, Haman, Rabshakeh, Nero, and so shall it be with those who now oppose the Lord and His people.

“But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David” (2Sa 5:17). First of all let us behold and admire here the providential dealings of God, “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things” (Rom 11:36). Nothing happens by chance in this world, and the actions of the wicked are just as truly controlled, yea, and directed, by the Governor of this world, as are those of the righteous. It was of the Lord that these Philistines threatened Israel at this time, and therein we may perceive His grace toward His servant. They were the enemies of JEHOVAH, and belonged to the people He had commanded Israel to destroy. But to take the initiative against them, David might feel was the height of ingratitude, for on two occasions the Philistines had given him protection when sorely persecuted by Saul (1Sa 27:1-3; 28:1-2). By God’s moving the Philistines to take the initiative, David’s scruples were subdued.

Though David had ascended the throne of Israel, this did not deter his former enemies, rather did it excite their jealousy and stirred them up to come against him. Therein we may find an illustration of Satan’s ways against the saints. Whenever an advance step is taken for God, or whenever honour is put upon the true King and Christ is given His proper place in our arrangements, the enemy is on hand to oppose. Let Abraham return unto “the place of the altar” and at once there is strife between his herdsmen and those of Lot (Gen 13:4-7). Let Joseph receive a divine revelation in a dream, and immediately the cruel envy of his brethren is stirred against him (Gen 37). Let Elijah triumph over the false prophets upon Carmel, and Jezebel threatens his life. Many such cases are also found in the Book of Acts. These are recorded for *our* instruction. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

Let, then, the attack of the Philistines upon David right after his coronation warn *us* against finding security in any spiritual prosperity we may have been blest with. High altitudes are apt to make the head dizzy. No sooner had David made Zion his own city, and that to the glory of the Lord, than the Philistines came up against him. The very next words after the boastful, “LORD, by thy favour thou hast made *my* mountain to stand *strong*,” are, “Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled” (Psa 30:7). Our “strength” is to maintain a conscious *weakness* (2Co 12:10). Every spiritual advance needs to be accompanied by watchfulness and prayer. “Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off” (1Ki 20:11)!

“The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim” (2Sa 5:18). The valley of Rephaim was but a very short distance from Jerusalem. No doubt the Philistines expected to make themselves masters of that strategic city before David had time to complete the fortification of it. In the words “spread themselves” indication is given that their force was a large one, “*all* the Philistines” (2Sa 5:17) probably denotes that their five principalities (1Sa 6:16-18) were here combined together. Little did they realize that they were rushing onward to their destruction, for they knew not the might of David’s scepter nor the power of JEHOVAH who had exalted him. The Philistines were unaware of the fact that the living God was *for* David, as He had not been for Saul.

Let us now consider David’s response unto the threatening presence of the Philistine hosts. “And David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand?” (2Sa 5:19). This is very blessed, accentuated by the final clause in verse 17, which is in marked contrast from what is recorded in verse 18. In the

one we read, “and David heard of it, and *went down* to the hold.” In the other, we are told that the Philistines “came and *spread themselves* in the valley of Rephaim.” In sharp antithesis from the self-confident Pharisees, David took a lowly place and evidenced his dependence upon God. Instead of accepting their challenge and immediately engaging them in battle, David turned to the Lord and inquired *His* will for him. O that writer and reader may cultivate this spirit more and more. It is written “In all thy ways *acknowledge him*,” and the promise is, “and he shall direct thy paths” (Pro 3:6).

“And David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand?” (2Sa 5:19). Not as the mighty man of valour did he impetuously rush ahead, but as the man submissive to his God did the king here act—most probably it was through Abiathar, by means of the Urim and Thummin in his ephod, that the Lord’s mind was sought. His inquiry was twofold—concerning his duty and concerning his success, “his conscience asked the former, his prudence the latter” (Matthew Henry). His first concern was to make sure he had a divine commission against the Philistines. In view of 2 Samuel 3:18, his duty seemed clear, but the question was, Is it *God’s* time for me to act *now*! His second concern was whether the Lord would prosper his efforts, for he realized that victory was entirely dependent upon God—unless *He* delivered the Philistines into his hand, all would be in vain.

“And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand” (2Sa 5:19). He who has said, “Seek ye *my* face” will not mock that soul who sincerely and trustfully responds with, “my *heart* said unto thee, thy face, LORD, will I seek” (Psa 27:8). Gods of wood and stone, the idols of earthly fame and material wealth, will fail their devotees in the hour of need, but the living God will not disappoint those who are subject unto Him and seek His aid in the time of emergency. The Lord is ever “very *present* help in trouble” (Psa 46:1), and the sure promise is “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (Jam 4:8). The divine ordering of our ways, the directing of our steps, is urgently needed by all of us, nor will it be withheld if sought after the appointed order.

“And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand” (2Sa 5:19). This also is recorded for *our* instruction and comfort. Then let us earnestly seek faith to appropriate the same and make it *our own*. Those words were graciously spoken by the Lord to encourage and nerve David for battle. We too are called upon *to fight* —“fight the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12). Yes, and it is only as *faith* is in exercise, only as the divine promises are actually *laid hold of* (expectantly *pleaded* before God), that we shall fight with good success. Has not God said *to us* He will “bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom 16:20). How *that* ought to animate us for the conflict! If we lay hold of that promise we shall be able to exclaim, “I therefore so run, *not as uncertainly*; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air” (1Co 9:26).

“And David came to Baal-perazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters” (2Sa 5:20). Here, too, David has left a noble example for us to follow, and the more closely we do so, the more will God be honored, and the more will further successes be assured for us. Having obtained mercy to be dependent, David found grace to be humble, and ascribed the victory

unto its true author, "*The LORD* hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me"—as when a swollen river bursts its banks and carries all before it. In every forward step, in every resistance of temptation, in every success in service, learn to acknowledge, "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1Co 15:10). May writer and reader be delivered from the self-praising, boastful, Laodicean spirit of this evil age, saying, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory" (Psa 115:1).

"And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them" (2Sa 5:21). No doubt the Philistines had expected both protection and help from their idols, but they failed them in the hour of need. Equally vain and impotent will prove any visible or material thing in which we put our trust. Now they were unwilling to preserve such gods as were unable to preserve them, God can make men sick of those things that they have been most fond of, and compel them to desert what they doted upon, and cast even the idols of silver, and gold to the moles and bats, Isaiah 2:20 (Matthew Henry.) In *burning* the idols of the Philistines, David not only made clean work of his victory, but *obeyed* God's order in Deuteronomy 7:5, "ye shall...burn their graven images with fire."

