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**STUDIES**  
**IN THE**  
**SCRIPTURES**

*“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39*

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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*

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EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### *12. The Advent of the Spirit (Part 4)*

Unto the apostles whom He had chosen, the risen Saviour “commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father,” assuring them that “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Act 1:2, 4, 8). Accordingly we read that, “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place” (Act 2:1). Their unity of mind evidently looked back to the Lord’s command and promise, and their trustful expectancy of the fulfillment thereof. The Jewish “day” was from sunset unto the following sunset and as what took place here in Acts 2 occurred during the early hours of the morning—probably soon after sunrise—we are told that the day of Pentecost was “fully come.”

The outward marks of the Spirit’s advent were three in number—the “sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind” (Act 2:2), the “cloven tongues like as of fire” (Act 2:3), and the speaking “with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Act 2:4). Concerning the precise signification of these phenomena and the particular bearing of them on us today, there has been wide difference of opinion, especially during the past thirty years. Inasmuch as God Himself has not seen fit to furnish us with a full and detailed explanation of them, it behooves all interpreters to speak with reserve and reverence. According to our own measure of light, we shall endeavour to briefly point out some of those things which appear to be most obvious.

First, the “rushing mighty wind,” which filled all the house, was the *collective* sign in which apparently all the hundred and twenty of Acts 1:15 shared. This was an emblem of

the invincible energy with which the third Person of the Trinity works upon the hearts of men, bearing down all opposition before Him, in a manner which cannot be explained (Joh 3:8), but which is at once apparent by the effects produced. Just as the course of a hurricane may be clearly traced after it has passed, so the transforming work of the Spirit in regeneration is made unmistakably manifest unto all who have eyes to see spiritual things.

Second, "There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them" (Act 2:3), that is, upon the twelve and upon them alone. The proof of this is conclusive. First, it was to the apostles only that the Lord spoke in Luke 24:49. Second, to them only did He, by the Spirit, give commandments after His resurrection (Act 1:2). Third, to them only did He give the promise of Acts 1:8. Fourth, at the end of Acts 1 (v. 26), we read, "He (Matthias) was numbered with *the eleven apostles*." Acts 2 opens with "And" connecting it with 1:26 and says, "They [the twelve] were all with one accord in one place" and on *them* the Spirit now "sat" (Act 2:3). Fifth, when the astonished multitude came together, they exclaimed, "Are not *all* these which speak *Galileans*?" (Act 2:7), namely, the "men [Greek, "males"] *of Galilee*" of 1:11! Sixth, in Acts 2:14-15, we read, "But Peter, standing up *with the eleven*, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For *these* are not drunken"—the word "these" can only refer to the "eleven" standing up with Peter!

These "cloven tongues like as of fire" which descended upon the apostles was the *individual* sign, the divine credential that they were the authorized ambassadors of the enthroned Lamb. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was a baptism of *fire*. "'Our God is a consuming fire.' The elect sign of His presence is the fire unkindled of earth, and the chosen symbol of His approval is the sacred flame: covenant and sacrifice, sanctuary and dispensation, were sanctified and approved by the descent of fire. 'The God that answereth by fire, let him be God' (1Ki 18:24). That is the final and universal test of deity. Jesus Christ came to bring fire on the earth. The symbol of Christianity is not a cross, but a tongue of fire" (Samuel Chadwick, 1860-1932).

Third, the apostles "speaking with other tongues" was a *public* sign. 1 Corinthians 14:22 declares, "Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not," and as the previous verse (where Isaiah 28:11 is quoted) so plainly shows, they were a sign unto *unbelieving Israel*. A striking illustration and proof of this is found in Acts 11, where Peter sought to convince his skeptical brethren in Jerusalem that God's grace was now flowing forth into the Gentiles. It was his description of the Holy Spirit's falling upon Cornelius and his household (Act 11:15-18 and cf. 10:45, 56) which convinced them. It is highly significant that the Pentecostal type of Leviticus 23:22 divided the harvest into three degrees and stages—the "reaping" or *main* part, corresponding to Acts 2 at Jerusalem; the "corners of the field" corresponding to Acts 10 at "Caesarea Philippi," which was in a corner of Palestine; and the "gleaning" for "the stranger," corresponding to Acts 19 at Gentile Ephesus! These were the only three occasions of "tongues" recorded in Acts.

It is well known to some of our readers that during the last generation many earnest souls have been deeply exercised by what is known as "the Pentecostal movement," and

the question is frequently raised as to whether or not the strange power displayed in their meetings, issuing in unintelligible sounds called “tongues,” is the genuine gift of the Spirit. Those who have joined the movement—some of them godly souls, we believe—insist that not only is the gift genuine, but it is the duty of all Christians to seek the same. But surely such seem to overlook the fact that it was not any “*unknown* tongue” which was spoken by the apostles. Foreigners who heard them had no difficulty in understanding what was said (Act 2:8).

If what has just been said be not sufficient, then let our appeal be unto 2 Timothy 3:16-17. God has now *fully* revealed His mind to us. All that we need to “*thoroughly* furnish” us “unto *all* good works” is already in our hands! Personally the writer would not take the trouble to walk into the next room to hear any person deliver a message which he claimed was inspired by the Holy Spirit. With the *completed* Scriptures in our possession, nothing more is required except for the Spirit to interpret and apply them. Let it also be duly observed that there is not a single exhortation in all the epistles of the New Testament that the saints should seek “a fresh Pentecost,” no, not even to the carnal Corinthians or the legal Galatians.

As a sample of what was believed by the early “fathers,” we quote the following, “Augustine saith, ‘Miracles were once necessary to make the world believe the Gospel, but he who now seeks a sign that he may believe, is a wonder, yea a monster.’ Chrysostom concludeth upon the same grounds that, ‘There is now in the Church no necessity of working miracles,’ and calls him ‘a false prophet’ who now takes in hand to work them” (From William Perkins, 1604).

In Acts 2:16, we find Peter was moved by God to give a general explanation of the great wonders which had just taken place. Jerusalem was, at this time of the feast, filled with a great concourse of people. The sudden sound from heaven “as of a rushing mighty wind,” filling the house where the apostles were gathered together, soon drew thither a multitude of people, and as they, in wonderment, heard the apostles speak in their own varied languages, they asked, “What meaneth *this*?” (Act 2:12). Peter then declared, “*This* is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Act 2:16). The prophecy given by Joel (Joe 2:28-32) now began to receive its fulfillment, the latter part of which we believe is to be understood symbolically.

And what is the bearing of all this upon us today? We will reply in a single sentence—The advent of the Spirit *followed the exaltation of Christ*. If then we desire to enjoy more of the Spirit’s power and blessing, we must give Christ the throne of our hearts and crown Him the Lord of our lives.

(N.B. Having dwelt upon the doctrinal and dispensational aspects of our subject, next year (D.V.), we hope to take up the “practical” and “experimental” bearings of it.)

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### 72. *The Faith of Moses (Continued) (11:25-27)*

“The person here instanced in as one that lived by faith, is Moses. And an eminent instance it is to his purpose, especially in his dealing with the Hebrews, and that on sundry accounts. 1. Of his person. None was ever in the old world more signalized by Providence in his birth, education, and actions, than he was. Hence his renown was both then, and in all ages after, very great in the world. The report and estimation of his acts and wisdom were famous among all the nations of the earth. Yet this person lived and acted, and did all his works *by faith*. 2. Of his great work, which was the typical redemption of the church. A work it was—great in itself—so God expresseth it to be and such as was never wrought in the earth before (Deu 4:32-34). Yet greater in the typical respect which it had to His eternal redemption of the church by Jesus Christ. 3. On the account of his office. He was the lawgiver, whence it is manifest, that *the law is not opposite to faith*, seeing the lawgiver himself lived thereby” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

Each example of faith supplied by the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 11 presents a distinctive feature or fruit of that spiritual grace. The faith which is here described is *saving* faith, without which no man is accepted by God (see verse 6). It is true that all Christians are not given the same measure of faith, nor do all of them manifest it in the same manner. All flowers are not of the same hue, nor are they equally fragrant, yet every variety differs radically from weeds! Not every saint is called upon to build an ark, offer up his son in sacrifice, or forsake a palace, nevertheless, there is that in the heart and life of *every* regenerate soul which plainly distinguishes him from those who are dead in trespasses and sins, and which clearly bears the mark of the *supernatural*—there is that in him which mere nature does not and cannot bring forth.

While it be true that very few Christians are called upon to leave a palace, yet everyone who would become a Christian *is required* to forsake the world—not physically, but morally. God does not bid us become hermits, or enter a convent or monastery—that is only the devil’s perversion of the truth of separation, but He *does* insist that the sinner must cast away the idols of the world, turn from its vain pleasures, cease walking in its evil ways, and set his affections upon things above. Scripture is unmistakably plain upon this point, declaring, “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jam 4:4). That which was adumbrated by Moses in our present passage was the heart’s renunciation of a vain and perishing world, and giving God His true place in the affections.

In our last article, we saw how Moses voluntarily relinquished his position of a nobleman in Pharaoh’s court and preferred to have fellowship with the despised and suffering people of God. In this, he was a blessed type of Him who was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, who descended from the glory of heaven and was born in a manger, who laid aside His robes of majesty and took upon Him the form of a servant. And my reader, His people are predestinated “to be conformed to” *His* image (Rom 8:29). He has left them an example and there is no other route to heaven, but by “following his steps,”

see John 10:4! There is a real and practical oneness between the Head and the members of His mystical body, and that practical oneness consists in *self-sacrifice*. Unless the spirit of self-sacrifice rules my heart, I am no *Christian*!

The way to heaven is a “narrow” one and the entrance to it is “strait,” and few there be that find it (Mat 7:13-14). Because that way *is* “narrow,” opposed to all the inclinations of flesh and blood, Christ bids us to “sit down and count the cost” (Luk 14:31) before we start out. The “cost” is far too high for all who have never had a miracle of grace wrought within them, for it includes the cutting off of a right hand and the plucking out of a right eye (Mat 5:29-30)—*that* is why 1 Peter 4:18 asks, “If the righteous *scarcely* be saved [or “*with difficulty* be saved”], where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” Few indeed are, like Moses, willing to pay the “cost.” Alas, the vast majority, even in Christendom, are like Esau (Heb 12:16) or the Gadarenes (Mar 5:14-15)—they prefer to indulge the flesh rather than deny it.

