

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

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STUDIES IN THE
SCRIPTURES

ARTHUR W. PINK

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Contents

January

Private Prayer—Part 1.....	6
The Epistle to the Hebrews	8
<i>121. A Good Conscience (13:18-19)</i>	
The Life of David.....	14
<i>73. His Inordinate Grief</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	18
<i>6. The Davidic</i>	
The Kingdom of Christ	22
God's Word in Our Hearts	26
The Doctrine of Election.....	29
<i>Introduction</i>	
Preaching As We Walk	33

February

Private Prayer—Conclusion.....	35
The Epistle to the Hebrews	37
<i>122. Praying for Ministers (13:18-19)</i>	
The Life of David.....	43
<i>74. His Return to Jordan</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	48
<i>6. The Davidic</i>	
The Kingdom of Christ	52

God's Word in Our Hearts	56
The Doctrine of Election.....	58
<i>2. Its Source</i>	
Trust in God	63
March	
The Lord's Prayer—Part 1	64
The Epistle to the Hebrews	66
<i>123. The Apostle's Prayer (13:20-21)</i>	
The Life of David.....	72
<i>75. His Restoration</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	76
<i>6. The Davidic</i>	
Conditions in the Past	80
The Blessed Man.....	84
The Doctrine of Election.....	88
<i>2. Its Grand Original</i>	
April	
The Lord's Prayer—Part 2	94
The Epistle to the Hebrews	96
<i>123. The Apostle's Prayer (13:20-21)</i>	
The Life of David.....	102
<i>76. His Restoration</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	106
<i>6. The Davidic</i>	
Conditions in the Past	110
Satan's Accusations	115
The Love of God	116
The Doctrine of Election.....	118
<i>3. Its Grand Original</i>	
May	
The Lord's Prayer—Part 3	123
The Epistle to the Hebrews	125
<i>125. Divine Exhortations (13:22)</i>	
The Life of David.....	131
<i>77. His Purpose Thwarted</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	135

7. <i>The Messianic</i>	
Conditions in the Past	139
The Doctrine of Election.....	143
4. <i>Its Verity</i>	
Conscience	148
1. <i>Its Nature and Origin</i>	
2. <i>Its Office and Character</i>	
June	
The Lord's Prayer—Part 4	152
The Epistle to the Hebrews	154
126. <i>Spiritual Freedom (13:23)</i>	
The Life of David.....	160
78. <i>His Honourable Conduct</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	164
7. <i>The Messianic</i>	
Conditions in the Past	168
The Doctrine of Election.....	172
4. <i>Its Verity</i>	
Conscience	177
2. <i>Its Office and Character [Continued From May Issue]</i>	
3. <i>Purged and Pure</i>	
July	
The Lord's Prayer—Part 5	181
The Epistle to the Hebrews	183
127. <i>Conclusion (13:24-25)</i>	
The Life of David.....	186
79. <i>His Honourable Conduct</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	190
8. <i>The Messianic</i>	
A Fourfold Salvation.....	194
1. <i>Salvation from the Pleasure Of Sin.</i>	
The Doctrine of Election.....	199
5. <i>Its Justice</i>	
Reproaches Improved.....	203
Welcome Tidings	206
August	
The Lord's Prayer—Part 6	210

The Sermon on the Mount	212
<i>1. Introduction</i>	
The Life of David.....	216
<i>80. His Sacred Song</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	220
<i>7. The Messianic</i>	
Date Fixing.....	224
The Doctrine of Election.....	228
<i>5. Its Justice—Part 2</i>	
A Fourfold Salvation.....	233
<i>II. Salvation from the Penalty of Sin.</i>	
Holiness.....	238
September	
The Lord’s Prayer—Part 7	239
The Sermon on the Mount	241
<i>2. The Beatitudes—Matthew 5:3-11</i>	
The Life of David.....	246
<i>81. His Sacred Song</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	250
<i>7. The Messianic</i>	
Samson’s Riddle	254
The Doctrine of Election.....	258
<i>6. Its Nature</i>	
A Fourfold Salvation.....	262
<i>3. Salvation from the Power of Sin</i>	
October	
The Lord’s Prayer	268
The Sermon on the Mount	270
<i>3. The Beatitudes—Matthew 5:1-11</i>	
The Life of David.....	275
<i>82. His Sacred Song</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	279
<i>7. The Messianic</i>	
The Unbelief of Thomas	283
The Doctrine of Election.....	287
<i>6. Its Nature</i>	
A Fourfold Salvation.....	292

IV. Salvation from the Presence of Sin.

November

The Lord's Prayer—Part 9	297
The Sermon on the Mount	299
<i>4. The Beatitudes—Matthew 5:1-11</i>	
The Life of David.....	304
<i>83. His Sacred Song</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	308
<i>7. The Messianic</i>	
2 Corinthians 3	312
The Doctrine of Election.....	319
<i>7. Its Design</i>	
Divine Providence	324
Saul at Gilgal.....	324
A Very Present Help	324

December

The Lord's Prayer—Conclusion	326
The Sermon on the Mount	328
<i>5. The Beatitudes—Matthew 5:1-11</i>	
The Life of David.....	333
<i>84. His Sacred Song</i>	
The Divine Covenants.....	338
<i>7. The Messianic</i>	
The Covenant Allegory	342
The Doctrine of Election.....	348
<i>7. Its Design—Part 2</i>	
Our Annual Letter	352

APPENDICES

About Studies in the Scriptures.....	355
Biography of A.W. Pink	357
<i>by Erroll Hulse</i>	
Chapel Library Resources	362

January

PRIVATE PRAYER—PART 1

“But *thou*, when thou prayest, enter into *thy* closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward *thee* openly” (Mat 6:6). Eight times in the space of this verse is the pronoun used in the singular number and the second person—a thing unique in all Scripture—as though to emphasize the indispensability, importance, and value of private prayer. We are to pray in the closet as well as in the church. In fact, if the former be neglected, it is not at all likely that the latter will be of much avail. He that is an attendee at the prayer meetings in order to be seen of men, and is not seen alone in his closet by God, is a hypocrite. Private prayer is the test of our sincerity, the index to our spirituality, the principle means of growing in grace. Private prayer is the one thing, above all others, that Satan seeks to prevent, for he knows full well that if he can succeed at this point, the Christian will fail at every other.

Alas, how remiss we have been, how sadly we have failed to discharge this duty, and what irreparable losers are we by this sinful neglect. Is it not high time that some of us heeded that word, “Consider your ways” (Hag 1:5, 7)?! Shall this year witness a repetition of the sad failures of the past? Can we go on robbing God of His due and our souls of the blessedness of communion with Him? The secret place of the Most High is one of vision, peace, joy. The closet is where strength is renewed, faith is quickened, graces are revived. It is not always the cares or pleasures of this world which are the hindering cause—some allow the discharge of public duties to prevent the performance of private ones. Beware, my reader, of being so busy in running from one meeting to another that personal dealings with God *in secret* are crowded out. Some are so busily engaged in reading, and preparing sermons, that private communion with God is prevented.

Not a few are puzzling their brains over prophecy when they should be on their knees before God. “The devil knows he is no loser, and the curious soul but a little gainer, if he can but persuade him to spend most of his precious time in pouring over the mysteries and hidden things of God. He that affects to read the Revelation of John more than his plain epistles, or Daniel’s prophecies more than David’s Psalms, and is more busy about reconciling different Scriptures than he is about mortifying of unruly lusts, or is set more upon vain speculation than upon things that make for edification—he is not the man that is cut out for closet prayer. Such as affect sublime notions, obscure expressions, and are men of abstract conceits, are but a company of wise fools, that will never take any delight to be with God in a corner. O how holy, happy, heavenly, and humble might many men have been, had they but spent half the time in closet prayer that they have spent in searching after those things that are hard to be understood” (Thomas Brooks, Puritan, 1608-1680).

The most eminent saints, in Old and New Testament times, applied themselves to private prayer. “And Abram planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God” (Gen 21:33). Why did Abram plant that grove, but that he could have a secluded spot where he might pour out his soul before his Maker. “And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide” (Gen 24:63). The Hebrew word for “meditate” also signifies *to pray*, and is elsewhere rendered “commune” and “pray.” So, too, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, Hezekiah, etc., were men whose private devotions are recorded in Holy Writ. Concerning Daniel, we read, “He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God” (Dan 6:10)—busy as he must have been, he allowed not public duties to crowd out private devotions.

Christ Himself, when upon earth, did much exercise Himself *in private prayer*—ponder such passages as Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, 6:46, Luke 5:16, where it will be found that He retired “into a mountain,” “into a solitary place,” “into the wilderness,” that He might be alone with God, free from disturbance and distraction. But why was *He* so much in private prayer? Another has suggested the following reasons. First, to put a very high honour and value upon the same—to enhance and magnify this duty. Second, that He might avoid all shows and appearances of ostentation and popular applause. He was very shy of the mere shadow of pride and vainglory. Third, to set us such a blessed pattern and gracious example that we should not content ourselves with public prayers only, nor with family prayers only, but that we should also apply ourselves to *secret* prayer. Fourth, that He might approve Himself to our understandings and consciences to be a merciful and faithful High Priest, “who ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

It is the exercising of ourselves in secret prayer which distinguishes us from hypocrites, who go through their religious exercises merely to be seen of men, Matthew 6:1-2, 5, 16. The hypocrite places a far higher value upon the applause of his fellows than he does upon the approbation of his Maker. The praise of men is his meat and drink. The outstanding mark of a hypocrite is that he is one thing in public, but quite another in private. But the genuine Christian makes conscience of his prayer life, knows that God sees and hears him in secret, and cultivates communion with Him in the closet. The diligence with which we perform our *private* devotions is the criterion of our sincerity. We never read in Scripture that Pharaoh, King Saul, Judas, Demas, Simon Magus, and the scribes and Pharisees ever poured out their souls before the Lord in secret! The hypocrite is more concerned about a good name than a good life, of a reputation for piety than a clear conscience—not so God’s children. In secret we may more freely, fully, and safely, unbosom our souls to God than we can in the presence of our fellows. There is no danger in opening our heart and confessing in detail our vilest sins before God in a corner, but there might be a considerable hazard in doing so even before our fellow Christians. No one with wisdom and refinement would think of exposing his bodily ailments and diseases to any but his bosom friend or physician, neither should he make known his weaknesses and wickedness to any but to his best Friend, the Great Physician. There need be no restraint or reserve in confession when we are apart with God. It was when David was alone in the cave (see the Psalm heading) that he poured out his complaint and showed him his trouble (Psa 142:2). Observe carefully the repeated “every family *apart*” and “their wives *apart*” of Zechariah 12:12-14—to manifest not only the soundness of their sorrow, but to show their sincerity.

It is striking to note that God has often granted the freest communications of Himself to those who were before Him in secret. It was so with Moses on the mount, when JEHOVAH gave him the law—and again when He gave him the pattern for the tabernacle. It was while Daniel was engaged in private prayer that God sent His angel to reveal to him the secrets of His counsel

concerning the restoration of Jerusalem and the duration thereof even unto the Messiah (Dan 9:3, 21-27), as it was also during a season when he was alone before the throne of grace that God assured him he was “a man greatly beloved” (Dan 10:11, 19). It is in the closet that God usually bestows His sweetest and choicest blessings. Cornelius was highly commended and graciously rewarded upon the account of his private prayer (Act 10:1-4). Peter was granted that wondrous vision concerning the Gentiles while praying alone (Act 10:9-13).

Scripture records much to illustrate and demonstrate the great prevalence of private prayer. O the wonders that followed secret wrestling with God, the grand mercies that have been obtained, the judgments that have been diverted, the deliverances that have been secured! When Isaac was all alone entreating with God for a good wife, he met Rebekah (Gen 24:63-64). While Hezekiah was weeping and praying in private, God sent the prophet Isaiah to assure him that He would add unto his days fifteen years (Isa 38:5). When Jonah was shut up in the whale’s belly, he was delivered in answer to his supplication (Jon 2:1-10). O the power of private prayer—it has issued in the dead being raised to life—1 Kings 17:18-22, 2 Kings 4:32-35. May the Holy Spirit graciously use these considerations to stir up writer and reader.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

121. A Good Conscience (13:18-19)

Hebrews 13:18-19 is closely connected with the verse which immediately precedes. In our present portion, the apostle mentions another duty which believers owe to those who minister unto them in spiritual things, and this is that they should earnestly remember them before the throne of grace. The writer of this epistle besought the prayers of the Hebrews, supporting his plea with a declaration of the sincerity and fidelity with which he had sought to discharge his office. The very fact that the true servants of Christ are so conscientious in the performance of their work, should so endear them to those they minister unto, that a spirit of prayer for them ought to be kindled in their hearts. They are the instruments through which we receive the most good, and therefore the least we can do in return is to seek to bear them up before God in the arms of our faith and love.

Before we consider this special need of Christ’s servants, and our privilege and duty in ministering unto the same, we propose to devote the remainder of this article unto a careful consideration of the particular reason here advanced by the apostle in support of his request, namely, “for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly” (Heb 13:18). This expression “a good conscience” occurs in several other passages in the New Testament, and because of its deep importance it calls for our closest attention. Much is said in the Word about conscience, and much depends upon our having and preserving a good one, and therefore it behooves us to give our best consideration to this weighty subject. Not only is it one of great practical moment, but it is especially timely in view of the conscienceless day in which we live. What, then, is the conscience? What is a *good* conscience, and how is it obtained and maintained? May the Spirit of Truth be our Teacher as we seek to ponder these vital questions.

Conscience is that faculty of the soul which enables us to perceive of conduct in reference to right and wrong, that inward principle which decides upon the lawfulness or unlawfulness of our desires and deeds. Conscience has well been termed the moral *sense*, because it corresponds to those physical faculties whereby we have communion with the outward world, namely, the five

senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. Man has an ethical instinct, a faculty or moral sensibility informing and impressing him. "It is far higher in the scale and keener in its perceptions than any mere bodily sense. There is an inner eye, that sees into the nature of right and wrong—an inner ear, sensitive to the faintest whisper of moral obligation—an inner touch, that feels the pressure of duty, and responds to it sympathetically" (A. T. Pierson, 1837-1911).

Conscience is that mysterious principle which bears its witness within us for good or evil, and therefore it is the very center of human accountability, for it greatly adds to his condemnation that man continues sinning against the dictates of this internal sentinel. Conscience supplies us with self-knowledge and self-judgment, resulting in self-approbation or self-condemnation according to our measure of light. It is a part of the understanding in all rational creatures which passes judgment on all actions for or against them. It bears witness of our thoughts, affections, and actions, for it reflects upon and weighs whatever is proposed to and by the mind. That it bears witness of *emotions* is clear from, "My conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart" (Rom 9:1-2). So again we read, "Take no heed unto all words that are spoken; least thou hear thy servant curse thee: for oftentimes also thine own heart [conscience] knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast [inwardly] cursed others (Ecc 7:21-22). Its voice is heard by the soul secretly acquainting us with the right and wrong of things.

That conscience exists in the unregenerate is clear from Paul's statement concerning the Gentiles, "Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Rom 2:15). Though the heathen never received the Scriptures, as Israel did, yet they had within them that which accused or excused them. There is within every man (save the idiot) that which reproved him for his sins, yea, for those most secret sins to which none are privy but themselves. Wicked men seek to stifle those inward chidings, but are rarely if ever successful. "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites" (Isa 33:14). Unregenerate men are without faith, yet not without fear, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth" (Pro 28:1). There is that within man which appalls the stoutest sinner after the committal of any gross evil—his own heart reproves him.

The Creator has gifted the human soul with various faculties, such as the understanding, affections, and will. And He has also bestowed upon it this power of considering its own state and actions, both inward and outward, constituting conscience both a monitor and judge within man's own bosom—a monitor to warn of duty, a judge to condemn for neglect of the same. It is an impartial judge within us, that cannot be suspected of either undue severity or ill-will, for it is an intrinsic part of our very own selves. Conscience anticipates the grand assize in the day to come, for it forces man to pass verdict upon himself, as he is subject to the judgment of God. It is resident in the understanding, as is clear from 1 Corinthians 2:11, where the conscience is termed our "spirit."

The presence of conscience within man supplies one of the clearest demonstrations of the existence of God. To this fact, the Holy Spirit appeals in Psalm 53. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psa 53:1). Now how does he prove there is a God? Thus, "There were they in great fear, where no fear was" (Psa 53:5). Though there was no outward cause for fear, none seeking to hurt them, yet even those who lived most atheistically were under a fear. An illustration is seen in the case of Joseph's brethren, who accused themselves when there was none other to accuse them, "They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother" (Gen 42:21). Though a man should hide himself from all the world, he cannot get away from

himself—his heart will pursue and condemn him. Now the very fact that there is such a hidden fear in man after sinning, that their hearts smite them for crimes done in secret, argues there is a God.

This fear is found in the most obstinate sinners, and in those who, because of their high station and power are exempt from human justice. History records how kings and emperors have followed their wickedness without interference, yet even the infamous Caligula trembled when it thundered. It was not a fear that they might be found out by man and punished by him, for in some notable instances this fear prevailed to such an extent that human punishment had been a welcome relief, and failing which they perforce laid violent hands upon themselves. What can be the reason for this, but that they feared a Judge and Avenger, who would call them to account? As the apostle said of the heathen, “Who *know* the judgment of God” (Rom 1:32)—there is a witness in their own souls that they are liable to His justice. Mark the fearful consternation of Belshazzar—the paling of his countenance, smiting of his knees, loosing of his joints, when he read the sentence on the palace walls (Dan 5).

“There is nothing in man that more challenges and demands adequate explanation than his moral sense. Conscience is a court always in session and imperative in its summons. No man can evade it or silence its accusations. It is a complete assize. It has a judge on its bench and that judge will not be bribed into a lax decision. It has its witness-stand, and can bring witnesses from the whole territory of the past life. It has its jury, ready to give a verdict, ‘guilty’ or ‘not guilty,’ in strict accordance with the evidence. And it has its sheriff, *remorse*, with his whip of scorpions, ready to lash the convicted soul. The nearest thing in this world to the bar of God, is the court of conscience. And though it be for a time drugged into a partial apathy, or intoxicated with worldly pleasure, the time comes when in all the majesty of its imperial authority this court calls to its bar every transgressor and holds him to a strict account” (A. T. Pierson).

But though the presence of conscience in us bears witness to the existence of a holy, righteous, sin-hating and sin-avenging God, it is scarcely correct to say (as numbers have done) that the conscience is the voice of God speaking in the soul—rather is it that faculty which *responds* to what He says. When Christ declared, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Mat 11:15). He signified him that has a conscience attuned to the Most High, who desires to know His will and submit to His authority. Conscience sits upon the bench of the heart as God’s vice-regent, acquitting or accusing. It acts thus in the natural man, but in the regenerate it is a godly conscience, guided in its operations by the Holy Spirit, bearing its testimony for or against the believer according to his character and conduct, Godwards and manwards.

The actual term “conscience” is derived from “scio,” to know, and “con,” with. There is some difference of opinion as to the precise application of the prefix, whether it be a knowledge we have in common with God or a knowledge according to His law. Really, it is a distinction with very little difference. The “knowledge” is of one individual alone by himself, but this “knowledge *with*” is where two at least share the same secret, either of them knowing it together with the other. Conscience, then, is that faculty which *combines two together*, and makes them partners in knowledge—it is between man and God. God knows perfectly all the doings of a man, no matter how carefully concealed—and man, by this faculty, also knows together with God the same things of himself. Hence we read of “conscience toward God” (1Pe 2:19), or as the Greek may also be rendered (see margin of R.V.) “the conscience of God”—having Him for its Author and Object. Conscience is God’s vice-regent, acting for and under Him.

Thus, as the very term implies, conscience must have *a rule* to work by—“knowledge together with.” It is not only a knowledge, but a knowledge coupled with *a standard*, according to which a

process of inward judgment is carried on. Now our only proper rule is the Word, or revealed will of God. That is divided into two parts—what God speaks to man in His holy law, and what He says to him in His blessed Gospel. If conscience departs from that Rule, then it is a rebellious one, it has ceased to speak and judge for God, and then the light in man is turned into darkness, for the (inward) eye has become evil (Mat 6:23). In his primitive condition, man had only the law, and the proper work of conscience then was to speak warningly and condemningly in strict accordance with that Rule, and to allow none other. But our first parents listened to Satan's lie, broke the law, and came under its condemnation.

Wherever we go, conscience accompanies us, whatever we think or do it records and registers in order to the day of account. "When all friends forsake thee, yea, when thy soul forsakes the body, conscience will not, cannot, forsake thee. When thy body is weakest and dullest, the conscience is most vigorous and active. Never more life in the conscience than when death makes its nearest approach to the body. When it smiles, acquits, and comforts, what a heaven doth it create within a man! But when it frowns, condemns and terrifies, how does it becloud, yea, benight all the pleasures, joys and delights of this world" (John Flavel, 1630-1691). Conscience, then, is the best of friends or the worst of enemies in the whole creation.

Much of our peace of mind and liberty of spirit in this world will be according to the favourable testimony of conscience, and much of our spiritual bondage, fear, and distress of mind will be according to the charges of wrong-doing which conscience brings against us. When the gnawings of conscience are intensified, they become unendurable, as was the case with Cain, Judas, and Spira, for they supply a real foretaste of the internal torments of hell. Most probably this is that worm that dieth not (Mar 9:44) which preys upon the lost. As a worm in the body is bred of the corruption that is therein, so the accusations and condemnations of conscience are bred in the soul by the corruptions and guilt that are therein. And as the worm preys upon the tender and invisible parts of the body, so does conscience touch the very quick of the soul.

But notwithstanding what has been predicated of the conscience above, it is, nevertheless, *defiled* (Ti 1:15). In the natural man it is exceeding partial in its office, winking at and indulging favourite sins, whilst being strict and severe upon other sins to which a person is not constitutionally prone. Thus we find the conscience of king Saul exceedingly punctilious in a matter of the ceremonial law (1Sa 14:34), yet he scrupled not to slay eighty-five of God's priests! The reason why the conscience is so uneven is because it has been corrupted by the fall—it is out of order, just as a foul stomach craves certain articles of diet while loathing others which are equally wholesome. So it is in the performance of duties—conscience in the natural man picks and chooses according to its own perverted caprice—neglecting what is distasteful, performing what is pleasing, and then being proud because it has done so.

Now conscience is either good or evil, and that, according as it is governed by the revealed will of God. Briefly, the evil conscience first. This is of several kinds. There is the ignorant and darkened conscience, relatively so and not absolutely, for all (save idiots) possess rationality and the light of nature. This is the condition of the heathen, and alas, of an increasing number in Christendom, who are reared in homes where God is utterly ignored. Then there is the brazen and defiant conscience, which blatantly refuses to be in subjection to God's known will, such was the case with Pharaoh. In the case of Herod, we see a bribed conscience, pretending that his oath obliged him to behead John the Baptist. The seared and insensible conscience (1Ti 4:2) pertains to those who have long resisted the light and are given over by God to a reprobate mind. The despairing and desperate conscience leads its possessor to lay violent hands upon himself.

At the new birth the conscience is renewed, being greatly quickened and enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Through the exercise of faith the conscience is purified (Act 15:9), being cleansed by an appropriation of the blood of Christ (Heb 9:14). A good conscience may be defined, generally, as one that is *set to please God in all things*, for it hates sin and loves holiness. It is one which is governed by the Word, being in subjection to the authority of its Author. Its binding rule is obedience to God, and to Him alone, refusing to act apart from His light. Consequently, the more conscientious the Christian be, the more he refuses all domination (the traditions and opinions of man) which is not divine, the more likely is he to gain the reputation of being conceited and intractable. Nevertheless, each of us must be much on his guard lest he mistake pride and self-will for conscientious scruples. There is a vast difference between firmness and an unteachable spirit, as there is between meekness and fickleness.

How is a good and pure conscience obtained? Briefly, by getting it rightly informed, and by casting out its filth through penitential confession. The first great need of conscience is *light*, for ignorance corrupts it. “That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good” (Pro 19:2). As a judge that understands not the laws of his country is unfit to give judgment on any matter that comes before him, or as a dim eye cannot properly perform its office, so a blind or uniformed conscience is incapable to judge of our duty before God. Conscience cannot take God’s part unless it knows His will, and for a full acquaintance with that we must daily read and search the Scriptures. “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Psa 119: 9). O to be able to say, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psa 119:105).

Let us now mention some of the qualities or characteristics of a good conscience. First, *sincerity*. Alas, how little of this virtue is left in the world—what shams and hypocrisy now obtain on every side—the religious realm, the political, the commercial, and the social. This is a conscienceless generation, and consequently there is little or no honesty, fidelity, or reality. That which now regulates the average person is a temporary expediency, rather than an acting according to principle. But it is otherwise with the regenerate: the fear of the Lord has been planted in his heart, and therefore can he say with the apostle, “We trust we have a good conscience, in *all things* willing to live honestly.” A sincere conscience genuinely desires to know God’s will and is truly determined to be in subjection thereto. Guile has received its death wound, and the heart is open to the light, ready to be searched thereby.

Tenderness is another property of a good conscience. By this quality is meant a wakefulness and sensitiveness so that it smites for sin upon all occasions offered. So far from being indifferent to God’s claims, the heart is acutely sensible when they have been ignored. Even for what many consider trifling matters, a tender conscience will chide and condemn. Job resolved to preserve a tender conscience when he said, “My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live” (Job 27:6). Again, we may understand this characteristic from its opposite, namely, a seared conscience (1Ti 4:2), which is contracted by an habitual practice of that which is evil, the heart becoming as hard as the public highway. Pray frequently for a tender conscience, dear reader.

Fidelity. When conscience faithfully discharges its office, there is a constant judging of our state before God and a measuring of our ways by His Holy Word. Thus the apostle Paul could say, “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Act 23:1). The favourable judgment which others may entertain of him will afford no satisfaction to an upright man unless he has the testimony of conscience that his conduct is right in the sight of God. No matter what may be the fashions of the hour or the common custom of his fellows, one whose heart beats true to God will not do anything knowingly against conscience. His language

will ever be, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto *God*, judge ye” (Act 4:19). On the other hand, his frequent prayer is, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa 139:23-24).

Tranquility. This is the sure reward of sincerity and fidelity, for wisdom’s ways (in contrast from those of folly’s) “are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Pro 3:17). An offended conscience will offend us, and “a wounded spirit who can bear?” (Pro 18:14). The Christian may as well expect to touch a live coal without pain, as to sin without trouble of conscience. But a clear conscience is quiet, condemning not, being unburdened by the guilt of sin. When we walk closely with God there is a serenity of mind and peace of heart which is the very opposite of the state of those who are lawless and disobedient, for “the wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest” (Isa 57:20). The tranquility of a good conscience is an earnest of the undisturbed calm which awaits us on High.

But let it be pointed out that every peaceful conscience is not a good one, nor is every uneasy conscience an evil one. The conscience of some is quiet because it is insensible. “When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace” (Luk 11:21), that is a quiet evil conscience, because put to sleep by the opiates of Satan. True tranquility of conscience is to be determined from the other properties. It must issue from sincerity, tenderness, and fidelity, or otherwise it is a seared one. We must consider not how much inward peace we have, but how much *cause*—as in a building, not the fairness of the structure, but the *foundation* of it is to be most regarded. On the other hand, a tender conscience is liable to err through lack of sufficient light, and needlessly write bitter things against itself, which is a “weak conscience” (1Co 8:12), as we may also be troubled by sin’s already pardoned.

Now a good conscience can only be maintained by constant diligence, “Herein do I *exercise myself*, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men” (Act 24:16). The apostle made it his daily employment to keep his conscience clear, that it might not justly accuse him of anything, so that he should have the witness in his own heart that his character and conduct were pleasing in the sight of the Holy One. The maintenance of a good conscience is an essential part of personal piety, “This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy...holding faith and a good conscience” (1Ti 1:18-19), that is the sum of personal godliness—faith being the principle of things to be believed by us, conscience the principle of the things to be done. Faith and a good conscience are linked together again in 1 Timothy 1:5 and 3:9, for we cannot hold the one without the other.

If the reader will turn back to Acts 24, he will find that Paul was replying to charges brought against him. In verses 14-16, he made his defense, giving therein a brief epitome of practical and experimental Christianity. As the foundation, he gives an account of his faith, “Believing all things which are written,” as the immediate proof thereof—“and have hope toward God,” and then a brief account of his conversation, “Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense.” A saving knowledge of the truth, then, is such a belief of the Scriptures as produces an hope of eternal life, which is evidenced by a keeping of the heart with all diligence. The same is enumerated again in, “The end of the commandment” (the design of the Gospel institution) is that love which fulfills the law, issuing from a heart that beats true to God (1Ti 1:5).