"And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim" (2Sa 5:22). Yes, even though we have the promise, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jam 4:7), there is no assurance given that he will not return. He departed from the Saviour only "for a season" (Luk 4:13), and thus it is with His followers. Yet let not his return to the attack discourage us. It is but a summons to renewed waiting upon God, seeking *fresh* strength from Him daily, hourly. "And when David inquired of the LORD, he said" (2Sa 5:23). On this second occasion also David sought divine guidance. Even though he had been successful in the first battle, he realized that further victory depended entirely upon the Lord, and for that he must be completely subject to Him.

"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). This is very striking. Here was the same enemies to be met, in the same place, and under the same Lord of hosts, and yet God's answer now is the very opposite of the previous one. Then it was, "Go up," now it is "Go not up," but make for their rear—circumstances may seem identical to human sight, yet on each occasion God is to be sought unto, trusted and obeyed, or victory cannot be ensured. A real test of obedience was this for David, but he did not argue or decline to respond. Instead, he meekly bowed to the Lord's will. *Here* is the man "after God's own heart"—who waited upon the Lord, and acted by His answer when it was given. Nor did he lose by it, "For then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines" (2Sa 5:24). God is ready to do still greater things when we own what He has already done for us!

"And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer" (2Sa 5:25). "David observed his orders, waited God's motions, and stirred then, and not till then" (Matthew Henry). Complete success was granted him. God performed His promise and routed all the enemy's forces. How that should encourage *us*! "When the kingdom of the Messiah was to be set up, the apostles,

who were to beat down the devil's kingdom, must not attempt anything till they receive the promise of the Spirit, who 'came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind' (Act 2:2), which was typified by this 'sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees,' and when they heard that, they must bestir themselves, and did so. They went forth conquering and to conquer" (Matthew Henry).

THE COVENANTS OF GOD

3c. The Adamic (Continued)

Before entering into detail upon the nature and terms of the compact which God made with Adam, it may be well to obviate an objection which some are likely to make against the whole subject, namely, that since the mere *word* "covenant" is not to be found in the historical account of Genesis, therefore to speak of the Adamic Covenant is naught but a "theological invention." There is a certain class of people, posing as ultra-orthodox, who imagine they have a reverence and respect for Holy Writ as the final court of appeal which surpasses that of their fellows. They say, Show me a passage which expressly states God made a "covenant" with Adam, and that will settle the matter, but until you can produce a verse with the exact term "Adamic Covenant" in it, I shall believe no such thing.

Our reason for referring to this paltry quibble is because it illustrates a very superficial approach to God's Word which is becoming more and more prevalent in certain quarters, and which stands badly in need of being corrected. Words are only counters or signs after all (different writers use them with varying latitude, as is sometimes the case in Scripture itself), and to be unduly occupied with the *shell* often results in a failure to obtain the kernel within. Some Unitarians refuse to believe in the tri-unity of God, merely because no verse be found which categorically affirms there are "three persons in the Godhead" or where the *word* "Trinity" is used. But what matters the absence of the mere *word* itself, when three distinct divine persons are clearly delineated in the Word of truth! For the same reason others repudiate the fact of the "total depravity" of fallen man, which is the height of absurdity when Scripture depicts him as corrupt in *all* the faculties of his being.

Surely I need not to be *told* that a certain person has been born again if all the evidences of regeneration are clearly discernible in his life. And if I am furnished with a full description of his immersion, the mere *word* "baptism" does not make it any more sure and definite to my mind. Our first search, then, in Genesis, is not for the term "covenant," but to see whether or not we can trace the outlines of a solemn and definite pact between God and Adam. We say this not because the word itself is never associated with our first parents—for elsewhere it is—but because we are anxious that certain of our readers may be delivered from the evil mentioned above. To dismiss from our minds all thoughts of an Adamic Covenant simply because the *term* itself occurs not in Genesis 1 to 5 is to read those chapters very superficially and miss much which lies only a little beneath their surface.

Let us now remind ourselves of the essential elements of a "covenant." Briefly stated, any covenant is a mutual agreement entered into by two or more parties, whereby they stand solemnly bound to each other to perform the conditions contracted for. Amplifying that definition, it may be pointed out that the terms of a covenant are—first, there is a stipulation of something to be done or given by that party proposing the covenant. Second, there is a restipulation by the other party of something to be done or given in consideration. Third, those stipulations must be lawful and right, for it can never be right to engage to do wrong. Fourth, there is a penalty included in the terms of agreement, some evil consequence to result to the party who may and shall violate his engagement, that penalty being added as a security.

A "covenant" then is a disposition of things, an arrangement concerning them, a mutual agreement about them. But again we would remind the reader that words are but arbitrary things, and we are never safe in trusting to a single term, as though from it *alone* we could collect the right knowledge of the thing. No, our inquiry is into the thing itself. What are the matters of *fact* to which these terms are applied? Was there any moral transaction between God and Adam wherein the above-mentioned four principles were involved? Was there any proposition made by God to man of something to be done by the latter? any stipulation of something to be given by the former? any agreement of both? any penal sanction? To such interrogations every accurate observer of the contents of Genesis 1 to 3 must answer affirmatively.

"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). Here are all the constituent elements of a covenant. First, there are the contracting parties, the Lord God and man. Second, there is a stipulation enjoined, which man (as he was duty bound) engaged to perform. Third, there was a penalty prescribed, which would be incurred in case of failure. Fourth, there was by clear and necessary implication a reward promised, to which Adam would be entitled by his fulfillment of the condition. Finally, the "tree of life" was the divine "*seal*" or ratification of the covenant, as the rainbow was the seal of the covenant which God made with Noah. Later, we shall endeavour to furnish clear proof of each of these statements.

"We here have, in the beginning of the world, distinctly placed before us, as the parties to the covenant, the Creator and the creature, the Governor and the governed. In the covenant itself, brief as it is, we have concentrated all those primary, anterior, and eternal principles of truth, righteousness, and justice, which enter necessarily into the nature of the great God, and which must always pervade His government, under whatever dispensation. We have a full recognition of His authority to govern His intelligent creatures, according to these principles, and we have a perfect acknowledgment on the part of man, that in all things he is subject, as a rational and accountable being, to the will and direction of the infinitely wise and benevolent Creator. No part of a covenant therefore, in its proper sense, is wanting" (R. B. Howell, 1801-1868, "The Covenant," 1855).