The *difficulty* of salvation, or the “straitness” of the gate and the “narrowness” of the way which leadeth into life, was strikingly prefigured by the alluring temptations and carnal obstacles which had to be overcome by Moses. As we pointed out in our last article, his noble decision not only involved the leaving of Pharaoh’s palace, the apparent ingratitude toward his foster-mother, the ignoring of the precedent set up by Joseph, but it also meant the throwing in his lot with a despised people, enduring all the discomforts and hardships of their wilderness wanderings, and the bringing down upon his head not only the contempt of his former associates, but having to endure the murmurings and criticisms of the Hebrews themselves. Ah, my reader, *such a choice* as Moses made was altogether contrary to flesh and blood, and can be accounted for only on the ground that a miracle of divine grace had been wrought within him. As our Lord declared, “With men *this is impossible*; but with God all things are possible” (Mat 19:26).

From what has been said above, is it not unmistakably evident that as great a distance as that which separates heaven from earth divides *Scriptural* “conversion” from that which goes under the name of “conversion” in the vast majority of the so-called “churches” today?! A genuine and saving conversion is a radical and revolutionary experience. It is vastly more than the taking up of a sound creed, believing what the Bible says about Christ, or joining some religious assembly. It is something which strikes down to the very roots of a man’s being, causing him to make an unreserved surrender of himself to the claims of God, henceforth seeking to please and glorify Him. This issues, necessarily, in a complete break from the world and the former manner of life. In other words, “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).

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter” (Heb 11:24). It is the first two words of this verse which supply an adequate explanation of the noble conduct of Moses here. A God-given faith is occupied with something better than the things of sight and sense, and therefore does it discern clearly the utter vanity of worldly greatness and honour. Faith has to do *with God*, and when the mind be truly stayed upon Him, neither the riches nor the pleasures of earth can attract, still less enthrall. Faith relies upon and is obedient unto a personal revelation from on High, for

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). Moses had “heard,” Moses “believed,” Moses *acted on* what he had heard from God.

“Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb 11:25). Yes, each of us *has to choose* between life and death (Deu 30:15), between sin and holiness, between the world and Christ, between fellowship with the children of God and friendship with the children of the devil. When Moses took the part of an Israelite against an Egyptian (Exo 2), he declared plainly that he preferred the former to the latter, that the promises of God meant far more to him than the fame or luxury of an earthly court. Yet at that time, the seed of Abraham were in an exceedingly low state, nevertheless, Moses knew that the promises which God had made unto the patriarchs could not fail.

That was *faith* indeed—to willingly forego the attractive prospects which lay before him in the land of the Nile and deliberately prefer a path of hardship. What he had “heard” from God was to him so grand, so great, so glorious, that, after thoughtfully balancing the one over against the other, Moses rejected material aggrandizement for spiritual riches. He considered it to be a far higher honour to be a child of Abraham than to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He might have *reasoned* that “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,” and have “made the most of his (present) opportunity,” rather than have set his heart on an unseen future, but the spirit triumphed over the flesh. O how we need to pray for grace to enable us to “approve things that are excellent,” that we may be “sincere and without offence till the day of Christ” (Phi 1:10).

It is to be duly noted that Moses elected to suffer affliction with the Hebrews not because they were his people, but because they were *God’s* people. “The object of his choice was God; the One who chose his fathers, who revealed to them His truth and grace, and commanded them to walk before Him without fear; the God who was not ashamed to be called their God, and to whom he had been dedicated in his infancy” (Adolph Saphir, 1831-1891). Observe that fellowship with “the people of God” necessarily involves, in some form or other, “affliction.” Yes, God has ordained that “we must through much tribulation enter into his kingdom” (Act 14:22), and declares, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2Ti 3:12). But *why* should this be so? Why had not God appointed a smoother path and a pleasanter lot for His high favourites while they pass through this world? We subjoin one or two of the many answers which may be returned to this question.

God has decreed that the general state of His people on earth shall be one of hardship, opposition, persecution. First, to arouse them to spiritual diligence. He has told them in His Word, “This is not your rest” (Mic 2:10), nevertheless, there is a tendency in us to settle down here. Again and again God bids us to watch and pray, to be sober and vigilant, alert and active, but only too often His exhortations fall on deaf ears. The “wise virgins” slumbered and slept as well as the “foolish” ones (Mat 25:5), and need *awakening*, because they will not heed such calls as are found in Romans 13:11, Ephesians 5:14, etc. He uses the enemy to arouse us. Second, to wean us from the world, because there is that in us which still loves the world. God, in His mercy, often stirs them up to hate us. Third, to conform us more fully unto the image of Christ. The Head endured the contradiction of



sinner *against* Himself and His body is called to have “fellowship in his sufferings” (Phi 3:10).

The “pleasures of sin” in Hebrews 11:25 has immediate reference to the riches and dignities of Pharaoh’s court, which Moses could no longer enjoy without being unfaithful to God and His people. To have gone on living in the palace would be despising Jehovah and His covenant with Abraham’s seed. It would have been preferring his own advancement and ease rather than the deliverance of his people. He would have been conducting himself as a worldling, rather than as a stranger and pilgrim in this scene, and worse, he would have been conniving at Pharaoh’s cruel treatment of the Hebrews. Moreover, to have resisted the impulse of the Spirit on his heart would have been *sin*. This shows us that things which are not sinful in themselves, become so when used or enjoyed at the wrong time. Everything is beautiful in its season. There is “a time to weep, and a time to laugh” (Ecc 3:4).

The principle we have just enunciated above is of great practical importance. Material things become snares if employed intemperately. God has granted us permission to “use” the things of this world, but has forbidden the “abuse” of them (1Co 7:31). Temporal blessings become a curse if they are allowed to hinder us from the discharge of duty. All associations must be severed which deter us from having fellowship with the saints. Personal ease and comfort are to be set aside when our brethren are “suffering affliction” and need a helping hand. Alas, only God knows how many professing Christians have continued to enjoy the *luxuries* of life, while thousands were without some of the bare *necessities* of life.

Everything which is severed from true godliness is included in this expression “the pleasures of sin.” Temporal mercies are to be enjoyed with thankfulness to God, but only so far and so long as they help to promote a true following of the example which Christ has left us. Alas, how many are seeking their happiness in the things of the flesh, rather than in the things of the Spirit. Scripture says, “Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith” (Pro 15:16)—but how few believe it! Mark it well, dear reader, the “pleasures of sin” are only for “a season,” and a solemnly brief season at that. They must end either in speedy repentance or speedy ruin. How blessed is the contrast presented in Psalm 16:11, “At thy right hand there are pleasures *for evermore!*” Is my heart set upon *them*? If so, I am making it my chief concern every day to walk along *the only path* which leads to them.

“Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt” (Heb 11:26). Here the Holy Spirit mentions a third instance of Moses’ contempt of the world. First, of its honours (v. 24), then of its pleasures (v. 25), now, of its wealth. Note the emphatic gradation in the decision of Moses as intimated in the three verbs. First, he “refused” to be any longer acknowledged as the adopted son of Egypt’s princess. Second, he “chose” or deliberately elected to become identified with and throw in his lot among the despised and suffering people of God. Third, he “esteemed” the reproach this involved, as high above that which he relinquished and renounced. The same Greek word is rendered “judged” in verse 11, showing that it was no rash conclusion which he jumped to hastily, but that it was the mature consideration of his mind and heart. Another has compared the

three verbs here with Mark 4:28, "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

This 26th verse is an amplification of what is found in the 24th and 25th, and announces both the intelligence of Moses' choice and the fervour of spiritual affection which prompted it. The decision that he made was not a reluctant and forced one, but ready and joyous. It was not merely he perceived that identifying himself with the Hebrews was a bounden duty, and therefore he must "make the best of a bad job" and put up with the hardships such a course entailed, but that he gladly preferred the same—*Christ* meaning infinitely more to him than everything which was to be found in Egypt. Reader, is the denying of self and taking up of the cross something which you grudgingly perform or does the "love of Christ constrain" (2Co 5:14) you thereto? Can you, in your measure, say with the apostle, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake" (2Co 12:10)?

What is meant here by "the reproach of Christ"? The Saviour was not born till many centuries later, true, but those whom the Father gave to Him before the foundation of the world, were, from Abel onwards, well-acquainted with Him. See John 8:56. Christ had a being before He was born of the virgin. We read of Israel "tempting Christ" in the wilderness (1Co 10:9). From the beginning, Christ was Head of the church and in His own Person led His own people, and was present in their midst, under the name of "the angel of the covenant." Let the interested reader carefully ponder the terms of Exodus 23:20-22 and it should be plain that no *created* "angel" is there in view. Thus, whatever that people suffered, it was the reproach "of Christ," who had taken them under His protection. There was a communion between Christ and His people, as real and as intimate as that union and communion which exists between Him and His people now. Weigh well Isaiah 63:9, Zechariah 2:8, and compare with Acts 9:4 and Matthew 25:34 and clear proof of this will be obtained.

The "reproach of Christ" (Heb 11:26). then signifies first, Christ *personally* as identified with His people. Second, it has reference to Christ *mystically*, His redeemed as one with Him in humiliation and persecution. "Christ and the church were considered from the beginning, as one mystical body; so as that what the one underwent, the other is esteemed to undergo the same" (John Owen). In marriage, the wife takes the name and status of her husband, because they have become "one flesh." In like manner, the church is called "Christ" in 1 Corinthians 12:12 and Galatians 3:16 because of its union and communion with Him, because of the likeness and sympathy between them. Nor was this blessed mystery kept concealed—as modern "dispensationalists" wrongly declare—from the Old Testament saints, as a careful comparison of Jeremiah 23:6 with 33:16 makes very evident. Moses had "heard" from God that the Hebrews were His people and the remnant among them "according to the election of grace" were ordained to be "joint heirs with Christ," and believing what he heard, he voluntarily and gladly decided to throw in his lot with them.

That the mystical body of Christ, the church, is in view here in Hebrews 11:26—for the Head and His members can never be separated, though they may be viewed distinctly—is abundantly clear by a careful comparison of the preceding clauses. Verses 25 and 26 are

obviously parallel and explain one another. In the former, we are told that Moses “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” Thus, there is a threefold parallelism—the “reproach” of verse 26 agrees with and is interpreted by the “suffering affliction” of verse 25; “the Christ” of verse 26 corresponds with and is defined by “the people of God” in verse 25; and the “treasures of Egypt” balances with and explains the “pleasures of sin for a season.”