“Herein do I exercise myself” (Act 24:16). We must make it our constant endeavour. First, by a diligent and daily searching of the Scriptures that we may discover the will of God. We are exhorted, “Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph 5:17), and this

in order that we may ascertain what is pleasing to Him, so that we offend not either in belief or worship. A conscience ill-informed is, at best, a weak and ignorant one. Second, by a serious inquiry into the state of our heart and ways, “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still” (Psa 4:4). We need to frequently challenge and call ourselves to account. If we would have conscience speak to us, we must speak often to it. It is given us for this very reason that we may judge of our state and actions with respect to the judgment of God. Then, “Let us search and try our ways” (Lam 3:40). Take time, dear reader, to parley with yourself and consider how matters stand between you and God. Short reckonings prevent mistakes, so review each day and put right what has come between you and God.

Third, a uniform course of obedience, “Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shalt assure our hearts before him” (1Jo 3:19). Fourth, by a constant alertness, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Mat 26:41). Fifth, by a serious resistance and mortification of sin—cutting off the right hand and putting out the right eye. Sixth, by a sincere repentance and confession when conscious of failure. Seventh, by faith’s appropriation of the cleansing blood of Christ.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

73. His Inordinate Grief

It will be remembered that in Article No. 72, we were occupied with the effects which the advance messengers of Joab had upon David. Those special couriers informed him of the defeat and death of Absalom (2Sa 18:29-33), and the king at once broke down and gave way to bitter lamentations. No doubt this was natural, and to be expected, for the insurrectionist was his own son, though an utterly unworthy one. Yet while an outburst of sorrow was excusable, inordinate grief was not so. In writing upon this subject, care needs to be taken by us, so as to prevent the reader, as far as we can, from drawing wrong conclusions. Inordinate grief is neither the depths to which we may be shaken nor the copiousness of our tears, for that is largely a matter of personal temperament and the state of our health.

Inordinate grief is when we so far lose control of ourselves that we become guilty of hysterical outbursts which ill become a rational creature, and uttering intemperate expressions, which displease the Lord and offends those who have His fear upon them. Especially should the Christian ever seek to set before others an example of sobriety, checking everything which savours of insubordination to God. Again, we are guilty of inordinate grief when we allow a sorrow to so overwhelm us that we are rendered incapable of discharging our duty. Particularly is this the case with those who occupy a public position, upon whom others are dependent or influenced thereby. In David’s case, he failed at each of these points, being guilty of a violent outburst of his passions, using intemperate language, and taking issue with God’s providential will.

In due time, Joab and his victorious army arrived at Mahanaim, to receive the congratulations of the king and wait upon him for further instructions. But instead of meeting them with warm gratitude for the signal service they had rendered him and his kingdom, David conducted himself in such a way as to make the army conclude the sovereign was filled with regret at their achievements. Consequently, instead of there being joyous celebrations over the victory, the spirit of the camp was greatly dampened. Instead of being thankful that his kingdom had been

mercifully delivered, David was completely overwhelmed with grief over the death of his wayward son, and all were made to suffer in consequence. The deplorable effects this produced will now be considered by us.

“And it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom. And the victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son. And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle. But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (2Sa 19:1-4). “The excessive indulgence of any passion (grief by no means excepted), not only offends God, but betrays men into great imprudence in their temporal concerns. They who have faithfully served us expect that we should appear pleased with them, and thankful for their services—and many will do more for a smile and a kind word from their superiors, than for a more substantial recompense—and be much grieved and disheartened if they think themselves frowned on” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

This was no time for David to yield to his private sorrows. Public interests urgently required him to bestir himself and grip the helm of state with a firm hand. A most serious and critical situation confronted him, which called for prompt and decisive action. Absalom’s rebellion had rent the kingdom asunder, and only a prudent policy, swiftly executed, could hope to restore peace and unity again. There had been a widespread revolt and David’s throne had been shaken to its very foundations. The king himself had been forced to flee from Jerusalem and his subjects had become divided in their interests and loyalty. But God had graciously intervened. The arch-rebel was slain and his forces utterly routed. This was the hour, then, for David to assert his authority, press upon the people the honour of JEHOVAH’s name, take charge of things, and take full advantage of the situation which had swung things so markedly into his favour.

As soon as he had received confirmation that Absalom and his forces had been defeated, David’s only wise course was to return immediately to Jerusalem. To set up his court once more in the royal city, while the rebels were in confusion and before they could rally again, was but the part of common prudence—how else could the insurrectionists be cowed and the unity of the nation be restored? But now grief paralyzed David—beclouding his judgment, sapping his energy, causing him to conduct himself most injudiciously. Never was there a time when he more needed to hold the hearts of his soldiers. It was essential to his royal interests that he should secure their respect and affection, but by keeping himself in close mourning, he not only dampened the spirits of his strongest supporters, but acted as though he disapproved of what they had done.

“And it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom. And the victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son” (2Sa 19:1-2). “The people will take particular notice of what their princes say and do. The more eyes we have upon us, and the greater our influence is, the more need we have to speak and act wisely, and to govern our passions strictly” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). David ought to have been ashamed of his sorrowing over such a worthless and wicked son, and done his utmost to subdue and hide it. See how the people reacted—they “gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle” (2Sa 19:3). Out of respect for their sovereign they would not rejoice while he continued to mourn, yet they must have felt deeply how little their efforts on his behalf were really appreciated.

“But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom my son, my son!” (2Sa 19:4). This was not the initial outburst of David’s anguish, but the prolonged hugging to himself of his sorrow after the army had returned. The king was quite overcome, insensible to the pressing requirements of the hour and the needs of his subjects. This is what inordinate grief produces. It makes one so self-centered that the interests of others are ignored. It thoroughly unfits for the discharge of our duties. It so takes the eye off God that we are wholly occupied with distressing circumstances. It is in such an hour that we need to take hold of and act out that oft-repeated injunction, “Be strong and of a good courage.” Inordinate grief will not restore the dead, but it will seriously injure the living.

David’s conduct displeased the Lord, and He used an unwelcome instrument to bestir the king to a renewed sense of his responsibility, for it is from this angle that we must first view Joab’s attack upon David. “When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Pro 16:7). Yes, “maketh,” for our enemies are as much under the immediate control of the Most High as are our best friends. True it is that every attack made upon us by our foes is not, necessarily, an indication that we have offended God, yet oftentimes it is so, and therefore it is the part of wisdom for us to always regard the attacks of our enemies as being God’s rod reproving us, and for us to examine our ways and judge ourselves. Did not God make Abimelech to be at peace with Isaac (Gen 26:26-30) and Esau with Jacob (Gen 33), then He could have easily softened the heart of Joab toward David—that He did *not* do so, intimates He was displeased with him for his inordinate grief.

“And Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines; in that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well” (2Sa 19:5-6). As we have pointed out, Joab, during the later years of his life, was far from being friendly disposed toward David, and though he served at the head of his army, self-interest and not loyalty to the king was what actuated him. He was therefore quick to seize this opportunity to assert his arrogance, and not sparing David’s feelings at all, he strongly berated him for his present selfishness and inertia. True, he was justified in remonstrating with David on the impropriety of his conduct, yet that by no means excused his pride and insolence. Though there was much force in what Joab said, yet he sadly failed to show that respect which was due his master.

“Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the LORD, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now” (2Sa 19:7). David’s duty was here plainly if roughly pointed out to him—he ought to present himself at once before those faithful troops who had endangered *their* lives for the preservation of *his*. Let the king now bestir himself and delay no longer, but go forth and publicly congratulate their success and thank them heartily for their services. The painful alternative must not be ignored. There was grave danger of a further and worse revolt. If the king persisted in selfish ingratitude, he would lose the respect of his staunchest supporters, and then he would be left without any to further his interests. Sometimes God makes use of a rough hand to arouse us from our lethargy and we should be thankful that He cares sufficiently for us to do so.

Joab had pressed upon David the claims of his people, and the king was duly aroused. So far from being angry at and refusing the counsel which he had received, David acted promptly upon

it and took his proper place. “Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. And they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate. And all the people came before the king: for Israel had fled every man to his tent” (2Sa 19:8). A wise man will seek to profit from good advice, no matter who may proffer it or how unkindly it may be given—shall I refuse an important letter because I dislike the appearance or manners of the postman! “When we are convinced of a fault we must amend, though we are told it by our inferiors, and indecently, or in heat and passion” (Matthew Henry). Was David looking back to this incident when he wrote, “Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head” (Psa 141:5)?

“And all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom. And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?” (2Sa 19:9-10). These verses show clearly the timeliness of Joab’s intervention and the deplorable state the kingdom of Israel was now in. A house divided against itself cannot stand—strong and swift measures were now called for. Many of the people still desired the return of their king, though they were too dilatory to do more than talk, and ask why a message was not sent urging him to come to Jerusalem. It is generally thus. Those who are friendly disposed toward us lack the energy to *act* on our behalf.

The tribes of Israel were conscious of their predicament—they were without a competent head. David undoubtedly possessed the best claims. He had proved himself a valiant and successful leader, delivering them from their powerful foes. Yet, when his son turned traitor and many of his subjects had joined forces with him, the king fled. But Absalom was now dead, and his army had been defeated. A “strife” ensued—probably the people blamed their elders for not taking the initiative and communicating with David, to assure him of their repentance and renewed fealty, while the elders threw the blame on the people because of their recent disloyalty. Mutual recriminations got them nowhere, meanwhile no definite steps were taken by them to urge David’s return to the capital.

“And king David sent to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, saying, Speak unto the elders of Judah, saying, Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house? seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, even to his house. Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh: wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king?” (2Sa 19:11-12). When David learned of the favourable sentiment which existed, generally, throughout Israel toward him, he threw the onus on the elders of his own tribe. “We do not always find the most kindness from those whom we have the most reason to expect it” (Matthew Henry). Alas, how true that is. How often we find that those who are bound to us by the closest ties and upon whom we have the greatest claims, are the first to fail and the last to help us. Perhaps one reason why this incident is recorded is that it may warn us not to expect too much even from our spiritual brethren—the less we expect, the less will be our disappointment.

That Judah, his own tribe, were so lacking in affection or enterprise, suggests that they too had been seriously implicated in the recent rebellion, and now they were either too slack to make suitable overtures to their king, or else they feared they had wronged him so grievously by siding with Absalom that there was no hope of regaining his favour. By employing two of the priestly family to negotiate with the elders of Judah, David evidenced both his prudence and piety. As God-fearing men, Zadok and Abiathar were trusted by the king and respected by the best of people, and therefore there would be no suspicion on either side that they were working from

self-interests. It is always wise and well for us to enlist the aid of those most looked up to for their uprightness when it becomes necessary for us to use intermediaries.

“And say ye to Amasa, Art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab” (2Sa 19:13). Though Amasa was the son of David’s sister (1Ch 2:17), Absalom had set him over the rebel army (2Sa 17:25), and therefore he was the leader of an influential party whom David desired to win. Moreover, he was determined to strip the haughty and intolerable Joab of his power, if that were at all possible. Yet he was very unwise in making known his purpose, for though Amasa accepted David’s offer, yet on the very first military enterprise on which he was dispatched, Joab met and murdered him (2Sa 20:10). By singling out Amasa for special notice—owning him as his kinsman and promising to make him general of all his forces if he now stood by the king’s cause—David gave clear intimation that he was ready to *pardon* those who had most grievously wronged him.

“And *he* bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man; so that they sent this word unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants” (2Sa 19:14). There is some difference of opinion as to whether the “*he*” refers to David, Amasa, or the Lord Himself. Personally, we believe it signifies the latter. First, because “God” is directly mentioned in verse 13. Second, because had the reference been to David it had said, “so they sent the word unto *him*” etc. Third, because we have no reason to suppose that Amasa was sufficiently prominent or powerful to affect “all the men of Israel.” Finally, because it is God’s prerogative alone to regulate the heart (Pro 21:1). No doubt God, instrumentally, made use of the persuasions of the priests, and of Amasa to influence them. Nevertheless their spontaneity and unanimity must be ascribed unto Him who sways all His creatures.

“So the king returned, and came to Jordan” (2Sa 19:15). David did not move until he was assured that the people really desired his return. He was unwilling to be king of those who welcomed him not. In this we have typically illustrated an important truth, “Our Lord Jesus will rule in those who invite Him to the throne of their hearts, and not till He is invited. He first *bows the heart* and makes it willing in the day of His power, and then *rules* in the midst of His enemies, Psalm 110:2-3” (Matthew Henry).

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

6. *The Davidic*

In the opening article of this series, it was pointed out that the various covenants which God entered into with men, from time to time, adumbrate different features of the everlasting covenant which He made with the Mediator ere time began. As we have followed the historical stream, it has been shown wherein the Adamic, the Noahic, and the Siniatic covenants shadowed forth the essential features of that eternal compact which constituted the basis of the salvation of God’s elect. In connection with the Davidic, it is observable there is an absence of those details which marked the earlier ones, that renders it less easy to determine the exact purpose and purport of it so far as the “letter” of it was concerned. Yet the reason for this is not far to seek—as the last of the Old Testament covenants, the type merged more definitely with the antitype. This becomes

the more patent when we examine carefully those Scriptures bearing directly thereon, for in some of them it is almost impossible to say whether the type or the antitype be before us.

A notable instance of this is furnished by the 89th Psalm. Though we cannot be sure of the precise time when it was first penned, there seems good reason to conclude that it is to be dated from the reign of Rehoboam. Its closing verses make it quite plain that it was written at a period when the honour and power of David's royal line had been reduced to a very low ebb, yet before the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple—for no hint of that calamity is here given. It was in the days of Rehoboam, ten of the tribes revolted from him and that the one placed over them became his powerful adversary, while the king of Egypt so weakened and humbled him that it appears he only retained his kingdom at all by the clemency of Shishak. A sad condition had arrived, for the fortunes of David's family had sunk to a deplorable degree.

It was under such circumstances the 89th Psalm was composed. That its writer was fearfully agitated appears from its last fourteen verses, though perhaps he was there voicing the general sentiment which then obtained. Everything looked as though the divine promises to David had failed and were on the eve of being made completely void. It was then that faith had its opportunity, and ignoring the black clouds which covered the firmament, took refuge in Him who dwelleth above it. It was in the covenant-faithfulness of the Father of Mercies that the Psalmist now found comfort. "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah." (Psa 89:1-4).

One view only has obtained among the spiritually-minded. Said the Puritan Brooks, "There are many passages in this Psalm which do clearly evidence it is to be interpreted of *Christ*, yea there are many things in this Psalm which cannot be clearly and pertinently applied to any but Christ." Augustus Toplady (1740-1778, author of the hymn "Rock of Ages") asked, "Do you suppose this was spoken of David in his own person only? No indeed, but to David as type and forerunner of Christ." "The whole context of the Psalm discovers the design of it to be to set forth some higher Person than David, for it seems to be too magnificent and lofty for an earthly prince" (Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680). "The whole of the 89th Psalm, which is altogether devoted to the covenant, is expressly said to be a vision in which JEHOVAH spake to His Holy One (Psa 89:19), and all the purport of it is to show how JEHOVAH had entered into covenant engagement with Christ for the redemption of His people" (Robert Hawker, 1753-1827).

Psalm 89, then, is the key to 2 Samuel 7:4-17. Not only does it unlock for us the meaning of the Davidic covenant, but it also fixes the interpretation of those passages in the prophets which obviously look back to and are based upon the same. "The covenant is made with David, the covenant of royalty is made with him, as the father of his family, and all his seed through him, and for his sake, representing the covenant of grace made with Christ as Head of the church, and with all believers in Him...The blessings of the covenant were not only secured to David himself, but were entailed on his family. It was promised that his family should continue—'thy seed will I establish forever,' so that 'David shall not want a son to reign' (see Jer 33:17). And that it should continue a royal family, 'I will build up his throne to all generations.' This has its accomplishment only *in Christ*" (Matthew Henry).

"I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant" (Psa 89:3). "David was the Lord's elect, and with him a covenant was made, which ran along in the line of his seed until it received a final and never-ending fulfillment in 'the Son of David.' David's house

must be royal—as long as there was a sceptre in Judah, David’s seed must be the only rightful dynasty. The great ‘King of the Jews’ died with that title above His head in the three current languages of the then-known world, and at this day He is owned as King by men of every tongue. The oath sworn to David has not been broken, though the temporal crown is no longer worn, for in the covenant itself his kingdom was spoken of as enduring forever. In Christ Jesus there is a covenant established with all the Lord’s *chosen*, and they are by grace led to be the Lord’s *servants*, and then are ordained kings and priests by Jesus Christ...After reading this (2Sa 7:12-16), let us remember that the Lord has said to us by His servant Isaiah, ‘I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David’ (Isa 55:3).” (Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892).

“Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations” (Psa 89:4). “David must always have a seed, and truly in Jesus this is fulfilled beyond his hopes. What a seed David has in the multitude which have sprung from Him who was both his Son and his Lord. The Son of David is the great Progenitor, the last Adam, the Everlasting Father, He sees His seed, and in them beholds of the travail of His soul. David’s dynasty never decays, but on the contrary, is evermore consolidated by the great Architect of heaven and earth. Jesus is a king as well as a progenitor, and His throne is ever being built up—His kingdom comes—His power extends. Thus runs the covenant. And when the church declines, it is ours to *plead it* before the ever-faithful God, as the Psalmist does in the latter verses of this sacred song. Christ must reign, but why is His name blasphemed and His Gospel so despised? The more gracious Christians are, the more will they be moved to jealousy by the sad estate of the Redeemer’s cause, and the more will they argue the case with the great Covenant-maker, crying day and night before Him, ‘Thy kingdom come’” (Charles H. Spurgeon).

We shall not proceed any further with a verse by verse comment of this Psalm, but rather seek to call attention to its more essential features, as they serve to elucidate the Davidic covenant. The first section of the Psalm closes with the declaration, “Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.” This has reference to the *mediatorial* throne of God in Christ, as is clear from the remainder of the verse and what follows—justice and judgment are the *establishment* (margin) of His throne—the firmest foundations on which any throne can be settled. The Son of God, as the Surety of His elect, undertook to satisfy divine justice, by rendering perfect obedience to the precepts of the law and by suffering its penalty, whereby He brought in everlasting righteousness. God’s administration of grace, then, is founded upon the complete satisfaction of His justice by Christ as the Sponsor of His people, Romans 3:24-26; 5:21.

Having at some length praised the God of Israel by celebrating His perfections, the psalmist next declared the happiness of the true Israel of God, closing with the blessed affirmation, “For the LORD is our defense; and the Holy One of Israel is our *king*” (Psa 89:18). The people that “know the joyful sound” (Psa 89:15), are they whose ears have been opened by the Spirit to take in the glad tidings of the Gospel, so that they understand the covenant promises and perceive their own personal interest therein. They walk in the light of JEHOVAH’s countenance, for they are accepted in the Beloved. In God’s righteousness they shall continue to be exalted, for divine justice is on their side and not against them. In God’s favour their horn or spirit shall be elevated, for nothing so exhilarates the heart as a realization of God’s free grace. As their King, the Holy One of Israel will both rule and protect them.

At verse 19, the psalmist returns to a consideration of the covenant which God made with David, enlarging upon his previous reference thereto, and pleading it before God for His favour unto the royal family, now almost ruined. Yet one has only to weigh the things here said to

perceive that they go far beyond the typical David, yea, some of them could scarcely apply to him at all, but receive their fulfillment in Christ and His *spiritual* seed. The covenant which God made with the son of Jesse was an outward adumbration of that eternal compact He had entered into with the Mediator on behalf of His people. It was the publishing on earth something of what transpired in the secret councils of heaven. The ultimate reference in, “Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one” is unto the Father’s intercourse with the Son before time began, see Proverbs 8:22-23, 30; Matthew 11:27; John 5:20.

“I have laid help upon one that is mighty” (Psa 89:19). How fully was that demonstrated in Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. He was mighty because He is the Almighty (Rev 1:8). As God the Son in personal union with the Son of Man, He was in every way qualified for His stupendous undertaking. None but He could magnify the law and make it honourable, make atonement for sin, vanquish death, bruise the serpent’s head, and so preserve His church on earth that the gates of Hades should not prevail against it. As this mighty One, “the Lion of the tribe of Juda,” the apostle John beheld Him in the Patmos visions (Rev. 5:5). Because He is such, therefore, “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Heb 7:25).

“I have exalted one chosen out of the people” (Psa 89:19). It is this, essentially, which qualifies Christ to occupy the Mediatorial throne, for not only is He “the mighty God” (Isa 9:6), but as the woman’s Seed (Gen 3:15) He has taken unto Himself our very nature, “In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest” (Heb 2:17). One of the titles by which God addresses the Redeemer is, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine *elect* (or chosen), in whom my soul delighteth” (Isa 42:1). And this blessed One God has exalted to His own right hand.

“I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him” (Psa 89:20). “This must also be expounded of the Prince Emmanuel. He became the Servant of the Lord for our sakes, the Father having found for us in His Person a mighty Deliverer, therefore upon Him rested the Spirit *without measure*, to qualify Him for all the offices of love to which He was set apart. We have not a Saviour self-appointed and unqualified, but one sent of God and divinely endowed for His work. Our Saviour Jesus is also the Lord’s Christ, or anointed. The oil with which He is anointed is God’s own oil, and holy oil, He is divinely endowed with the Spirit of holiness—cf. Luke 4:18” (Spurgeon). In the prophets, Christ is called “David” again and again, the name meaning “the beloved,” for He is most dearly beloved of the Father. “He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God” (Psa 89:26). Where is there any record that David ever addressed God by this endearing term? Obviously the reference is to Him who, on the morning of His resurrection, declared “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (Joh 20:17). “Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth” (Psa 89:27). This too is intelligible only of the True David, who must have the pre-eminence in all things. Christ was made higher than the kings of the earth when God seated Him at His own right hand in the heavens, “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named” (Eph 1:21).

“His seed also will I make to endure for ever” (Psa 89:29). Here again, the type loses itself in the antitype. Literally, David’s “seed” lives on forever in the person of Christ, who was made of David according to the flesh (Rom 1:3). But spiritually, it is the “seed” of the True David, namely, *believers*, for they alone own His sceptre and are His subjects. “Saints are a race that neither death nor hell can kill” (Spurgeon). Of old it was declared of Christ, “He shall see his seed....He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isa 53:10-11). In a coming day, Christ shall exclaim, “Behold I and the children which God hath given me” (Heb 2:13).

“And his throne as the days of heaven” (Psa 89:29). Let it be duly noted that both here and in verse 36, Christ’s “seed” and His “throne” are coupled together, as though His *throne* could not stand if His seed should fail. Well did Charnock ask, “If His subjects should perish, what would He be King of? If His members should be consumed what would He be head of?” It is His *mediatorial* throne and its *perpetuity* which are here in view. On the new earth there will be “the throne of God *and of the Lamb*” (Rev 22:1).

If any doubt remains in the reader’s mind as to the accuracy or truth of our interpretation above, that which is recorded in Psalm 89:30-37 should at once completely remove it. Nothing could be plainer than that the believing children of the antitypical David are there in view. In this most previous passage, God makes known “His ways”—the principles according to which He deals with the redeemed—operative in *all* dispensations. Christ’s children still have a sinful nature, and thus are ever prone to forsake God’s law, yet even though they do so, this will not annul the promises which God made to them in Christ. True, God is holy, and therefore will not wink at their sins. He is righteous, and so chastises them for their iniquities, but He is also both faithful and gracious, and so will not break His word to Christ, nor take away His lovingkindness from those for whom His Son died.

God had declared, “I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, thy seed will I establish for ever” (Psa 89:3-4). Yes, but suppose David’s seed should prove thoroughly unworthy and unfaithful—what then? Will God cast them out of His covenant? No indeed, this is why verses 30-31 began with “If”—an objection is anticipated, the Arminian bogey of falling from grace and being lost is here laid by the heels, If the seed of the antitypical David break God’s statutes and keep not His commandments, will divine rejection and eternal destruction be their inevitable portion? No, God will make them smart severely for their perverseness, yet it is the disciplinary rod He uses, and not the sword or axe of the executioner. God is not fickle—whom He loves, He loves forever, and therefore neither man nor Satan shall ever destroy any of the seed of the True David.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

In our “Covenant” articles in the current issues, it has been pointed out that one of the dominant characteristics of Christ’s throne and kingdom, distinguishing it from all human and earthly ones, is its *everlastingness*. This particular feature is repeatedly emphasised in the Scriptures, in fact it is found in almost every passage where His kingdom is mentioned—see 2 Samuel 7:16; Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 2:44; Luke 1:32-33; 2 Peter 1:11; Revelation 11:15. Now this fact that Christ’s throne is “for ever and ever” at once refutes the idea of dispensationalists, whose assertions concerning Christ’s kingdom are mainly confined (in most cases entirely so) to what they term His “millennial reign,” which lasts for a thousand years only. In the past, the writer has himself been misled by this fantasy and erred in some of his earlier writings thereon. Therefore we here humbly make this acknowledgment and renounce what we now believe is an error.

There is, however, one passage which appears to clash with those verses which affirm the eternity of Christ’s kingdom, and which at the same time seems to offer some support to the pre-millennialists, and therefore a separate consideration of its contents is called for. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall

have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he [God] hath put all things under his [Christ's] feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1Co 15: 22-28).

The above has been a favourite passage with errorists of various types—Unitarians, dispensationalists, and Universalists have all appealed to it in support of their fallacies, and have interpreted, or rather misinterpreted, it according to their particular views. It therefore behooves us to approach it with double care and caution, praying that the Holy Spirit will graciously guide us in its exposition. That this passage presents difficulties in translation, punctuation, and interpretation is freely granted, but that they are far from being insuperable we shall seek to show. Our first inquiry must be, What bearing do these verses have upon *their context*—why should this reference to Christ's delivering up the kingdom and His being subject to the Father be introduced into a description of the resurrection? Then, what particular "end" is referred to? Which "kingdom" is it that Christ delivers up? And what "death" is destroyed?

We begin by considering the *scope* of our passage. There were some at Corinth who were saying, "that there is no resurrection of the dead" (1Co 15:12), and this chapter was written in refutation of that serious error. First, the apostle pointed out that such a denial involved the repudiation of the Gospel itself and excluded all hope of salvation. He shows that if there be no resurrection, then Christ Himself is still in the grave (1Co 15:12-19). Then he proceeded to argue that since Christ is risen from the dead, His people also must be raised—the resurrection of the unsaved nowhere falls within the compass of *this* chapter. According to the great principles of the economy of redemption, the resurrection of the Head guaranteed the resurrection of Christ's mystical body. The security which the resurrection of Christ gives for the resurrection of His people, as here unfolded, is twofold—arising both from its procuring and from its final cause.

The resurrection of the holy dead rests on the procuring cause, or *what led up to the* resurrection of Christ Himself. This was His becoming obedient unto death in the room and stead of His people. As the sin of Adam produced not only his own death, but also the death of all who were in him as their federal head, so the obedience unto death of Christ procured not only His own resurrection, but will also produce the resurrection of all who are united to Him as their federal Head (1Co 15:20-23). Again, the resurrection of the saints rests on the final cause, or *what the resurrection of Christ led onto*, and this was that He rose *to reign* (1Co 15:24-28). All power in heaven and earth has been given to Him for the express purpose of subduing all the enemies of Himself and His Father, and this secures the abolition of death in the glorious resurrection of all His people.

Before proceeding further we call attention to what we are now convinced is a most misleading mistake in the punctuation. But lest any should think we are acting in an arbitrary manner or taking unwarranted liberties with the text of the A.V., let it be pointed out, first, that in any version the punctuation is entirely a matter for the translators to decide (for the original Greek is not broken up into either paragraphs or verses, sentences or clauses), and this upon grammatical or doctrinal considerations, which leaves room for considerable difference of opinion. And second, what we are about to advance is so far from being novel and original, that many before us (from Theophylact to Herinsius, and down to our own times) have adopted this construction.