There was, then, a formal compact between God and man concerning obedience and disobedience, reward and punishment, and where there is a binding law pertaining to such matters and an agreement upon them by both parties concerned, there is a "covenant"—

compare Genesis 21:27 and what precedes Genesis 31:44 and what follows. In this covenant, Adam acted not as a private person for himself only, but as the federal head and representative of the whole of his posterity. In that capacity he served alone, Eve not being a federal head jointly with him, but was included in it, she being (later, we believe) formed out of him. In this Adam was a type of Christ, with whom God made the Everlasting Covenant, and who at the appointed time acted as the Head and Representative of His people, as it is written, "over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come" (Rom 5:14).

The most conclusive proof that Adam *did* enter into a covenant with God on the behalf of his posterity is found in the penal evils which came upon the race in consequence of its head's disobedience. From the awful curse which passed upon all his posterity we are compelled to infer the *legal relation* which existed between Adam and them, for the Judge of all the earth, being righteous, will not punish where there is no crime. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that [or "in whom"] all have sinned" (Rom 5:12). Here is the fact, and from it we must infer the preceding cause of it—under the government of a righteous God the suffering of holy beings *unconnected* with sin is an impossibility. It would be the very acme of injustice that Adam's sin should be the cause of death passing on all men, unless all men were morally and legally connected with him.

That Adam stood as the federal head of his race and transacted for them, and that all his posterity were contemplated by God as being morally and legally (as well as seminally) in Adam, is clear from almost everything that was said to him in the first three chapters of Genesis. The language there used plainly intimates that it was spoken to the whole human race, and not to Adam as a single individual, but spoken to *them* and of *them*. The first time "man" is mentioned it evidently signifies all mankind and not Adam alone, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let THEM have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and [not simply "the garden of Eden," but] *over all the earth*" (Gen 1:26). All men bear the name of their representative (as the Church is designated after its Head, 1 Corinthians 12:12), for the Hebrew for "every man" in Psalm 39:6, 11 is "all Adam"—plain evidence of their being one in the eye of the law.

In like manner, what God said to Adam after he had sinned, was said *to* and *of* all mankind, and the evil to which he was doomed in this world, as the consequence of his transgression, equally falls upon his posterity, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life...In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen 3:17, 19). As this sentence "unto dust shalt *thou* return" did not respect Adam only, but all his descendants, so the same language in the original threat had respect unto all mankind, "In the day that thou eatest thereof *thou* shalt surely die" (Gen 2:17). This is reduced to a certainty by the unequivocal declarations of Romans 5:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:22. The curse came upon all, so the sin must have been committed by all.

The terms of the covenant are related in or clearly inferable from the language of Genesis 2:17. That covenant demanded as its condition, perfect obedience. Nor was that in any way difficult. One test only was instituted by which that obedience was to be formally expressed, namely, abstinence from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had endowed Adam, in his creation, with a perfect and universal rectitude (Eccl 7:29), so that he was fully able to respond to all requirements of his Maker. He had a full knowledge of God's will concerning his duty. There was no bias in him toward evil, having been created in the image and likeness of God, his affections were pure and holy (cf. Eph 4:24). How simple and easy was the observance of the obligation! How appalling the consequences of its violations!

"The tendency of such a divine precept is to be considered. Man is thereby taught: 1. That God is Lord of all things, and that it is unlawful for man even to desire an apple, but with His leave. In all things therefore, from the greatest to the least, the mouth of the Lord is to be consulted, as to what He would, or would not have done by us. 2. That man's true happiness is placed in God alone, and nothing is to be desired but with submission to God, and in order to employ it for Him. So that it is *He* only, on whose account all thing appear good and desirable to man. 3. Readily to be satisfied without even the most delightful and desirable things, if God so command, and to think there is much more good in obedience to the divine precept than in the enjoyment of the most delightful thing in the world. 4. That man was not yet arrived at the utmost pitch of happiness, but to expect a still greater good, after his course of obedience was over. This was hinted by the prohibition of the most delightful tree, whose fruit was, of any other, greatly to be desired, and this argued some degree of imperfection in that state in which man was forbid the enjoyment of some good" (The Economy of the Covenants, 1660, Hermann Witsius, 1636-1708).

Unto that prohibitive statute was annexed a promise. This is an essential element in a covenant—a reward being guaranteed upon its terms being fulfilled. So here, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen 2:17) necessarily implies the converse—"If thou eatest not thereof thou shalt surely live." Just as "Thou shalt not steal" (Exo 20:15). inevitably involves "Thou shalt conduct thyself honestly and honourably," just as "rejoice in the Lord" (Phi 4:4). includes "murmur not against Him," so according to the simplest laws of construction the threats of death as a consequence of eating, affirmed the promise of life to obedience. God will be no man's debtor. The general principle of "in keeping of them [the divine commandments] there is great reward" (Psa 19:11) admits of no exception.

A certain good, a spiritual blessing, *in addition to* what Adam and Eve (and their posterity in him) already possessed, was assured upon his obedience. Had Adam been *without* a promise, he had been without a well-grounded hope for the future, for the hope which maketh not ashamed is founded upon the promise (Rom 4:18 etc.). As Romans 7:10 so plainly affirms, "the commandment, which was ordained *to life*," or more accurately (for the word "ordained" is supplied by the translators) "the commandment which was unto life"—having "life" as the reward for obedience. And again, "the law is not of faith: but, The man that *doeth* them *shall live* in them" (Gal 3:12). But the law was "weak through the flesh" (Rom 8:3), Adam being a mutable, fallible, mortal, creature.

Against what has been said above it is objected, Adam was *already* in possession of spiritual life, how, then, could “life” be the reward promised for his obedience? It is true that Adam was in the enjoyment of spiritual life, being completely holy and happy, but he was *on probation*, and his response to the test God gave him, his obedience or disobedience to His command, would determine whether that spiritual life should be *continued*, or whether it would be forfeited. Had Adam complied with the terms of the covenant, then he had been *confirmed* in his creature standing, in the favour of God toward him, in communion with his Maker, in the happy state of an earthly paradise. He would then have passed beyond the possibility of apostasy and misery. The reward, or additional good, which would have followed Adam’s obedience, was a state of inalienable blessedness both for himself and his posterity.

The well-informed reader will observe from the above that we are not in accord with Hermann Witsius and some other prominent theologians of the Puritan period, who taught that the reward promised Adam upon his obedience was the heavenly heritage. Their arguments upon this point do not seem to us at all conclusive, nor are we aware of anything in Scripture which may be cited in proof thereof. An inalienable title to the earthly paradise is, we think, what the promise denoted. Rather was it reserved for the incarnate Son of God, by the inestimable worth of His obedience unto death, to merit for His people everlasting bliss on High. Therefore we are told that He has ushered in a “better covenant” with “*better promises*” (Heb 8:6). The last Adam has secured, both for God and for His people, *more* than was lost by the defection of the first Adam.