“For he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Heb 11:26). This was what strengthened and supported the faith of Moses. He had never forsaken the honours and comforts of the palace unless his heart had been fixed upon the eternal recompense. Faith realizes that peace of conscience is better than a big bank balance, that communion with God is infinitely to be preferred above the favours of an earthly court. Moses knew that he would be no loser by such a choice. Faith sees that nothing is lost which is quitted for Christ’s sake—though the name of Moses was removed from Egypt’s records, it has been accorded a prominent place upon the imperishable pages of Holy Writ. See here the vast difference between worldlings and saints. The former estimate things by sight, the latter by faith. The former through the coloured glass of corrupt reason and carnal sense, the latter by the light of God’s Word. Thus they wonder at each other. The worldling *thinks* the real Christian is crazy, the Christian *knows* the poor worldling is spiritually insane.

The heart of Moses was set upon something more blessed than the perishing things he was relinquishing. The “he had respect” is a compound in the Greek, and properly signifies to look from one thing to another. He looked from the things of time to those of eternity, for “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). This is one of the great properties of faith—to frequently and trustfully ponder the promise of eternal life, which we are to dwell in forever after this scene of sin is left behind. Faith perceives that the way to “save” is to “lose” (Mat 16:25), that present self-denial will yet be honoured by enrichment, knowing that if now we suffer with Christ we shall be “also glorified together” (Rom 8:17). How this condemns the practice of many who spend their lives in the greedy pursuit of the world, with no regard to God or their eternal interests, but think that if they call on Him for mercy with their last gasp, all will be well. Such people terribly deceive themselves by failing to see that eternal life is a “reward”—see Luke 1:74-75. We must labour in the works of godliness in *this* life.

That which Moses had “respect unto” is here called “the recompense of the reward.” This is the all-sufficient presence of God with His people now (Gen 15:1), and the great and final reward of eternal glory which is given by God and received by His people as a compensation for all their sufferings. This is one of the New Testament passages which proves the Old Testament saints had a much clearer understanding of the future state of the redeemed than is now commonly supposed. For the reward of good works, see Hebrews 6:10; of patience, Hebrews 6:12; of suffering, Hebrews 10:34. The calling of heaven a “reward” in nowise imports any desert on man’s part, but abundant kindness in God, who will not suffer anything to be done or endured for Christ’s sake without recompense. It is called a “reward” to encourage obedience (Psa 19:11) and allure our hearts (Mat 5:12). That a *gift* may be a “reward” is clear from Colossians 3:24. It is also called a “reward” because it is God’s *owning* of the Spirit’s work in and through His people. Since eternal glory is a “reward,” let us be patient under present suffering, Romans 8:18. It is legitimate

to view the reward of heaven while serving here—not that this is to be the chief or only motive (for that would be a religion of selfishness), but as faith's anticipation, cf. Philippians 3:8-14. The reward is "gratuitous that God hath annexed to faith and obedience, not merited or deserved by them, *but infallibly annexed* unto them in a way of sovereign bounty" (John Owen).

## THE LIFE OF DAVID

### 24. *His Sore Dilemma*

Following his local incursion upon and victory over the Amalekites, David, instead of quietly making for Ziklag, most imprudently "came to Achish" (1Sa 27:9). Seeing him so heavily laden with the spoils which had been taken, the king inquired where he had been. David feared to tell Achish that he had been destroying Israel's enemies and the Philistines' friends, and therefore returned a misleading answer. David had taken precaution to cover his tracks, for we are told that he "saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring tidings to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so will be his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines" (1Sa 27:11). Forgetful of God and the many tokens he had already received of His protecting care, David dissembled. Achish was thoroughly deceived, for we read, "Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant forever" (1Sa 27:12).

Probably it was his persuading Jonathan to tell his father that he had gone about his business, telling Abimelech an untruth, his prevarications before Achish, and some other instances, which caused David, when later he penitently reflected upon them, to pray "Remove from me the way of lying" (Psa 119:29). This seems to have been David's "besetting sin," or the particular inclination of his corrupt nature. Now when we are foiled by any sin, we should take careful pains lest we settle into a "way" or course of sinning, for as a brand which has once been in the flame is now more susceptible to fire, so the committing of any sin renders us more liable to form a habit of that evil.

Humiliating as may be the acknowledgment of it, the fact remains that every one of us needs to cry fervently unto God, "Remove from me the way of lying." Because we are descended from parents who, at the beginning, preferred the devil's lie to God's truth, we are strongly inclined unto lying. Yea, it is so much a part of our fallen nature that none but God can remove it from us. How many indulge in exaggeration, which is a form of lying. How many deceive by gestures and actions, which is another form of it. How many make promises (in their letters, for example, vowing they will soon write again) which they never fulfill. Worse still, how many lie unto God by false appearances—going through the form of prayer, feigning to be very pious outwardly, when their hearts and minds are upon the things of the world. Of old God said, "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the

house of Israel with deceit” (Hos 11:12). God sees through all vain shows, and will not be mocked.

The consequences of David’s lie soon became apparent. “And it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men” (1Sa 28:1). Probably this was about the last thing he expected. Poor David! he was indeed in a tight place now, so tight that it seemed impossible for him to turn either way. On the one hand, to refuse the king’s request would not only be to run the danger of angering him, with what that would most likely entail, but would appear the height of ingratitude in return for the kindness and protection which had been given to him and his people. On the other hand, to accept Achish’s proposal meant being a traitor to Israel.

This sore dilemma in which David found himself is recorded for *our* learning. It is a solemn warning of what we may expect if we forsake the path of God’s precepts. If we enter upon a wrong position, then trying and unpleasant situations are sure to arise—situations which our consciences will sharply condemn, but from which we can see no way out of. When we deviate from the path of duty, in the slightest degree, each circumstance that follows will tend to draw us further aside. Once a rock starts downhill, it gains momentum with every bound that it takes. Then how watchful we need to be against the *first* false step. Yea, how earnestly should we pray, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe” (Psa 119:117)! Satan rests not satisfied for the Christian to yield one “little” point and knows full well our doing so greatly lessens our resistance to his next temptation.

For the sake of younger readers, let us enlarge a little more upon this point. To go anywhere we ought not will bring us into temptations that it will be almost impossible to resist. To seek the society of non-Christians is to play with fire and to accept favours from them will almost certainly result in our getting burned. To compromise one point will be followed by letting down the bars at others. For a young lady to accept the attentions of an undesirable young man makes it far harder to reject his later advances. Once you accept a favour—even if it be but a “joy-ride” in an auto—you place yourself under an obligation and though you be asked to pay a high price in return, yet if you demur, “ingratitude” is what you are likely to be charged with. Then go slowly, we beg you, in accepting favours from any, especially from those who are likely to take an unfair advantage of you.

David had done wrong in seeking protection from Saul in the land of the Philistines and now the king of Gath required service from him in return. War being determined against Israel, Achish asks the assistance of David and his men. Yes, when the Christian turns unto the world for help, he must expect to be asked to pay the world’s price for the same. Needless intimacies with the avowed enemies of godliness, and the receiving favours from them, quickly reduces us to be unfaithful to God or ungrateful to our benefactors. To what a strait had the false position of David reduced him—if he promised to fight against Israel and then broke his word, he would be guilty of treachery; if he fight against Israel, he would alienate the affections of his own people and expose himself to the reproach of having slain Saul. It seemed impossible that he should extricate himself from this dilemma with a good conscience and clear reputation.

“And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do” (1Sa 28:2). Probably David was quite undecided how to act and cherished a secret hope that the Lord would help him out of his great difficulty. Yet this by no means excused him for returning an insincere and evasive answer. “And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever.” (1Sa 28:2). The king of Gath understood his reply as a promise of effectual assistance and so determined to make him the captain of his bodyguard. At the time, David was too much swayed by the fear of man to refuse attendance upon Achish.

“Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city” (1Sa 28:3). This seems to be brought in for the purpose of intimating why the Philistines should make an attack upon Israel at this time. The knowledge of the prophet’s death had probably emboldened them. When death has removed ministers of God, or persecution has banished them (as it had David), a land is deprived of its best defence. “And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land” (1Sa 28:3). This is mentioned as an introduction to what follows unto the end of the chapter. It serves to emphasize the inconstancy of Saul. It illustrates the worthlessness of the temporary reformation of professors, who ultimately return to their wallowing in the mire.

“And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa. And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled” (1Sa 28:4-5). Had he been in communion with God, there would be no need for such a fear, but he had provoked the Holy One to forsake him. Saul’s excessive terror arose chiefly from a guilty conscience. His contempt of Samuel, his murdering the priests and their families, his malicious persecution of David. Probably he had a premonition that this attack of the Philistines foreboded his approaching doom.

“And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not,” (1Sa 28:6). Unspeakably solemn is this. The case of one abandoned by God. It was under urgent terror and not as a preparation for repentance, that Saul now sought unto the Lord. He did not “inquire” of Him till his doom was sealed, till it was too late, for God will not be mocked. O unsaved reader, heed that call, “Seek ye the LORD *while he may be found*, call ye upon him *while he is near*” (Isa 55:6), otherwise, God may yet say of thee, as of those of old, “These men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all *by them?*” (Eze 14:3).

“And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not” (1Sa 28:6). Some see a contradiction between this statement and what is said in 1 Chronicles 10:13-14, “So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; And inquired not of the LORD.” The “literalists” of the day, those who are incapable of seeing beneath the bare letter of the Word, may well be stumbled by a comparison of the two passages, but he who is taught the *spiritual* meaning of the Scriptures perceives no difficulty. There is much that passes for “prayer” among men (when they are in great physical distress) which unto God is no more than the

“howling” of beasts, see Hosea 7:14. Saul “inquired” in a hypocritical manner, which the Lord would not regard at all. The ear of the Lord is open unto none save those of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

“Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor” (1Sa 28:7). Here we behold the fearful wickedness of one who was righteously abandoned by God. Fearful presumption was it for Saul to deliberately and definitely resort unto one who practiced diabolical arts. Only a little before, he had banished from the land those who had “familiar spirits” (1Sa 28:3), known today as “mediums.” It illustrates the fact that apostates frequently commit those very sins which they once were most earnest in opposing. We shall not follow Saul through the remainder of this chapter, but pass on to the 29th, where the Holy Spirit continues the narrative about the Philistines and David.

“Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek: and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel. And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rearward with Achish” (1Sa 29:1-2). “If David had told the truth, Achish would never have dreamed of enrolling him amongst the hosts of the Philistines. It was his own contrivance that had brought him there. He, who so well knew how to discriminate between the Philistines and the armies of the living God, and who, on the ground of that distinction, had so often sought and obtained the assistance of the God of Israel, now found himself leagued with the enemies of God for the destruction of God’s people. He who had so distinctly refused to stretch out his hand against the Lord’s anointed, was now enrolled with those very hosts who were about to shed the blood of Saul and of Jonathan too, upon the mountains of Gilboa. Such were the terrible circumstances in which David suddenly found himself. He seems to have looked upon them as hopeless, nor do we read of his attempting any remedy.

“But David had not ceased to be the subject of care to the great Shepherd of Israel. He had wandered and was to be brought back. The secret providence of God again interfered and separated him from the camp of the Philistines” (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899). Yes, man’s extremities are (so to speak) God’s opportunities and from the dilemma which David could see no way out of, He graciously extricated him—without his having to move a finger, a door was opened for his deliverance. The means which the Lord employed upon this occasion should cause us to bow in adoration before the High Sovereign over all and deepen our trust in Him.

“Then said the princes of the Philistines, What do these Hebrews here? And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, Is not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell unto me unto this day?” (1Sa 29:3). God has various ways of delivering His people from their difficulties. While the ungodly pursue their own purposes and follow out their own plans, God secretly influences them to such determinations as subvert the good of His saints. These “princes” of the Philistines were not those of the immediate court of Achish, but lords of other principalities, who were confederates with him. These now opposed the design of Achish to use David and his men in the forthcoming battle.

“And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? should it not be with the heads of these men? Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?” (1Sa 29:4-5). “Though God might justly have left David in his difficulty to chasten him for his folly, yet because his heart was upright with Him, He would not suffer him to be tempted above which he was able, but with the temptation made a way for his escape (1Co 10:13). A door was opened for his deliverance out of this strait. God inclined the hearts of the Philistine princes to oppose his being employed in this battle and to insist upon him being dishonored, and thus their enmity befriended him, when no friend he had was capable of doing him such a kindness” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

The esteem and affection of the wicked often become snares to us, but reproaches, contempt, injurious suspicions, prove beneficial, and the ill-usage of the ungodly by which we are driven from them is much better for us than their friendship which knits us to them. “When worldly people have no evil to say to us, but will bear testimony to our uprightness, we need no more from them; and this we should aim to acquire by prudence, meekness, and a blameless life. But their *flattering* commendations are almost always purchased by improper compliances, or some measure of deception, and commonly cover us with confusion. It is seldom prudent to place great confidence in one who has changed sides, except as the fear of God influences a real convert to conscientious fidelity” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). It is striking to note the particular thing which God made use of to influence those Philistine lords against David. It was the song which the women of Israel had sung in David’s honour and which now for the third time brought him into dishonour—so little are the flatteries of people worth! They stir up jealousy and hatred in others. Yet in the hand of God, it became the instrument of David’s deliverance.

Achish now summoned David into his presence and said, “Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines” (1Sa 29:7). No doubt David secretly rejoiced at this deliverance from his sore dilemma, yet he was unwilling that the king of Gath should know it. He prevaricated again, making an appearance of concern for being so summarily dismissed. “And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king?” (1Sa 29:8). Sad it is to see the anointed of God dissembling and speaking in such a manner of His people. But Achish was not to be moved and said, “Wherefore now rise up early in the morning with thy master’s servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart” (1Sa 29:10). Marvelous deliverance was this from his ensnaring service, yet without the slightest credit to David. It was nought but the sovereign grace of God which freed him from the snare of the fowler.



## A WARNING

### *Marks of Religious Declension*

1. When you are reluctant to religious conversation and the company of serious, heavenly-minded Christians, and enjoy yourself best with men of the world. 2. When from preference, you are absent from meetings for prayer, confine yourself to Sabbath meetings, are easily detained from them, and are ready to excuse such neglects. 3. When you are afraid to consider certain duties seriously, lest your conscience rebuke past neglect and insists on fidelity now. 4. When it is more your object, in doing duty, to pacify conscience, than to honour Christ, obtain spiritual profit, or do good to others. 5. When you have an over-critical spirit respecting preaching; are dissatisfied with the manner, as inelegant, too plain, too intelligent, or not according to some favourite model; or with the matter, as too doctrinal, or too perceptive; or when you complain of it as too close or are suspicious of personality. 6. When you are more afraid of being accounted strict, than of sinning against Christ by negligence, in practice, and unfaithfulness “to your Lord and Master” (Joh 13:14). 7. When you have little fear of temptations and can trifle with spiritual danger. 8. When you thirst for the complacency of men of the world, and are more anxious to know what they think or say of you, than whether you honour the Saviour in their sight. 9. When scandals to religion are more the subject of your censure, than of your secret grieving and prayer before God, and faithful endeavours for their removal. 10. When you are more afraid to encounter the scorn of an offending man, by rebuking sin, than of offending God by silence. 11. When you are more bent on being rich than holy. 12. When you cannot receive deserved reproof for faults, are unwilling to confess them, and justify yourself. 13. When you are impatient and unforbearing towards the frailties, misjudgments, and faults of others. 14. When your reading of the Bible is formal, hasty, lesson-wise, or merely intellectual, and unattended with self-application; or when you read almost any book with more interest than the Book of God. 15. When you have more religion abroad than at home; are apparently fervent when “seen of men” (Mat 23:5), but languid when seen only in the family or by God alone. 16. When your religious taste is more for the new things of men, than for the old things of the treasury of God’s Word. 17. When you call spiritual sloth and withdrawal from Christian activity by the names of prudence and peaceableness, while sinners are going to destruction and the church suffering declension; unmindful that prudence can be united with apostolic fidelity, and peaceableness with most anxious seeking of the salvation of souls. 18. When, because there is false zeal abroad, you will neither trust yourself nor others, even in that “fervency in spirit, serving the Lord” (Rom 12:11) which Paul taught and practiced. 19. When you are secretly more gratified at the falls of some professor of religion, than grieved for the wounds he inflicts upon Christ. 20. When, under chastisement of Providence, you think more of your sufferings than your deserts, and look more for relief than purification from sin. 21. When you confess, but do not forsake besetting sin. 22. When you acknowledge, but still neglect duty.

## DISPENSATIONALISM

### 6. *The Grace of God*

“The character of God, and the great principles of His moral government, the revelation of which has been one great object of His dealings with men, have of course, been at all times the same in themselves, though the knowledge of them has been communicated to men at sundry times and in divers manners. The way in which fallen men were to be saved has been at all times the same, as it was necessarily and unchangeably determined in its substance, or fundamental provisions and arrangements, by the attributes of God, and the principles of His moral government. Of course God’s great designs with respect to the fallen race of man has been at all times the same, conducted upon the same principles and directed to the same object. The chief differences observable in God’s successive dispensations toward the human race are to be found in the *fullness* and *completeness* of the revelation which, at different times He gave of His character and plans, and especially of the method of salvation, and in the more temporary objects which at different periods He combined with His one grand terminating purpose” (William Cunningham, 1870).

Since the Fall, God’s dealings with men have been under three distinct economies—the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian. In each of them, “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10) has both exercised and manifested His sovereign benignity. It is a serious mistake to suppose that divine grace is peculiar to this Christian era. It is a fundamental error to affirm that in Old Testament times God’s people were saved on some other principle than grace. Yet, through a wrong understanding of John 1:17 and Ephesians 3:2, it has been widely held that the Mosaic economy was one of *unrelieved* law, and that not until after the day of Pentecost was the grace of God made known to poor sinners. In the note appended to Matthew 28:19, the Scofield Bible says, “With the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ begins the dispensation of the grace of God (Eph 3:2), which is defined as ‘His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus’; and ‘the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast’ (Eph 2:7-9). Under grace [which Mr. S. contrasts from “under law,” the Mosaic economy] God freely gives to the believing sinner eternal life (Rom 6:23); accounts to him a perfect righteousness (Rom 3:21-22; 4:4-5), and accords to him a perfect position.” But God gave precisely *the same* blessings unto penitent and believing sinners from Abel onwards!

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen 6:8). To appreciate the force of this, attention must be paid to the verses which precede and follow. The wickedness of man was great in the earth, so that it repented the Lord He had made man. The earth was filled with violence for “all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth” (Gen 6:12). Nevertheless, even in those terrible times (far, far worse than now!), there was “a remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom 11:5). God had reserved unto Himself one family from being swallowed up in the general apostasy. The sovereign grace of God had singled out Noah, wrought in him a saving faith, which was evidenced by works of obedience and righteousness. It was not for anything in him, for God permitted it to appear that he was a

man of like passions with us (Gen 9:21), but due alone to the free favour and will of God that Noah was delivered from the flood.

That the patriarchs were saved *by grace* is made abundantly clear from the 4th chapter of Romans. There we are told, "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for [unto] righteousness" (Rom 4:2-3). Then in verse 16, we read, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be *by grace*; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of *us* all." Nor was this blessed truth withheld from them and only made known in New Testament times. In Genesis 19:19, we read that Lot said, "Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life." How clear was his apprehension of the unmerited favour of God. In Genesis 43:29, we find Joseph saying to Benjamin, "God be *gracious* unto thee." Clear proof is this that he was divinely taught this precious truth.

How gloriously did God demonstrate His *grace* in delivering the descendants of Abraham from "the iron furnace." Nowhere is His sovereign favour more blessedly displayed than in the difference He put between the Hebrews and the Egyptians, and the wonderful way in which He emancipated them from the house of bondage. No clearer type of redemption is to be met with in all the Scriptures. The sending of Moses unto an oppressed and groaning people, the protection they were afforded from the angel of death under the blood of the paschal lamb, and their deliverance at the Red Sea, unmistakably and plainly shadowed forth the Christian's deliverance from the servitude of sin and Satan, and his security from the wrath to come, which deliverance and security he owes entirely to the grace of God manifested in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. So too it was grace, *wondrous grace*, which provided the murmuring Israelites with manna from on high and with water out of the smitten rock.