That to which we have referred in the above paragraph is the opening clause of verse 24, which we believe concludes verse 23. In other words, "then cometh the end" does not begin a

sentence, but completes one. Instead of connecting the “then cometh the end” with what follows in verses 24-26, and thereby understanding it to signify “then cometh the termination of all mundane affairs,” the end of the world’s history—we regard it as meaning, “Then is the conclusion of *the resurrection*.” This is obviously the more natural construction, for it not only removes the necessity for the supplement “cometh” which has been inserted by the translators (there being nothing in the Greek to warrant it), but it also furnishes a more fitting completion to the sentence—“Christ the firstfruits—then they that are Christ’s at His coming—then the end,” i.e., the grand completion of *the harvest*.

What follows in verses 24-26 introduces no new subject, but amplifies what has been said in verses 20-23. If verse 25 be placed in a parenthesis, and the supplementary (italicized) words of verse 26 be omitted, the sentence will be much simpler and more perspicuous. “When he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power (For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet), the last enemy shall be destroyed—death.” Let it be steadily borne in mind that the great object throughout the whole of this chapter is to show the absolute security which *Christ’s* resurrection gives for the resurrection of His *people*. That this subject is continued by the apostle after the passage we are now considering is clear from verses 29-32, where further and supplementing arguments are advanced, namely the case of those who are baptised, and his own conduct.

Verses 24-26 are brought in here to assure the hearts and strengthen the confidence of believers. We understand their central purport to be something like this—There are many and powerful enemies of Christ seeking to oppose Him and destroy His people, but their efforts shall prove utterly futile, for being endowed with all power and authority from God Himself, Christ shall completely triumph over them all. Not only shall Christ reduce to impotency all human and demoniacal foes, but death itself shall be abolished. It is *death* which stands in the way of the full manifestation of divine wisdom, power, and grace, in the complete holiness and happiness of the redeemed family. While their bodies remain in the grave, Christ’s triumph over sin and Satan is incomplete, and He does not see the entire fruit of “the travail of his soul,” in which He is to find full satisfaction. Death, then, is here called “the *last* enemy” because when the appointed time for the resurrection arrives *it alone* stands in the way of the consummation of Christ’s mighty work of full and eternal deliverance.

A right understanding, then, of verses 24-26 definitely fixes the meaning of “then the end,” proving it belongs to verse 23. Verses 24-26 illustrate and demonstrate that at the coming of Christ there will be an end or completion of the resurrection—it is to be by the destruction of the last enemy—death. There will be no more resurrection (of saints) after the coming of Christ, for there will be no more to die, and so no more to be raised. It will then be fully evidenced that Christ has subdued all foes unto Himself, which was the grand purpose for which the Father delegated all power unto the Redeemer. He must reign till all His enemies are put under His feet, for He rose again for this purpose. Wherefore it follows that the last enemy—death, must be destroyed, and when it is, the resurrection of the saints must have come to “the end”!

For a closer consideration of the details of these verses we must first ascertain the precise signification of, “When he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God” (1Co 15:24). Now it is self-evident that no explanation of those words can possibly be true which asserts that the throne of Christ’s glory shall ever be vacated. Shall Christ lay down the reward which the Father gave Him for His unspeakable humiliation and obedience unto death? Surely His recompense is not to cease as soon as He has completed His great commission—destroying the works of Satan and subduing His Father’s foes. Shall He cease to be Lord and King at the very time when every knee

begins to bow to Him and every tongue confesses His name? What! Are the saints to be crowned with an *eternal* reward, and the King of saints with only a *temporary* one? Will the redeemed “reign for ever and ever” (Rev 22:5) and the Redeemer for only a thousand years?

If it be strange that pre-millenarians interpret this clause as the ending of Christ’s millennial kingdom, it is stranger still that some post-millenarians understand by it the termination of His mediatorial kingdom, for the perpetuity *of that is* affirmed again and again in Scripture. But if it refer to neither of them, what other alternative remains? The “kingdom” or dominion of Christ is a threefold one. First, that which belongs to Him as the second Person of the Godhead, namely, His absolute authority over all creatures. Second, that which pertains to Him as the incarnate Son, the Mediator, namely, His rule over His own people. Third, that to which He was exalted after His resurrection, when “all power was given him in heaven and earth” (see Mat 28:18), namely, His dominion over all His *enemies*, so that He might triumphantly conclude the work of redemption by subjugating every opposing force. It is the *third* which 1 Corinthians 15:24 has reference to.

The duties of a king may be summed up in these two things—to rule righteously over his subjects, to subdue his and their enemies. The subjugation of all who oppose is an essential part of *Christ’s* reign. This He accomplishes now by setting bounds to their power, making even their wrath to praise Him, and ultimately by reducing them to complete impotency when sentence of punishment is passed upon them, and they are all securely and eternally shut up in their own place. All things fell by sin into an enmity against God and the salvation of the church. Christ as the Vice-regent of the Father has received commission for the removal of this enmity and the destruction of all His gainsayers. This He was to variously and gradually accomplish in the exercise of all His offices. He did so at the cross by the exercise of His priesthood, when He (judicially) removed the enmity between God and His people (Eph 2:14-16). He does so now by the exercise of His prophetic office, in effectually causing the Gospel to experimentally reconcile His people to God (Psa 110:2-3). He will yet do so by the exercise of His kingship, when He destroys the finally impenitent.

Christ has received commission to put down that revolt which commenced in the sin of angels, and has been carried on through the Fall of man, with all its fearful consequences, so that the divine supremacy shall again be effectually manifested and universally acknowledged. In the universe there is now a kingdom of darkness (Mat 12:26 and Col 1:13) as well as a kingdom of light. There is “the throne of iniquity” (Psa 94:20), as well as the throne of righteousness. But this state of things cannot be permitted to continue forever. True, God had a wise end in permitting it, but He shall in His own good time end it. This work has been entrusted to Christ, partly as a reward of His humiliation, partly for the furtherance of His redemptive work. This, as we have said above, is accomplished by Him through a twofold process—by converting some of the rebels into loyal subjects, by depriving the others of all power to work any further evil. The finalization of the one shall be seen when Christ presents the church to Himself “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle” (Eph 5:27). The finalization of the other will be demonstrated when Revelation 19:11 to 20:15 is fulfilled.

There is, then, a “kingdom” which has been usurped by God’s enemies and which Christ has been appointed to restore unto Him. In order to His successful discharge of this appointment, Christ has been endowed with unlimited power, see Psalms 2:6-9, 45:3-6; Acts 2:36 and 5:31; Ephesians 1:20-21; Philippians 2:9-11; 1 Peter 3:18-22. This recovery by Christ of that kingdom usurped by Satan and his hosts, is intimated in our passage by, “when he shall have *delivered up* the kingdom to God” (1Co 15:24), for the same Greek word is found in such verses as Matthew

11:27; 24:9; Acts 3:13; Romans 8:32, where it is an assigning over to judicial powers *for judgment*. This enables us to perceive clearly *what* kingdom it is which Christ renders to the Father. It is not the resignation of His own Lordship, but the arresting of His foes in order to their eternal incarceration in the lake of fire.

We trust it has been made quite plain to the reader that the central thought of 1 Corinthians 15:22-26 is that the resurrection of Christ Himself is connected with such a state of power and authority as is at once sufficient for securing the resurrection of all who are savingly connected with Him. That there are powerful adversaries at work seeking to prevent this seems clearly implied, but that their efforts shall prove utterly vain is here emphatically declared. The abolition of death will be the crowning act of Christ's triumph over Satan and his hosts. The reason why the apostle brought in the parenthesis of verse 25 was to explain *how* Christ is to recover unto God the usurped kingdom—by putting down all hostile forces. He quotes from Psalm 110:1, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand," which means that at His ascension Christ was invested with the government of the universe, "until I make thine enemies thy footstool" promised Him full victory over them, and that promise must be fulfilled. Verses 27-28 we leave for our next article on the kingdom of Christ in the next issue.

GOD'S WORD IN OUR HEARTS

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psa 119:11). The duty of God's children is to hide His Word in their hearts, and in so doing there must be a right end—their knowledge of it and delight in it is to be directed *to practice*.

One duty and necessary practice of God's children is to hide the Word in their hearts. See it confirmed by a Scripture or two, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night" (Jos 1:8). "Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thy heart" (Job 22:22). Lay up His words as we would do choice things, that they may not be *lost*, and lay them up as a treasure to be *used* upon all occasions. In the *heart*—let them not swim in the brain or memory only, but let the affections be moved therewith, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col 3:16). Be so diligent in the study of the Scripture that it may become familiar with us, by frequent hearing, reading, meditating, conferring about it. As a stranger, let it not stand at the door, but receive it into an inner room—be as familiar as those that dwell with you. God complaineth of His people, "I have written to him [Ephraim] the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing" (Hos 8:12). To be strangers to the Word of God, and little conversant in it, is a great evil.

What is it to hide the Word in our hearts? (1) To understand it, to get a competent knowledge of it. We take in things into the soul by the understanding, "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul" (Pro 2:10). (2) When it is assented unto by faith. The Word is settled in the heart by faith, otherwise it soon vanisheth, "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb 4:2). (3) When it is kindly entertained. Christ complained, "Ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you" (Joh 8:37). Men are so possessed with lust and prejudice, that there is no room for Christ's Word. Though it break in upon the heart with evidence and power, yet it is not entertained there but cast out again as an unwelcome guest. (4) When it is deeply rooted. Many men have flashes for a time—their affections may be much aloft, and they may have great elevations of joy, but no

sound grace, "Ye rejoiced in his light *for a season*" (see Joh 5:35). The Word must be settled into a standing affection, if we would have comfort and profit from it. We read of "The engrafted word" (Jam 1:21). Till there be the root of the matter in us, in vain do we expect fruit.

The reasons why this is one great duty and practice of the saints to hide the Word in their heart are two. First, that we may have it *ready for our use*. We lay up principles that we may lay them out upon all occasions. When the Word is hidden in the heart, it will be ready to break out in the tongue and practice, and be forthcoming to direct us in every duty and exigency. When persons run to the market for every pennyworth, it doth not become good housekeepers. To be seeking of comforts when we should use them, or to run to a book, is not so blessed as to hide it in the heart. A good scribe "which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven...bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old" (Mat 13:52). He hath not only this year's growth but the last year's gathering (for so is the allusion). He hath not only from hand to mouth, but a good stock by him. So should it be with the Christian, which is a very great advantage.

First, it will prevent vain thoughts. Why is evil so ready and present with us? Because our stock of spiritual knowledge is so small. A man that hath a pocket with more brass farthings than pieces of silver, will more readily draw out farthings than shillings—his stock is greater. So vain thoughts will be more ready with us, unless the Word dwell richly in our hearts. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things" (Mat 12:35). The workings of our spirits are as our treasure and stock. The mind works upon what it finds in itself, as a mill grinds whatever is put into it—chaff or corn. Therefore, if we would prevent evil thoughts and musings of vanity all the day long, we must hide the Word in our hearts.

Second, when you are alone and without outward helps, your hearts will furnish you with matters of counsel, or comfort, or reproof, "My reins also instruct me in the night seasons" (Psa 16:7). When we are alone, and there is a veil of darkness drawn upon the world, and we have not the benefit of a Bible, a minister, or Christian friends, our reins will instruct us—we may draw out of our heart that which will be for our refreshing. *A Christian is to be a walking Bible*—to have a good stock and treasure in himself.

Third, it will supply us in prayer. Barrenness and leanness of soul is a very great defect, which God's children often complain of. One great reason is because the Word of God does not dwell plenteously in them. If the heart were often exercised in the Word, the promises would hold up our hearts in prayer, enlarge our affections, and we should be better able to pour out our spirits before Him. "My heart is inditing a good matter" (Psa 45:1). What follows? "My tongue is the pen of a ready writer." When the heart is full, the tongue will be loosed and speak freely. What is the reason we are so dumb and tongue-tied in prayer? Because the heart is so barren. When the spring is dry, there will be little water in the stream. Take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," then follows "praying always with all supplication" (Eph 6:17-18). When we have a good store of the Word it will burst out in prayer.

Fourth, it will be a great help to us in all our affairs. Proverbs 6:21-22, speaking of the precepts of God, "Bind them continually upon thine heart...when thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; when thou awakest it shall talk with thee." Upon all occasions the Word will be ready to cast in seasonable thoughts. When we awake, our first thoughts in the morning will begin with God, to season the heart all the day. And as we are about our business, the Word will hold our hearts in the fear of God. And when we sleep, it will guard us from vain dreams and imaginations. In a wicked man, sin engrosses all his thoughts. It employs him all the day, plays in his fancy all the night. It solicits him first in the morning,

because he is a stranger to the Word of God. But a man that is a Bible to himself, the Word will ever be upon him, urging him to duty, restraining him from sin, directing him in his ways.

Fifth, it is a great relief against temptations to have the Word ready. The Word is called “The Sword of the Spirit.” In spiritual conflicts there is none like it. Those that ride abroad in time of danger will not be without a sword. We are in danger and had need handle the Sword of the Spirit. The more ready the Scripture is with us, the greater advantage in our conflicts and temptations. When the devil came to assault Christ, He had Scripture ready for him, whereby He overcame the tempter. The door is barred upon Satan, and he cannot find such easy entrance, when the Word is hid in our hearts, and made use of pertinently. “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong.” Wherein lies their strength? “And the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one” (1Jo 2:14). O it is a great advantage when we have the Word not only *by* us, but *in* us, engrafted in the heart! When it is present with us, we are more able to resist the attacks of Satan. Either a man forgets the Word or has lost his affections to it, before he can be drawn to sin.

Sixth, it is a great relief in afflictions. Our fainting in trouble come from ignorance or forgetfulness, “Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him” (Heb 12:5). If we had a herb growing in our garden that would ease our smart, what, are we the better if we know it not? There is no malady but what has its remedy in the Word. To have a comfort ready is a great relief.

Seventh, it makes our conference and conversation with others more gracious. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Mat 12:34). When we have a great deal of hidden treasure in the soul, it will get out at the tongue, for there is a quick intercourse between the heart and the tongue. The tap runs according to the liquor wherewith the vessel is filled. Come to men of an unsavory spirit, pierce them, broach them, give them occasion again and again for discourse, and you get nothing but frothy communication from them and vain talk. But now a man that has stored his heart with the Word is ever and anon interposing for God. Like a bottle filled with wine, he must have vent. As the Spouse’s lips are said to “drop as honeycombs,” they are ever putting forth savoury expressions in their converse with others.

Before I go to the second reason, let me anticipate an objection. Is not this to take from the Spirit and give it to the Word? And that to the Word not as written in God’s book, but as it is in our hearts. Will not this be to ascribe all to created grace? I answer (1) Without question, it is the office of the Spirit to bring things to our remembrance, and the great help He gives is by suggesting such passages as may be of most seasonable relief to the soul in temptations, in prayer, and in business (Joh 14:26). But what is ascribed to the Scriptures and grace is not to the robbing of the Spirit, for the Scripture is of *His* inditing and grace is of *His* working. Yea, we still reserve the chief honour to the Holy Spirit, for He not only works grace, but works by grace. He not only indites the Scripture, but operates by it. It is He that quickens prayer, and therefore it is ill trusting to our own understanding and memory, for it is the Spirit that is the great Remembrancer, and impresses upon the mind seasonable thoughts.

(2) I grant further, the children of God are subject to much forgetfulness of the truth that is impressed upon their hearts—partly through the present cloud and mist which the temptation raiseth. The psalmist had truths enough to support him, yet he said, “Until I went into the sanctuary of God....foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee” (Psa 73:17, 22). There is so much dullness upon the children of God that they cannot remember seasonable thoughts—as Hagar had a fountain by her, yet she did not see it till God opened her eyes (Gen

21). So under temptation, all are benighted and the light that is in the understanding is obscured. And partly through the little sense they have for the present need of the comforts which the Word propounds—few are so wise as to lay up for a bad year. And partly through sloth and negligence, being taken up with other things. It is possible sometimes that we may be guided by the Spirit, and act right merely by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, without any interposing and concurrence of our own understandings as John 12:13 compared with verse 16, They “took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord....These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things *were written of him*, and that they had done these things unto him.” Mark they were guided by the Spirit to do that they knew not for the present.

(3) The Holy Spirit makes use of a sanctified memory, bringing Scripture to our remembrance as we have need. It is made their act, because the Holy Spirit made use of their memories—they “remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up” (Joh 2:17). They that neglect to search and hide the Word in their hearts have not such seasonable refreshment, for God works more strongly with the strongest graces—there where there is the greater receptivity, there is the greater influence. Those that are ignorant cannot expect such help as those having the Word dwelling richly in them.

The second reason is, therefore should we hide the Word in our hearts, because God doth so in the work of conversion, “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts” (Heb 8:10). The mind is compared to tables of stone, and the heart to the ark, and so this is required of us to “write them upon the table of our heart” (see Pro 7:3). How doth this follow? because *God* does in conversion, therefore it is *our* duty? I answer, (1) God requires what He works to show the creature’s duty, as well as the power of His own grace. God is to convert, yet do *you* turn; circumcise your heart and I will circumcise; mortify your members, and yet, “If ye through the Spirit do mortify. “He gives and *requires*, to engage the subserviency of our endeavours, and to make us sensible of our obligation. (2) This follows because this work must be gone over and over that it may be more explicit. We must revive the work, and put a fresh copy of the law into our hearts, to keep the old work a-foot.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

Introduction

Twelve years ago, we published in this magazine a series of addresses on election which the editor delivered to large congregations in Australia. Those addresses, as was to be fully expected, met with a very varied reception, “Some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not” (Act 28:24). On the one hand, God was pleased to use them in the awakening of some who were utterly indifferent to divine things, to arouse others in a backslidden condition to consider their ways, and to move not a few to give diligence to make their calling and election sure. On the other hand, Satan stirred up self-righteous Pharisees to hotly oppose, and denounce the doctrine as a most dangerous and injurious one. As many of our present readers do not have access to this earlier effort, and as we feel that a more systematic exposition of the subject is now called for, we have decided to take it up for fuller consideration in this year’s issues.

It is a foundational doctrine. In the past, many of the ablest teachers were accustomed to commence their systematic theology with a presentation of the attributes of God and then a contemplation of His eternal decrees. And it is our studied conviction, after perusing the writings of many of our moderns, that the method followed by their predecessors cannot be improved upon. God existed before man and His eternal purpose long antedated His works in time. “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Act 15:18). The divine councils went before creation. As a builder draws his plans before he begins to build, so the great Architect predestinated everything before a single creature was called into existence. Nor has God kept this a secret locked in His own bosom. It has pleased Him to make known in His Word the everlasting counsels of His grace, His design in the same, and the grand end He has in view.

When a building is in course of construction, onlookers are often at a loss to perceive the reason for many of the details. As yet, they discern no order or design—everything appears to be in confusion. But if they could carefully scan the builder’s “plan” and visualize the finished production, much that had puzzled would become clear to them. It is the same with the outworking of God’s eternal purpose. Unless we are acquainted with His eternal decrees, history remains an insolvable enigma. God is not working at random—the Gospel has been sent forth on no uncertain mission—the final outcome in the conflict between good and evil has not been left indeterminate—how many are to be saved or lost depends not on the will of the creature. Everything was infallibly determined and immutably fixed by God from the beginning, and all that happens in time is but the accomplishment of what was ordained in eternity.

The grand truth of election, then, takes us back to the beginning of all things. It antedated the entrance of sin into the universe, the Fall of man, the advent of Christ, and the proclamation of the Gospel. A right understanding of it, especially in its relation to the everlasting covenant, is absolutely essential if we are to be preserved from fundamental error. If the foundation itself be faulty, then the building erected on it cannot be sound. And if we err in our conceptions of this basic truth, then just in proportion as we do so will our grasp of all other truth be inaccurate. God’s dealings with Jew and Gentile, His object in sending His Son into this world, His design by the Gospel, yea, the whole of His providential dealings, cannot be seen in their proper perspective till they are viewed in the light of His eternal election. This will become the more evident as we proceed.

It is a difficult doctrine, and this in three respects. First, in the *understanding* of it. Unless we are privileged to sit under the ministry of some Spirit-taught servant of God, who presents the truth to us systematically, great pains and diligence are called for in the searching of the Scriptures, so that we may collect and tabulate their scattered statements on this subject. It has not pleased the Holy Spirit to give us one complete and orderly setting forth of the doctrine of election, but instead “here a little, there a little”—in typical history, in Psalm and prophecy, in the great prayer of Christ (Joh 17), in the epistles of the apostles. Second, in the *acceptation* of it. This presents a much greater difficulty, for when the mind perceives what the Scriptures reveal thereon, the heart is loath to receive such an humbling and flesh-withering truth. How earnestly we need to pray for God to subdue our enmity against Him and our prejudice against His truth. Third, in the *proclamation* of it. No novice is competent to present this subject in its scriptural perspective and proportions.

But notwithstanding, these difficulties should not discourage, still less deter us, from an honest and serious effort to understand and heartily receive all that God has been pleased to reveal thereon. Difficulties are designed to humble us, to exercise us, to make us feel our need of wisdom from on High. It is not easy to arrive at a clear and adequate grasp of any of the great

doctrines of Holy Writ, and God never intended it should be so. Truth has to be “bought” (Pro 23:23)—alas that so few are willing to pay the price—devote to the prayerful study of the Word the time wasted on newspapers or idle recreations. These difficulties are not insurmountable, for the Spirit has been given to God’s people to guide them into all truth. Equally so for the minister of the Word—an humble waiting upon God, coupled with a diligent effort to be a workman that needs not to be ashamed, will in due time fit him to expound this truth to the glory of God and the blessing of his hearers.

It is an *important* doctrine, as is evident from various considerations. Perhaps we can express most impressively the momentousness of this truth by pointing out that apart from eternal election there had never been any Jesus Christ, and therefore, no divine Gospel. For if God had never chosen a people unto salvation, He had never sent His Son, and if He had sent no Saviour, none had ever been saved. Thus, the Gospel itself originated in this vital matter of election. “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation” (2 Thess. 2:13). And why are we “bound to give thanks”? Because election is the root of all blessings, the spring of every mercy that the soul receives. If election be taken away, everything is taken away, for those who have *any* spiritual blessing are they who have *all* spiritual blessings “*according as* they were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world” (see Eph 1:3-4).

It was well-said by Calvin (1509-1564), “We shall never be clearly convinced, as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the fountain of God’s free mercy, till we are acquainted with His eternal election, which illustrates the grace of God by this comparison; that He adopts not all promiscuously to the hope of salvation, but He gives to some what He refuses to others. Ignorance of this principle evidently detracts from the divine glory, and diminishes real humility....If, then, we need to be recalled to the origin of election, to prove that we obtain salvation from no other source than the mere good pleasure of God, then they who desire to extinguish this principle, do all they can to obscure what ought to be magnificently and loudly celebrated.”

It is a *blessed* doctrine, for election is the spring of all blessings. This is made unmistakably clear by Ephesians 1:3-4. First, the Holy Spirit declares that the saints have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. Then He proceeds to show *why* and *how* they were so blessed—it is “*according as* God hath *chosen* us in Christ before the foundation of the world.” Election in Christ, therefore, precedes being blessed with all spiritual blessings, for we are blessed with them only as being in Him, and we are only in Him as *chosen* in Him. We see, then, what a grand and glorious truth this is, for all our hopes and prospects belong to it. Election, though distinct and personal, is not, as is sometimes carelessly stated, a mere abstract choice of persons unto eternal salvation, irrespective of union with their Covenant Head, but a choice of them *in Christ*. It therefore implies every other blessing, and all other blessings are given only through it and in accordance with it.

Rightly understood there is nothing so calculated to impart comfort and courage, strength and security, as a heart-apprehension of this truth. To be assured that I am one of the high favourites of heaven imparts the confidence that God most certainly will supply my every need and make all things work together for my good. The knowledge that God has predestinated me unto eternal glory supplies an absolute guaranty that no efforts of Satan can possibly bring about my destruction, for if the great God be *for* me, who can be against me! It brings great peace to the preacher, for he now discovers that God has not sent him forth to draw a bow at a venture, but that His Word *shall* accomplish that which He pleases, and shall prosper whereto He sends it (Isa

55:11). And what encouragement it should afford the awakened sinner. As he learns that election is solely a matter of divine *grace*, hope is kindled in his heart—as he discovers that election singled out some of the vilest of the vile to be the monuments of divine mercy, why should *he* despair!

It is a *distasteful* doctrine. One had naturally thought that a truth so God-honouring, Christ-exalting, and so blessed, had been cordially espoused by all professing Christians who had had it clearly presented to them. In view of the fact that the terms “predestinated,” “elect,” and “chosen,” occur so frequently in the Word, one would surely conclude that all who claim to accept the Scriptures as divinely inspired would receive with implicit faith this grand truth, referring the act itself—as sinful and ignorant creatures should do—unto the sovereign good pleasure of God. But such is far, very far from being the actual case. No doctrine is so detested by proud human nature as this one, which make nothing of the creature and everything of the Creator—yea, at no other point is the enmity of the carnal mind so blatantly and hotly evident.

We commenced our addresses in Australia by saying, “I am going to speak tonight on one of the most hated doctrines of the Bible, namely that, of God’s sovereign election.” Since then we have encircled this globe and come into more or less close contact with thousands of people belonging to many denominations, and thousands more of professing Christians attached to none, and today the only change we would make in that statement is, that while the truth of eternal punishment is the one most objectionable to non-professors, that of God’s sovereign election is the truth most loathed and reviled by the majority of those claiming to be believers. Let it be plainly announced that salvation originated not in the will of man, but in the will of God (see Joh 1:13, Rom 9:16), that were it not so, none would or could be saved—for as the result of the Fall man has lost all desire and will unto that which is good (Joh 5:40, Rom 3:2)—and that even the elect themselves have to be *made* willing (Psa 110:3), and loud will be the cries of indignation raised against such teaching.

It is at *this* point the issue is drawn. Merit-mongers will not allow the supremacy of the divine will and the impotency unto good of the human will, consequently they who are the most bitter in denouncing election by the sovereign pleasure of God, are the warmest in crying up the free-will of fallen man. In the decrees of the council of Trent—wherein the Papacy definitely defined her position on the leading points raised by the Reformers, and which Rome has *never* [not even to this day in 1998] rescinded—occurs the following, “If any one should affirm that since the Fall of Adam, man’s free will is lost, let him be accursed.” It was for their faithful adherence to the truth of *election*, with all that it involves, that Bradford (1510-1555) and hundreds of others were burned at the stake by the agents of the pope. Unspeakably sad is it to see so many professing Protestants agreeing with the Mother of Harlots in this fundamental error!

But whatever aversion men may now have to this blessed truth, they will be compelled to hear it in the last great day, hear it as the Voice of final, unalterable, and eternal decision. When death and Hades, the sea and dry land, shall give up the dead, then shall the book of life—the register in which was recorded from before the foundation of the world the whole election of grace—be opened in the presence of angels and demons, in the presence of the saved and of the lost, and that Voice shall sound to the highest arches of heaven, to the lowest depths of hell, to the uttermost bound of the universe, “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev 20:15). Thus, this truth which is hated by the non-elect above all others, is the one that shall ring in the ears of the lost as they enter their eternal doom! Ah, my reader, the reason why people do not receive and duly prize the truth of election is because they do not feel their dire *need* of it.

It is a *separating* doctrine. The preaching of the sovereignty of God, as exercised by Him in foreordaining the eternal destiny of each of His creatures, serves as an effectual flail to divide the chaff from the wheat. “He that is of God heareth God’s words” (Joh 8:47)—yes, no matter how contrary they may be to *his* ideas. It is one of the marks of the regenerate that they set to their seal that God is true. Nor do they pick and choose, as will religious hypocrites. Once they perceive a truth is clearly taught in the Word, even though it be utterly opposed to their own reason and inclinations, they humbly bow to it and implicitly receive it, and would do so though not another person in the whole world believed it. But it is far otherwise with the unregenerate. As the apostle declares, “They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1Jo 4:5-6).

We know of nothing so divisive between the sheep and the goats as a faithful exposition of this doctrine. If a servant of God accepts some new charge, and he wishes to ascertain which of his people desire the pure milk of the Word, and which prefer the devil’s substitutes, let him deliver a series of sermons on this subject, and it *will quickly* be the means of taking “forth the precious from the vile” (Jer 15:19). It was thus in the experience of the divine Preacher—when Christ announced, “No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father,” we are told, “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (Joh 6:65-66)! True it is that by no means all who intellectually receive “Calvinism” as a philosophy or theology, give evidence (in their daily lives) of regeneration, yet equally true is it that those who continue to cavil against and steadfastly refuse any part of the truth, are not entitled to be regarded as Christians.