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

10. Its Results

The justification of the believer is absolute, complete, final. “It is *God* that justifieth” (Rom 8:33), and “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). So absolute and inexorable is this blessed fact that, in Romans 8:30 we are told, “Whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Notice it is not simply a promise that God “*will* glorify,” but so sure and certain is that blissful event, the past tense is used. “Them he also glorified” is speaking from the standpoint of the eternal and unalterable purpose of God, concerning which there is no conditionality or contingency whatsoever. To be “glorified” is to be perfectly conformed to the lovely image of Christ, when we shall see Him as He is and be made like Him (1Jo 3:2). Because God has determined this, He speaks of it as already accomplished, for He “callethe those things which be not as though they were” (Rom 4:17).

So far as the believer is concerned, the penal side of the sin question has been settled once and for all. His case has been tried in the supreme court, and God has justified him. In consequence thereof the divine decision is “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). Once those very persons *were* under

condemnation—"condemned already" (Joh 3:18), but *now* that their faith has united them to Christ there is *no* condemnation. The debt of their sin has been paid by their great Surety. The record thereof has been "blotted out" by His cleansing blood. "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth" (Rom 8:33-34). Who will reverse *His* decision! Where is that superior tribunal to which this cause can be carried? Eternal justice has pronounced her fiat—immutable judgment has recorded her sentence.

It is utterly and absolutely impossible that the sentence of the divine Judge should ever be revoked or reversed. His sentence of justification results from and rests upon a complete satisfaction having been offered to His law, and that in the fulfillment of a covenant engagement. Thus is effectually precluded the recall of the verdict. The Father stipulated to release His elect from the curse of the law provided the Son would meet the claims of justice against them. The Son freely complied with His Father's will, "Lo, I come" (Heb 10:7). He was now made under the law, fulfilled the law, and suffered the full penalty of the law, therefore shall He see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Sooner shall the lightnings of omnipotence shiver the Rock of Ages than those sheltering in Him again be brought under condemnation.

How very, very far from the glorious truth of the Gospel is the mere *conditional* pardon which Arminians represent God as bestowing upon those who come to Christ—a pardon which may be rescinded, yea, which *will be* canceled, unless they "do their part" and perform certain stipulations! What a horrible and blasphemous travesty of the truth is that!—an error which must be steadfastly resisted no matter who holds it. Better far to hurt the feelings of a million of our fellow-creatures than to displease their august Creator. On no such precarious basis as *our* fulfilling certain conditions has God suspended the justification of His people. Not only is there "*now* no condemnation" resting upon the believer, but there *never* again shall me, for "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom 4:8).

The dread sentence of the law, "thou shalt surely die" (Gen 2:17). cannot in justice be executed upon the sinner's Surety and also upon himself. Hence by a necessity existing in the very nature of moral government, it *must* follow that the believing sinner be freed from all condemnation, that is, so cleared of the same that he is raised above all liability to punishment. So declared our blessed Saviour Himself, in words too plain and emphatic to admit of any misunderstanding, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and *shall not come* into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (Joh 5:24). He, the habitation of whose throne is "justice and judgment," has sealed up this declaration forever, by affirming, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb 13:5). Sooner shall the sword of justice cleave the helmet of the Almighty than any divinely pardoned soul perish.

But not only are the sins of all who truly come to Christ eternally remitted, but the very righteousness of the Redeemer passes over to them, is placed upon them, so that a perfect obedience to the law is imputed to their account. It is theirs, not by promise, but by gift (Rom 5:17), by actual bestowment. It is not simply that God treats them as if they were righteous, they *are* righteous and so pronounced by Him. And therefore may each believing soul exclaim, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my

God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isa 61:10). O that each Christian reader may be enabled to clearly and strongly grasp hold of this glorious fact—that he is now truly righteous in the sight of God, is in actual possession of an obedience which answers every demand of the law.

This unspeakable blessing is bestowed not only by the amazing grace of God, but it is actually required by His inexorable *justice*. This too was stipulated and agreed upon in the covenant into which the Father entered with the Son. That is why the Redeemer lived here on earth for upwards of thirty years before He went to the cross to suffer the penalty of our sins, He assumed and discharged our responsibilities. As a child, as a youth, as a man, He rendered unto God that perfect obedience which we owed Him. He fulfilled all righteousness (Mat 3:15) for His people, and just as He who knew no sin was made sin for them, so they are now made "the righteousness of God in him" (2Co 5:21). And therefore does JEHOVAH declare, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness *shall not depart* from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee" (Isa 54:10).

By actually believing with a justifying faith, the sinner doth receive Christ Himself, is joined to Him, and becomes immediately an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ. This gives him a right unto and an interest in the benefits of His mediation. By faith in Christ he received not only the forgiveness of sins, but "an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Act 26:19), the Holy Spirit (given to him) being "the earnest of our inheritance" (Eph 1:13-14). The believing sinner may now say "in the LORD have I righteousness" (Isa 45:24). He is "*complete* in him" (Col 2:10), for by "one offering" the Saviour hath "*perfected for ever* them that are sanctified" (Heb 10:14). The believer has been "accepted in the beloved" (Eph 1:6), and stands before the throne of God arrayed in a garment more excellent than that which is worn by the holy angels.

How infinitely does the glorious Gospel of God transcend the impoverished thoughts and schemes of men! How immeasurably superior is that "everlasting righteousness" which Christ has brought in (Dan 9:24) from that miserable thing which multitudes are seeking to produce by their own efforts. Greater far is the difference between the shining light of the midday sun and the blackness of the darkest night, than between that "best robe" (Luk 15:22) which Christ has wrought out for each of His people and that wretched covering which zealous religionists are attempting to weave out of the filthy rags of their own righteousness. Equally great is the difference between the truth of God concerning the *present* and *immutable* standing of His saints in all the acceptability of Christ, and the horrible perversion of Arminians who make acceptance with God contingent upon the believer's faithfulness and perseverance, who suppose that heaven can be purchased by the creature's deeds and doings.

It is not that the justified soul is now left to himself, so that he is certain of getting to heaven no matter how he conducts himself—the fatal error of Antinomians. No indeed. God also imparts to him the blessed Holy Spirit, who works within him the desire to serve, please, and glorify the One who has been so gracious to Him. "The love of Christ

constraineth us...that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2Co 5:14-15). They now "delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom 7:22), and though the flesh, the world, and the devil oppose every step of the way, occasioning many a sad fall—which is repented of, confessed, and forsaken—nevertheless the Spirit renews them day by day (2Co 4:16) and leads them in the paths of righteousness for Christ's name's sake.