What has been said in the last paragraph is generally acknowledged, but it is now supposed that all is changed when we reach Exodus 19 and 20. To use an expression which is commonly employed in some circles, "At Sinai Israel placed themselves under law"—as though they were not "under law" previously, see Exodus 16:27-28! Then it was "the Dispensation of Law" began, a dispensation which it is insisted was, in its fundamental essentials, radically different from this Christian era. As a sample of what we now have reference to, we transcribe a few sentences from I. M. Haldeman's "How to Study the Bible." There the writer affirms, "The distinctive value of dispensational truth may be seen by contrasting the dispensation of the Holy Ghost with the Mosaic dispensation." Among the points of difference, Mr. H. gives the following, "In the Mosaic dispensation, God dealt according to man's work. In the Holy Ghost's dispensation, He deals according to Christ's work. In the Mosaic dispensation, God dealt on the basis of Law. In the Holy Ghost dispensation, He deals on the basis of Grace. In the Mosaic dispensation, God said, 'Do, and live.' In the Holy Ghost dispensation, He says, 'Live and do'."

Now we have no hesitation in saying that such brief and bald statements as these are most misleading and mischievous. The first of the above contrasts ignores the fact that the

redemptive work of Christ was retroactive in its efficacy and value, and that from Abel onwards God has *always* dealt with His spiritual elect on the ground of Christ's atonement, Romans 3:24-25 and 1 Peter 1:19-20. The second contrast drawn needs considerable amplification. God is dealing with all who are out of Christ "on the basis of Law" as much today as He did with Israel in the time of Moses—as they shall yet discover to their eternal undoing, Romans 3:19, and as will be shown in the paragraphs which follow, God acted in grace with Israel during the Mosaic economy as truly as He is acting in grace now. If by the term "life" in the third contrast, Mr. Haldeman means *spiritual* and *eternal* life (as the second member of it seems to clearly denote), then his statement is positively horrible, false doctrine of the worst kind.

In considering the constitution which God gave to Israel at Sinai, most of our moderns appear to fix their whole attention on the moral law and utterly ignore *the ceremonial*. The two ought to be regarded together, for they formed one complete whole. They presented the two sides of God's character and nature, as "light" (1Jo 1:5) and "love" (1Jo 4:8). The moral law exhibited the righteousness and holiness of God; the ceremonial law reflected His love and grace. The one was given to reveal and convict of sin; the other was given to point to the blessed provision which the free favour of God has made for the blotting out of sin. The one was to show man his ruin; the other made known the remedy for that ruin. The ceremonial law, with its sin-offerings, its priesthood, its blessed provisions, proclaimed in no uncertain terms the *grace* of God, and it is ignorance of the worst kind to refer to the Mosaic economy as a stern regime of unrelieved justice, unmodified by the gracious provisions for failure which were found in the Levitical institutions.

That God dealt in *grace* with the nation of Israel after they received the law from His mouth at Sinai is so plain that only the blind can fail to see it, yet as this is now so little perceived, we feel that we must labour the point. A most noteworthy proof thereof is found in the very next incident which occurred after Jehovah first announced the Ten Words. When Moses returned to the mount, Aaron made a golden calf and the nation worshipped the same. A more flagrant violation of their covenant with the Lord could scarcely be imagined, though God chastened them for their offense, yet as Jeremiah 31:2 declares, "The people which were left of the sword *found grace* in the wilderness." Blessed is it to behold the typical mediator pleading on the behalf of his erring brethren and averting from them the divine wrath.

When Moses returned again to the mount, carrying with him the two hewn tables for God to write the Ten Commandments upon, we are told that, "The LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, *merciful and gracious*, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Exo 34:5-7). What a blessed mingling was this of grace and law, of sovereign benignity and righteousness, of compassion and holiness! Let those who so loudly insist that "law and grace will no more mingle than will oil and water," seriously ponder the above passage and revise their foolish and one-sided conception of things. It is blessed to see how Hezekiah (2Ch 30:9), Nehemiah (9:17) and Jonah (4:2), each rested upon *this* precious word in Exodus 34:6.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall *bless* the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and *be gracious* unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace” (Num 6:22-26). How can such a passage as this be fitted into the narrow conception of the Mosaic economy which is being propagated so ardently by the dispensationalists? It cannot. One almost wonders whether many of them know there *is* such a passage in the Pentateuch! Those verses record the benediction which the high priest pronounced upon Israel. What greater and grander blessing can be prayed for today?

The principle of *grace* was prominently exhibited in the civil law which the Lord gave unto His people. Therein Israel was taught to be *gracious* in their conduct. Many examples might be given, but we must here content ourselves with a few, leaving the reader to follow up the subject for himself. In Exodus 21:2, we find that God gave orders, “If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh *he shall go out free for nothing*.” “If thou lend money to any of my people that is *poor* by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury. If thou at all take thy neighbour’s raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; *for I am gracious*” (Exo 22:25-27).

“Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning” (Lev 19:13)—this in order that the labourer might have money with which to purchase food for his evening meal. “If a bird’s nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young” (Deu 22:6). “When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence” (Deu 22:8). Who can fail to see the principle of *grace* shining forth in these precepts? God thereby taught His people to be considerate of others, to be compassionate and merciful.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you” (Mat 5:43-44). These verses are often appealed to as a proof of the radical difference which obtains between the Mosaic and Christian dispensations, but such an appeal betrays deplorable ignorance. Christ was there refuting the wicked errors of the Pharisees. The Old Testament inculcated *the same gracious treatment of “enemies”* as Christ insisted upon. “If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again” (Exo 23:4). “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt *love* thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD” (Lev 19:18). “Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth” (Pro 24:17). “If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink” (Pro 25:21). One wonders if present-day dispensationalists read their Bibles at all or if they are content to merely echo what their predecessors have said.

Notwithstanding their waywardness and continued backsliding, God dealt *in grace* with Israel all through their long and checkered history. Read through the book of Judges and see how often He raised up deliverers for them. Read through the Kings and the Chronicles and note His long-suffering benignity in sending them prophet after prophet. After Israel had fallen to the low level they did in the reign of Ahab, what grace was displayed in the ministry of Elijah and Elisha. Read carefully Isaiah 1:2-15, and then ponder that amazing invitation in 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Where in all the New Testament is there a word which, for pure grace, exceeds this of Isaiah 1:18?!

Right down to the end of the Old Testament we find God dealing in grace with Israel. In the days of Hezekiah "the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet" (2Ki 13:23). In the days of Hosea, they were invited to, "Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and *receive us graciously*" (Hos 14:2). As late as Malachi, we find the prophet saying, "And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will *be gracious* unto us" (Mal 1:9).

The godly in Israel, during the Mosaic economy, had a vastly different conception of God than have our dispensationalists. Hear the Psalmist as he declares, "Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful" (Psa 116:5). Hear him again as he bursts forth into adoring praise, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases...He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (Psa 103:2-3, 10)—can *Christians* say more? "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Psa 130:3)! *What*, then, is *the great distinction* between the Mosaic and the Christian dispensation? This: then, God's grace was confined unto one nation, now it flows forth unto *all nations*!

## HEART WORK

### *Part Six*

The heart of man is his worst part before it be regenerate and his best part afterwards. It is the seat of principles and the source of actions. The eye of God is, and the eye of the Christian ought to be, principally fixed upon it. The great difficulty in conversion is to win the heart to God and the great difficulty after conversion is to keep the heart with God. Herein lies the very pinch and stress of religion. Here is that which makes the way to life a narrow way and the gate of heaven a straight one. To afford some direction and help in this great work, these articles have been prepared. We realize their many defects, yet trust that

God will be pleased to use them. No other subject can begin to compare with it in practical importance.

The general neglect of the heart is the root cause of the present sad state of Christendom. The remainder of this article might readily be devoted unto the verifying and amplifying of that statement, instead, we merely point out briefly one or two of the more prominent features. Why is it that so many preachers have withheld from their congregations that which was, so obviously, most needed? Why have they “spoken smooth things” instead of wielding the sword of the Spirit? Because their own hearts were not right with God—*His* holy fear was not upon them. An “honest and good heart” (Luk 8:15) will cause a servant of Christ to preach what he sees to be the most essential and profitable truths of the Word, however displeasing they may be unto many of his people. He will faithfully rebuke, exhort, admonish, correct, and instruct, whether his hearers like it or not.

Why have so many church members departed from the faith and given heed to seducing spirits? Why have multitudes been led away by the error of the wicked, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness? Why have so many others been attracted to companies of notional professors, which, despite their proud boasts of being the only people gathered together in (or unto) the name of Christ, are, for the most part, people who have only an acquaintance with the letter of Scripture and are strangers to practical godliness? Ah, the answer is not far to seek—it was because they had no *heart* acquaintance with the things of God. It is they who are sickly and diseased which fall easy victims unto the quacks. So it is those whose hearts are never rooted and grounded in the Truth, which are tossed about with every wind of doctrine. The study and guarding of the heart is the best antidote against the infectious errors of the times. And this leads us to point out some of the *advantages* of keeping the heart.

1. The pondering and garrisoning of the heart is a great help to the understanding in the deep things of God. An honest and experienced heart is a wonderful aid to a weak head. Such a heart will serve as a commentary upon a great portion of the Scriptures. When such a one reads the Psalms of David or the Epistles of Paul, he will find there many of his own difficulties stated and solved. He will find them speaking the language of his own heart—recounting *his* experiences, expressing *his* sorrows and joys. By a close and regular study of the heart, he will be far better fitted to understand the things of God than graceless rabbis and inexperienced doctors—not only will they be clearer, but far sweeter unto him. A man may discourse orthodoxly and profoundly of the nature and effects of faith, of the preciousness of Christ, and the sweetness of communion with God, who has never felt the impressions or efficacy of them upon his own spirit. But O how dull and dry will these *notions* be unto those who have *experienced* them!