It is a *neglected* doctrine. Though occupying so prominent a place in the Word of God, it is today but little preached, and still less understood. Of course it is not to be expected that the “higher critics” and their blinded dupes should preach that which makes nothing of man, but even among those who wish to be looked up to as “orthodox” and “evangelical,” there are scarcely any who give this grand truth a real place in either their pulpit ministrations or their writings. In some cases this is due to ignorance—not having been taught it in the seminary, and certainly not in the “Bible Institutes,” they have never perceived its great importance and value. But in too many cases it is a desire to be popular with their hearers which muzzles their mouths. Nevertheless, neither ignorance, prejudice, nor enmity can do away with the doctrine itself or lessen its vital momentousness.

In bringing to a close these introductory remarks, let it be pointed out that this blessed doctrine needs to be handled *reverently*. It is not a subject to be reasoned about and speculated upon, but approached in a spirit of holy awe and devotion. It is to be handled *soberly*, “When thou art in disputation, engaged upon a just quarrel to vindicate the truth of God from heresy and distortion, look into *thy* heart, set a watch on thy lips, beware of wild fire in thy zeal” (E. Reynolds, 1648). Nevertheless, this truth is to be dealt with *uncompromisingly* and plainly, irrespective of the fear or favour of man, confidently leaving all “results” in the hand of God. May it be graciously granted *us* to write in a manner pleasing to God and *you* to receive whatever is from Himself.

PREACHING AS WE WALK

The story is told of St. Francis of Assisi that he once stepped down into the cloisters of his monastery, and laying his hand on the shoulder of a young monk, said, “Brother, let us go down into the town and preach.”

The venerable father and the young monk set out together. They wandered down the principal streets and wound their way through alleys and lanes, and even to the outskirts of the town and the village beyond, until they eventually found themselves back at the monastery.

Then inquired the young monk, “Father, when shall we begin to preach?”

The father looked down kindly and said, “My child, we have been preaching—we were preaching while we were walking. We have been seen—looked at, our behaviour has been remarked upon, and so we have delivered a morning sermon. Ah! my son, it is of no use that we walk anywhere to preach unless we preach as we walk.”



February

PRIVATE PRAYER—CONCLUSION

“My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up” (Psa 5:3). Let this be our resolve, and so long as we are spared, our practice, throughout the year we have just entered. It is both our wisdom and our duty to thus begin each day with God. “Should not a people seek unto their God?” (Isa 8:19). Surely the light of nature dictates that we ought to do so, while the light of the Gospel affords us ample instruction and encouragement for the same. When He says to us, “Seek ye my face,” should not our hearts answer as to One we love, “Thy face, LORD, will we seek” (see Psa 27:8)? But suppose our hearts have grown cold and we have wickedly strayed from Him? Well, when He says, “Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings,” should we not readily reply, “Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God” (Jer 3:22)?

O my reader, is there not much that we need to say to the Lord our God, the One whom we serve? How many and important are the concerns which lie between us and Him. We are constantly dependent upon Him—all our expectation is from Him. Is not all our happiness for time and eternity bound up in His favour? Have we not need to seek His approbation—to seek Him with all our hearts—to beg as for our very lives that He will lift up the light of His countenance upon us, to plead Christ’s righteousness as that through which alone we can hope to obtain God’s lovingkindness (Psa 71:16)?! Are we not conscious that we have deeply offended the Lord our God by our numerous and grievous sins, and have contracted defilement thereby? Should we not confess our folly and seek forgiveness and cleansing by the blood of Christ? Have we not received innumerable bounties and blessings from Him—must we not acknowledge the same, and return thanks and praise? Yes, prayer is the very least we can offer unto God.

Let us now make a few suggestions upon how this duty is to be performed. First, *reverently*. In all our approaches to God, we should duly consider His exalted majesty and ineffable holiness, and humble ourselves before Him as Abraham did (Gen 18:27). The word “*direct* my prayer unto thee” (Psa 5:3) signifies a fixedness of thought or close application of the mind. We need to set about the discharge of this duty solemnly, as those who have at heart something of great importance which we dare not trifle with. When we come before the throne of grace and address the Most High, we must not offer the sacrifice of fools, “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God” (Ecc 5:2). He that shoots an arrow at a mark *directs* it with a steady hand and fixed eye—so when engaging the heart to approach unto God, it must be disengaged from everything else. O to be able to say, “My heart is *fixed*, O God” (Psa 57:7). See to it that the awe of God’s greatness be upon your soul together with a deep sense of your utter unworthiness.

Second, *sincerely*. We cannot be too strongly or too frequently warned against that mere external worship to which we are so constantly prone and which is the bane of all spiritual good. Of old, Israel was charged with making mention of God's name, "but *not in truth*" (Isa 48:1). The desire of our heart must prompt and correspond to the petitions we present. How we need to beg God that this may be wrought into our spirits. How we need to search our hearts and see to it that we mean what we say, for "The LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Exo 20:7). Form the habit of challenging yourself by inquiring, Am I consistent with myself when I invoke God, or do I think I can impose upon Him with hypocrisy. "The LORD is high unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him *in truth*" (Psa 145:18). As an aid to this, ponder the high value of those spiritual things you ask for—your deep need of them—and inquire, Do I really desire the same?

Third, *submissively*—that is, subserviently to God's glory and our own highest good. Our petitions should ever be presented with the provision, "If it be thy will." We are ever prone to act amiss and often know not what manner of spirit we are of (Luk 9:55). The prayer of faith includes submission as truly as it does confidence, for if the latter be without the former, it is presumption—and not faith. To pray in faith is not to ask in the certain belief that God will give us what we ask for, but rather that He will grant us what is wisest and best. If we knew assuredly beforehand that God would certainly give us the very things we ask for, we would have reason to be afraid to pray, for often we desire things which would prove a curse if we got them! Our wisdom as well as our duty is to pray, conditionally and submissively. We must bow before God's sovereignty.

Fourth, *confidently*. There are some men, who because of their high station or known sternness towards all inferiors, we would be afraid to approach. And because we have none to introduce and speak a good word for us, we would therefore abandon the idea of speaking to them. But there is no reason why a believer should be discouraged from speaking to God—nay, He bids us, "Come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy" (Heb 4:16). Let not, then, a sense of God's greatness or holiness, nor a realization of your own entire unworthiness, deter you. Such are God's compassions unto humble supplicants that even His terror should not make them afraid. It is directly against His revealed will that His people should frighten themselves thus. He would have them encourage themselves as children, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15). By that very spirit of adoption we were brought into the nearness, freedom, and liberty of the children of God, and though we are still full of sin, yet, "we have an advocate with the Father" (1Jo 2:1).

Fifth, *fervently*. David said, "I entreated thy favour with my whole heart" (Psa 119:58). It is not sufficient that our tongues babble out a mere form—our hearts must be in this work—we are to be more concerned about the exercise of our affections than in the selection of our words. It is to be feared that we pray far more from our memories than our consciences. But let it be pointed out that fervency in prayer is *not* a working up of our animal spirits so that there is shouting and shaking of the body—actors work themselves up into a great heat to move their audience and lawyers to impress a judge. Fervency is expressed in Scripture as a calling upon the name of the Lord (Rom 10:13), a stretching out the hands toward Him (Job 11:13), a following hard after Him (Psa 63:8), a laying hold of Him (Isa 64:7), a pouring out the heart before Him (Psa 62:8). It is a striving in prayer (Rom 15:30). God hates lukewarmness. Note Daniel's intensity, Daniel 9:19. David compared his prayers to "incense" (Psa 141:2), and no incense was offered without *fire*!

Let us now anticipate an objection. I would be often in praying before God, but sin has so much power over me that it severs communion and utterly quenches the spirit of prayer in my heart—I feel so polluted that it would be a mockery for me to appear before the thrice holy God. Ah, but God’s hearing of our prayers does not depend upon our sanctity—but upon Christ’s mediation, “I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name’s sake” (Eze 36:22). It is not because of what Christians are in themselves, but because of what they are in Christ, that God responds to their requests, “to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God *by Jesus Christ*” (1Pe 2:5). When God answers our petitions, it is not for our sakes, nor for our prayers’ sake, but for His Son’s sake, see Ephesians 4:32. Seek to remember, my distressed brethren, that you are a member of the mystical body of Christ, and as Luther said, “What man will cut off his nose because there is filth in it?”

The more desperate be our case, the greater is our need to pray—if grace in us be weak, the continued neglect of prayer will make it weaker. If our corruptions be strong, the omission of prayer will make them stronger. Sins which are bewailed never hinder the access and success of our petitions. Jonah was a man full of sinful passions, yet *his* prayers prevailed with God (Jon 2:1-2, 7, 10). David said, “Iniquities prevail against me,” yet he at once added, “as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away” (Psa 65:3). On another occasion he said, “The LORD hath heard the *voice* of my weeping” (Psa 6:8)—his very tears prayed! God hears the sighs and groanings of those who cannot put them into words. Then encourage yourself by the greatness of God’s mercy, His covenant promises, His Fatherhood, and by the answers you have received in the past.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

122. Praying for Ministers (13:18-19)

“Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner” (Heb 13:18-19). As was pointed out in the opening paragraph of last month’s article, this passage is closely connected with verse 17, where believers are commanded to obey their ecclesiastical leaders. Here is mentioned a further obligation of Christians unto those who minister to them in spiritual things, namely, that they should remember them before the throne of grace. A true observance of this exhortation would probably do more than anything else to counteract and countervail a widespread evil—those who plead with God for blessings upon the preacher are far less likely to go around criticizing them unto men. A spirit of fault-finding stifles the breath of intercession—contrariwise, a spirit of prayer will curb complaining and gossiping lips.

“Pray for us” (Heb 13:18). The servants of Christ stand in real and urgent need of the prayers of their people. They are but men themselves, ignorant, weak, and erring, and unless they are granted a double portion of the Spirit, they are not equipped for their arduous and honourable calling. They are the ones who bear the brunt of the battle and are the special objects of Satan’s attacks. They are often tempted to compromise, to keep back that which, though unpalatable to them, is most profitable for their hearers. In the face of many disappointments and discouragements, they are apt to grow weary in well-doing. It is, then, both our duty and privilege

to supplicate God on their behalf for daily supplies of grace to be granted them from on High—that they may be delivered from temptations, kept faithful, steadfast, and devoted.

It is to be duly noted that this request was made by none other than the writer of this epistle. If, then, the greatest of the apostles stood in need of the intercessory support of his brethren, how much more so the rank and file of God's ministers. How tenderly, how earnestly, and how frequently Paul made this request! Here he adds, "I beseech you"—language used in Romans 15:30, where he besought the saints to strive together with him in their prayers to God. In 2 Corinthians 1:11, he speaks of "helping together by prayer for us." A beautiful type of the efficacy of the prayers of God's people to support one of His servants is found in the holding up the hands of Moses (Exo 17:11), where we are significantly told, "And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel *prevailed*: and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed."

"Pray for us" (Heb 13:18). We agree with Owen that though the apostle here used the plural number (as was his general custom) that it was for himself alone he made this request, as the "I" in verse 19 intimates. It is a pre-eminently Pauline touch, and as we pointed out in our second article of this series, it supplies one of the many details which serve to *identify* the writer of this epistle. There is no record in the New Testament that any other of the apostles besought the prayers of the church. Paul did so in no less than seven of his epistles—Romans 15:30; Ephesians 6:18-19; Colossians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Philemon 22, and here. "He who laboured more than the other apostles, and who was endowed with so many gifts, seems to have had the greatest craving for sympathy, for affection, for communion, and the most vivid conception that God only giveth the increase—that it is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord" (Adolph Saphir, 1831-1891).

"Pray for us" (Heb 13:18), though the immediate reference was to Paul himself, yet obviously the exhortation applies to all the servants of Christ, and is binding upon all to whom they minister. They are the ones, under God, through whom we receive the most good. Oftentimes they are, ministerially, our spiritual fathers (1Co 4:15), our spiritual nurses (1Th 2:7), our guides, counselors, and nourishers. They are to be esteemed very highly for their work's sake (1Th 5:13), and that esteem is to be evidenced by our constantly bearing them up before God in the arms of faith and love. To earnestly supplicate the throne of grace on their behalf is the least return we can make them for their loving labours, sacrificial endeavours, faithful ministrations. There is no doubt that the more diligent the people are in discharging this duty, the more help and blessing are they likely to receive through their labours.

"Pray for us" (Heb 13:18). The apostle was persuaded that all the blessing he needed could be obtained from God, and from Him alone, and that *prayer* was the appointed means of obtaining those blessings. Someone has said, "If the due obedience of the church by all its members, unto the rulers of it, be the best means of its edification and the chief cause of order and peace in the whole body, certainly prayer for its leaders and fellow-members is the appointed channel for obtaining it." Again, by requesting the prayers of the Hebrew Christians, Paul intimated the regard in which he held them as righteous men, whose prayers would "avail much." His request also signified his confidence in their love for him—a heart that tenderly and faithfully sought their good, doubted not the warmth of their affection for him. Prayer for each other is one of the principal parts of the communion of saints.

The apostle supported his plea for the prayers of his readers by a striking and powerful reason—"For we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly." In saying "we trust," two things were intimated. First, his becoming modesty—there was no boastful, "we know." Second, his assurance, for such language in Scripture does not express a

doubt. Thus, though there was confidence in his heart toward God, yet he expressed himself in humble terms—an example we do well to heed in this boastful and egotistic age. It is a grand thing when a minister of the Gospel can truly, though modestly, appeal to the faithful performance of his labours as a reason why he may claim the *sympathy and support* of his people. It is only when he sincerely aims to do the right thing and maintains a good conscience that the minister can, with propriety, ask for the *prayers* of his people.

Probably the reason why Paul here made particular reference to his earnest endeavour to maintain a good conscience was because he had been so bitterly denounced by his own nation, and no doubt (for Satan was the same then as now) the most unfavourable reports about him had been circulated among the Hebrews. He had been cruelly scourged by his own countrymen, and unjustly imprisoned by the Romans, yet he had the witness within his own bosom that it was his desire and determination to always act with integrity. “Though my name be cast out as evil, and though I be suffering as a wrong-doer, yet I appeal to my faithfulness in the Gospel ministry. I do not walk in craftiness, nor handle the Word of God deceitfully—nor do I make merchandise of the Gospel—I have genuinely sought to act honourably under all circumstances.” Happy the man that can say that!

“For we trust that we have a good conscience” (Heb 13:18). As we pointed out last month, the *conscience* is that faculty with which the Creator has endowed man, whereby he is capable of judging his state and actions with respect to the judgment of God. Its office is twofold—to reveal sin to us, to discover our duty, and that according to the light shining into it. There is a twofold light which men have to illumine conscience—natural reason and Scripture revelation, and the Spirit applying the same. If the conscience has only the twilight of nature, as is the case with the heathen, it passes judgment on natural duties and unnatural sins. But if it enjoys the supernatural light of the Word, it judges of those sins and duties which can only be known by divine revelation. It registers a permanent record in the soul. The more light we have, the greater is our responsibility, Luke 12:48.

Though the heathen possess not the law delivered by revelation of God to them, yet they have, in their moral sensibilities, the substance of its precepts written in their hearts, Romans 2:15. When Paul said he had “lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Act 23:1), it was parallel with his “touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless” (Phi 3:6). There was a conformity of his outward conduct to the light which he had in his conscience. Thus, “Those that say there is no use of the moral law to the Christian, may as well say there is no more use of the faculty of conscience in the soul of a Christian. Tear that faculty out of a man’s heart, if you will tear out that other, namely, the obliging precepts. Even as if God would annul colours and light, He must also take away and close up the sense of sight” (Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680).

“The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly” (Pro 20:27). This moral sense has been rightly denominated the divine spy in man’s soul. Its checks and reproofs are a warning from God. It acts in His name, citing us before His tribunal. It receives its instruction and authority from God, and is accountable to Him and to none other—alas how many are regulated by the customs and fashions of this world, and live upon the opinions and reports of their fellows. Conscience is a part of that light which “lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (Joh 1:9). In many passages, both the “heart” (1Jo 3:20) and the “spirit” (Rom 8:16; 1Co 2:11) signify the conscience, while in Psalm 16:7, it is called the “reins.” In yet other passages, it is likened unto the physical “eye” (Luk 11:34-36)—as the eye is the most sensitive member of the body and its visive faculty, so is the conscience to the soul.

Conscience, then, is God's witness within man. It is the voice of His law directing and admonishing the heart, conveying to us a knowledge of right and wrong. Its functions are to give testimony and force a moral verdict. Its business is to pronounce upon each action, whether it be good or evil, with the reward or punishment belonging to it, and then by a reflex act it deposes or witnesses that we have done righteously or unrighteously. Yet while conscience convicts of sin, it in no wise helps us to believe the Gospel—on the contrary, its workings withstand faith. No matter to what extent the natural conscience be enlightened, it conduces nothing to faith, nay, it is the greatest enemy to it that the heart of man has. Faith is the gift of God, a *supernatural* bestowment, something which is the operation of the Holy Spirit, altogether apart from and transcending the greatest height to which the unaided faculties of fallen man can reach unto.

What has just been pointed out above may, at first sight, surprise the reader, yet it ought not. Conscience is fully capable of hearing what the law says, for it is but the law written in the heart naturally, but it is quite deaf to what the Gospel says, and understands not a word of it. If you speak to natural conscience about a Saviour and urge it to believe on Him, its answer will be like unto that of the Jews (and it was this principle of conscience which made them so speak), "As for Moses we know that God spake unto him: but as for this fellow [Christ] we know not whence he is" (see Joh 9:29). Talk to a man of the law, and conscience responds, for it knows what he *ought* to do, but as for the Gospel, its voice is that of a stranger to him. Conscience is quite incapable of pointing out the way of deliverance from the condemnation and penalty of sin, yea, "Except a man be born again, he *cannot see* the kingdom of God" (Joh 3:3).

It is true that the more conscience be enlightened, the more will it discover to us all manner of sins, and rebuke us for them. Yet conscience alone will never discover unbelief to us and convict us of its heinousness—only the immediate light of the Holy Spirit shining in the heart will do that. There are two great sins which lie outside the jurisdiction of conscience to set them upon the heart, ordinarily. First, the guilt of Adam's original transgression, which has been justly imputed unto all his posterity. An instructed conscience may perceive the depravity and corruption of a nature which has resulted from our fall in Adam, but it will not convict of that fatal condemnation we lie under because of our first father's offense. Second, conscience will not acquaint us with our lack of faith in Christ, and that this is *the* sin of all sins—only the special operation of the Spirit upon the quickened heart can accomplish this. Examine those who are most troubled in conscience and it will be found that none of them are burdened because of their *unbelief*.

Until conscience be subordinated unto faith, it is the greatest hindrance to believing which the natural man has. What is the chief obstacle which an awakened and convicted soul encounters? Why, the greatness of his sins—his heart telling him that he is beyond the reach of mercy, and it is naught but the accusations of a guilty conscience which produces that sense of hopelessness in the heart. Conscience brings our sins to light, makes them to stare us in the face, and terrifies us with their enormity. Conscience it is which tells a distressed soul that salvation is far off from such a one as I am. Conscience will set us a working and a doing, but only in a legal way. So far from leading us into the path of true peace, it will take us farther away from it. Thus it was with the Jews of old, and thus it is still, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness" (Rom 10:3).

In the case of a Christian, conscience and faith supplement each other in their workings. If conscience convicts of sin or rebukes for the omission of duty, faith eyes the mercy of God in Christ, penitently confesses the fault, and seeks cleansing through the precious blood of Christ. "The worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" (Heb 10:2)—no more apprehensions of them as standing against us. It is the believer's bounden duty to maintain a

good conscience, 1 Timothy 1:19; 3:9, but in order to that there must be a continual judging of ourselves and our ways. The revealed will of God is its only rule, for nothing else can lawfully bind it, Therefore it is infinitely better to offend the whole world than God and conscience. “All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him,” and what was the prophet’s response and recourse? This, “But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I opened my cause” (Jer 20:10, 12).

The sole rule to regulate the conscience of the Christian is God’s written Word, for “whatsoever is not of faith [and therefore according to the Word, Rom 10:17] is sin” (Rom 14:23)—that is, whatsoever is not done from a settled persuasion of judgment and conscience out of the Word, is sin. The *defects* of a good conscience are, first, *ignorance or error*—some children of God are very imperfectly established in the truth and are much confused as to what is right and wrong in the sight of God, especially in things indifferent, concerning which there is much difference of opinion. They understand not that *liberty* which Christ has purchased for His people (Gal 5:1), whereby they are free to make a right and good use of all things indifferent—i.e., things not specifically forbidden by Scripture. “Wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face shine” (Psa 104:15), which goes beyond bare necessities, to which we may add those innocent recreations which refresh mind and body. How to make a proper use of such things is defined in 1 Timothy 4:4-5.

Second, and closely connected with the preceding, is what Scripture calls a “*weak conscience*” (1Co 8:12), which is due to lack of light, wrong teaching, of personal prejudice and idiosyncrasies. It is often trying and difficult to know how to act towards those thus afflicted/ On the one hand, love desires their good, and must be patient with them, and refrain from acting recklessly and needlessly wounding them. But on the other hand, their fads and scruples are not to be so yielded to by us that our own spiritual liberty is annulled—Christ Himself refused to bring His disciples into bondage by yielding to the traditions of men (Mar 7:2), even though He knew they were spying for some fault in Him, and would be offended by His conduct. Third, a *doubting* conscience. Fourth, a *wounded* conscience, whose peace is disturbed by unrepented and unconfessed sins.

The *benefits and blessings* are indeed rich compensation for every effort we make to maintain a good conscience. First, it gives us confidence Godwards. When we have sinned away our peace, there is a strangeness and distance between the soul and the Holy One. When our inward monitor convicts and condemns us, the heart grows shy of God, so that we cannot so comfortably look Him in the face. It is only when everything is made right with God, by contrite confession and faith’s appropriation of the cleansing blood of Christ, that we can approach the throne of grace with boldness. “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” (Heb 10:22)—i.e., a conscience which no longer accuses us before God. “If I regard iniquity in my heart [which is inconsistent with a good conscience], the LORD will not hear me” (Psa 66:18). But on the other hand, “If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (1Jo 3:21-22).

Second, a clear conscience affords his chief relief when a believer is falsely accused and aspersed by his enemies. What unspeakable consolation is ours when we can rightfully appropriate that benediction of Christ’s—“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake” (Mat 5:11). This was the case with the apostle Paul, “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that

in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world” (2Co 1:12). Third, a clear conscience vindicates its possessor against the accusations of Satan. The great enemy of our souls is constantly seeking to take away our peace and joy, and we are powerless against his onslaughts when a guilty conscience confirms his charges. But when we can appeal to a pure conscience and expose his lies, then his fiery darts are successfully quenched. The psalmist was very bold when he said—see Psalm 7:3-5, 8.

Fourth, a pure conscience gives great advantage to its possessor when he is lawfully reproving others. The admonitions of that Christian whose life is inconsistent have no weight, but he who walks closely with God speaks with authority. That man who is upright before God and his fellows, wields a moral force which is felt even by the ungodly. Finally, a peaceful conscience affords unspeakable comfort in a dying hour. When one has the inward witness that, despite many failures, he has sincerely endeavoured to do that which was right before God and unto his fellows, he has an easy pillow to rest his head upon. “Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight” (Isa 38:3)—that was an appeal to a good conscience by one who was “sick unto death.”

Paul’s testimony of his having a good conscience consisted in this—“In all things willing to live honestly” (Heb 13:18). A resolute will and a sincere endeavour to act rightly under all circumstances is the fruit and evidence of a good conscience. Being “willing” signifies a desire and readiness, with an accompanying effort and diligence. “In *all* things” takes in our whole duty to God and man, expresses the strictness and exactness of the apostle’s course to maintain a conscience “void of offense” (Act 24:16). What a striking commentary upon this declaration of Paul’s is furnished in the account of his manner of life at Ephesus, see Acts 20:18-27. How his devotion, fidelity, and constancy puts to shame the flesh-loving indolence of so many preachers today. What strictness God requires from His servants—as the least bit of grit in the eye hinders its usefulness, so any sin trifled with will trouble a tender conscience.

We are commanded to “Provide things honest in the sight of all men” (Rom 12:17)—a good conscience respects the second table of the law equally with the first, so that we owe no man anything and are not afraid to look anybody in the face. Any faith which does not produce an impartial and universal obedience is worthless. All the mysteries of our most holy faith are mysteries of *godliness*. But if the Word of God has come to us in word only and not in power, then we are but Christians of the letter and not of the spirit. Alas, how many today are sound in doctrine and have a carnal assurance of eternal life, yet who exercise themselves not to maintain a conscience void of offense! Alas, alas, what a conscienceless age our lot is cast in. How many souls are stumbled by the loose living of the majority of those who now profess to believe the Gospel?

“In all things willing to live honestly” (Heb 13:18). We are exhorted to have our conversation “honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1Pe 2:12). The Greek word in our text expresses more than is commonly understood by “honestly,” being the same as that used in, “He hath done all things *well*” (Mar 7:37). Its real force is “excellently” or “honourably.” In his, “in all things *willing* to live honestly,” the apostle again expresses his humility and truthfulness. A sincere desire and a diligent endeavour so to act is the highest perfection attainable in this life, for we all fail in the carrying out of it. Thus, in all ages the saints have prayed, “O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, *who desire to fear thy name*” (Neh 1:11). It is blessed to be

assured by God Himself that, “For if there be first a *willing* mind, it is *accepted* according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not” (2Co 8:12).

“But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner” (Heb 13:19). In this verse, Paul added a further reason why he desired the Hebrew saints to pray for him. Many things are intimated therein—that he had been with them previously, but circumstances over which he had no control now prevented his return—the best of ministers may be kept from their people (1Ki 22:27; Jer 38:6); that he greatly desired to come to them again, which shows that not his *own* comfort (deliverance from prison) but *their good* was uppermost in his mind; that he had strong confidence in the prevalence of prayer and of their affection for him. “When ministers come to a people as a return of prayer, they come with greater satisfaction to themselves and success to the people. We should fetch in all our mercies by prayer” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

The language used here by Paul denotes that he believed man’s goings are of the Lord, that He disposes the affairs of the church much according to their prayers—to His glory and their consolation. “That I may be restored to you the sooner” (Heb 13:19) is very striking, showing that Paul was no blind fatalist. If God had decreed the exact hour, how could prayer bring it to pass “the sooner”? Ah, it is utterly vain for us to reason about or philosophise over the consistency between God’s eternal decrees and prayer—sufficient for us to be assured from Scripture that prayer is both a bounden duty and blessed privilege. It is God’s way to make us feel the need of and then ask for the bestowment of His mercies before He gives them, Ezekiel 36:37. We know not if this prayer was answered, nor is it at all material, “According to our present apprehensions of duty we may lawfully have earnest desires after, and pray for such things, as shall *not* come to pass. The secret purposes of God are not the rule of prayer” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

74. *His Return to Jordan*

What a bewildering maze does the path of life present to many a soul—its twistings and turnings, its ups and downs, its advances and retreats are often too puzzling for carnal wisdom to solve. True it is that the lives of some are sheltered ones, with little of adventure and still less of mystery in them. Yet it is far otherwise for others, with their journeying hither and thither. But in the light of Scripture, the latter should not be surprised. One has only to read the biographies of the patriarchs to discover how often they were called upon to strike their tents, move from place to place, traverse and then re-traverse the same path. The experiences of David, then, were in this respect far from being exceptional—nor should any child of God deem it passing strange if he, too, finds himself retracing his steps and returning to the same place which he left months or years ago.

Amid the strange vicissitudes of life, how comforting it is for the saint to be assured that “the steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD” (Psa 37:23). Ah, it was David himself, who, by the Spirit of inspiration, originally penned those words. He realized that a predestinating God had first decreed and then ordered his entire journey through this world. Happy, thrice happy, the soul who by faith lays hold of this grand truth. To be fully assured that neither fickle fortune nor blind fate, but his all-wise and loving Father has mapped out his course supplies a peace and poise to a

believing heart such as nothing else can give. It softens disappointment, affords comfort in sorrow, and quietens the storm within—yet it is only as faith is *in exercise* that those peaceable fruits of righteousness are produced in us. An evil heart of unbelief deprives one of such consolation, placing him on the same level as the poor worldling, who has no light to disperse his gloom.