In the last paragraph will be found the answer to those who object that the preaching of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith alone, will encourage carelessness and foster licentiousness. Those whom God justifies are not left in their natural condition, under the dominion of sin, but are quickened, indwelt, and guided by the Holy Spirit. As Christ cannot be divided, and so is received as Lord to rule us as well as Saviour to redeem us, so those whom God justifies He also sanctifies. We do not affirm that all who receive this blessed truth into their heads have their lives transformed thereby—no indeed, but we do insist that where it is applied in power to the heart there always follows a walk to the glory of God, the fruits of righteousness being brought forth to the praise of His name. Each truly justified soul will say,

*"Let worldly minds the world pursue,
It has no charms for me;
I once admired its trifles too,
But grace has set me free."*

It is therefore the bounden duty of those who profess to have been justified by God to diligently and impartially examine themselves, to ascertain whether or not they have in them those spiritual graces which *always accompany justification*. It is by our sanctification, and that alone, that we may discover our justification. Would you know whether Christ fulfilled the law *for you*, that His obedience has been imputed to *your* account? then search your heart and life and see whether a spirit of *obedience to Him* is daily working in you. The righteousness of the law is fulfilled only in those who "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom 8:4). God never designed that the obedience of His Son should be imputed to those who live a life of worldliness, self-pleasing, and gratifying the lusts of the flesh. Far from it, "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).

Summarizing now the blessed *results* of justification. 1. *The sins of the believer are forgiven*. "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by him all that believe are justified from all things" (Act 13:38-39). All the sins of the believer, past, present, and to come, were laid upon Christ and atoned for by Him. Although sins cannot be actually pardoned before they are actually committed yet their obligation *unto the curse* of the law were virtually remitted at the cross, antecedently to their actual commission. The sins of Christians involve only the governmental dealings of God in this life, and these are remitted upon a sincere repentance and confession.

2. *An inalienable title unto everlasting glory is bestowed*. Christ purchased for His people the reward of blessing of the law, which is eternal life. Therefore does the Holy Spirit assure the Christian that he has been begotten "to an inheritance incorruptible, and

undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1Pe 1:4). Not only is that inheritance *reserved* for all the justified, but they are all *preserved* unto it, as the very next verse declares, "who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1Pe 1:5)—"kept" from committing the unpardonable sin, from apostatising from the truth, from being fatally deceived by the devil—*so* "kept" that the power of God prevents anything separating them from His love in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:35-38).

3. *Reconciliation unto God Himself.* "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom 5:1, 10). Until men are justified they are at war with God, and He is against them, being "angry with the wicked every day" (Psa 7:11). Dreadful beyond words is the condition of those who are under condemnation—their minds are enmity against God (Rom 8:7), all their ways are opposed to Him (Col 1:21). But at conversion the sinner throws down the weapons of his rebellion and surrenders to the righteous claims of Christ and by Him he is reconciled to God. Reconciliation is to make an end of strife, to bring together those at variance, to change enemies into friends. Between God and the justified there is peace—effected by the blood of Christ.

4. *An unalterable standing in the favour of God.* "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand" (Rom 5:1-2). Mark the word "also," not only has Christ turned away the wrath of God from us, but in addition He has secured the benevolence of God toward us. Previous to justification our standing was one of unutterable disgrace, but now, through Christ, it is in one of unclouded grace. God now has naught but good-will toward us. God has not only ceased to be offended at us, but is well-pleased with us—not only will He never afflict punishment upon us, but He will never cease to shower His blessings upon us. The throne to which we have free access is not one of judgment, but of pure and unchanging grace.

5. *Owned by God Himself before an assembled universe.* "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified" (Mat 12:36-37). Yes, justified publicly by the Judge Himself! "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but *the righteous* into life eternal" (Mat 25:46). Here will be the final justification of the Christian, this sentence being *declaratory* unto the glory of God and the everlasting blessedness of those who have believed.

Let it be said in conclusion that the justification of the Christian is *complete* the moment he truly believes in Christ, and hence there are no degrees in justification. The apostle Paul was as truly a justified man at the hour of his conversion as he was at the close of his life. The feeblest babe in Christ is just as completely justified as is the most mature saint. Let theologians note the following distinctions. Christians were *decretively* justified from all eternity, *efficaciously* so when Christ rose again from the dead; *actually* so when they believed; *sensibly* so when the Spirit bestows joyous assurance; *manifestly* so when they tread the path of obedience; *finally* so at the day of judgment, when God shall sententially, and in the presence of all created things, pronounce them so.

DIVINE GUIDANCE

Part Two

“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph 5:17). It is clear from this verse that it is both the right and the duty of the Christian to have a knowledge of the Lord’s will for him. God can neither be pleased nor glorified by His children walking in ignorance or proceeding blindly. Did not Christ say to His beloved disciples, “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (Joh 15:15). If, then, we are in the dark as to how we ought to proceed in anything, it is clear that we are living far below our privileges. No doubt the majority of our readers will give their hearty assent to these statements, but the question which concerns most of them is, *how* are we to *ascertain* the Lord’s will concerning the varied details of our daily lives?

First, let it be duly observed this exhortation, that we should be understanding “*what* the will of the Lord is,” is preceded by “Wherefore be ye not unwise.” That word “unwise” does not here signify bare ignorance or lack of knowledge, otherwise the two halves of the verse would merely express the *same* thought in its negative and positive forms. No, the word “unwise” there means “lacking in common sense,” or as the R.V. renders it “be not ye *foolish*.” Nor does the word “foolish” signify no more than it now does in common speech. In Scripture the “fool” is not simply one who is mentally deficient, but is the man who leaves God out of his life, who acts *independently* of Him. This must be duly borne in mind as we seek to arrive at the meaning of the second half of Ephesians 5:17.

Let it also be carefully observed that Ephesians 5:17 opens with the word “Wherefore,” which points us back to what immediately precedes. There we read, “See then that ye *walk circumspectly*, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:15-16). Unless *those* exhortations are prayerfully and diligently heeded, it is impossible that we should be “*understanding* WHAT the will of the Lord *is*.” Unless our *walk* be right, there can be no spiritual discernment of God’s will for us. And this brings us back to the central thought of the preceding article. Our daily walk is to be ordered by God’s Word, and in proportion as it is so shall we be kept in His will and preserved from folly and sin.

“A good understanding have all they that do his commandments” (Psa 111:10). A “good understanding” may be defined as *spiritual instinct*. We all know what is meant by that “instinct” with which the Creator has endowed animals and birds—that inward faculty which prompts them to avoid danger and moves them to seek that which makes for their well-being. Now man was, originally, endowed with a similar instinct, though of a far superior order to that possessed by the lower creatures. But at the Fall, he, to a large extent, lost it, and as one generation of depraved beings has followed another, their “instinct” has become more and more weakened, until now we see the vast majority of our fellows conducting themselves with far less intelligence than do the beasts of the field—rushing madly to destruction, which the instinct of the brutes would avoid—acting foolishly, yea,

madly, contrary even to “common sense,” conducting their affairs and concerns without discretion.