Ah, my reader, experience is the great schoolmaster. Much in Job and Lamentations will seem dull and uninteresting until you have had deeper exercises of soul. The seventh chapter of Romans is not likely to appeal much unto you until you make more conscience of indwelling sin. Many of the later Psalms will appear too extravagant in their language until you enjoy closer and sweeter fellowship with God. But the more you endeavour to keep your heart, and bring it into subjection unto God, to keep from it the evil solicitations of Satan, the more *suited to your own case* will you find many chapters of the Bible. It is

not simply that you have to be in the “right mood” to appreciate, but that you have to pass through certain exercises of heart ere you can discover their appropriateness. Then it is that you will have “felt” and “tasted” for yourself the things of which the inspired writers treat. Then it is you will have the key which unlocks many a verse that is fast closed unto masters of Hebrew and Greek.

2. Care in keeping the heart supplies one of the best evidences of sincerity. There is no external act which distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor, but before this trial no hypocrite can stand. It is true that when they think death to be very near, many will cry out of the wickedness and fear of their hearts, but that signifies nothing more than does the howling of an animal when it is in distress. But if thou art tender of thy conscience, watchful of thy thoughts, and careful each day of the workings and frames of thy heart, this strongly argues the sincerity of it, for what but a real hatred of sin, what but a sense of the divine eye being upon thee, could put any one upon these secret duties which lie out of the observation of all creatures? If, then, it be such a desirable thing to have a fair testimony of your integrity, and to know of a truth that you fear God, then study, watch, keep the heart.

The true comfort of our souls much depends upon this, for he that is negligent in the keeping of his heart, is generally a stranger to spiritual assurance and the sweet comforts flowing from it. God does not usually indulge lazy souls with inward peace, for He will not be the patron of carelessness. He has united together our diligence and comfort, and they are greatly mistaken who suppose that the beautiful child of assurance can be born without soul pangs. Diligent self-examination is called for—first the looking into the Word and then the looking into our hearts, to see how far they correspond. It is true the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian, but He cannot be discerned by His essence. It is His operations that manifest Him and these are known by the graces He produces in the soul, and those can only be perceived by diligent search and honest scrutiny of the heart. It is in the heart the Spirit works.

3. Care in keeping the heart makes blessed and fruitful the means of grace and the discharge of our spiritual duties. O what precious communion we have with God when He is approached in a right frame of soul. Then we may say with David, “My meditation of him shall be sweet” (Psa 104:34). But when the heart be indisposed, full of the things of this world or weighted down by the cares of this life, then we miss the comfort and joy which should be ours. The sermons you hear and the articles you read (if by *God’s* servants) will appear very different if you bring a *prepared* heart to them! If the heart be right, you will not grow drowsy while hearing the reading of the riches of God’s grace, the glories of Christ, the beauty of holiness, or the needs-be for a scripturally ordered walk. It was because the heart was neglected you got so little from attending to the means of grace!

The same holds good of prayer. O what a difference there is between a deeply exercised and spiritually burdened heart pouring out itself before God in fervent supplication and the utterance of verbal petitions by rote! It is the difference between reality and formality. He who is diligent in heart work and perceives the state of his own soul is at no loss in knowing *what* to ask God for. So he who makes it a practice of walking with God, communing with God, meditating upon God, spontaneously worships Him in spirit and in truth. Like David he will say, “My heart is inditing a good matter” (Psa 45:1).



The Hebrew there is very suggestive. Literally, it is "My heart is boiling up a good matter." It is a figurative expression taken from a living spring, which is bubbling up fresh water. The formalist has to rack his mind, and as it were, laboriously pump up something to say unto God, but he who makes conscience of heart work finds his soul like a bottle full of new wine—ready to burst, giving vent to sorrow or joy as his case may be.

4. Diligence in keeping the heart will make the soul stable in the hour of temptation. The care or neglect of the conscience largely determines our attitude toward and response unto solicitations of evil. The careless heart falls an easy prey to Satan. His main attacks are made upon the heart, for if he gains *that*, he gains all, for it commands the whole man! Alas, how easy a conquest is an *unguarded* heart. It is no more difficult for the devil to capture it, than for a burglar to enter a house whose windows and doors are unfastened. It is the watchful heart that both discovers and suppresses the temptation before it comes in its full strength. It is much like a large stone rolling down a hill! It is easy to stop at first, but very difficult after it has gained full momentum. So, if we cherish the first vain imagination as it enters the mind, it will soon grow into a powerful lust which will not take a nay.

Acts are preceded by desires and desires by thoughts. A sinful object first presents itself to the imagination and unless *that* be nipped in the bud, the affections will be stirred and enlisted. If the heart does not repel the evil imagination, if instead it dwells on it, encourages it, feeds on it, then it will not be long before the consent of the will is obtained. A very large and important part of heart work lies in observing its first motions and checking sin *there*. The motions of sin are weakest at the first and a little watchfulness and care then prevents much trouble and mischief later. But if the first movings of sin in the imagination be not observed and resisted, then the careless heart is quickly brought under the full power of temptation and Satan is victorious.

5. The diligent keeping of the heart is a great aid to the improving of our graces. Grace never thrives in a careless soul, for the roots and habits of grace are planted in the heart, and the deeper they are rooted there, the more thriving and flourishing grace is. In Ephesians 3:17, we read of being "rooted and grounded in love." Love in the heart is the spring of every gracious word of the mouth and of every holy act of the hand. But is not *Christ* the "root" of the Christian's graces? Yes, the originating root, but grace is the derivative root, planted and nourished by Him, and according as *this* thrives under divine influences, so the fruits of grace are more healthy and vigorous. But in a heart which is not kept diligently, those fructifying influences are choked. Just as in an uncared-for garden, the weeds crowd out the flowers, so vain thoughts that are not disallowed and lusts which are not mortified, devour the strength of the heart. "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: *When* I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches" (Psa 63:5-6).

6. The diligent care of the heart makes Christian fellowship profitable and precious. Why is it that when Christians meet together, there are often sad jarrings and contentions? It is because of unmortified passions. Why is their conversation so frothy and worthless? It is because of the vanity and earthiness of their hearts. It is not difficult to discern by the actions and converse of Christians, what frames their spirits are under. Take one whose

mind is truly stayed upon God, and how serious, heavenly, and edifying is his conversation, "The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of his God *is in his heart*" (Psa 37:30-31)! If each of us was humbled every day before God under the evils of his own heart, we should be more pitiful and tender toward others, Galatians 6:1.

7. A heart well-kept fits us for any condition God may cast us into or any service He has to use us in. He that has learnt to keep his heart lowly is fit for prosperity and he who knows how to apply Scripture promises and supports is fit to pass through any adversity. So he that can deny the pride and selfishness of his heart is fit to be employed in any service for God. Such a man was Paul. He not only ministered to others, but looked well to his own vineyard, see 1 Corinthians 9:27. And what an eminent instrument he was for God. He knew how to abound and how to suffer loss. Let the people deify him, it moved him not, except to indignation. Let them stone him, he can bear it.

8. By keeping our hearts diligently, we should the soonest remove the scandals and stumbling blocks out of the way of the world. O how the worthy name of our Lord is blasphemed because of the wicked conduct of many who bear His name. O what prejudice has been created against the Gospel by the inconsistent lives of those who preached it. But if we keep *our* hearts, we shall not add to the scandals caused by the ways of loose professors. Nay, those with whom we come into contact will see that we "had been with Jesus" (Act 4:13). When the majestic beams of holiness shine from a heavenly walk, the world will be awed and respect will again be commanded by the followers of the Lamb.

Though the keeping of the heart entails such hard labour, do not such blessed gains supply a sufficient incentive to engage diligently in the same? Look over the eight special benefits we have named and weigh them in a just balance. They are not trivial things. Then guard well your heart and watch closely *its love for God*. Jacob served seven years for Rebekah and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love that he had unto her. The labour of *love* is always delightful. If God has your heart, the feet will run swiftly in the way of His commandments. Duty will be a delight. Then let us earnestly pray, "So teach us to number our days, that we may *apply our hearts* unto wisdom" (Psa 90:12)—as we "apply" our hands unto manual tasks.

Let me now close the whole of these articles with a word or two of consolation to all serious Christians who have sought to faithfully and closely give themselves to this heart work, but who are groaning in secret over their apparent lack of success therein and who are fearful that their experience falls short of a saving one. First, this argues that your heart *is* honest and upright. If you are mourning over heart conditions and sins, that is something no hypocrite does. Many a one is now in hell who had a better heart than mine; many a one now in heaven complained of as bad a heart as thine.

Second, God would never leave thee under so many heart burdens and troubles if He intended not thy benefit thereby. You say, Lord, why do I go mourning all the day having sorrow of heart? For long have I been exercised over its hardness and not yet is it broken. Many years have I been struggling against vain thoughts and still I am plagued by them. O when shall I get a better heart? O that God would thereby show you what your heart by

nature is and have you take notice of how much you are beholden to free grace! So too He would keep you humble and not fall in love with yourself.

Third, God will shortly put a blessed end to these cares, watchings, and headaches. The time is coming when your heart shall be as you would have it, when you will be delivered from all fears and sorrows, and never again cry, "O my hard, vain, earthy, filthy heart." Then shall all darkness be purged from your understanding, all vanity from your affections, all guilt from your conscience, all perversity from your will. Then shall you be everlastingly, delightfully, ravishingly entertained, and exercised upon the supreme goodness and infinite excellency of God. Soon shall break that morning without clouds, when all the shadows shall flee way and then we "shall *be like him*; for we shall see him as he is" (1Jo 3:2). Hallelujah!

For much in these articles, particularly the fourth and final one, we are indebted to the works of the Puritan, John Flavel (1630-1691).

## ASSURANCE

### *Dialogue 4*

"Good evening, Mr. Editor, I trust I am not intruding." "No indeed, you are very welcome, Brother Humble Heart, and I am thankful to see from your countenance that your heart is lighter (Pro 15:13)." Bro. H.H.: "I am glad to say it is so at present, for the Lord has been very gracious to me and I cannot but think that it is in answer to your prayers, for the Scriptures declare, 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much' (Jam 5:16)." Editor: "If the Lord has deigned to hear my feeble intercessions on your behalf, all praise alone to Him. But tell me something of His goodness towards you." Bro. H.H.: "May it please the Lord to direct my thoughts, anoint my lips, and help me to do so. My story is rather a long one, but I will be as concise as the case allows.