In previous months, we have spent some time in dwelling upon the various sad incidents which marked David's journey from Jerusalem to the Jordan, and from there to Mahanaim—now we are to contemplate the brighter side of things as the king retraced his steps. The contrasts presented are indeed striking, reminding us of the welcome spring and genial summer after a long and dreary winter. The analogies which exist between the seasons of the year and the different stages and experiences of life have often been dwelt upon, yet not too often, for there are many salutary lessons to be learned therefrom. Some dyspeptic souls seem more in their element when dwelling upon that which is sad and somber, just as there are those (because they suffer from the heat) who are glad when summer is over. Another class determines to be occupied only with that which is cheerful and gay, refusing (to their own loss) to face that which is serious, sober and solemn—just as some people always grumble when the weather is wet, failing to realize the rain is as needful as the sunshine.

It is much the same with those preachers who attempt to trace out the experiences of a Christian. Some who delineate the inward history of a believer, or what *they* consider it should consist of, disproportionately dwell upon his assurance, peace, and joy. While others overemphasize his painful conflicts and defeats, his doubts and fears. The one is as harmful as the other, for in either case only a caricature of the truth is presented. The one would rapidly skim over the distressing incidents which occasioned David's flight from Jerusalem to the Jordan, and those which attended him on the way to Mahanaim. While the other would expatiate fully thereon, but say little upon his happier lot as he returned from his exile to the capital. Let us diligently seek to avoid such lopsidedness, and preserve the balance in all things, so that as we should be equally thankful for each of the passing seasons of the year, we will endeavour to profit from the ever-varying circumstances of life through which we are called upon to pass.

If David had passed through a season of gloom and tragedy, he was now to encounter some pleasant and gratifying experiences. If he had met with the ingratitude and unjust reproaches from some of his subjects, he was now to be the recipient of a hearty welcome and the appreciative homage of others. How the tide of public opinion ebbs and flows—one moment exclaiming, "No doubt this man is a murderer," and the next one changing their minds and saving "that he was a god" (Act 28:4-6). How this should warn us against placing any reliance upon the creature! How thankful we should be when God is pleased to incline any to be favourably disposed towards us. On occasions, the crowd changes from friendliness to hostility, at other times, the converse is the case. So it was at the stage we have now reached in our hero's history.

"So the king returned, and came to Jordan" (2Sa 19:15). What a change had been wrought since David had last stood on the banks of this river. Then he was fleeing from Absalom, who had captured the hearts of many in Judah—now the rebel was dead, and God had so reinstated David in the affections of the royal tribe, that all the men of Judah had sent word unto him, "Return thou, and all thy servants" (2Sa 19:14). Assured that God was with him, and that he could rely upon the loyalty of his people, David left Mahanaim where his temporary camp had been set up, and betook himself as far as this famous stream. He had been slow in acting, partly because he wished to make sure of his ground, by ascertaining whether or not the people still desired him to

reign over them. Not by force of arms, but by the wishes of his subjects was he determined to hold his position.

“And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan,” (2Sa 19:15). It will be recalled that David had sent Zadok and Abiathar to inquire into the attitude of the elders of Judah toward him. It seems a pity that there had been no joint conference with the heads of the other tribes. “It would have been better if they had conferred with their brethren, and thus acted in concert, as this would have prevented many bad consequences” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). Even though it had involved further delay, joint action on the part of Israel would have been far more satisfactory. Nothing is gained by partiality—those slighted nurse their grievance, and sooner or later express their dissatisfaction and cause trouble. Thus it proved with the nation, for less than a century later, ten of its tribes separated and were never again restored.

“And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan” (2Sa 19:15). The place where the men of Judah now met David was associated with memorable events. It was there that Joshua had, by the command of the Lord, circumcised those of Israel who had been born in the wilderness, so that “the reproach of Egypt” was rolled away from them (Jos 5:2-9), and it was from that incident it derived its name, for Gilgal means “rolling away.” How appropriate the chosen venue, for the reproach of Judah’s infidelity was rolled away as they now renewed their fealty to David. Again—at a later date, we read, “Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and *renew the kingdom there*” (1Sa 11:14)—thus was history now virtually repeating itself.

“And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which was of Bahurim, hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David” (2Sa 19:16). What pleasant surprises we sometimes have amid life’s disappointments! This is the last man of all who might have been expected to be among those who came to welcome the king, for Shimei was the one who had reviled and cursed him on his outward journey (2Sa 16:5-6). The commentators attribute Shimei’s friendly advances on this occasion to nothing more than carnal prudence or an instinct of self-preservation, but this we think is quite a mistake—he seems to have been in no danger of his life, for the next verse informs us there were a thousand men of Benjamin with him. No, in the light of verse 14, we believe this is another instance of God’s making his enemies to be at peace with him when a man’s ways please the Lord.

“And there were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over Jordan before the king” (2Sa 19:17). Well did Matthew Henry suggest, “Perhaps Jordan was never passed with so much solemnity, nor with so many remarkable occurrences, as it was now, since Israel passed it under Joshua.” It was almost as surprising for the lying Ziba to present his obeisance to the king on this occasion, as it was for Shimei, for if the one had reviled him with a foul tongue, the other, by his wicked imposition (2Sa 16:1-4) abused him with a fair one. No doubt he was anxious to establish himself more firmly in the king’s favour ere Mephibosheth should undeceive him.

“And there went over a ferry boat to carry over the king’s household, and to do what he thought good” (2Sa 19:18). “This is the only place in which a *boat* for passing over a river is mentioned. Bridges are not mentioned in Scripture. Rivers were generally *fording* at that time” (Thomas Scott). “And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was come over Jordan” (2Sa 19:18). See here a signal demonstration of the power of God—nothing is too hard for Him—He can subdue the most rebellious heart. What wonders are wrought by the Spirit even in the reprobate, for upon them, too, He puts forth both His restraining and constraining operations—were it not so, the elect could not live in this world at all. Yet how feebly is this

realized today, even by the saints. How little is the hand of God beheld by them in the subduing of their enemies' hatred and in making others to be friendly and kind toward them. A spirit of atheism, which would exclude God from all human affairs, is more and more infecting this evil generation.

“And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart. For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king” (2Sa 19:19-20). Let us see in this incident a typical picture of the penitent sinner casting himself upon the mercy of David's greater Son and Lord. This is exactly what takes place at a genuine conversion, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD; and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa 55:7). This is the course which Shimei now followed. He ceased his defiant conduct, threw down the weapons of his warfare against David, acknowledged his grievous offences, cast himself at the king's feet, thereby avowing his willingness to be subject to his royal sceptre. Saving mercy is not to be obtained any other way. There must be a complete about-face. Contrition and confession are as imperative as is faith in Christ.

Have *you*, my reader, really and truly surrendered yourself to the Lordship of Christ? If you have not, no matter what you believe, or how orthodox the profession you make, you are yet in your sins and on your way to eternal perdition. Make no mistake on this point, we beseech you—as you value your soul, examine thoroughly the foundations of any hope of salvation which you may cherish. If you are living a life of *self*-pleasing, and are not in subjection to the commandments of Christ, then are you in open revolt against Him. There must be a complete break from the old life of worldliness and carnal gratification, and the entering into a new relationship with God in Christ, namely, a submitting to His holy will and the ordering of all your conduct thereby. You are either living for self, or striving to serve and please God—and in your heart you *know* which course you are following. Being religious on the Sabbath and irreligious the other six days will avail you nothing.

“But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD's anointed?” (2Sa 19:21). Abishai was brother to the arrogant Joab and possessed much of his domineering spirit. He was the one who had offered to slay Shimei at the time he had reviled David (2Sa 16:9)—mercy was foreign to his nature, and even though Shimei now publicly acknowledged his offense and besought the king's pardon, this son of Zeruiah thirsted for his blood. May we not consider this line in our typical picture as illustrative of the principle (cf. Luk 9:42; 15:2 etc.) that there are some ready to oppose whenever a sinner takes his true place before God? If there are those who complain that the way of salvation is made too easy when the grace of God is emphasized, there are others who argue that salvation by works is being inculcated when the *righteousness* of God and the claims of Christ are duly pressed.

“And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know that I am this day king over Israel? Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king sware unto him” (2Sa 19:22-23). It is indeed blessed to mark how David's soul loathed the evil suggestion made by Abishai. That son of Zeruiah—whose heart had never been broken before God, and therefore was devoid of His compassions—was far too blind to perceive that this was no time for the enforcing of unmingled justice. But it was far otherwise with David, “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Mat 5:7). He had received wondrous mercy from

the Lord, and now he exercised mercy unto this wretched Shimei, and in return for this he shall obtain further mercy from God. Let us not ignore that searching word, “If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Mat 6:14-15). God communicates grace to His people in order to make them gracious-reflectors of Himself.

Feign would we dwell for a moment longer on the lovely spirit which now actuated our hero. In previous sections of 1 and 2 Samuel, we have beheld the grace of God *towards* David—electing, exalting, pardoning, and preserving him. So too have we seen the grace of God working *in* him. It was the general rule of his life, giving character to his dealings with others, as it had thus given character to God’s dealings with him. Being called to enter into blessing, he rendered blessing. When he was reviled, he reviled not again (1Sa 17:29). When persecuted, he threatened not, but suffered it (1Sa 20:1). Never do we read of him seeking his own advancement or honour. When tidings reached him of the death of Saul, he wept instead of rejoicing. In the fall of Abner and Ishbosheth, it is only the sorrow and fasting of David we hear of. So it is, in varying measure, with all Christians—notwithstanding the detestable workings of the flesh, there are also the precious fruits of the Spirit—seen and approved of by God, if not always observable by others or recognizable to ourselves.

This was the man after God’s own heart, and in every scene in which he was called to take a part—save when he was, for a while, turned aside by Satan—we behold him seeking not his own aggrandizement or even vindication, but serving in grace and kindness. A most blessed example of this was before us when pondering 2 Samuel 9. He would be an emulator or follower of God (Eph 5:1), as a dear child. So it was when Abishai was for exacting bare righteousness, but mercy had rejoiced over judgment towards himself in the heart of the Lord, and nothing but the same is now beheld in the heart of David. Divine grace had not only pardoned his grievous sins against Uriah, but had now delivered him from the murderous designs of Absalom. How, then, could he consent to the death of even his worst enemy?! Ah, my reader, divine grace not only forgives sins, but it also transforms sinners—taming the lion, making gentle the wolf. Thereby the divine “workmanship” (Eph 2:10) is made manifest.

But let us look again beyond David to that blessed One of whom he was so eminent a type. In what has just been before us, we are presented with a lovely picture of *the Gospel*. The grand truth of the Gospel is that Christ “receiveth sinners.” Yes, He not only spares, but welcomes His worst enemies, and freely pardons them. Nevertheless, they must seek Him, surrender to His Lordship, take their place before Him in the dust as penitents, confessing their sins, and casting themselves on His sovereign mercy. This is what Shimei did. He determined to make his peace with David, came to him, and did obeisance before him. And we read that the king said, “Thou shalt not die” (2Sa 19:23). And this, dear reader, is what the King of kings will say of you, if you throw down the weapons of your warfare against Him and exercise faith in Him. May the Spirit of God graciously cause some unsaved reader to do so.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

6. The Davidic

In last month's article, it was pointed out how that the historical account of the Davidic covenant lacks that fullness of detail which marked the earlier ones. The reason for this being the nearer the approach unto the advent of Christ, the more the type merged into the anti-type. It was also shown how that Psalm 89 supplies us with the divine interpretation of the promises given through the prophet Nathan to the son of Jesse. The superlative importance of this fact cannot be too strongly insisted upon, for it settles the vexed question as to the character and location of Christ's throne and kingdom. It is here that we are furnished with clear and conclusive answers to the questions and disputes which have been raised concerning the terms found in 2 Samuel 7:11-16.

That which we are most anxious to make clear to the reader is this—is the “seed” promised to David in 2 Samuel 7:12 a carnal or a mystical one? Is His “kingdom” (v. 12) an earthly or a heavenly one? Is His “house” and “throne” (v. 13) a material or spiritual one? If one of these questions can be definitely and finally settled, then the others will be, for it is obvious that the passage must be dealt with *consistently* throughout—all is to be understood literally or all mystically, carnally or spiritually. Now all doubt is removed as to the answer to the first question—the “seed” promised to David, like the seed promised to Abraham (Gal 3:7, 16) is a *mystical* one—that is to say, it finds its accomplishment not in Christ personally, but in Christ mystically, i.e., Christ *together* with the members of His body—the church of which He is the Head. The proof of this is found in Psalm 89.

In 2 Samuel 7, God promised David, “I will set up thy seed after thee...I will be his Father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men” (2Sa 7:12-14). In Psalm 89, God declared, “I have found David my servant....he shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father....my covenant shall stand fast with him....if his children forsake my law....then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes” (vv. 20, 26, 28, 30, 32). Nothing could be plainer than this—the “if *he* commit iniquity, I will chasten *him* with the rod” of 2 Samuel 7:14 is here changed to, “I will visit *their* transgressions with the rod” (Psa 89:32). Thus the “seed” of David is Christ and His children. Their absolute identification is further emphasized in, “I will visit *their* transgression with the rod...nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him” (vv. 32-33). Thus, the Redeemer and the redeemed are inseparably linked, for together they form *one* (mystical) body.

The grand promise made to David in 2 Samuel 7 was that though his seed should commit iniquity, God's mercy would “not depart away from him,” but that his “house” and “kingdom” should be “established forever” (2Sa 7:14-16). It was no fleshly or earthly blessing, but a spiritual and eternal one. Therein it differs radically from what had gone before. Both Adam in Eden and Israel in Canaan had *forfeited* their heritage, but the inheritance Christ secured for His people is an *inalienable* one. This is what is made so prominent in Psalm 89. Of Christ God declared, “His seed also will I make to endure *for ever*” (Psa 89:29). This is God's covenant-engagement with the Mediator, and no failure or sin on the part of His people shall cause God to cancel it. True, He will severely chastise them for their transgressions—for in God's family the rod is not spared and the children spoiled—but He will *not* cast them off as incorrigible rebels. The atonement of Christ fully met all their liabilities, and as *He* enjoys God's favour forever, so must *those* vitally united to Him.

The same grand feature marks the throne and kingdom of Christ, distinguishing them from all that pertains to the earth, “I will stablish the throne of his kingdom *for ever*” (2Sa 7:13). That there should be no uncertainty on this point, God repeats, “Thy throne shall be established *for ever*” (2Sa 7:16). It is no temporal and temporary throne which the true David occupies, enduring only for a thousand years—as the New Testament expressly declares, “of his kingdom there shall be *no end*” (Luk 1:33). The same grand truth is emphasized in Psalm 89, “And his throne as the days of heaven,” (Psa 89:29)—not “as the days of earth.” “His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the *sun* before me. It shall be established for ever as the *moon*” (Psa 89:36-37). The most enduring objects in nature are selected as the figure and proof of the absoluteness of the perpetuity affirmed. That Christ’s kingdom is a celestial, and not an earthly one, is seen in, “And as a faithful witness in heaven” (Psa 89:37).

Another Psalm which casts its light upon the character and contents of the Davidic covenant is the 132nd upon which we must offer a few remarks. It has two divisions. In the first (vv. 1-10), there is a pleading with JEHOVAH to be merciful unto His people “for David’s sake” (v. 10). In the second section (vv. 11-18), we have His response, promising, “I will make the horn of David to bud...upon himself shall his crown flourish” (vv. 17-18). In the first, God is reminded of David’s deep concern to supply a permanent house for the holy ark. In the second, the Lord declares that He has found a satisfying and eternal resting-place in Zion. In the first, prayer is made that God’s priests might be “clothed with righteousness.” In the second, God affirms that He will cloth His priests “with salvation.” The second half strictly balances the first throughout.

Now that which invests this 132nd Psalm with particular interest for us is what is found therein concerning God’s *resting-place* and the relation of this to the Davidic covenant. It will be remembered that 2 Samuel 7 opens with an account of David’s anxiety to provide a suitable residence for the ark, and that it was in response thereto Nathan made such a wondrous and gracious revelation to him. Let it be duly noted that among the covenant promises which God then made to David concerning the blessed One, who (according to the flesh), should descend from him, was this declaration, “He shall build *an house* for my name,” and to Him God says, “Thine *house* and thy kingdom shall be established for ever” (2Sa 7:13, 16). Like the “throne” and “kingdom” mentioned in the same passage, this “house” is not material, earthly, and temporal, but a spiritual, heavenly, and eternal one. It is no mere Jewish temple for “the millennium,” but a divine dwelling-place for the ages of the ages.

The tabernacle, as is well-known, was the symbol of God’s residing among the covenant people and of the divine fellowship to which He had graciously admitted them. This symbolical significance was transferred to the temple, with the additional idea—suggested by its very structure—of *durability* and permanency. With this place of worship, the *throne* of David was indissolubly bound up. The destruction of the temple only became possible as the effect of the confirmed apostasy of the occupants of David’s throne, and its restoration was only to be expected as the work of someone of the royal race being brought into renewed fellowship with God—this is verified in the reconstruction of the second temple by Zerubbabel. The symbol, however, was the type of something higher—the true temple of God is the sanctified *hearts* of His saints. It is with His spiritual church that the throne of David, as occupied by the Redeemer, is permanently and inseparably united.

The kingdom of Christ and the house of God are one and the same, viewed from different angles. It is the redeemed who constitute the true subjects of Christ’s kingdom, for they alone own His sceptre—where there are no subjects, there can be no kingdom. And it is the redeemed who provide God with a satisfying resting-place. In the later prophets it was expressly foretold,

“Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory” (Zec 6:12-13). Now the true house in which God dwells is a spiritual one, composed of living stones, converted souls, which is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph 2:20-21).

Returning to Psalm 132. “The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David: he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore” (Psa 132:11-12). These verses make it clear beyond all doubt that our Psalm has to do directly with the Davidic covenant. In their “letter” significance, they respected David’s throne upon earth and the condition which determined its continuance—a condition which was not met by his descendants. In their spiritual purport, they concern the antitypical David and His children, His infinite merits assuring that God would grant the needed grace for them to render to Him that obedience which the new covenant required, namely, a real and sincere one, though not flawless and perfect—D.V., this will be carefully considered by us when we take up the new covenant. Such Scriptures as the following are to be pondered for the fulfillment of this promise of Christ’s children occupying His throne—Luke 22:29, 30; 1 Corinthians 6:2-3; 1 Peter 2:9 (“a royal priesthood”), Revelation 3:21.

“For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his *habitation*” (Psa 132:13). “It was no more than any other Canaanite town till God chose it, David captured it, Solomon built it, and the Lord dwelt in it. So was the church a mere Jebusite stronghold till grace chose it, conquered it, rebuilt it, and dwelt in it. JEHOVAH has chosen His people, and hence they are His people—He has chosen the church, and hence it is what it is. Thus in the covenant David and Zion, Christ and His people, go together. David is for Zion, and Zion for David—the interests of Christ and His people are mutual” (Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 1834-1892). In Hebrews 12:22, the kingdom of Christ is expressly denominated “Mount Sion”, see our comments thereon in the exposition of that verse in “Studies” of April, 1936.

“This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it” (Psa 132:14). “Again are we filled with wonder that He who fills all things should dwell in Zion—should dwell in His *church*. God does not unwillingly visit His chosen. He *desires* to dwell with them. He desires *them*. He is already in Zion, for He says *here*, as one upon the spot. Not only will He occasionally come to His church, but He will dwell in it, as His fixed abode. He cared not for the magnificence of Solomon’s temple, but He determined that at the mercy-seat He would be found by suppliants, and from thence He would shine forth in brightness of grace among the favoured nation. All this, however, was but a type of the spiritual house, of which Jesus is foundation and cornerstone, upon which all the living stones are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. O the sweetness of the thought that God desires to dwell in His people and rest among them!” (C. H. Spurgeon).

If further proof be required that the church is the dwelling-place of God, it is forthcoming in “that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1Ti 3:15). Here, then, is the ultimate accomplishment of those promises God made through Nathan. The antitypical David *has built* the house for God’s name (2Sa 7:13 and cf. His use of the word “build” in Mat 16:18). Unto Him God said, “*Thine* house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever” (2Sa 7:16), for the Father

and the Son are one. In this house the Lord Jesus presides, for we read, “But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (Heb 3:6). When the first heaven and the first earth are passed away, it shall be said, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev 21:3). The Lord God will then “rest in his love” (Zep 3:17).

Nor was David himself left in ignorance as to the higher and spiritual purport of the covenant promises which the Lord had made to him. This appears first in the expressions of his deep wonderment and overwhelming gratitude at the time they were first made to him (2Sa 7:18-29). “Thou hast also spoken of thy servant’s house for a great while to come” (v. 19), he declared, language which connotes a period of vast extent, far in excess of that covered the lengthiest human dynasties. Then he added, “Is this the manner [“law,” margin] of man, O Lord GOD?” Christ’s kingdom shall be ordered by a principle securing for it a perpetuity which was wholly inapplicable to any human rule, and therefore all pertaining to His kingdom obviously stands in marked contrast from the established order of things which belongs to all merely human dynasties.

David’s own understanding of the deeper import of the contents of the covenant also appears in those Messianic Psalms of which he was the author. As we have already seen, in the 2nd Psalm, David declares of that One whom God was to establish king in Zion, that He would possess the dominion of the whole earth, kings being commanded to acknowledge Him on pain of incurring His ruinous disfavour—something which plainly denoted that a greater than Solomon was in view. From the many things he predicated in Psalm 89 of his seed, it is evident David must have known that in no proper sense could they be applied to his immediate successors on the throne. While in the 110th Psalm, David himself calls his promised descendant his *Lord*: “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Psa 110:1).

Not only does it appear from the Psalms that David’s mind was freely occupied with the covenant promises and that God granted him much light thereon, but we also learn from Scripture that they formed the principal solace and joy in the prospect of his dissolution, for when the world was fast receding from his view, he clung to them as “all his salvation and all his desire” (2Sa 23:5). As he contemplated death, the future of his family seriously engaged his thoughts. Sorely had he suffered from and by his children, and few if any appeared to have the fear of God upon them. He was probably exercised as to whom should succeed him in the kingdom—then it was he exclaimed, “Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he make it not to grow” (2Sa 23:5).

“Although my house be not so [i.e., as described in 2Sa 23:3-4] with God, *yet*...although he make it not to grow,” that is, it declines and diminishes naturally. Absalom was dead, Adonijah, another of his sons, would be slain (1Ki 2:24-25), yet God *would* preserve him a seed from which Christ would come. The dying king was convinced that nothing could prevail to prevent the fulfillment of the divine promises—that full provision was made for every possible contingency.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

Another article seems to be required for the further elucidation and amplification of what has already been advanced in our exposition of 1 Corinthians 15:22-28, the more so as we have yet said nothing upon the last two verses. We have endeavoured to show that the contents of this passage introduce nothing that is not strictly pertinent to the theme which the apostle is discussing in this chapter, both before verse 22 and after verse 28—namely, the resurrection of the saints. Instead, as we have seen, it supplies a striking and valuable contribution to that important subject, by furnishing proof that there is no possibility of any enemy of Christ and His people being able to prevent that glorious event. Furthermore, it has been shown that the whole passage is one connected and consistent whole, and not a number of individual statements having little or nothing in common.

In 1 Corinthians 15 verse 22, the assertion is made that “in Christ shall all be made alive.” This at once intimates that the elect only are in view, for the non-elect never were and never will be in Christ—compare verses 45-47, where further contrasts between the first and last Adam are in view. In verse 23, the statement made in the second half of verse 22 is particularized, “But every man [every one] in his own order.” The Head and His members are not made alive simultaneously. No, in this, as in all things, Christ has the pre-eminence, consequently there is an interval between “Christ the firstfruits”—which not only denotes *precedence*, but *pledge* of the future harvest. “Afterward [Greek, “then”] they that are Christ’s [again showing that only the holy dead are here in view] at his coming.” But will there not be the raising of other believers at a still later period—no, for “*then cometh the end*”—the promise in verse 22 is now completely made good.

Two important questions are naturally raised by the contents of verses 22-23—how and when shall Christ bring this to pass? Each is answered in what follows. “For he [God] hath put all things under his [Christ’s] feet” (1Co 15:27). This is only another way of saying that God has exalted the crucified but risen Redeemer to the place of supreme authority and power—carefully compare Ephesians 1:19-23 and observe the same words in verse 22. God has not only entrusted unto the Mediator the saving of His own people, but the subduing of all His enemies—note the double claim He makes in John 17:2. This is the answer to His prayer, “Father...glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee” (Joh 17:1). In the new creation, from beginning to end, “all things” are of the Father, yet “all things” are by Jesus Christ (1Co 8:6).

How glorious is the Christ of God! What dignity, majesty, and might are His! Alas, how vastly different is that wretched caricature presented from the modern pulpit, wherein Christ is referred to as *needing* the help of His puny creatures in order to bring His work to a successful conclusion. How perversely man inverses the divine order. It is we who are in sore need of *His* help and not He of *ours*. Christ has received commission from the Father, to “destroy the works of the devil” (1Jo 3:8), not only to bring good out of all the evil which sin has created, but also to bring to an end all the confusion and dishonour to God which Satan has brought into the universe. Therefore, “He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet” (1Co 15:25).

“When he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father”—that is, the kingdom which Satan has usurped, the kingdom of darkness—“when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power” (1Co 15:24)—which explains the previous clause, meaning when He shall have subdued every creature and force which is hostile to God, “the last enemy that shall be destroyed—death” (1Co 15:26). Thus the two “whens” of verse 24 correspond to the two “thens” of verse 23—we showed last month that the closing clause of verse 24 (in the A.V.) completes verse 23, while the destruction of death answers to, confirms the fact, that “the end” (of the

resurrection of the saints) has come. If any shadow of doubt remains upon this point of our interpretation, verse 54 completely removes it, “So *when* this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, *then* shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory,” for “death” is “destroyed.”

What has just been pointed out not only refutes the pre-millennial interpretation of this particular passage, but it seems to completely overthrow their entire position. Their contention is, first, that Christ does not receive the kingdom until His second advent—arguing that He is now seated on the Father’s throne (Rev 3:21), and that He will not occupy His own throne (Mat 25:31) until the beginning of the Millennium. Second, that instead of all God’s enemies being completely and finally subdued at the time of Christ’s coming, this will not occur till after the Millennium is over—appealing to Revelation 20:7-10 to bolster up their theory. Third, most of them insist that the coming of Christ and His raising the church take place before the “tribulation period,” and that it is not until several years later He makes alive those who were slain by “the antichrist.” A worse turning of things upside down could scarcely be imagined—alas that in the past we ourselves have been guilty of it.

As we have shown, so far from the second advent of Christ being the time when His kingdom is inaugurated and that the putting forth of His mighty power for the subduing of His enemies is commenced, it is then that He delivers up the kingdom to the Father because every foe *has* been reduced to a state of utter impotency—it is quite clear from Luke 19:13 that Christ went to heaven “to receive for himself a kingdom and to return,” and *not* to return and then receive a kingdom! (Luk 19:12). Again—so far from Christ’s subjugation of His enemies taking place at a date long after His second coming, our passage places it before, or at least makes it to synchronize with, the destruction of death, the last enemy—note the same order in Matthew 13:1, 41-43. And the emphatic and unequivocal statements at the close of 1 Corinthians 15:24, “then cometh the end” entirely excludes all idea of any saints being raised after Christ’s coming.

Far more serious is the view taken by many of the closing portion of our passage. Those who have regarded the, “Then [cometh] the end” (1Co 15:24) as referring to the end of time, the termination of this world, consider verses 27-28 as illustrative of Christ’s then delivering of the kingdom to the Father, following which the Son is to become in some new way subject to the Father—thus does one error logically involve and lead up to another. Whatever be the meaning of verse 28, we may rest fully assured that there is nothing in it which in anywise clashes with the plain teaching of other Scriptures, and therefore no interpretation of it can be valid which supposes that Christ will yet suffer a second humiliation or cease to be an Object of worship. Most certainly there is nothing in it which casts the slightest cloud upon the Godhead of the Redeemer, or intimates that the second person in the Trinity is inferior to the First. Equally certain is it that there can be nothing in the verse which signifies Christ will ever abdicate His mediatorial throne.