Now at regeneration God gives to His elect “the spirit...of a *sound* mind” (2Ti 1:7), but that “spirit” has to be cultivated, it needs training and directing. The necessary instruction for this is found in the Word. From that Word we may learn what are the things which will prove beneficial to us, and what be injurious; what things are to be sought after, and what avoided. As the precepts of Scripture are reduced to *practice* by us, and as its prohibitions and warnings are *heeded*, we are enabled to judge things in their true light, we are delivered from being deceived by false appearances, we are kept from making foolish “mistakes.” The closer we walk by the Word, the more fully will this prove to be the case with us—a “good judgment” or spiritual instinct will be formed within us, so that we shall conduct our affairs discreetly and adorn the doctrine we profess.

So highly does the saint prize this spiritual instinct or sound mind, that he prays, “Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments” (Psa 119:66). He realizes that it can only be increased as he is *divinely* “taught,” that is, by the Spirit applying the Word to his heart, opening to him its meaning, bringing it to his remembrance when needed, and enabling him to make a proper *use* of the same. But let it be duly noted that in this prayer the petition is backed up with a plea, “*for* I have believed thy commandments,” “believed,” not merely by an intellectual assent, but approved with the affections. Only when *that* be truly the case is such a petition sincere. There is an inseparable connection between the two things—where God’s commandments are loved by us, we can count upon Him teaching us “good judgment.”

As we have said above, the “fool” is not the mentally deficient, but the one who leaves God out of his thoughts and plans, who cares not whether his conduct pleases or displeases Him. The “fool” is a *godless* person. Contrariwise, the “wise” (in Scripture) are not the highly intellectual or the brilliantly educated, but those who honestly seek to put God first in their hearts and lives. And God “honours” those who honour Him (1Sa 2:30). He gives them “good judgment.” True, it is not acquired all in a day. It is “here a little and there a little.” Yet the more completely we are surrendered to God, the more the principles of His Word *regulate* our conduct, the swifter is our growth in spiritual wisdom. In saying that this “good judgment” is not acquired all at once, we do not mean that a whole lifetime has to be lived before it becomes ours—though, alas, this *is* often the case with many. No indeed, some who have been converted but two or three years are often more spiritual, godly, and possess more spiritual wisdom than those who have been converted years before them.

By treasuring up in his mind the doctrines, precepts, promises, exhortations, and warnings of Scripture, and by diligently comparing himself with the Rule by which he is to walk, the Christian grows into a habitual frame of spiritual wisdom, and acquires a gracious “*taste*” which enables him to judge of right and wrong with a degree of readiness and certainty as a musical ear judges sounds, so that he is rarely mistaken. He who has the Word *ruling* in his heart is influenced thereby in all his actions, and because the glory of God is the great aim which he has before him, he is not suffered to go far wrong. Moreover, God has promised to show Himself strong on the behalf of the one whose heart

is perfect toward Him, and this He does by regulating His providences and causing all things to work together for his good.

“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” (Mat 6:22). This language is of course figurative, yet its meaning is not difficult to ascertain. What the eye is to the body, the heart is to the soul, for out of the heart are “the issues of life” (Pro 4:23). The actions of the body are directed by the light received from the eye. If the eye be “single,” that is, sound and clear, perceiving objects as they really are, then the whole body has light for the directing of its members, and the man moves with safety and comfort. In like manner, if the heart be undivided, set on pleasing God in all things, then the soul has clear vision, discerning the true nature of things, forming a sound judgment of their worth, choosing wisely, and directing itself prudently. While the heart is right with God, the soul is endowed with spiritual wisdom so that there is full light for our path.

“But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Mat 6:23). Here is the solemn contrast. If the vision of our bodily eye be defective, a cataract dimming it, then nothing is seen clearly, all is confusion, and the man stumbles as if in the dark, being continually liable to lose his way and run into danger. In like manner, where the heart be not right with God, where sin and self dominate, the whole soul is under the reigning power of darkness—native depravity, and in consequence, the judgment is blinded so that it cannot rightly discern between good and evil, cannot see through the gild of Satan’s baits, and so is fatally deceived by them. The very “light” which *is* in fallen man, namely, his “reason,” is controlled by his lusts, so, *great* is his “darkness.”

It is to be noted that the verses we have just been considering were spoken by Christ immediately after what He had been saying in Matthew 6:19-21 concerning the right and wise laying up of treasures. It was as though He now anticipated and answered a question from His disciples. If it be so important and essential for us not to lay up treasures in earth, but to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, then why is it that those men who are commonly regarded as the “shrewdest” and are considered by their fellows to be the most “successful,” seek after earthly treasures, rather than after heavenly? To this Christ replied—marvel not at this—they *cannot see* what they are doing. They are like blind men gathering pebbles supposing that they are valuable diamonds.

Much light does Christ here cast on what we now behold going on on every side. They who have set their hearts upon the things of time and sense, are but spending their energies for that which will stand them in no stead when they come to their deathbed, labouring for that which satisfieth not (Isa 55:2), and the reason why they conduct themselves so insanelly—pursuing so eagerly the pleasures of this world, which will bear nothing but bitter regrets in the world to come—is because their hearts are evil. *God* has no real place in their thoughts, and in consequence He gives them up to the spirit of madness. There must be the “single eye”—the heart set upon pleasing God—if the soul is to be filled with heavenly wisdom, which loves, seeks, and lays up heavenly things. That wisdom is something which no college or university can impart—it is “from above” (Jam 3:17).

It is also to be carefully observed that our Lord's teaching upon the "single eye" with the whole body "full of *light*," and the "evil eye" with the whole body "full of darkness," is immediately followed with, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Mat 6:24). This at once establishes the meaning of the preceding verses. Christ had been speaking (under a figure) of setting the Lord supremely before the heart, which necessarily involves the casting out of worldly things and fleshly considerations. Men think to compound with God and their lusts, God and mammon, God and worldly pleasures. No, says Christ, God will have all or nothing. He that serveth Him must serve Him *only* and *supremely*. Ah, my reader, are you willing to pay the necessary price to have *divine* light on your path?