"A poor woman, known among the Lord's people as Sister Fearing, was left a widow some months ago, and having buried all her children, I knew she had no one to spade her garden. So this spring I called on her and asked if she would allow me to do it." Editor: "I am glad to hear that. If godliness be not intensely practical, then it is only a name without the reality. It is written, 'Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world' (Jam 1:27). And did this poor Sister avail herself of your kind offer?" Bro. H.H.: "Yes, with tears running down her face, she told me she was quite unable to express her gratitude. After a while she said, It was not so much my offer to help which moved her so deeply, but that it gave her a little hope she was not completely abandoned by God.

"I asked her why she ever entertained the thought that God had cast her off? She told me that most of the time she felt herself to be such a vile and polluted creature that a holy God could not look with any satisfaction upon her. She said she was so constantly

tormented by doubts and fears that God must have given her over to an evil heart of unbelief. She added that, in spite of all her reading of the Word and crying unto the Lord for strength, her case seemed to grow worse and worse, so that it appeared heaven *must* be closed against her.” Editor: “And what reply did you make to her sorrowful complaint?” Bro. H.H.: “Why, there flowed into my mind a verse which I had not thought of for a long time. I felt it was from the Lord, and looking to Him for wisdom and tenderness, I addressed the dear soul as follows:

“Sister Fearing, I think you are too hasty in your conclusion. I have been just where you now are. I read in God’s Word, ‘The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power’ (1Co 4:20), and I reasoned that if God had set up His kingdom in my heart, then the power of sin would be broken, and alas, I found sin in me stronger than ever. I read, ‘He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him’ (1Jo 4:16), but I could not believe He dwelt in me while I was in such bondage to slavish fear. I read, ‘Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father’ (Rom 8:15), but I could not cry, ‘Abba, Father,’ so I was afraid God had nothing to do with me. I read, ‘Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin’ (1Jo 3:9), and though I was preserved from bringing public reproach upon the name of Christ, yet I found myself continually overcome by sin within. My guilty conscience daily condemned me and unto peace I was a stranger.”

Sister Fearing: “You have accurately described my sad lot, but go on please.” Bro. H.H.: “Suffer me, then, to ask you a few honest questions. Have you been chastised, rebuked, made tender, and sore for sin? And after feeling God’s reproofs, was your spirit revived and refreshed under the Word, so that you hoped for better days?” Sister Fearing: “Yes, I have been conscious of God’s rod upon me and have owned with David, ‘Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me’ (Psa 119:75). And there have been times, all too brief, when it seemed I was softened and revived, and had a little hope, but the sun was soon again hidden behind dark clouds.” Bro. H.H.: “Well, *that* proves God *does* dwell within you, for He declares, ‘Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to *revive* the spirit of the humble, and to *revive* the heart of the contrite ones’ (Isa 57:15)!”

Sister Fearing: “Yes, I am familiar with that verse, but it makes against *me*, for had God truly ‘revived’ me, the *effects* of it would remain. Instead, I am dry and parched, lifeless and barren.” Bro. H.H.: “Again you are too hasty in ‘writing bitter things against’ yourself, Job 13:26. Such ‘revivings’ of faith, hope, and love in the soul *are* evidences of the Spirit’s indwelling. But let me now give you the verse which flowed into my mind at the beginning of our conversation. It exactly fits your case, ‘And now *for a little space* grace hath been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in His holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us *a little reviving* in our bondage’ (Ezr 9:8). Ah, dear Sister, do you not see that this ‘little reviving,’ even though it be for ‘a little space’ is a manifestation of God’s dwelling in a broken and contrite heart?”

Editor: “That was indeed a word in season, and evidently given you by the Spirit. There are many hindered from enjoying assurance through unnecessary fears. Because sin

is in them as an active and restless principle, they imagine they have no contrary principle of holiness, and because in part they are carnal, judge that they are not spiritual. Because grace is but feebly active, they conclude they are void of it and because for a long season they enjoy not strong consolation, suppose they have no title to it. They fail to distinguish between the motions of the flesh and the motions of the Spirit. As surely as sin manifests the flesh to be in us, so does grieving over it, striving against it, repenting for it, and the confessing of it to God, show the Spirit or new nature indwells us. The Christian's sighs and groans are among his best evidences that he is regenerate."

Bro. H.H.: "May I ask, exactly what you meant when you said, Many are hindered from enjoying assurance through *unnecessary fears*? My reason for asking is, because in Philippians 2:12, God bids His people work out their salvation *with fear and trembling*." Editor: "Your question is well taken. We must distinguish sharply between the fears of *godly jealousy* and the fears of *unbelief*. The one is a distrusting of self, the other is a doubting of God. The former is opposed to pride and carnal confidence, the latter is the enemy of true peace. The eleven apostles manifested the fear of godly jealousy when the Saviour announced that one would betray Him, and each of them inquired, 'Lord, is it I?' (Mat 26:25). David gave way to the fear of unbelief when he said, 'I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul' (1Sa 27:1). But I have interrupted your narrative. Tell me how Sister Fearing responded to your giving her Ezra 9:8."

Bro. H.H.: "Really, it seemed to make little impression. She sighed deeply and for a while said nothing. Then she continued, 'I fear it would be presumption for me to say that I have ever been *revived*, for a dead soul cannot be—he must first be quickened. Probably the raising of my spirits under the reading or hearing of the Word is nothing more than the joy of the stony-ground hearer' (Mat 13:20-21). To which I replied, But one who has never been quickened has *no* pantings after God, never seeks Him at all, but seeks to banish Him entirely from his thoughts. True, he may go to church and keep up a form of godliness before others, but there is no diligent seeking after Him in private, no yearnings for communion with Him.

"Perhaps, dear Sister, it may be a day of 'small things' (Zec 4:10) with you. Often there is life, where there is not strength. A child may breathe and cry, yet cannot talk or walk. If God be the object of your affection, if sin be the cause of your grief, if conformity to Christ be the longing of your heart, then a good work *has* begun in you (Phi 1:6). If it is indwelling sin which makes you so wretched from day to day, if it be deliverance from its polluting affects you yearn and pray for, if it be the lustings of the flesh you are struggling against, then it must be because a principle of holiness has been implanted in your heart. Such godly exercises are not in us by nature. They are the products of indwelling grace. Despair not, for it is written of Christ, 'a bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench' (Mat 12:20)."

Sister Fearing: "Yes, it is one thing to understand these things intellectually, but it is quite another for God to apply them in power to the heart. *That* is what I long for, and that is what I lack. My wound is far too deadly for any man to heal. O that I could be sure as to whether my disrelish of sin arises from mere natural convictions of conscience that every ungodly person feels more or less, whether they are suggestions from Satan for the purpose

of deceiving me, or whether they actually are the strivings of the new nature against the old. Nothing short of the personal, mighty, and saving power of the Holy Spirit realized in my heart, will or can give me genuine relief.”

Bro. H.H.: “I am thankful to hear you say this. Human comforts may satisfy an empty professor, but such a plaster will not heal one of the elect when stricken by God. It is His purpose to cut off *every* arm of flesh from them, to strip them and bring them, in their helplessness, as empty-handed beggars before the throne of His grace. As to whether or not the life of God be actually planted in the soul, *therein* lies the grand mystery. *That* is the pivot on which eternal destiny must turn. And no verdict from man can satisfy on that point. Only the Lord Himself can give such a testimony or witness as will satisfy one of His children. But when He *does* shine into the soul, when He applies His Word in power, when *He* says, ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace,’ then no word from a preacher is needed. The Lord keep you at His feet till He grants this.

“Until very recently I too was much exercised over the great danger of Satan instilling a false peace and making me believe that all was well, when it was not so, as I was also much perplexed to know how to distinguish between the convictions of *natural* conscience and the exercises of a *renewed* conscience. But the Lord has shown me that as a tree is known by its fruits, so the nature of a cause may be determined by the *character of the effects* it produces. They who are deluded by the false peace which Satan bestows are filled with conceit, presumption, and carnal confidence. They do not beg God to search them, being so sure of heaven they consider it quite unnecessary. The convictions of natural conscience harden, stop the mouth of prayer, and lead to despair. The convictions of a renewed conscience produce penitent confession, lead to Christ, and issue in honesty and uprightness before God.

“In conclusion, let me earnestly counsel you, dear Sister, to have nothing to do with those who profess their experience to be all peace and joy, and who, if you ask them whether they are tormented by the plague of their own heart or whether they have *felt* the blood of Christ applied to their own conscience, laugh, and say they have nothing to do with feelings, but live above them. Such deluded creatures can be of no more help to a groaning saint than one suffering anguish from bodily ills would receive any relief from the so-called Christian Scientists, who tell him his pains are mental delusions, and to think only of health and happiness. One and another are equally physicians of no value. Instead, pour out your woes into the ears of the Great Physician and in His own perfect time, He will pour oil and wine into your wounds, and put a new song into your mouth.”

Bro. H.H.: “Since then I have said nothing more to her on the subject, believing it best to leave her alone with God.” Editor: “I am glad to hear that. None but blind Arminians will attempt to do the Holy Spirit’s work for Him. Much damage is often done to souls by trying to force things. When God begins a work, we may safely leave it in *His* hands to continue and complete the same. And how happy I am, dear Brother, to perceive the dew of the Spirit upon your own soul. It appears that ‘the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear,’ and ‘the time of the singing of birds is come’ (Song 2:11-12) with you.”

Bro. H.H.: "Thanks be unto God for taking pity upon such a wretch. It is much better with me now. The strange thing is, though I had little or no real assurance myself when I commenced speaking to Sister Fearing, but as she mentioned the different things which so sorely troubled her, God seemed to put into my mouth the very words most needed, and as I spake them to her, He sealed them into my own heart." Editor: "Yes, it is as we read in Proverbs 11:25, 'The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.' In communicating the Word of God to His children, our own hearts are refreshed and our own faith is established. To him that useth what he hath shall more be given.

"I have long perceived the truth of what the apostle says in 2 Corinthians 1:4, 'Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.' It is God's way to take His people, *and especially His servants*, through trying and painful experiences, in order that they may *use* to His glory the consolation wherewith He has comforted them. It is those who know most of the plague of their own heart, who are best fitted to speak a word in season to weary souls. It is out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh and it is he who has passed through the furnace who can best deal with those now in the fire. Let us pray that it may please God to be equally gracious unto Sister Fearing."