Obviously, we must turn to the context for a right understanding of (1Co 15:27-28). Nor does that present the slightest difficulty so far as the ascertaining of its leading thought be concerned—the man Christ Jesus possesses such authority and power that nothing can possibly prevent His raising in Glory the whole of His people. The risen Christ has been invested with such majesty and might that no hostile power can stand before Him. The dominion of Christ is a supreme, universal, and uncontrollable one, so far as creatures are concerned. Yet it is a subordinate one so far as essential deity is concerned. Now the purpose and purport of verses 27-28 is to illustrate *the delegated character of* that dominion and authority, in the exercise of which the Son brings back

the kingdom to the Father by putting down all opposing rule. This brings before us a subject of no small importance.

The expression, “when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father” implies that, in some sense, the kingdom has *departed* from the Father. But there is a real sense in which the kingdom never has departed, and never can depart, from the Father. His *right* to reign and His *power* to assert that right, are indubitable and infinite, immutable and eternal. There is no being, and there is no event, that is or can be beyond His control. Ay, there is no being nor event which shall not be made ultimately to subserve the purpose of His wise and righteous government. Yet it is an undeniable fact that a considerable portion of His creatures have renounced their allegiance, and have individually, and collectively, set themselves in opposition to Him, refusing to obey His holy, righteous, and good laws, and to yield their co-operation in working out the wise and benevolent designs of His administration. To this rebel portion of God’s subjects belong the whole of the fallen angels, and the whole too of fallen men, with the exception of those who are reclaimed by the Son.

“An important portion of God’s dominions is in a state of revolt. The standard of rebellion, first erected on the very battlements of heaven, has since been erected on earth; and for nearly six thousand years its inhabitants almost with one consent, have rallied around it, scornfully rejecting the claims of their Maker, and obstinately refusing to return to their allegiance, and acknowledge Him as their rightful King. Earth and hell are leagued in one grand conspiracy against the throne of the Most High. Christ is exalted to the throne to put down these enemies and opposing powers, and thus recover the kingdom from the usurpers” (Van Valkenburgh).

Now the way in which this usurped kingdom is restored to the Father is Christ’s putting down of all opposing rule and power. All power, whether diabolical or human, exercised by individuals, or embodied in institutions, or order of things, must be overthrown, so that this kingdom will be brought back to Him whose absolute right it is to reign in and over us. The “rulers of the darkness of this world” (Eph 6:12) must be dethroned—stripped of their power to deceive and destroy. Everything inimical must be destroyed by the God-man in His administration of that kingdom entrusted to Him by the Father. True, these all “make war with the Lamb,” but “the Lamb shall overcome them: *for* he is Lord of lords, and King of kings” (Rev 17:14). He will “break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel” (Psa 2:9). Satan with his rebel hosts, and those of our race who clung to his dominion, shall be cast into the lake of fire.

The object of 1 Co 15:27-28 is to show us that the power Christ wields over His enemies is a *delegated* one. Christ’s authority is not distinct from the divine—rather is it the exercise of that power which is common to the Father and the Son as divine persons. Just like, “As the Father hath life in himself: so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (Joh 5:26). It is as though the apostle said, in referring to Psalm 110, I stated that Christ must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet (1Co 15:25), yet let me now remind you it is *JEHOVAH* who secures this, as the first verse of that Psalm affirms. “For he hath put all things under his feet” (1Co 15:27) is a quotation from Psalm 8:6, as a further corroboration of the truth that it is *JEHOVAH* who gave the Mediator dominion over all His creatures.

Let it be remarked that this ancient oracle is again quoted by our apostle in Hebrews 2. That which fills us with wonderment in Psalm 8 is that it is of *man* this is predicated. That Psalm begins by contemplating the ineffable majesty of *JEHOVAH*, “O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens” (Psa 8:1). Next he asks, “What is man, that THOU art mindful of *him*?...for thou hast made him a little lower than the angels” (Psa 8:4-5). Then he exclaims, “Thou madest him to have *dominion over* the works of thy

hands; *thou* hast put all things under his feet” (Psa 8:6). After quoting the whole of this passage, the apostle says, “But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, *crowned* with glory and honour” (Heb 2:8-9)—thereby proving that the unlimited power Christ is now wielding is the power *of God*.

“But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him” (1Co 15:27). When in the 8th Psalm it is said that JEHOVAH subjected all things to man, it is very obvious that He who should subject them to Him—who gave supremacy to Him, sovereignty over them—does not, in so doing, denude Himself of His own power or authority—that power necessarily remains supreme. As the apostle here declares, “It is manifest that he is excepted” (1Co 15:27). And *how is* it “manifest”? Why, because a *delegated* authority necessarily implies a supremacy in Him who confers it. The Father will be greater than the Mediator—Christ’s kingdom, though in reference to creatures, supreme, is, in reference to essential deity, delegated, and this statement is made that it may be obvious that all things are of God.

“And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shalt the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all” (1Co 15:28). Yet let it be said very emphatically that this subjection of the Son to the Father *is no new thing* which exclusively characterizes that order of things which shalt obtain upon His restoring of the usurped kingdom. No, no—the Father’s word to the Son, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever” (Heb 1:8) is not to be rescinded in the eternal state. The subjection of the Son to the Father marks the whole mediatorial economy. “That economy, throughout proceeds on the principle that, while essentially the Son and Spirit are equal with the Father, being one with Him in the economy of grace, they are subordinate to the Father, who sustains the majesty of divinity. The Father is greater than they. He sends, they come; He appoints, and they execute. All things are *of Him by them*” (John Brown, 1772-1787).

The principal design of 1Co 15:28, then, is to teach us that the present subjection of the Mediator unto the Father *will continue* after the consummation of His glorious victory. It in nowise signifies that Christ’s divine person shall withdraw from His humanity or that as the God-man He *will* no longer be an object of worship. On the other hand, the glorified humanity of Christ, notwithstanding all the honour and authority conferred upon it, is but *a creature*, and in the eternal state this will be made evident. Let it be said emphatically that verse 28 must not be understood to mean that the second person in the Godhead, as such, will, throughout eternity, be under subjection to the first, for on the new earth there is “the throne of God *and* of the Lamb” (Rev 22:1). Nevertheless, the man Christ Jesus will yet resign unto the Father His government of the wicked. Verse 28 refers to the re-assumption by God Himself of that power and authority delegated to the Mediator in connection with His rule over His enemies.

Before the ascension of Christ, God reigned as God—since that event, He reigns through the Mediator. When Christ has delivered up the usurped kingdom to the Father, then “God”—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—will be all in all. Yet even then Christ will still be the Head of His church and reign upon His mediatorial throne. At the conclusion of his exposition of 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, the renowned Puritan, John Owen, said, “I declared that all the state of things which we have described shall then cease, and all things issue in the immediate enjoyment of God Himself. I would extend this no further than as unto that which concerneth the exercise of Christ’s mediatory office with respect unto the church *here below* and the *enemies* of it. But there are some things which belong to the essence of this state which shall continue unto all eternity, as,

first, I do believe that the person of Christ, in and by His human nature, shall be forever the immediate Head of the whole glorified creation. Second, that He shall be the means and way of communication between God and His glorified saints forever. Third, that the person of Christ, and herein His human nature, shall be the eternal object of divine glory, praise, and worship.”

As a concluding summary of what has been before us, we cannot do better than quote from John Brown’s, “The Resurrection of Life” (through which we have received much help in preparing these two articles), wherein he gives the following analysis of 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. “The passage, thus expounded, teaches us the following principles—first, that the risen Saviour is invested with unlimited power and authority. He ‘reigns’—‘all things are subjected to him.’ Second, the design of His being thus invested with unlimited power and authority is, that He may ‘restore the kingdom to the Father.’ Third, in restoring the kingdom to the Father, He will ‘put down all opposing rule, and authority, and power.’ Fourth, in the accomplishment of this, the destruction of death as an opposing power is necessarily involved. Fifth, all this is to be accomplished by *divine* power, administered by the Son, that the whole glory of the bringing back of the kingdom may be seen to belong, and be ascribed, to Him, ‘of whom are all things, and through whom are all things’ and to whom, therefore, it is most meet that all things should be—whose glory ought to be the end, as His will is the cause and the law, of the universe.”

GOD’S WORD IN OUR HEARTS

Use 1. To persuade you to study the Scripture, that you may get understanding and hide the Word in your hearts for gracious purposes. This is the Book of books—let it not lie idle. The world can as well be without the sun as the Bible—Psalm 19 speaks first of the sun, then of the law of God, which is to the Christian as the sun is to the outward world. Consider the great use of the Word for informing the understanding and reforming the will. The Word of God is able to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished (2Ti 3:17). “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Psa 119:9). A young man that is so heedless and headstrong, and in the very heat of his lusts, yet there is enough in the Word to cleanse, tame, and subdue him to God. Therefore let us get it into our hearts. To this end.

Meditate often on it. “Mary kept all these sayings” (Luk 2:19). How did she keep them? She “pondered them in her heart.” Musing makes the fire to burn, and deep and constant thoughts are operative. The hen which straggles from her nest when she sits a-brooding produces nothing. It is a constant incubation which hatches the young. So when we have only a few straggling thoughts, and do not brood upon the truth. When we have flashes only, like a little glance of a sunbeam upon a wall, it does nothing. But serious thoughts, through the Lord’s blessing, will do the work. Urge the heart again and again. Ask, is this a truth?—then what will become of me if I disregard it. Is this the Word of God, and does it find no more entertainment in my heart?

Receive it in the love of it. The apostle makes this to be the ground of apostasy, “because they received not the love of the truth” (2Th 2:10). O let it soak into the affections. If it lie only in the tongue or in the mind, only to make it a matter of talk and speculation, it will be soon gone. The seed which lies upon the surface, the fowls of the air will pick it up. Therefore hide it deeply, let it soak further and further. First, men have a naked apprehension of truth, then it gets into the conscience, then it lies in the heart, then it is laid up. When it is dearer than our dearest lust, then

it will stick by us. When it breaks in upon the heart with evidence and power, you cannot keep both.

Use 2. To direct you what to do in *reading*. It is a notable preservative against sin and an antidote against the infection of the world. “The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide” (Psa 37:31). As long as truth is kept lively and active, and in view of conscience, we shall not slide, or not so often. We have many temptations to divert us from obedience, but we are in safety when the law of God is in our heart. See how it was in Joseph’s heart, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”—against God, that is of such sovereign majesty, of such infinite goodness and mighty power, so able to save and to destroy! Every time you read the Scripture you should lay up something. The best way to destroy ill weeds is by planting the ground with right seed. Then for *promises*—what have you hidden in your heart for comfort against desertions and afflictions? In a time of trial, you will find one promise gives more comfort and support than all the arguments that can be produced by reason. “This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy *word* hath quickened me” (Psa 119:50). He had a word to support him. Therefore let us treasure up the promises. So for *threats*, especially against the sins we are most inclined to, “Who among you will give ear...and hear for the time to come?” (Isa 42:23). It is well with you for the present, but matters to come are put off, little cared for, Amo 6:3. You should think of and provide against what will come afterward.

So in *hearing*. Do not hear lightly, but hide the Word in your heart, that it be not embezzled by your own negligence, forgetfulness, running into carnal distractions—that it be not purloined by Satan, that he may not snatch away the good seed out of your soul. When the Word is preached, there is more company present than is visible. There are angels and demons in the assembly. Whenever the sons of God meet together, Satan is there too. The devil is present to divert the mind by wandering thoughts, by raising prejudices that we may cast out the Word—or by excuses, delays, evasions, putting it off to others when we begin to have some sense of our sin and danger. The devil is loath to let us go too far, lest Christ get a subject into His kingdom. Therefore let us labour to get something into the heart by every sermon—some fresh consideration is given out to set you a-work in the spiritual life. A conscientious waiting upon God will find something every time. It is sad to consider how many have heard much, and laid up little or nothing at all; it may be they have laid it up in their notebooks, but not laid up the Word in their hearts.

For *meditation*. Meditate upon the Word. Do not study it in a cursory manner, or content yourselves with a slight taste, or a little volatile affection, but ponder it seriously, that it may enter into your very heart. Hasty and perfunctory thoughts work nothing. Meat must be well-chewed and digested, if you would have it turn into good blood and energy. You must follow the Word closely till it settle into some affection. So much then for David’s practice, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart.” The second thing is the aim and end of it, “that I might not sin against thee” (Psa 119:11).

In hiding the Word in our hearts, there must be a *right design*. Our knowledge of it and delight in it are to be directed to *practice*. First, we must not study the Word merely out of *curiosity*, that we may know what is said there, as men will pry into civil art and secular subjects. So the Athenians flocked about Paul, Acts 17:18-21. So for novelty’s sake, men may have an affection in the Word—“Ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light” (Joh 5:35). There are certain adulterous affections we have to the Word when it is new and fresh, but when it grows familiar we loathe it. This affection to the Word is soon spent.

Second, we must not hide the Word in our heart that we may be able to *teach others*, that we may make a gainful trade of it. Alas! a man may teach others and be himself a castaway. Look, as in coining of money, an iron stamp may impress the character and print upon a piece of silver or of gold, so God may use the gifts of some men to beget faith in others and perish themselves. “We have prophesied in thy name,” yet “depart from me; I know you not” (see Mat 7:22-23).

Third, this must not be our end either—not merely for *delight*. Largeness of knowledge brings a content with it, as it is an addition to our equipment. Truth is the object of our understanding and may please an unsanctified mind. Not merely out of subserviency to some base and inferior ends, that we get esteem in the world or the reputation of knowing persons, but as it is an elevation of the understanding. Every delight in *truth* is not a delight in *God*! There is a natural delight we have in the contemplation of any sublime truth. This is merely a delight in the work of our own faculties, when the affections are terminated in bare knowledge—as it is a high and mysterious truth, or as it is a delectation to the understanding.

Fourth, we are not merely to study the Word for the *comfort* of it and the suitableness to the conscience. As man is a reasonable creature, he will delight in knowledge. And as he has a conscience which presages death and judgment to come, he may delight in the comfort of it. Many search out promises, but do not love precepts. The stony ground seem to have a joy—they may delight in the comfortable part of religion, but this joy comes to nothing—this gladsome forward spring is no sure prognostication of a plentiful harvest. Then only do we receive the Word aright when we look to the holy part, and *mortify* our natural desires and affections. Many deal with the Word as great men do with fleshly companions—willing to entertain them at their tables—to hear their discourse, because of the pleasantness of their mirth. But to enter into bonds for them, and discharge them from debt, or better their fortunes, that they will not do. So many will give Christ and the Word, especially the comfortable part of it, entertainment, but they are loath to take the duty of the Gospel unto themselves. Therefore it is not enough to study the Word merely that we may cherish our own persons with the comforting part of it, but we must also study the holy part and that which does require our duty. Then let us labour to hide the Word in our hearts as David did—that we may not sin against God. (A sermon by the Puritan Thomas Manton, [1620-1677] slightly abbreviated).

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

2. *Its Source*

Accurately speaking, election is a branch of predestination, the latter being a more comprehensive term than the former. Predestination relates to *all* creatures, things, and events, but election is restricted to rational beings—angels and humans. As the word *predestinate* signifies, God from all eternity sovereignly ordained and immutably determined the history and destiny of each and all of His creatures. But in these articles, we shall confine ourselves to predestination as it relates to or concerns rational creatures. And here, too, a further distinction must be noticed. There cannot be an election without a rejection, a taking without a passing by, a choice without a refusal. As Psalm 78 expresses it, “He *refused* the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: but *chose* the tribe of Judah” (Psa 78:67-68). Thus predestination includes both

reprobation (the passing by of the non-elect, and then the foreordaining of them to condemnation—Jude 4—because of their sins) and election unto eternal life, the former of which we shall *not* now discuss.

The doctrine of election means, then, that God singled out certain ones in His mind both from among angels (1Ti 5:21) and from among men, and ordained them unto eternal life and blessedness. That before He created them, He decided their destiny, just as a builder draws his plans and determines every part of the building before any of the materials are assembled for the carrying out of his design. Election may thus be defined—it is that part of the counsel of God whereby He did from all eternity purpose in Himself to display His grace upon certain of His creatures. This was made effectual by a definite decree concerning them. Now in every decree of God three things must be considered—the beginning, the matter or substance, the end or design. Let us offer a few remarks upon each.

The *beginning* of the decree is the *will of God*. It originates solely in His own sovereign determination. While determining the estate of His creatures, God's own will is the alone and absolute cause thereof. As there is nothing above God to rule Him, so there is nothing outside of Himself which can be in any wise an impulsive cause unto Him—to say otherwise is to make the will of God no will at all. Herein, He is infinitely exalted above us, for not only are we subject to One above us, but *our* wills are being constantly moved and disposed by external causes. The will of God could have no cause outside of itself, or otherwise there would be something prior to itself (for a cause ever precedes the effect) and something more excellent (for the cause is ever superior to the effect), and thus God would not be the independent Being which He is.

The *matter* or substance of a divine decree is God's purpose *to manifest* one or more of His attributes or perfections. This is true of all the divine decrees, but as there is variety in God's attributes, so there is in the things He decrees to bring into existence. The two principal attributes He exercises upon His rational creatures are His grace and His justice. In the case of the elect, God determined to exemplify the riches of His amazing grace, but in the case of the non-elect He saw fit to demonstrate His justice and severity—withholding His grace from them because it was His good pleasure so to do. Yet it must not be allowed for a moment that this latter was a point of cruelty in God, for His nature is not grace alone, nor justice alone, but both together. And therefore in determining to display *both* of them there could not be a point of injustice.

The *end*, or design of every divine decree is God's own *glory*, for nothing less than this could be worthy of Himself. As God swears by Himself because He can swear by none greater, so because a greater and grander end cannot be proposed than His own glory, God has set up that as the supreme end of all His decrees and works. "The Lord hath made all things *for himself*" (Pro 16:4)—for His own glory. As all things are from Him as the first cause, so all things are *to* Him (Rom 11:36) as the final end. The good of His creatures is but the secondary end. His own glory is the supreme end and everything else is subordinate thereto. In the case of the elect, it is God's amazing grace which will be magnified. In the case of the reprobate, His pure justice will be glorified. What follows in this article will largely be an amplification of these three points.

The source of election, then, is *the will of God*. It should be scarcely necessary to point out that by "God" we mean, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Though there are three persons in the Godhead, there is but one undivided nature common to them all, and so but one will. They are one, and they agree in one, "He is in *one* mind, and who can turn him?" (Job 23:13). Let it also be pointed out that the will of God is not a thing apart from God, nor is it to be considered only as a part of God. The will of God is God Himself willing. It is, if we may so speak, His very nature in activity, for His will is His very essence. Nor is God's will subject to any fluctuation or change.

When we affirm that God's will is immutable, we are only saying that God Himself is, without "variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jam 1:17). Therefore the will of God is *eternal*, for since God Himself had no beginning, and since His will is His very nature, then His will must be from everlasting.

To proceed one step further. The will of God is absolutely *free*, uninfluenced and uncontrolled by anything outside of itself. This appears from the making of the world—as well as of everything in it. The world is not eternal, but was *made* by God, yet whether it should be or should not be created, was determined by Himself alone. The time when it was made—whether sooner or later; the size of it—whether smaller or larger; the duration of it—whether for a season or forever; the condition of it—whether it should remain "very good" or be defiled by sin—was all settled by the sovereign decree of the Most High. Had He so pleased, God could have brought this world into existence millions of ages earlier than He did. Had He so pleased, He could have made it and all things in it in a moment of time, instead of in six days and nights. Had He so pleased, He could have limited the human family to a few thousands or hundreds, or have made it a thousand times larger than it is. No other reason can be assigned why God created it when and as it is than His own imperial will.

God's will was absolutely free in connection with election. In choosing a people unto eternal life and glory, there was nothing outside Himself which moved God to form such a purpose. As He expressly declares, "I *will* have mercy on whom *I will* have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom *I will* have compassion" (Rom 9:15)—language could not state more definitely the absoluteness of divine sovereignty in this matter. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Eph 1:5). Here again all is resolved into the mere pleasure of God. He bestows His favours or withholds them as pleases Himself. Nor does He stand in any need of *our* vindicating His procedure. The Almighty is not to be brought down to the bar of human reason. Instead of working to *justify* God's high sovereignty, we are only required to *believe it*, on the authority of His own Word. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for *so* it seemed good in thy sight" (Mat 11:25-26)—the Lord Jesus was content to rest there and so must we be.

Some of the ablest expositors of this profound truth have affirmed that the *love* of God is the moving cause of our election, citing, "In love: having predestinated us" (Eph 1:4-5). Yet *in so* doing, we think they are chargeable with a slight inaccuracy or departure from the rule of faith. While fully agreeing that the last two words of Ephesians 1:4 (as they stand in the A.V.), belong properly to the beginning of verse 5, yet it should be carefully noted that verse 5 is *not* speaking of our original election, but of our being predestinated *unto* the adoption of children—the two things are quite distinct, separate acts on the part of God, the second following upon the first. There is *an order* in the divine counsels, as there is in God's works of creation, and it is as important to heed what is said of the former as it is to attend unto the divine procedure in the six days' work of Genesis 1.

An object must exist or subsist *before* it can be loved. Election was the first act in the mind of God, whereby He chose the persons of the elect to be holy and without blame (Eph 1:4). Predestination was God's second act, whereby He ratified by decree the *state* of those to whom His election had given a real subsistence before Him. Having chosen them in His dear Son unto a perfection of holiness and righteousness, God's love went forth to them, and bestowed upon them the chiefest and highest blessing His love could confer—to make them His children by adoption. God is love, and all His love is exercised upon Christ and those in Him. Having made the elect

His own by the sovereign choice of His will, God's heart was set upon them as His special treasure.

Others have attributed our election to the *grace* of God, quoting "There is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom 11:5). But here again we must distinguish between things that differ, namely, between the *beginning* of a divine decree and its *matter* or substance. It is true, blessedly true, that the elect are the objects upon which the grace of God is specially exercised, but that is quite another thing from saying that their election *originated* in God's grace. The order we are here insisting upon is clearly expressed in Ephesians 1. First, "He [God] hath chosen us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame [righteous] before him" (Eph 1:4), that was the *initial* act in the divine mind. Second, "in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself," and that "according to the good pleasure of his will" (Eph 1:4-5)—that was God *enriching* those upon whom He had set His heart. Third, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph 1:6)—that was both the subject and *design* of God's decree—the manifestation and magnification of His grace.

"The election of grace" (Rom 11:5), then, is *not* to be understood as the genitive of *origin*, but of object or character, as in "the Rose *of* Sharon" (Sol 2:1), "the tree *of* life" (Gen 2:9), "the children *of* disobedience" (Eph 5:6). The election of the church, as of all His acts and works, is to be traced right back to the uncontrolled and uncontrollable will of God. Nowhere else in Scripture is the *order* of the divine counsels so definitely revealed as in Ephesians 1, and nowhere else is the emphasis placed so strongly upon God's will. He predestinated unto the adoption of children "according to the good pleasure of his *will*" (Eph 1:5). He has made known to us "the mystery of his *will*" (not "grace") and that "according to his good pleasure which he hath *purposed* in himself" (Eph 1:9). And then, as though that was not sufficiently explicit, the passage closes with "being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh *all* things after the counsel of his own *will*: that we should be to the praise of his glory" (Eph 1:11-12).

Let us dwell for a moment longer upon that remarkable expression "who worketh all things after *the counsel* of his own will" (Eph 1:11). Note well it is not "the counsel of his own *heart*," nor even "the counsel of his own *mind*," but WILL—not "the will of his own counsel," but "the counsel of his own will." Herein God differs radically from us. Our wills are influenced by the thoughts of our minds and moved by the affections of our hearts, but not so God's. "He doeth according to his *will* in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth" (Dan 4:35). God's will is supreme, determining the exercise of all His perfections. He is infinite in wisdom, yet His will regulates the operations of it. He is full of mercy, but His will determines when and to whom He shows it. He is inflexibly just, yet His will decides whether or not justice shall be put forth. Observe carefully, *not*, "Who *can* by no means clear the guilty" (as is so generally misquoted), but, who "*will* by no means clear the guilty" (Exo 34:7). God first wills or determines that a thing shall be, and then His wisdom contrives the *execution* of it.

Let us now point out what has been *disproved*. From all that has been said above it is clear, first, that our *good works* are *not* the thing which induced God to elect us, for that act passed in the divine mind in eternity—long before we had any actual existence. See how this very point is set aside in, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth" (Rom 9:11). Again we read, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto* good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10). Since, then, we were

elected prior to our creation, then good works could not be the moving cause of it—no, they are the *fruits and effects* of it.

Second, the *holiness* of men, whether in principle or in practice, or both, is not the moving cause of election, for as Ephesians 1:4 so plainly declares, “He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him”—not because we *were* holy, but so that we *might* be. That we “*should* be holy” was something future, which follows upon it, and is the means to a further end, namely, our salvation, to which men are chosen. “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit” (2Th 2:13). Since, then, the sanctification of God’s people was the design of His election, it could not be the cause of it. “This is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1Th 4:3)—not barely the approving will of God, as being agreeable to His nature, nor merely His preceptive will, as required by the law, but His *decretive* will, His determinate counsel.

Third, nor is *faith* the cause of our election. How could it be? Throughout their un-regeneracy all men are in a state of unbelief, living in this world without God and without hope. And when we had faith, it was not of ourselves—either of our goodness, power, or will. No, it was a gift from God (Eph 2:8), and the operation of the Spirit (Col 2:12), flowing from His grace. “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Act 13:48), and *not* “as many as believed, were ordained to eternal life.” Since, then, faith flows from divine grace, it cannot be the cause of our election. The reason other men do not believe, is because they are “not of Christ’s sheep” (see Joh 10:26). The reason why any believe is because God gives them faith, and therefore it is called “the faith of God’s elect” (Ti 1:1).

Fourth, it is not God’s *foreview* of these things in men which moved Him to choose them. God’s foreknowledge of the future is founded upon the determination of His *will* concerning it. The divine decree, the divine foreknowledge, and the divine predestination is the *order* set forth in the Scriptures. First, “Who are the called according to his purpose”; second, “for whom he did foreknow”; third, “He also did predestinate” (Rom 8:28-29). The decree of God as *preceding* His foreknowledge is also stated in, “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Act 2:23). God foreknows everything that *will* be, because He has ordained everything that *shall* be. Then it is to put the cart before the horse when we make foreknowledge the cause of God’s election.

In conclusion, let it be said that the *end* of God in His decree of election is the manifestation of His own glory, but before entering into detail upon this point we will quote several passages which state the broad fact itself. “But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly *for himself*” (Psa 4:3). “Set apart” here signifies chosen or severed from the rest. “Him that is godly” refers to David himself (Psa 89:19-20)—“for himself,” and not merely for the throne and kingdom of Israel. “For the LORD hath chosen Jacob *unto himself*, and Israel for his peculiar treasure” (Psa 135:4). “To give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed *for myself*; they shall shew forth my praise” (Isa 43:20-21), which is parallel with Ephesians 1:5-6. So in the New Testament, when Christ was pleased to give to Ananias an account of the conversion of His beloved Paul, He said “he is a chosen vessel *unto me*” (Act 9:15). Again, “I have reserved *to myself* seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal” (Rom 11:4), which is explained in the next verse as “a remnant according to the election of grace.”

TRUST IN GOD

A right judgment of God will help us to employ our faith in any condition. *In wealth*, men are apt to trust in their abundance, to stand upon their mountain, and to say, “I shall never be moved.” But now in this estate, if a man conceives aright of God—that it is He who gives strength to be rich and who gives strength to do us good—that He can blast the greatest estate with an imperceptible consumption, and in the midst of a man’s sufficiency make him to be in straits, that He can embitter all with His sore displeasure, and not suffer the flour nor the winepress to feed him. In great wisdom and deep counsels, if a man considers that “the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand” (Pro 19:21), and that He can turn the wisdom of the world into foolishness, and catch the wise in their own craftiness. In great provisions of worldly strength and human combinations, if he consider that God can take off the wheels, dissipate the affections, melt the spirits, and waylay the enterprises of the largest hosts of men, that He can arm flies, and lice, and dust, and winds, and stars, and every small unexpected contingency against the strongest opposition—it must needs make him set his rest and hang his confidence and assurance upon an higher principle.