It is quite likely that not a few readers are disappointed at our method of treating this subject, that which has been said being very different from what the title led them to expect. Neither in the preceding article nor in this one have we attempted to enter into specific details and state how a person is to act when some difficult or sudden emergency confronts him, rather have we sought to treat of *basic principles* and thoroughly establish them. Though it might satisfy his curiosity, it would serve no good purpose for a teacher to explain an intricate problem in higher mathematics to a student who had not already mastered the elementary rules of arithmetic. So it would be out of place for us to have explained how particular cases and circumstances are to be dealt with before we have pressed those rules which must guide our general walk.

Thus far we have dealt with two chief things—the absolute necessity of being controlled by the Word of God without us, and the having a heart within which is single to God's glory and set upon pleasing Him, if we are to have the light of heaven shining upon our earthly path. A third consideration must now engage our attention—the *help of the Holy Spirit*. But it is at this point we most need to be upon our guard, lest we lapse into a vague mysticism on the one hand, or become guilty of wild fanaticism on the other. Many have plunged into the most foolish and evil courses under the plea they were "prompted by the Spirit." No doubt they *were* "prompted" by some "spirit," but most certainly not by the *Holy Spirit*. HE never prompts to anything contrary to the Word. Our only safety is to impartially bring our inward impulses or promptings to the test of Holy Writ.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom 8:14). This divine Guide is perfectly acquainted with the path which God has ordained for each celestial traveler. He is fully conversant with all its windings and narrowness, its intricacies and dangers. To be led by the Spirit is *to be under His government*. He perceives our temptations and weakness, knows our aspirations, hears our groans, and marks our strugglings after holiness. He knows when to supply a check, administer a rebuke, apply a promise, sympathize with a sorrow, strengthen a wavering purpose, confirm a fluctuating hope. The sure promise is, "He will guide you into all truth" (Joh 16:13). This He does by regulating our thoughts, affections and conduct, by opening our understandings to perceive the meaning of Scripture, applying it in power to the heart, enabling us to appropriate and reduce it to practice. Then let us each time we open the Sacred Volume, humbly and earnestly *seek* the aid of Him who inspired it.

It is to be noted that Romans 8:14 opens with the word, "For," the apostle introducing a confirmation of what he had been affirming in the previous verses. They who "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom 8: 4), they who mind "the things of the Spirit" (Rom 8:5), they who "through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body" (Rom 8:13), are the ones who are "led by the Spirit." As the "Spirit of holiness," it is His aim to deepen the impress of the restored image of God in the soul, to increase our happiness by making us more holy. Thus *He* "leads" to nothing but what is sanctifying. The "Spirit guides" by subduing the power of indwelling sin, by weaning us from the world, by maintaining a tender conscience in us, by drawing out the heart to Christ, by causing us to live for eternity.

(Completed, God willing, in the January issue).

GOATS

A few months ago we published some notes upon goats sent us by a brother in Australia. Several have written to say they were helped by the same. Not long since we wrote to Bro. Klooster, who is engaged in Gospel work in Holland, a land where goats are quite common among the poorer people. In the course of our letter to him, we mentioned that it was our growing conviction "the goats" of Matthew 25:33 etc. are professing Christians who are devoid of the life of God in their souls. His reply has still further strengthened our conviction, and from it we here extract some thoughts concerning these animals, as being an adumbration of those bearing the name of Christ who are strangers to His salvation.

Read Matthew 25:31-33. "It is plain from Scripture that the 'sheep' mentioned here are God's chosen people, who are washed in the blood of the Lamb, and have followed the great Shepherd (Joh 10:26-29). It is equally plain from the Scripture that the 'goats' are not atheists and others who repudiate the existence of the eternal God, but are those having 'a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,' people ever learning and 'never able to come to the knowledge of the truth' (2Ti 3:5-7). Looking now at Matthew 25:44, we read that the goats shall answer Christ 'saying, *Lord*, when saw we thee an hungered?' Only those spoken of in 2 Timothy 3:5; Jude 11 etc. will (even as the sheep, God's children) address Him as 'Lord.' Hereby they show their 'form of godliness' or outward resemblance to God's children, as at a distance goats resemble sheep in appearance and in the sound of their bleating. In Matthew 7:21-23, we read of this same religious people, with their 'form of godliness.'

"In Scripture the 'right hand' is always used as a symbol for the place of might, power, honor, protection and fellowship. Read carefully Psalm 16:8-9, 11; Mark 15:27; Galatians 2:9; Exodus 15:6. But the 'left hand' is a symbol of the place of inferiority, dishonour, folly. 'A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his *left*' (Ecc 10:2). Ehud (Jdg 3:15-22) was left-handed, and a sneaking assassin. The seven hundred men

spoken of in Judges 20:16 were all *left* handed, and brought certain destruction when used in fighting. In Ezekiel 16:46, we read of religious by apostate Samaria dwelling at Jerusalem's *left* hand—Sodom as her 'right hand' is to be exalted above her, Matthew 11:20-24.

"In connection with Matthew 25:33, we read in Ezekiel 34:17, 'Behold, I *judge between* cattle and cattle,' that is, between sheep and goats, for the very next sentence adds 'between the rams and the he goats.' Reading the whole chapter carefully through, there is no doubt that the 'rams' speak of the teachers, leaders, pastors of the sheep; while the 'he goats' are the false prophets (2Pe 2:1-3), the 'hirelings' (Joh 10:12-13) who catch and scatter the sheep.

"A *ram* has the same nature and taste as the sheep, only he is stronger, and their natural protector. A ram will never attack a man or animal, except he, or his sheep, are attacked. So the true undershepherd only attacks when the honour of his great Shepherd and His sheep are assailed. Then, like the ram, he will fight even unto death. The *he-goat* has the same nature as the goats, only he is more fierce and destructive, and will attack without any provocation or need—so the false shepherds are constantly making onslaughts on the truth, on Christ, and on His people.

"Therefore will I *save my flock*, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will *judge between* cattle and cattle' (Eze 34:22). 'He shall *separate* them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats...and these [the goats] shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous [the sheep] into life eternal' (Mat 25:32, 46)"!!

OUR ANNUAL LETTER

"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice" (Phi 4:4). Rejoicing is not simply a spiritual luxury, but a Christian duty. Nor is it merely for us to be regaling ourselves on special occasions only. We are to rejoice *alway*. Spiritual rejoicing is not dependent upon personal temperament, pleasant surroundings, congenial circumstances, or the company of vivacious fellow-saints. This is evident from our opening verse. It was written by one "in bonds," a prisoner at Rome. It is true that a gloomy disposition may affect the mind with doleful thoughts, that unpleasant surroundings are apt to dampen the natural spirits, that trying circumstances tend to harass, and that lack of fellowship with happy saints may sadden the heart. Nevertheless, *the Holy Spirit* is not limited by such things as those, and when *He* takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us we cannot but rejoice.