## OUR ANNUAL LETTER

"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal 3:6). How grand the assurance that high above this ever-fluctuating world is One "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jam 1:17)! The great Jehovah is eternal, immutable, uninfluenced by anything outside Himself. What a satisfying Object for faith to be engaged with! The immutability of God provides an all-sufficient foundation for the heart to rest upon. Nations may rise and nations may fall, empires may expand and then collapse, world conferences may convene with high hopes and then adjourn with hopes dashed, but the covenant God of the spiritual Israel *changes not*.

Because God is immutable the sons of Jacob "are not consumed." Who are these "sons of Jacob"? They are those who bear the image of their spiritual father. The *spiritual* "sons of Jacob" are they who, in felt helplessness, cling to Jehovah and cry, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Gen 32:26). They are those, who, experiencing many ups and downs and despite innumerable failures, are able to say, "I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD" (Gen 49:18). Such, though harassed and frequently tripped up by Satan, are "not consumed" by him. Such, though at times brought very low, are "not consumed" by poverty and starvation. Such, though perhaps sorely tempted, are "not consumed" by the unpardonable sin of suicide. Many, many thousands during the "depression" have put an end to their wretched existence on earth, but there is not a line in all the Scriptures which hints that one of Christ's redeemed has or ever will.

Nor has this “son of Jacob,” the editor, nor the magazine, been “consumed” by the stress and straitness of the “hard times.” Though without any salary for the past five years, we have contracted no debts and owe no man anything. Graciously has our faithful God continued to supply our every need, and not only so, He has enabled us to minister to more of His dear people who are in need! Nor do we believe for a moment that *our* circumstances are more favourable because we are any better than some of our suffering brethren and sisters. No indeed, in and of ourselves we are leprous beggars, entirely dependent upon the grace and mercy of our sovereign God, and every cause have we to say with the Psalmist, “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psa 103:10).

Not only has the God of all grace preserved this magazine through the most difficult year the world has experienced financially during the present century, but He has also granted us many different proofs that His blessing rests upon the same. Backsliders have been restored, numbers influenced to separate from the corrupt churches, and many have been led into a closer walking with God, for all of which we ask the Christian reader to return thanks and offer praise unto Him to Whom alone it is due. The extracts from various letters received, given in the “Welcome Tidings” article in the July issue, convey some idea of how the Holy Spirit is being pleased to apply the messages unto souls here and there. These encouragements along the way nerve us to go on pressing forward along the path to which God has called us.

Of course it is only to be expected that sometimes we receive letters of an entirely different character. Some of the articles which God has enabled us to write have been too searching for those who are seeking to serve two masters and they want the magazine no more. Out of the hundreds of names which we removed from our list at the end of last year (many of whom we fondly hoped to hear from) hardly any wrote requesting that the “Studies” be sent to them again this year. We know quite well that if we would devote an article each month to “The Signs of the Times,” a page to “Questions (on the Bible) and Answers,” and would introduce one or two other such things, our little magazine would be popular in a much wider circle than we now reach. But it is our aim not to tickle the ear, but to search the conscience; not to pander unto the sensational-monger, but to feed Christ’s hungry sheep; not to please empty professors, but to make God’s children more and more *out of love with themselves*.

But instead of being surprised that some are not able to digest “bitter herbs” (Exo 12:8), we are thankful that God has enabled so many to receive them. Purgative medicine is not pleasant, either physically or spiritually, and the flesh in the Christian is no different from the flesh in the non-Christian, and only as the Spirit subdues it, is any one able to appropriate that which *condemns* the flesh. In view of the fact that so much is said about the love of God, and so little about His holiness; that so much is said about the blood and finished work of Christ, and so little about His yoke and the example which He has left us to follow; that so much is said about salvation from hell, and so little about salvation from self-will and self-pleasing; that so much is said about the free gifts of God, and so little about the imperative necessity of an obedient walk (Heb 5:9); that so much is said about the security of the saint, and so little about his working out his salvation “with fear and



trembling”;—it is indeed a marvel that there is still a remnant left who *are* willing to read a magazine which honestly seeks to emphasize *both* sides with due proportion.

We are hopeful that God will be pleased to raise up other men who will, by the help of His Spirit, emphasize those portions of His truth which are now so sadly and so widely neglected. We are hopeful that God will grant a fresh outpouring of His Spirit and are endeavouring to plead before Him the promise found in the last part of Isaiah 59:19—may scores of our readers be led to *daily* plead the same. Yet, we are certain that no heaven-sent revival will come until there is a faithful preaching *of the law*, by which “is the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:20), and a stronger emphasis laid upon the indispensable need for *repentance*. But if God withholds a revival, then we fully expect to see fewer and fewer wanting this magazine. Would it not seem a tragedy if God continued to give the editor messages, sent in funds to print them, and had not sufficient readers to justify the publication of them? Yet this is a very real possibility! Will you not, then, pray more definitely and earnestly *for an increased circulation*.

Our list of names would be very much longer than it now is, if we would continue to send the “Studies” year after year to those who conclude they are entitled to them, merely from the fact that there is no subscription price. But though we send forth the magazine free, we are very far from getting it printed for nothing. It costs us ninety cents (three shillings and nine pence) to each person we send to for a year. Possibly there are some who conclude there is some organization or wealthy “board” behind us. No indeed. This little messenger is published purely as “a work of faith and labour of love,” for the editor takes *nothing* out of it for his arduous and continuous services. It is supported by the voluntary gifts of the Lord’s people, many of whom are very poor in this world’s goods, and therefore we feel it would be a sin to use their sacrificial offerings to send the magazine to those who would trade on their generosity. Gladly do we send it to many real saints *unable* to contribute.

While seeking to press those things which make for practical godliness in the daily life, we realize there is a balance of truth to be preserved and that there is a danger of getting the Christian too much occupied with himself and too little with Christ. Therefore, if the Lord spares us and permits the “Studies” to be published through 1934, we expect to vary our note of emphasis. Having written so much of late upon the responsibility of man, a lengthy series on the high sovereignty of God should prevent our readers from becoming lop-sided. This series is taken from a book now out of print, kindly loaned by a friend, “The Providence of God,” by Alexander Carson, being a most able and helpful topical treatment of the book of Esther. Then, if the Lord enables, the editor hopes to write a series on the basic doctrine of Justification, wherein we shall be largely engaged (D.V.) with the grace of God and the imputed righteousness of Christ.

The Lord willing, the exposition of Hebrews will continue for another year at least, as will also “The Life of David.” The “Dispensational” articles are not quite completed, and when they are, we hope to follow them with several upon “The Covenants.” Probably some of our readers have been somewhat disappointed by the cover-page articles on the Holy Spirit. It was our desire to treat the whole subject as comprehensively as we could, yet briefly. Having dwelt this year upon the doctrinal and dispensational aspects, we expect

to treat more of the experimental and practical side. Having been engaged principally with the *Person* of the Spirit, from now on we shall consider His *work*, in its manifold aspects. We greatly feel our own deep need of an especial anointing for this task, and beg our readers to pray definitely for the same.

Perhaps some were disappointed that we offered no comments in our columns upon "The World's Economic Conference" which convened in London, when the representatives of no less than sixty-six nations met together to discuss the grave problems which affect their peoples. But we long that our own heart and the hearts of our readers should be engaged with other objects. "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1Jo 2:17). What profit is there for the soul in reading over their wranglings? "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth" (Isa 45:9). The grand consolation for the children of faith is that our God is upon the throne, working "*all* things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph 1:11). The Conference fizzled out virtually as a farce, but the Lord's purpose in it was not foiled.

At the time of this writing, it is rather difficult to advise our friends in what form to send their gifts, as the currency of most nations is still fluctuating. If those in Australia will enclose stamps or notes (*not* money orders), we can get them exchanged. We would prefer for those in Great Britain to send us U.S.A. paper money, if they can purchase (at their bank) dollars for not more than 4.6. Or if they will kindly inquire at the Post Office and be regulated by the American value of the pound, we shall esteem it a favour. If they are informed the pound is worth 19/- in the U.S.A., kindly send us an International Money Order made out to *York, Penna., U.S.A.*; but if worth less than 19/- please send local Money Order to Mr. Winstone. The 1933 bound Volume is now ready at one dollar postpaid, or 4/6 abroad.

Once more the Lord has called upon us to strike our pilgrim tent. The landlord was seeking to sell the house which we rented during the past two and a half years in Millmont, and we were likely to receive notice to move at any time. After waiting on God for directions, He made it plain that He would have us sojourn next in York, a town of some fifty thousand people, and less than one hundred miles away from our last abode. Here there is a small company of the Lord's saints with whom we expect to have happy fellowship and to whom we hope to minister the Word orally at least once a week. Will readers kindly note carefully our new address.

On our study wall is a painted motto bearing the words, "Thou Remainest," which is of great comfort to us. During the past year quite a number of dear friends who have taken the "Studies" from the beginning have been called Home; among them, several who were much used of God in the financial support of this monthly messenger. But "*Thou* Remainest." He will never leave us nor forsake us, and while He has use for this little magazine, we have no doubt whatever but that He will continue to graciously supply our every need. These lines are being written six weeks before our year closes (on December 1), and there is every prospect that we shall again be permitted to close with a small credit balance. Hallelujah! great is God's faithfulness. God heard your prayers, dear reader!

During the past year it has been the happy privilege of the editor and his devoted wife to correspond with many of our readers upon their personal problems and trials. We take

this opportunity in saying that we welcome letters telling of difficulties and sorrows, and seek grace and wisdom to send a word of counsel and comfort in reply. Any time something may be obscure in our writings, do not hesitate to let us know. Criticisms we always seek to weigh before the Lord. Correspondence along spiritual lines are earnestly invited. We long to redeem the time and be of help to as many souls as possible. We feel a real relation exists between us and many of our readers.

Once more our gracious God has brought the editor and his wife through another year's hard work without any sickness, which we attribute very largely to the intercession of our brethren and sisters in Christ. Good health is a great need for which we cannot be too thankful. From the human side, we are convinced that a plain diet and *moderation* in all things, has much to do with keeping our body in good working order. We earnestly covet the continued supplications of our friends that God's rich blessing will abide upon us and His work in our lives. Pray that our circulation may be increased and that more spiritual fruit will grow unto God's glory. "Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf" (2Co 1:11). We send hearty Christian greetings unto all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Yours by God's abounding mercy, A.W. and V.E. Pink, 531 Thomas St., York, Pa., U.S.A.