Again—in *poverty* and the most extreme straits which a man can be in, if he considers that God is a God of the valleys as well as of the hills; that He will be seen in the mount when His people are under the sword; that the Lord knows the days of the upright, and will satisfy them in the time of famine—that when the young lions famish for hunger (they which live not by the fruits on the earth, but by their prey; they which can feed on the dead bodies of those other creatures which a famine has devoured), yet even *then* He can provide abundantly for His own. That when things are marvelous unto us, then they are easy unto Him, that when they are impossible unto us, then they are possible with Him. That He can lead in a wilderness, and feed with all unknown and unsuspected bread. That when the light of the sun and moon shall fail, He can be an everlasting light and glory to His people. That as a Father so He pities, and as an heavenly Father so He knows, and can supply all our need. That when we are without any wisdom to disappoint, or strength to withstand the confederacies of men, when they come with chariots of iron and walls of brass, even then the eyes of the Lord run too and fro to show Himself strong in the behalf of those that walk uprightly—that He can then order some providence, produce some engine, discover some way to extricate—then will a man learn to be anxious or distracted in nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make his requests known unto Him who is at hand, and who cares for him.—E. Reynolds, 1648.



March

THE LORD’S PRAYER—PART 1

After all that has been spoken and written by godly men on prayer, we need something better than what is human to guide us, if we are to perform aright this essential duty. How ignorant and sinful creatures are to come before the Most High God, how they are to pray acceptably to Him and obtain from Him what they need, can only be discovered as the great Hearer of prayer is pleased to reveal His will to us. This He *has* done—not only by opening up for the very chief sinners a new and living way of access into His immediate presence, and by appointing prayers the chief means of intercourse and blessing between Himself and His people, but by graciously supplying a perfect pattern after which their prayers are to be modeled. “The whole Word of God is of use to direct us in prayer, but the special rule of direction in prayer is that form of prayer which Christ taught His disciples, commonly called the Lord’s Prayer” (Shorter Catechism, 1646-1647).

From earliest times it has been called “the Lord’s Prayer,” not because it is one that He Himself addressed to the Father, but as graciously furnished by Him to teach us both the manner and method of how to pray and the matters for which to pray. It should therefore be highly esteemed by Christians, for Christ knew both their needs and the Father’s good will toward them, and so He has mercifully supplied us with a simple yet comprehensive directory. Every part or aspect of prayer is included therein. Adoration, in its opening clauses, thanksgiving in the conclusion. Confession is necessarily implied, for that which is asked for supposes our weakness or sinfulness. Petitions furnish the main substance, as in all praying—intercession is involved in the first three petitions, and more definitely expressed in the last four, by them being in the plural number—“give *us*,” etc.

This prayer is found twice in the New Testament, being given by Christ on two different occasions—a hint for preachers to reiterate that which is of fundamental importance. The variations are significant. The language of Matthew 6:9 intimates that this prayer is given to us for a *model*, yet the words of Luke 11:2 indicate it is to be used by us as a *form*. Like everything in Scripture, this prayer is perfect, in its order, construction, and wording. Its order is adoration, supplication, and argumentation. Its petitions are seven in number. It is virtually an epitome of the Psalms—a most excellent summary of all prayer. Every clause in it occurs in the Old Testament, denoting that our prayers must be Scriptural if they are to be acceptable. “If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us” (1Jo 5:14). But we cannot know His will if we are ignorant of His Word.

It has been alleged that this prayer was designed only for the temporary use of Christ’s first disciples, until such time as the new covenant was inaugurated. But both Matthew and Luke wrote their Gospels years *after* the Christian dispensation had commenced, and neither of them give any intimation that it had become obsolete and no longer of service to Christians. It is

contended that this prayer is not suitable for believers now, inasmuch as the petitions contained in it are not offered in the name of Christ and that they contain no express reference to His atonement and intercession. But this is a serious misconception and mistake, for by parity of reason, none of the Old Testament prayers, none of the Psalms, could be used by us! But the prayers of Old Testament believers were presented to God “for His name’s sake,” and Christ was the angel of the covenant of whom it was said, “*My name is in him*” (Exo 23:21). The Lord’s Prayer is not only to be offered in reliance upon Christ’s mediation, but it is that which He specially directs and authorizes us *to* offer.

In more recent times, certain “students of prophecy” have objected to the use of this prayer on dispensational grounds, arguing that it is exclusively a Jewish prayer and legalistic in its tenor. But this is nothing more or less than a blatant attempt of Satan’s to rob God’s children of a valuable portion of their birthright. Christ did not give this prayer to Jews as Jews, but to His “disciples.” It is addressed to “Our Father,” and therefore is to be used by all the members of His family. It is recorded not only in Matthew, but also in Luke—the *Gentile Gospel*. Christ’s injunction, after His resurrection, for His servants to teach believers, “*whatsoever* I have commanded” (Mat 28:20), includes His command in Matthew 6:9. There is nothing whatever in this prayer *unsuited* to the Christian today and everything in it is needed by him.

It has long been a controversial question, which has given rise to much acrimonious controversy, whether the Lord’s Prayer is to be regarded as a form to be used or a pattern to be imitated. The right answer to this question is, it is to be considered as *both*. In Matthew, it is manifestly brought forward as an example or pattern of the prayer which was to obtain under the new economy. “After this manner therefore pray ye.” “With that reverence, humility, seriousness, confidence in God, concern for His glory, love to mankind, submission, moderation in temporal things and earnestness about spiritual things which it inculcates” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). But in Luke’s Gospel we find our Lord asserting “When ye pray, *say*” (Luk 11:2)—i.e., as a formula. It is the duty of Christ’s disciples in their praying not only to always use it as a pattern, but sometimes to employ it as a form.

Unto those who object to the using of any *form* of prayer, let us remind them that God Himself often puts the very language into the mouths of His needy people. For example, “Take with you *words*, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously” (Hos 14:2). Doubtless, we need to be much on our guard against merely *formal*, and still more so against a *superstitious* observance of the Lord’s Prayer. Nevertheless, we must as sedulously avoid going to the opposite extreme and never employing it at all. In the opinion of this writer, it ought to be reverently and feelingly recited once at every public service, and used daily at family worship. That it has been perverted by some, whose too frequent use thereof seems to amount to the “vain repetition” which the Saviour prohibited, is no valid reason why we should be altogether deprived of offering it at the throne of grace, in the spirit which the Lord inculcated and in the very words He dictated.

“In every expression, petition, and argument of this prayer, we *see Jesus*—He and the Father are *One*. He has a ‘Name’ given Him which is above every name. He is the blessed and only Potentate, and His ‘kingdom’ ruleth over all. He is the ‘living bread’ which came down from heaven. He had power on earth to ‘forgive sins.’ He is able to succour them that are ‘tempted.’ He is the angel that ‘redeems from all evil.’ The kingdom, power, and glory pertain unto Him. He is the fulfillment and confirmation of all divine promises and gracious assurances. Himself ‘the amen, and faithful witness.’ Well did Tertullian (155-220) term the Lord’s Prayer, ‘the Gospel abbreviated.’ The more clearly we understand the Gospel of the grace of God, ‘the gospel of the

glory of Christ,' the more shall we love this wonderful prayer, and glorying in the Gospel which is 'the power of God and the wisdom of God' to them that believe, we shall rejoice with joy unspeakable as we offer the divinely prescribed petitions and expect gracious answers" (Thomas Houston, 1803-1882).

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

123. The Apostle's Prayer (13:20-21)

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb 13:20-21). Let us begin by considering the *connection* in which these verses have with what precedes. First with their wider context and then with their more immediate. In them there is really a gathering up into a brief but comprehensive sentence of the whole of what had been previously set forth, except that the apostle here *prays* there might be wrought in the Hebrews that unto which they had been *exhorted*. The substance of the whole doctrinal portion of the epistle is included therein, and the apostle now begs God to apply to the hearts of his readers the benefits and fruit of all the important instruction which he had presented to them. These verses, then, form a fitting conclusion, for what follows them is virtually a postscript.

Viewing our text in the light of its immediate context, we perceive a blessed exemplification of the fact that the apostle practiced as he preached, for what he had required from his readers he is here seen doing for them. In verses 18-19, he had besought the prayers of the Hebrews on *his* behalf, and now we find him supplicating the throne of grace on *their* behalf. What a blessed example the chief of the apostles has left unto all whom Christ has called unto public service. If ministers desire the prayers of their people then let them see to it that *they* are not backward in praying for those God has committed to their charge. This is an essential part of the minister's functions. It is not sufficient that he faithfully preaches the Word—he must also fervently and frequently ask God to *bless* that Word unto those who heard him. O that all who are called to the sacred office may feelingly exclaim, "God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you" (1Sa 12:23).

The verses which are now before us are in the form of an apostolic benediction or prayer. In them is set forth, in a striking and appropriate manner, the Object to whom the prayer was offered, following which is the matter for which supplication was made. In this article, we shall confine ourselves unto the former. The person to whom the apostle prayed is here described first by one of His titles, namely, "the God of peace," and then by one of His works, the raising of Christ from the dead, and this in turn is ascribed unto the blood of the everlasting covenant. Those who have followed us through this lengthy series of articles may perceive how aptly the apostle reduces his grand exposition of the superiority of Christianity over Judaism unto these three chief heads—the God of peace, the risen Shepherd of the sheep, the blood of the everlasting covenant.

"The God of peace" (Heb 13:20). The varied manner in which God refers to Himself in Scripture, the different appellations He there assumes, is not regulated caprice, but is ordered by infinite wisdom, and we lose much if we fail to weigh diligently each one. It is not for the mere

sake of variation in diction, but each distinguishing title is selected in strict accord with its setting. He is spoken of as “The God of patience and consolation” in Romans 15:5, because that is in keeping with the subject of the four previous verses. In Romans 16:27, He is addressed, “To God only wise,” because the immediate context has made known the revelation of the mystery wherein His inscrutable wisdom had been veiled. Before considering the significance of “the God of peace” (Heb 13:20), let it be pointed out that it is an entirely Pauline expression, occurring nowhere in the writing of any other apostle—another identifying mark of the penman of *this* epistle. It is found in Romans 15:33 and 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:11, Philippians 4:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 3:16, and here—seven times in all.

“The God of peace” (Heb 13:20). First, this title contemplates God in relation to *His people*, and not mankind in general, yet in His forensic character, that is, in His office of *judge*. It will be remembered that in that blessed passage where the two covenants are placed in antithesis and Sion is contrasted from Sinai, it is said, “But ye are come...to God the Judge of all” (Heb 12:22-23), which is the climacteric feature of the Gospel. The face of the Supreme Judge is wreathed in smiles of benignity as He beholds His people in the face of His Anointed. But it was not always thus. On the morning of creation, as God saw us in Adam, our federal head, He viewed us with complacency, as “very good” (Gen 1:31). But alas! sin came in, a breach was made between the Creator and the creature, and a state of alienation, *mutual alienation*, ensued, for a holy God could not be at peace with sin.

It needs to be clearly recognised that from the beginning God has sustained *other* relationships to man than those of Creator and Benefactor. Adam, and the human race in him, were placed under law, and therefore became subject to divine government. In consequence of this, God was his Lord, his King, his Judge. While he remained in loyal subjection unto the divine authority, yielding obedience to the King’s laws, His favour was enjoyed, but when he transgressed, all was altered. Sin has not only defiled man, corrupting the whole of his nature, but it has brought him under the curse of the divine law, and has subjected him to the divine wrath. Fallen man, then has to do with an offended Judge. This was speedily made evident unto the original rebel, for we read, “Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he *drove out* the man” (Gen 3:23-24).

Alas, how little is this most solemn aspect of the truth preached today! Sin has not only vitiated our nature, it has alienated us from God, as it is written “alienated from the life of God” (Eph 4:18). Man has not only lost the image of God in which he was created, but he has forfeited the favour of God in which he was instated. In consequence of the fall, there is a *mutual antagonism* between God and man. Sin has made a breach between them, so that all the harmony and concord which there was, both spiritual and judicial, has been completely destroyed. Not only is the carnal mind “enmity against God” (Rom 8:7), “the *wrath of God* is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom 1:18). That God is alienated from the sinner and antagonistic to him is as clearly taught in the Scriptures as is man’s enmity against God.

The One with whom fallen man has to do is his outraged King and offended Judge, and His own Word leaves us in no doubt as to His *judicial* attitude toward the fallen creature. “Thou hatest all workers of iniquity” (Psa 5:5). “God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psa 7:11). “But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their *enemy*, and he fought against them” (Isa 63:10). It was for this reason that none other than our blessed Redeemer said, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him *which is able* to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mat 10:28), which is to be understood not

simply of God's absolute power or omnipotency, but also and chiefly of His *judicial* power or rightful authority, as we are His prisoners and obnoxious to His judgments. Why is the modern pulpit so culpably silent upon these and similar passages?

God's holiness burns against sin and His justice clamours for satisfaction. But is He not also of infinite mercy? Blessed be His name, He *is*! Nevertheless His mercy does not override and nullify His other perfections. Grace reigns, but it reigns "*through* righteousness" (Rom 5:21), and not at the expense of it. When therefore God had designs of mercy toward His people—who sinned and fell in Adam, in common with the non-elect—His wisdom contrived a way whereby His mercy might be exercised consistently with His holiness, yea, in such a way, that His law was magnified and His justice satisfied. This grand contrivance was revealed in the terms of the everlasting covenant, which was entered into between God and the Mediator before the foundation of the world, but in view of the entrance of sin and the fall of the elect in Adam. Christ undertook to restore the breach which had been made, to effect a perfect reconciliation between God and His people, to make full satisfaction for all the harm which sin had done to God's manifestative glory.

Many, adopting the horrible heresy of the Socinians ("Unitarians"), will not allow that the reconciliation *is mutual*—but God has been reconciled to His people as truly as they to Him. As we have shown above, the Scriptures not only speak of enmity on *men's* part, but also of wrath on *God's* part, and that, not only against sin, but sinners themselves, and not the non-elect merely, but the elect too, for *we* "were by nature the children of wrath [yes, of "wrath" in addition to depravity!], even as others" (Eph 2:3). Sin placed God and His people at judicial variance—they the parties offending, He the party offended. Hence, for Christ to effect perfect conciliation, it was required that He turn away the judicial wrath of God from His people, and in order to this, Christ offered Himself a propitiatory sacrifice to God, Himself bearing that wrath which was due to them.

This central truth in the atonement, now so generally repudiated, was portrayed again and again in the Old Testament types. For instance, when Israel sinned so grievously in connection with the golden calf, we find JEHOVAH saying to Moses, "Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them" (Exo 32:10). But notice how blessedly the immediate sequel shows us the typical mediator interposing between the righteous anger of JEHOVAH and His sinning people, and turning away His wrath from them, see Exodus 32:11-14. Again we read in Numbers 16, that upon the rebellion of Korah and his company, the Lord said unto Moses "Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment" (Num 16:45). Whereupon Moses said unto Aaron, "Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an *atonement* for them: for there is *wrath* gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun." Aaron did so, and we are told, "He stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was *stayed*" (Num 16:46, 48).

Surely nothing could be plainer than the above examples, to which many others might be added. All through the patriarchal and Mosaic economies we find that sacrifices were offered for the specific purpose of averting God's righteous wrath, to appease His judicial displeasure, to turn away His anger, the effect of which being expressly termed a "reconciliation," see Leviticus 16:20; 2 Chronicles 29:24; Daniel 9:24. Most obviously the Israelites offered not their sacrifices to turn away their own enmity against God. Inasmuch, then, as those Old Testament sacrifices were foreshadowings of Christ's oblation, what a turning of things upside-down is it to affirm that the great end of Christ's work was to reconcile sinners to God, instead of to divert God's wrath

from us. The testimony of the New Testament is equally plain and emphatic—then let us bow to the same, instead of resisting and reasoning against it.

Of Christ it is said, “Whom God hath set forth to be a *propitiation* through faith in his blood, to declare [not His love or grace, but] his *righteousness*” (Rom 3:25). Now a “propitiation” is that which placates or appeases by satisfying offended justice. The force of this verse is by no means weakened by the fact that the Greek word for “propitiation” is rendered “mercy seat” in Hebrews 9:5, for the mercy seat was a *blood-sprinkled* one. It was the place where the typical mediator applied the atoning sacrifice for the satisfying of God’s justice against the sins of His people. As a matter of fact, the Hebrew word for “mercy seat” signifies “a covering,” and it was so designated for two reasons. First, because it covered the ark, hiding from view the condemning law—the tables of stone beneath it. And second, because the blood sprinkled upon it covered the offenses of Israel from the eye of offended justice by an adequate compensation. Thus it fittingly portrayed the averting of deserved vengeance by means of a substitutionary interposition.

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom 5:10). Yes, when we were “enemies,” *God’s enemies*—obnoxious to His righteous judgment. This term denotes the relation in which we stood to God as the objects of His governmental displeasure and subject to the curse of His law. But we were “reconciled,” that is, restored unto His favour, and that, not by the Spirit’s work in us subduing our enmity, but by “the death”—the propitiatory sacrifice—of God’s Son. That this statement refers to the turning away of God’s anger from us and the restoring us to His favour is clear from the previous verse, “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Rom 5:9). Now to be “justified” is the same as God’s being reconciled to us, His acceptance of us into His favour, and not our conversion to Him. Being “justified by his blood” points to the procuring cause of our justification, and that blood was shed that we might be “saved from *wrath*.” God is now pacified toward us, because His wrath was exhausted upon our Surety and Substitute.

“That he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Eph 2:16). “That he,” that is, the Mediator, the incarnate Son. “Might reconcile,” that is, restore to God’s judicial favour. “Both,” that is, elect Jews and elect Gentiles. “Unto God,” that is, considered as the moral Governor of the world, the judge of all the earth. “In one body,” that is, Christ’s humanity, “the body of his flesh” (Col 1:22)—here designated “*one* body” to emphasise the *representative character* of Christ’s atonement, as He sustained the responsibilities and liabilities of all His people—it is the One acting on behalf of the many as in Romans 5:17-19. “Having slain the enmity thereby,” that is, God’s holy wrath, the hostility of His law. The “enmity” of verse 16 cannot possibly refer to that which existed between Jews and Gentiles, for *that* is disposed of in Ephesians 2 verses 14-15. “Enmity” is here personified (“slain”) as “sin” is in Romans 8:3. Thus, Ephesians 2:16 signifies that all the sins of God’s people meeting on Christ, divine justice took satisfaction from Him, and in consequence, God’s “enmity” has ceased, and we are restored to His favour.

Let it not be thought that we are here inculcating the idea that Christ died in order to render God compassionate toward His people. Not so, the Father Himself is the Author of reconciliation, 2 Corinthians 5:19. The gracious *means* by which He designed to effect the reconciliation originated in His own love, yet the atonement of Christ was the righteous instrument of removing the breach between us. The term is entirely a *forensic* one, contemplating God in His office as Judge. It concerns our relationship to Him not as our Creator, or as our Father, but as our King. The reconciliation which Christ has effected wrought no change in God Himself, but it *has* in the

administration of His government—His law now regards with approbation those against whom it was formerly hostile. Reconciliation means that transgressors have been restored to *the judicial favour* of God through Christ's having closed the breach which sin had made. It was the amazing love of God which gave Christ to die for us, and His atonement was in order to the removing of those legal obstacles which our sins had interposed against God's love flowing out to us in a way consistent with the honour of His justice.

The great controversy between God and His people has been settled. The fearful breach which their sins occasioned has been repaired. The Prince of Peace has silenced the accusations of the law and removed our sins from before God's face. Peace has been made—not a peace at any price, not at the cost of righteousness flouted—no, an *honourable* peace. “The God of peace,” (Heb 13:20), then signifies, first, the judge of all is pacified. Second, the King of heaven has been reconciled to us. Third, JEHOVAH, by virtue of His covenant promises, has received us to His favour—for while He continued offended, we could not receive any gifts of grace from Him. Just as surely as Christ turned away God's wrath from His elect, so does He in due time send the Holy Spirit into their hearts to destroy *their* enmity against God, this being a consequence of the former.

We trust that what is next to be before us will render yet more intelligible and forcible all that has been said above. “That brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus” (Heb 13:20). Here is the grand *evidence* that God is pacified toward us. When God raised Christ from the dead, He showed that He was propitiated, that He had accepted the ransom which had been given for our redemption. Let it be carefully noted that in our present verse it was the Father who is said to raise Christ, and that, in His character of “the God of peace.” We will consider these two things separately. There is an *order* preserved in the personal operations of the Godhead. Resurrection was a work of divine power, and that divine power belongs in common to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who being one and the same God concur in the same work. Yet They concur in a way proper to Them—in all Their personal operations it is ascribed to the Father, as the Fountain of working and Wellhead of all grace, who does all things *from* Himself, yet *by* the Son and Spirit.

In the grand mystery of redemption, God the Father sustains the office of supreme Judge, and hence we read, “Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that *God* hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Act 2:36 and cf. 10:36). So it is in our text, the raising of Christ is there viewed not so much as an act of divine power, as of rectoral justice. It is God exercising His *judicial* authority which is emphasized, as is clear from the particular terms used. We are ever the losers if, in our carelessness, we fail to note each single variation of language. It is not who “raised again,” but “*brought again* from the dead our Lord Jesus” (Heb 13:20). The force of that expression may be ascertained by comparing Acts 16:35, 37, 39. The apostles had been unlawfully imprisoned, and when, later, the magistrates bid them go forth, they refused, demanding an *official* delivery, and we are told, “they came and...*brought them out*” of prison (Act 16:20-21)—compare also John 19:4, 13 for the force of this term “brought.”

When Christ was in the state of the dead, He was in effect a prisoner under the arrest of divine vengeance. But when He was raised, then was our Saviour let out of prison and the word “brought again” suitably expresses that fact. Christ possessed the power to raise Himself—and considering His death and burial from another angle, He exercised that power. But in His official character as Surety, He lacked the necessary *authority*. The God of peace sent an angel to remove the stone from the sepulchre, not to supply any lack of power in Christ, but as the judge when he is satisfied sends an officer to open the prison doors. It was God Himself, as the Judge of all, who “delivered” Christ up for our offenses and it was God who raised Him for our justification (Rom

4:25). This was very blessed, for it evidences the perfect subjection of the Son to the Father even in the grave. He did not His might and break prison, but waited till God brought Him forth *honourably* from the dead.

Let us next observe the particular office Christ sustained when the God of peace brought Him again from the dead, “that great shepherd of the sheep” (Heb 13:20). Note, not “the,” but “*that* great shepherd,” because Paul was writing to those who were familiar with the Old Testament. “That shepherd” signifies the One who was *promised* in such passages as, “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom” (Isa 40:11), “And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David: he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd” (Eze 34:23)—the Object of the faith and hope of the church from the beginning. Into the hands of our blessed Redeemer, God placed His flock, to be justified and sanctified by Him. Let it be duly recognized that a shepherd is not the lord of the flock, but a *servant* to take charge of and care for it, “*Thine* they were, and thou gavest them me,” (Joh 17:6) said Christ.

Christ is the “Shepherd of *the sheep*” and not of the “wolves” (Luk 10:3) or the “goats” (Mat 25:32), for He has received no charge from God to save them—how the basic truth of *particular* redemption stares us in the face on almost every page of Holy Writ! There are three main passages in the New Testament where Christ is viewed in this particular character. He is “the good Shepherd” (Joh 10:11) *in death*, the “great shepherd” (Heb 13:20) *in resurrection*, and the “chief Shepherd” *in glory* (1Pe 5:4). The “great Shepherd” of the sheep calls attention to the excellency of His person, while the “chief Shepherd” emphasises His superiority over all His undershepherds or pastors, the One from whom they receive their authority. How jealously the Holy Spirit guarded the glory of Christ at every point. He is not only the “Shepherd” but “that *great* shepherd” (Heb 13:20), just as He is not only High Priest, but our “great high priest” (Heb 4:14), and not merely King, but “the King of kings” (1Ti 6:15).

“Through the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb 13:20). This is obviously an allusion to, “As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water”—the *grave* (Zec 9:11). What is said of Christ is often applied to the church, and here what is said of the church is applied to Christ, for *together* they form “one body.” If, then, *He* was brought back from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant, much more shall *we* be. To say that God brought again from the dead “that great shepherd of the sheep” (Heb 13:20) means, He was raised not as a private person, but as the public Representative of His people. “The blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb 13:20) was the meritorious cause—as it was “by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place” (Heb 9:12) and that we have “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Heb 10:19), so it was according to the infinite value of His atoning blood that both the Shepherd and His sheep are delivered from the grave.

As Christ (and His people) was brought into death by the sentence of the law, so from it He was restored by the law’s Administrator, and this according to His agreement with Him before the foundation of the world. This it is which gives additional meaning to the divine title at the beginning of our verse. He is called “the God of peace” (Heb 13:20) from that compact which He made with the Mediator, concerning which we read, “The counsel of *peace* shall be between them both” (Zec 6:13). “My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall *the covenant of my peace* be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee” (Isa 54:10). The older commentators were about equally divided as to whether the final clause of our verse refers to that eternal agreement between God and the Mediator or to the new testament or covenant (Mat 26:28). Personally, we

believe that *both* are included. The new covenant (about which we hope to have more to say later in our Covenant articles) is proclaimed in the Gospel, wherein is made known the terms on which we personally enter into the peace which Christ has made, namely, repentance, faith, and obedience. The new covenant is ratified by Christ's blood and it is “everlasting” because its blessings are eternal.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

75. His Restoration

We continue to trace out the progress of David on his way back from Mahanaim to Jordan, and thence to Jerusalem. A number of incidents occurred which intimated the change in his fortunes. Many of those who forsook the king in the time of adversity now flocked around him in the day of his prosperity. Yet these were not all fair-weather friends—some had rendered him real service when the storm burst upon him. Others, who had been hindered from so doing, had nevertheless remained loyal to him and now came to welcome him as he returned from exile. Each of these incidents possesses a charm all its own. At the close of last month's article, we viewed the lovely magnanimity of our hero unto Shimei, the man who had cursed him. Next we behold his wisdom and fidelity.

“And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace” (2Sa 19:24). This is very touching. Mephibosheth, it will be remembered, was the grandson of Saul, David's arch-enemy. For his father Jonathan's sake, Mephibosheth had received such kindness at the king's hands that he was accorded a place at his table (2Sa 9). Mephibosheth was practically a cripple, being lame on both his feet (2Sa 9:3 and cf. 4:4). In the day David's sore need, Mephibosheth had prepared an elaborate and serviceable present, and had ordered his servant to saddle an ass that he might ride unto the fugitive king. But instead of obeying orders, the servant, Ziba, had himself ridden to the king, offered the present as a gift from himself, and had then grievously slandered and lied about his master (2Sa 16:1-4). All through the time of his absence, David had laboured under a misapprehension of the loyalty of Mephibosheth, but now the truth was to be revealed.

What is recorded about Mephibosheth here in 2 Samuel 19:24 clearly denoted his devotion to David in the hour of his rejection and humiliation. So real, so great had been his grief at the sorry pass to which the king had been reduced, that Mephibosheth had utterly neglected his own person. Instead of seeking to feather his own nest, he had genuinely mourned David's absence. This is very beautiful, and is recorded for our learning, for everything in the Old Testament has a lesson for *us*, if only we have eyes to see and a heart to receive. The practical lesson in this incident for the believer today is found in those words of Christ's, “The days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast” (Mat 9:15)—it becomes us to *mourn* during the King's absence! Note how the apostle rebukes the Corinthians because they were “full,” “rich,” and had “reigned as kings” (1Co 4:8). “The king said unto him, Wherefore wentest thou not with me, Mephibosheth?” (2Sa 19:25). First, let it be noted that David did not turn away from him in anger or disgust, refusing him a hearing. Probably the king was surprised to see him at all after the false impression that Ziba had conveyed to him. But the present

condition of Mephibosheth must have made quite an impression, so the king gave him opportunity to explain and vindicate himself. An important lesson is this for us to heed. We must ever seek to be fair and impartial, and ready to hear *both* sides. It is obviously unjust to give credence received behind a person's back, and then refuse to hear his explanation face to face.

Mephibosheth gladly availed himself of the opportunity now given and proceeded to make an unvarnished statement of the facts (2Sa 19:26-27). He employed the most respectful and affectionate language—an example we also do well to heed if placed under similar circumstances, for nothing is gained, and our cause is rather weakened than strengthened, if we hotly condemn our questioner or judge for being so ready to believe evil of us. “But my lord the king is as an angel of God: do therefore what is good in thine eyes” (v. 27). Herein Mephibosheth expressed his confidence in David's wisdom and justice. He was satisfied that once his royal master heard both parties and had time to reflect upon the merits of the case, he would not be imposed upon, and therefore he was not afraid to leave himself in David's hands.