There are some remarkable statements in the New Testament on the subject of rejoicing. For example we read that after the apostles had been *beaten* by the Jews for preaching the Gospel, they "departed from the presence of the council, *rejoicing* that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Act 5:41), that was the spirit triumphing over the flesh. Nor was that victorious attitude limited to the apostles, for of the

Hebrew saints it is recorded that “they took” *joyfully* the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had “in heaven a better and an enduring substance” (Heb 10:34)—that was faith triumphing over unbelief. James exhorted the early saints to “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (Jam 1:2-3). Writing to the saints at Rome, Paul said, “We *glory* in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience” (Rom 5:3).

“Rejoice *with trembling*” (Psa 2:11). What a strange collocation of terms is that! one which we can scarcely conceive of any uninspired pen inventing. If it be proper to “rejoice” then why “tremble”? and how is it possible to conjoin the two at the same time? Ah, God is infinitely wiser than we are, and He well knows our tendency to extremes, our danger of perverting even that which is good, so accordingly He warns by counseling us. Material riches often take to themselves wings and fly away. The fairest flower fades in a few days at most. The sun which is now shining so brightly, may, within a few minutes, be overcast by dark clouds. God requires us to exercise a holy jealousy over ourselves, and to hold all earthly things with a light hand.

“Rejoice with trembling.” This is the word which has come to us forcibly as we contemplated our annual letter. We have great cause for “rejoicing.” Throughout another twelve months the smile of the Lord has been upon us, lavishly has He bestowed both spiritual and temporal mercies. We have been favoured with much liberty in composing the numerous articles for another volume. Hardly a day has passed by but what evidence has come to hand that the Lord’s blessing rests upon our labours. Funds have again come in freely so that all bills were promptly paid. God has graciously heard prayer for an increased circulation, bringing us in touch with quite a number more who hunger for spiritual things and are willing to be *searched* by the Word. While, throughout another year both the editor and his wife have been spared a single day’s sickness. Yes, abundant cause have we for “rejoicing.”

But it is written “rejoice *with trembling*.” Many have been spoiled by success. Of Israel it is written, “Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked” (Deu 32:15). This needs to be taken to heart by us. History shows conclusively that the state of the church was healthiest not in times of outward prosperity, but in seasons of adversity. That ought not to be, yet the fact remains it *is* so. It is the heavily-weighted ship which is steadiest on a stormy sea, and our souls need the ballast of trials to hold us down in our proper place. Even the beloved Paul was given a thorn in the flesh lest he be “exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations” he had been favored with (2Co 12:7). The mountain air is invigorating for a change, but to continue long in a high altitude is hard on the heart.

This word, “Rejoice *with trembling*” needs to be turned into earnest prayer by both writer and reader. None are hated so much by Satan as those whom God is blessing, and there is still that in them which is capable of responding to his temptations. We need to be much on our guard lest increased light will issue in increased chastisement, through our failure to *walk* according to the light. We need to be much on our guard lest multiplied blessings lead to confidence in the flesh, lest we become vain in our joy and puffed up with the very things we rejoice in. We have to do with a jealous God, who will not tolerate

idols. May He graciously write this word, “rejoice with trembling” on each of our hearts—we only do so when we rejoice as though we rejoiced not (1Co 7:30).

If anything written by us has been blest to any of our readers, then unto the Lord alone is due *all* the honour and glory. It does not, it cannot, be credited to us. *We* have nothing but what we first received (1Co 4:7). Everything worth having, knowing, or enjoying, is the pure gift of God, and to Him be rendered eternal praise. In ourselves we are poor, sinful, erring creatures, and daily do we have occasion to blush and hang our heads in shame. We are but empty vessels unless the Spirit is pleased to fill them. Therefore we respectfully request that none of our readers will address us as “Rev.” No worm of the dust is due such a title. It is written “holy and reverend is HIS name” (Psa 111:9).

Should the Lord spare us for another year, we expect to follow the articles on “Justification” with a series on the doctrine of Sanctification. This is much needed today, for many of God’s saints have very hazy and confused ideas on the subject. It is harder to handle than Justification, and we earnestly solicit the prayers of Christian friends that we may be divinely helped therein. The papers on the work and operations of the Spirit are to be continued, God willing, for another year, and here too we approach the more intricate branch of our theme and stand in urgent need of wisdom from on High. Having completed the section on the Life of Faith, the next verses in Hebrews take up the important and searching subject of divine Chastisement. May the Lord graciously prepare our hearts for its contemplation. The Life of David takes a more tragic turn and contains some very solemn warnings for us.

Not a few of our readers would like us to take up the book of Revelation, but in addition to being conscious of our utter incompetency for such a task, we feel there are other matters of more practical moment for these days. The future is in the hands of God, it is the *present* which most concerns our own responsibility. It is of far more importance that we should learn to live daily lives which are pleasing to the Lord, and how to obtain answers to prayer, than it is to speculate about what is going to happen next in the political world. In the day of judgment it will matter comparatively little whether or not we could rightly explain the four riders of Revelation 6 or the two beasts of Revelation 13, but it will make tremendous difference whether or not we have regulated our lives by the precepts and commands of Holy Writ.

During this year, several hundreds of new names have been added to our mailing list—some of them have written, expressing their appreciation in a practical way, deeming it both a privilege and a duty to have a part in supporting this printed ministry, but most of them we have not heard from. It costs from 80 to 90 cents (3/4 to 3/9) to send this magazine for a whole year to a single person—due to the fact that our circulation is so small, were it doubled, it would almost halve the cost for each individual. There seems to be an increasing number these days who want something for nothing, and we have no intention of encouraging so dishonest a spirit. On the other hand, where *genuine* poverty prevents a reader from sending in a gift, that is no hindrance from his receiving these “Studies.” We have spoken plainly because we do not take a penny for our labours (our own needs being supplied), and because we dare not use the gifts of God’s people to go on

sending the magazine year after year to those who are better able to contribute to its expenses.

Several hundred names are dropped from our list each year, which means they have to be replaced by new ones, if we are to be justified in continuing to publish. We would therefore beg each interested friend who has, under God, received real help from its pages, to prayerfully consider if there are any Christians known to him or her who would be likely to value these "Studies," and if so, to write them, telling about the publication and urging them to write us for it. We heartily thank all friends who have had prayerful and financial fellowship in this word. This written ministry—to which the editor is devoting *all* his time—is more urgently needed than it was ten years ago. Many of Christ's sheep are starving spiritually. It is our bounden duty to try and reach them. All is well with us. With loving greetings, Yours by God's abounding mercy, A. W. and V. E. Pink.