Next, Mephibosheth owned the utter unworthiness of himself and family, and acknowledged the signal grace that had been shown him. “For all of my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king?” (2Sa 19:28). “This shows that Ziba's suggestion was improbable, for could Mephibosheth be so foolish as to aim higher, when he fared so easily, so happily, as he did?” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). This was powerful reasoning. By the king's clemency, Mephibosheth had already been amply provided for—why, then, should he aspire unto the kingdom? It was not as though he had been slighted and left penniless. Having been adopted into the king's family circle, it had been utter madness to deliberately court the king's displeasure. But he would refrain from any further self-vindication.

“And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba *divide* the land” (2Sa 19:29). It seems strange that the commentators completely miss the force of this, considering that David was quite unconvinced by Mephibosheth's defense, yea, themselves regarding it as weak and unsatisfactory. We feel, then, we must labour the point a little. First, the words of David on this occasion cannot possibly mean that his previous decision remained unaltered, that the verdict he had given in the past must stand. And for this simple but conclusive reason, David had given no such orders previously! If we turn back to the occasion when the servant had deceived the king, we find that he said, “Behold, thine are *all* that pertained unto Mephibosheth” (2Sa 16:4).

But now—since David did *not* confirm here the order he had given in 2Sa 16:4, how are we to understand his words? Was he so puzzled by the conflicting statements of Ziba and Mephibosheth that he knew not which to believe and so suggested a *division* of the land as a fair compromise? Surely not, for that had been grossly unjust to both of them. What then? This—David said what he did not in any harshness, but in order to *test* Mephibosheth's heart and draw out his affections. Obviously a false and mercenary Mephibosheth would have cried out, Yes, yes, that is a very satisfactory settlement! But not such was the language of the true and devoted Mephibosheth.

Have we not a similar case in the puzzling situation presented to Solomon by the two harlots? Both of those women gave birth to a child—one overlying and smothering hers and then stealing the remaining one. When the two women appeared before the king, each claimed to be the mother of the surviving child. What did Solomon say? This, “*Divide* the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other” (1Ki 3:25)—the very proposal David made unto Mephibosheth! And how did the suggestion work out? Why, the imposter was quite willing to the arrangement,

but the actual mother of the living child at once cried out, “O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it” (1Ki 3:26). And so it was here, as the sequel shows.

“And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let *him* take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house” (2Sa 19:30). How clearly that evidenced the unfeigned and disinterested character of his love! All he wanted was David’s own company. Now that the king was restored, nothing else mattered. To be in David’s own presence meant far more to Mephibosheth than any houses or lands. A later incident confirms the fact that Mephibosheth had not been cast out of the king’s favour, for when seven of Saul’s descendants were slain as a satisfaction for his sin in the slaughter of the Gibeonites, it is expressly recorded that, “The king spared Mephibosheth” (2Sa 21:7)! And what of the wicked Ziba? He was allowed to go away unpunished, as Shimei had been, for David marked his appreciation of his restoration by the gracious remission of the injuries done to him.

“And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim, and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan. Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old: and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he was a very great man” (2Sa 19:31-32). This befriending of the king in the hour of his need came before us as pondered in the closing verses of chapter 17. There is no doubt that in ministering so freely to David and his men, Barzillai had done so at considerable risk to himself, for had Absalom prevailed, there is little doubt that he had been made to suffer severely for his pains. It is touching to see him here, in his feebleness, taking such a journey to conduct his beloved monarch across the Jordan.

“And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem” (2Sa 19:33). Deeply did the king appreciate the loyalty, generosity, and welcome of his aged subject, and accordingly desired that he should participate in the feast which was to mark his restoration. But Barzillai had other thoughts. He felt, and rightly so, that one so near to death should be engaged in more serious and solemn exercise than festivities. Not but there is a time to feast as well as a time to fast, yet such was hardly a suitable occupation for a man so close to the brink of eternity. The aged should be done with carnal pleasures, and set their thoughts and affections on something more enduring and satisfying than the best this earth has to offer.

“But behold thy servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee” (2Sa 19:37)—apparently this was one of his sons or grandsons. Barzillai was no austere cynic who cherished a dog-in-the-manger attitude toward the rising generation. “They that are old must not begrudge young people those delights which they themselves are past the enjoyment of, nor oblige them to retire as *they* do” (Matthew Henry). If on the one hand, those of experience should do what they can to warn and shield their juniors from carnal follies and the snares of this world, on the other hand, they must guard against that extreme which would deprive the young of those lawful pleasures which they themselves once participated in. It is easy for some dispositions to develop selfishness and crabbiness under a supposed concern of protecting those under their charge. Such, we take it, is one of the lessons here inculcated in Barzillai’s response to the king’s invitation.

“And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, that will I do for thee” (2Sa 19:28). David at once fell in with Barzillai’s suggestion, for he was anxious to repay his kindness. It is our duty to do what we can in assisting the children of those who befriended us when we were in need. It is beautiful to read how that when the aged David was giving instruction to Solomon, he made special mention of the descendants of Barzillai, “But shew kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to

me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother” (1Ki 2:7). Nor was this all that David had done, as the sequel will show.

In his remarkable little work, “*Scripture Coincidences*,” J. J. Blunt (1794-1855) points out how that Chimham is mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah, and in that incidental manner common to hundreds of similar allusions in the Word which so evidently bear the stamp of truth upon them. This argument for the divine inspiration of the Scriptures produces a stronger conviction than any external evidence. There is an exact coincidence observable by allusions to particular facts which demonstrates perfect consistency *without* contrivance or collusion. As we have seen, Chimham accompanied David to Jerusalem, but what the king did for him, beyond providing a place for him at his table and recommending him to the care of Solomon, does not appear. Nothing further is said about him in the historical books of the Old Testament. But in Jeremiah 41, his name again appears. An account is there given of the murder of Gedaliah, the officer whom Nebuchadnezzar had left in charge of Judea as its governor, when he carried away captive the more wealthy of its inhabitants. The Jews, fearing the consequences of their crime, and apprehending the vengeance of the Chaldeans, prepared for flight, “And they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of *Chimham*, which is by *Bethlehem*, to go to enter into Egypt” (Jer 41:17).

“It is impossible to imagine anything more incidental than the mention of this estate near Bethlehem, which was the habitation of Chimham, yet how well does it tally with the spirit of David’s speech to Barzillai some four hundred years before! What can be more probable, than that David, whose birth-place was this very Bethlehem, and whose patrimony in consequence lay there, having undertaken to provide for Chimham, should have bestowed it in whole, or in part, as the most flattering reward he could confer, a personal, as well as a royal, mark of favour, on the son of the man who had saved his life and the lives of his followers in the hour of their distress—and that, to the very day when Jeremiah wrote, it should have remained in the possession of the family of Chimham and be called after his own name” (J. J. Blunt).

“Then the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him: and all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel. And, behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said unto the king, Why have our brethren the men of Judah stolen thee away, and have brought the king, and his household, and all David’s men with him, over Jordan?” (2Sa 19:40-41). By the time that David had crossed the Jordan, many of the elders and people of Israel came to bring back the king, only to discover they had been anticipated. The officers of Judah had taken lead in this and had failed to notify the ten tribes of their intentions. The omission was strongly resented, for those of Israel felt they had been slighted, yea, that a serious reflection was cast upon their loyalty to the king.

“And all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king is near of kin to us: wherefore then be ye angry for this matter? have we eaten at all of the king’s cost? or hath he given us any gift? And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more right in David than ye: why then did ye despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel” (2Sa 19:42-43). Alas, what is poor human nature. If these Israelites were so desirous that the king should be honoured, why be peeved because others had preceded them? O what mischief issues from pride and jealousy. How quick many are to take umbrage at the least seeming slight. How we need to watch against the workings of our own pride and endeavour to avoid giving offence to the pride of others. But let us, in closing, contemplate a deeper significance possessed by the incidents which have been before us.

“But here again some glimpses may be discerned of the glorious character and kingdom of David’s Son and Lord. Being anointed by the Father to be His King upon His holy hill of Zion, He reigns over a willing people, who deem it their privilege to be His subjects. Once indeed they were rebels (and numbers of their associates perish in rebellion), but when they became sensible of their danger, they were fearful or reluctant to submit unto Him—till His ministers, by representing His tender love, and His promises of pardon and preferment, through the concurring influences of His Spirit, bowed their hearts to an humble willingness that He should reign over them. Then He readily pardoned and accepted them—and upon no account will He cast out or cut off the greatest offender who cries for mercy. He will recompense those, who from love to Him, feed His servants. He will assign them a place in His holy city. Alas that it must be added, that while the King Himself is so plenteous in mercy, many of His professed subjects are envious and contentious with each other, and quarrel about the most trivial concerns, which prevent much good, and does immense mischief “ (Thomas Scott).

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

6. *The Davidic*

From the Psalms we turn now to the prophets, in which we find a series of divine predictions based upon the promises made to David in 2 Samuel 7. Before turning to some of the more important of these, let it be again pointed out that the *new* things of Christ’s kingdom were portrayed under the veil of the *old*, that when the Holy Spirit made mention of Gospel times they necessarily partook of a Jewish colouring. In other words, existing things and institutions were employed to represent other things of a higher order and nobler nature, so that the fulfillment of those ancient predictions are to be looked for in the spirit and not in the letter, in substance and not in regards to actual form. Only as this clearly-established principle is held fast shall we be delivered from the carnalizing of the Jews of old and the gross literalizing of dispensationalists of today.

Many pages might be written in amplification of what has just been said, and in supplying proof that it *is* “a clearly established principle.” The person, the office, and the work of Christ, as well as the blessings which He purchased and procured for His people, were very largely foretold in the language of Judaism. But the fact that the antitype is spoken of in the terms of the type should not cause us to confuse the one with the other. The Old Testament is to be interpreted in the light of the New—not only its types, but its prophecies also. When we read that, “Christ our *passover* is sacrificed for us” (1Co 5:7), we understand what is meant thereby. When we are told that Christians are the seed and children of *Abraham* (Gal 3 and 4), we perceive the fulfillment of God’s promise to the patriarch that he should have a numerous seed. In the light of the epistles, we have no difficulty in recognising that a *spiritual* cleansing was denoted by, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean” (Eze 36:25).

Take again the wondrous events of the day of Pentecost. Peter explained them by declaring, “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Act 2:16-17). The apostle did not mean that Joel’s prophecy had received all exhaustive

accomplishment in the phenomena of that particular day, for they were, in measure, repeated both in Acts 8 and 10. Nevertheless, there *was* an actual fulfillment in the larger spiritual endowments then granted the twelve. But let it be carefully noted it was *not a literal* fulfillment. The freer communications of the Spirit were foretold under the peculiar form of “visions” and “dreams,” because such was the mode *when Joel lived* in which the more especial gifts of the Spirit were manifested. The promised gift of the Spirit was conferred, yet with a *new* mode of operation far higher than that of which the Old Testament prophet was cognizant.

Let what has been said above be carefully borne in mind in connection with all that follows. “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever” (Isa 9:6-7). The relation between this illustrious passage and its context shows that the scope of the Holy Spirit in the whole was to intimate the character of Christ’s kingdom. In the previous chapter, the prophet had spoken of dark and dismal days of trouble and distress, and then he comforted and encouraged the hearts of true believers by announcing the good and grand things which the Messiah would provide. Three New Testament blessings are spoken of in Old Testament terms.

The first was that great light should spring up in a lost world, “The people that walk in darkness [without a written revelation from God] have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined” (Isa 9:2). We are not left in any doubt as to the meaning of this, for the Holy Spirit has explained it at the beginning of the New Testament. In Matthew 4:14-16, we read that the Lord Jesus came and dwelt in Capernaum, “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias,” quoting this very verse. The following facts were thereby unequivocally established—that the prophecy of Isaiah 9 referred to no far distant “millennium,” but to this Christian dispensation, that its accomplishment lies not in some remote era, but in the present—that it concerned not Jews as such, but “the Gentiles,” that the blessing foretold was not a carnal or material one, but a spiritual one.

The second blessing here announced was an enlargement and rejoicing in the Lord, “Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil” (Isa 9:3). The “nation” is that “holy nation” of 1 Peter 2:9—compare Matthew 21:43. By means of the promulgation of the Gospel light (spoken of in the previous verse), the holy nation of the New Testament church would be multiplied, as the book of Acts records. Those who are supernaturally enlightened by the Spirit become partakers of a spiritual joy, so that they “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8). The clause “not increased the joy” signifies it is not a carnal happiness which is in view (such as the Jews dreamed of), but “they joy *before thee*.” Their lot in this world is “as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing” (2Co 6:10).

The third blessing is spiritual liberty and freedom, “For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire” (Isa 9:4-5). As Gideon was an instrument in the hand of God for breaking the heavy yoke of oppression that Midian had placed on the neck of Israel, so Christ, upon His coming, would deliver poor sinners from the hands of all their enemies—sin, Satan, the world, and the curse of a broken law, unto which they were in bondage (cf. Luke 1:74-75; 4:18).

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given” (Isa 9:6). The opening “For” shows the definite connection with the context, and announces who it is that would secure those grand blessings for His people. “For unto us a child is born” refers not to the fleshly descendants of Abraham, but to the entire election of grace. The “government” upon His shoulder is no mere rule over Palestine, but is over the entire Universe, for all power is given unto Christ in heaven and in earth (Mat 28:18). Nor is His a temporary reign for a thousand years only, but “even for ever” (Isa 9:7). That which the throne and kingdom of the natural David dimly foreshadowed is now being cumulatively, and shall be increasingly, accomplished by the spiritual David on an infinitely higher plane and in a far grander way.

“And in that day there shall be a root of *Jesse*, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall *the Gentiles* seek: and his rest shall be glorious” (Isa 11:10). The theme of this blessed chapter is the ministry of the Lord Jesus, and the infinitely and eternally glorious and delightful effects thereof. Its details are to be understood in accord with its main drift, so that its metaphors and similes are to be taken in their proper and figurative sense. To take them literally would be like taking the Levitical priesthood for the priesthood of Christ, whereas the former was only intended to represent the latter. It would be like taking the earthly Canaan for that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. As its contents have been so grievously corrupted, we offer a few remarks thereon.

“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” (Isa 11:1). Thus the opening words of the chapter indicate clearly enough that its language is *not* to be taken literally. The “rod” is the symbol of the rule and governing power of Christ, as in “The LORD shall send the *rod* of thy strength out of Zion: *rule* thou in the midst of thine enemies” (Psa 110:2). “And a branch shall grow out of his roots” signifies Christ’s *fruitfulness* (cf. Joh 15:2), which fruitfulness is the result of the Spirit’s being given to Him without measure, Isaiah 11:2-3. Next follows in verses 4-5, a description of Christ’s ministry and the principles which regulated it—righteousness, equity, and faithfulness. Then we have a figurative description of the *effects* of His ministry in the conversion of sinners. They to whom the ministry of Christ is sent, that is, those to whom the Gospel comes in its saving power, are here likened to the beasts of the field.

We are so distorted and degraded by the fall that we are fitly compared to wild beasts and creeping things (Isa 11:6-8). Yet these were to undergo such a transformation that God declares, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain” (Isa 11:9). The whole of this is to be understood *spiritually*. A “mountain” is a local elevation of the land, and to be on a mountain is to be raised and exalted—so that conversion brings us to a state of elevation before God, conducting us from our low and depraved state by nature and elevating us into the holiness we have in Christ. Observe that this “mountain” is called, “My *holy* mountain,” being the same as that described in “the LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness,” (Jer 31:23) called the “habitation of justice” because the Mediator is there a “mountain of holiness” because He has made an end of all our sins.

But let it not be supposed that believers only reach this “holy mountain” when they arrive at heaven. No, they are brought there experimentally in this life, or they will never reach heaven in the next—for it is written, “Ye *are* come unto mount Sion [Zion]” (Heb 12:22). And *who* is it that are come thither? Those who by nature are likened by the prophet to wolves and lambs, leopards and kids. In Acts 10 they are likened to “all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air” (v. 12), which makes it unmistakably clear that the language used by Isaiah is to be understood *spiritually and not literally*, as the

dispensationalists vainly dream. Let us use the terms of Peter's vision to interpret the figures of Isaiah 11, noting the fourfold classification.

The "fourfooted beasts of the earth" (Act 10:12), that is, sheep and oxen, which are distinguished from the "wild beasts." There is a difference between men, not in nature but in outward conduct—the consequence of disposition, civilization, or religious upbringing—some being more refined, moral, and conscientious than others. "That our *sheep* may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets" (Psa 144:13) refers to this first class—and was it not actually the case in the time of the apostles when thousands were converted? (Act 4:4). A solemn portrayal of the "*wild* beasts" is found in Psalm 22, where the suffering Saviour exclaims, "Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and roaring lion" (vv. 12-13). Was not Saul of Tarsus one of these wild bulls and ravening lions (see Act 9:1; 22:4), and yet *grace tamed him*.

In Micah 7, we have a beautiful description of the third class or "creeping things." "The nations [Gentiles] shall see and be confounded at all their might" (Mic 7:16). Yes, when grace works it *humbles*, so that we are ashamed at what we once boasted of as our righteousness and confounded at our former self-sufficiency. "They shall lay their hand upon their mouth" (Mic 7:16)—having no longer anything to say in self-vindication. "Their ears shall be deaf" (Mic 7:16) to anything Satan says against the Gospel. "They shall lick the dust like a serpent" (Mic 7:17), humbling themselves beneath the mighty hand of God. "They shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth" (Mic 7:17)—margin, like "creeping things!" Yes, the Gospel unearths us, making us to set our affection on things above. "They shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of thee" (Mic 7:17)—when His holy law is applied to their hearts. And what is the effect produced? Hear their blessed testimony, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage" (Mic 7:18).

And what of the fourth class, the "fowls of the air"? Do we not see them beautifully portrayed in Ezekiel 17. The "cedar" was the tribe of Judah, and "the highest branch" of it (v. 3) was the royal house of David. The "tender branch" in verse 22 is Christ (cf. Isa 53:2), of whom it was promised, "In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all *fowl* of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell" (Eze 17:23). But let us now notice, though it must be very briefly, the blessed *transformation* which is wrought when these creatures, so intractable by nature, are converted unto God.

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Isa 11:6). How wondrous the grace which brings the wolfish rebel into the mildness and meekness of the lamb! How mighty the power that changes the ferocity of the lion so that a child may lead it! Their enmity against God and His truth is subdued, and they are *brought down* to the feet of Christ. The more they grow in grace, the lower estimation they have of themselves. "And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (Isa 11:7). The lion passes from the carnivorous to the graminivorous—take that literally and it amounts to little, understand it spiritually and it signifies a great deal—when born again we can no longer find satisfaction in creature things, but rather we long for heavenly food. "And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den" (Isa 11:8)—this is victory over the enemy, cf. Psalm 91:13-14; Luke 10:19.

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain" (Isa 11:9). Here is the perfect safety of the Lord's people. Comparing again Psalm 144, the thirteenth verse of which we quoted above,

what immediately follows? This, “that our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out” (Psa 144:14). They are absolutely *safe* in this mystic fold—none of Christ’s sheep shall perish. And what is it that ensures their safety in God’s holy mountain? This, “*For* the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa 11:9)—not the material globe, but the spiritual “earth,” the church. “*All* thy children shall be taught of the LORD” (Isa 54:13). It is the new covenant “earth” or family, “For *all* shall know me, from the least to the greatest” (Heb 8:11). “And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious” (Isa 11:10): and thus we have completed the circle—it is the antitypical David whose banner waves over the whole election of grace.

CONDITIONS IN THE PAST

“The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is *no* new thing under the sun. Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been *already* of old time, which was before us” (Ecc 1:9-10). How little is the plain testimony of these verses really believed today by many professing Christians, yea, how often is it contradicted both in pulpit and in pew by those who are thoroughly infatuated by what they style “the signs of the times.” If they hear or read of some wide-spread crime wave sweeping over a portion of the world, or some recently sprung-up cults of error which are fatally deceiving tens of thousands, or of a terrible epidemic of disease that is slaying large numbers of their fellows, they at once jump to the conclusion that nothing like it has ever happened before, and draw prophetic deductions from what they imagine is without precedent.

When the air is filled with rumours of war, and more so still when hostilities actually break forth, lovers of the sensational promptly quote Matthew 24:6-8 to show that the end of the age is upon us. If war be followed by famine, pestilence, and earthquakes in divers places, then appeal is promptly made to Revelation 6, with loud assertions that that prediction is now in course of fulfillment. The sad state of Christendom—with its unfaithful pulpits, rapidly decreasing church attendance, waning Sunday Schools, the increase of sham conversions, the decay of vital godliness—is cited as clear proof that the coming of the Lord is certain to take place in our own lifetime. The fearful spread of lawlessness on every side, the blatant defiance of moral standards, the almost universal desecration of the Sabbath, are often said to be without parallel in human history. Nevertheless God’s Word expressly declares, “That which hath been is now; and that which is to be *hath already been*” (Ecc 3:15).

Human nature has been the same in every age. The history of the New Testament era has been, in all its essential features, but a repetition of what occurred in Old Testament times. The prevalence of idolatry, the abounding of wickedness in every conceivable form, the frightfulness and frequency of wars, the failure of the masses to take to heart and profit from visitations of divine judgment, the general refusal to heed the exhortations and expostulations of God’s servants, and the low spirituality which obtained amongst the Lord’s own people, are recorded in the Old Testament in letters of blood and tears. “The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty” (Psa 74:20)—to a much greater extent than now obtains. “Help, LORD; for the godly man *ceaseth*; for the faithful fail from among the children of men” (Psa 12:1)—the godly have ever been an insignificant remnant. “Now for a long season Israel hath been without

the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law” (2Ch 15:3), this was in Old Testament times.

It is true there is an ebb and flow of the tide. The book of Judges supplies a striking illustration of this. Over and over again in that book the following order is seen—Israel sinning against the Lord, His selling them into the hands of their enemies, their crying to Him for relief, His delivering of them, and then their lapsing back into wickedness. Identically the same order is observable throughout the long history of Christendom. Frequently, Israel sank very low, and then God granted a gracious revival, which was followed by backsliding and spiritual deadness. In the time of Josiah, Hezekiah, and Ezra, there were radical reformatations, but the effects of these soon spent themselves. In the days of David conditions were much better than under the reign of Saul, while under Ahab things were much worse than in the days of Solomon. Sometimes the restraining hand of God was more evidently placed upon the lusts of man, while at others it was more manifestly removed. Sometimes His Word went forth in mighty power, at others His servants cried, “Who hath believed our report?” (Isa 53:1).

It is striking to note that immediately following the Scripture with which we began this article, we read, “There is no remembrance of former things” (Ecc 1:11). That is the trouble with our present age. *Conditions in the past are largely unknown today.* A generation has arisen which does little or no serious reading, which are largely unacquainted with history, and unaware of the fact that present conditions are but a reduplication of those which have frequently obtained before. And “signs of the times” preachers trade upon their ignorance and credulity, making them suppose that much which is transpiring in the world is altogether extraordinary, that conditions now are such that they *cannot* go on much longer, that without any doubt the end of the age is upon us, and so on. But over against all such talk it stands written, “There is *no new thing* under the sun!” (Ecc 1:9).

It should prove an eye-opener to some of our readers to learn something of what has obtained in the past. Such an abundance of material is before us that we find it difficult to decide which portion of it to discard. It would cover far too much space were we to attempt a picture describing the outstanding features of each generation during the last eighteen centuries, so we will generalize the earlier ones, and enter into more detail upon those which followed the great Reformation of Luther. Here, too, we can only make a selection, dealing with the most prominent characteristics. As far as possible we shall avoid doing so in our own words, quoting from the writings of those who actually lived in those days, and giving book and page reference, so that any who wish to take the trouble of consulting a good public library, may verify for themselves.

“The church’s story from the close of the New Testament Canon to the era of the Patristic theologians must be gleaned from the revelations their writings afford of its condition in their own time. Who can doubt that then, as in the days of Israel’s apostasy, there were many who feared the Lord and thought upon His name? But here I am speaking of the church as a whole. Protestantism delights in attributing to the Romish apostasy the vices which disgraced the church of Christendom during the Middle Ages, but in this regard the church of Rome was merely the product and development of the much-vaunted “primitive church” of the Fathers. Abundant proof of this will be found in the acts and words of some of the great and holy men who sought in vain to stem the evil tide. The facts are disclosed in various standard works—here of course a few characteristic extracts must suffice.

“The birth of Cyprian occurred about a century after the death of the last of the apostles. Born and bred in Paganism, he was converted in middle age, and three years afterwards he became Bishop of Carthage. Ten years later he suffered Martyrdom in the Valerian persecution. The

following words may indicate the condition of the church in his time, ‘Serious scandals existed even among the clergy. Bishops were farmers, traders, and money-lenders, and by no means always honest. Some were too ignorant to teach the catechumens. Presbyters made money by helping in the manufacture of idols.’

“In Cyprian’s day, ‘the virgins of the church’ [‘nuns’ we call them now] were held in special honour on account of their reputed sanctity. What, then, passed for superior sanctity may be gleaned from the following words of that eminent and holy man, ‘What have the virgins of the church to do at promiscuous baths, there to violate the commonest dictates of feminine modesty! The places you frequent are more filthy than the theatre itself; all modesty is there laid aside; and with your robes your personal honour and reserve are cast off.’

“Half a century before these words were written, Clement of Alexandria had bewailed the low morality which prevailed among Christians, even at a time when, as he said, ‘The wells of martyrdom were flowing daily.’ Referring to then attendance at church he wrote, ‘After having waited upon God and heard of Him, they leave Him there, and find their pleasure without in ungodly fiddling, and love-songs, and what-not—stage plays and gross revelries.’

“The ‘conversion of Constantine’ set free the church to put her house in order, and pursue her mission to the world without hindrance from without. But her condition in those halcyon days may be judged by the fact that at a single visitation the great Chrysostom deposed no fewer than thirteen bishops for simony and licentiousness. Nor was this strange, having regard to the means by which men secured election to the Episcopal office. Here are Chrysostom’s words, ‘That some have filled the churches with murders, and made cities desolate when contending for *this position*, I now pass over, lest I should seem to say what is incredible to say.’

“He was equally unsparing in dealing with the vices of the lower orders of the clergy. The natural result followed. The ‘historic church’ convened a packed council, which deprived him of his archbishopric, and he was banished to Nicea. Moved, however, by the indignant fury of the laity, the Emperor recalled him, and his return to Constantinople was like a public triumph. But his fearless and scathing denunciations of the corruptions and immoralities of church and Court led to the summoning of another council, more skillfully arranged, and his second banishment was intended to be, as in fact it proved, a death sentence. He practically died a martyr—one of the first of the great army whose blood cries to God for vengeance upon the ‘historic church.’

“Nor were licentiousness and simony evils of recent growth in the church, nor were they peculiar to the see of Chrysostom. In A.D. 370, an imperial edict was read in the churches of Rome, prohibiting clerics and monks from resorting to the houses of widows or female wards, and making them ‘incapable of receiving anything from the liberality or will of any woman to whom they may attach themselves under the plea of religion, and (the edict adds) any such donations or legacies as they shall have appropriated to themselves shall be confiscated.’

“This edict, sweeping though its terms were, had to be confirmed and strengthened by another twenty years later. And here is the comment of Jerome on the subject, ‘I blush to say it, heathen priests, players of pantomimes, drivers of chariots in the circus, and harlots are allowed to receive legacies; clergy and monks are forbidden to do so by Christian princes. Nor do I complain of the law (he adds), but I am grieved that we *deserve* it.’ According to Jerome, so great was the evil that men actually sought ordination in order to gain easier access to the society of women and to trade upon their credulity. He, at least, maintains no reserve about the vices of the clergy of his day. And the picture he draws of the state of female society among the Christians is so repulsive that, as a recent writer remarks, we would gladly believe it to be exaggerated, but (he adds) if the

priesthood, with its enormous influence, was so corrupt, it is only too probable that it debased the sex which is always most under clerical influence.

“Of ‘Saint’ Cyril of Alexandria, Dean Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868) writes, ‘While ambition, intrigue, arrogance, rapacity, and violence are proscribed as unchristian means; barbarity, persecution, bloodshed as unholy and unevangelical wickedness; posterity will condemn this orthodox Cyril as one of the worst of heretics against the spirit of the Gospel.’

“A kindly estimate this, of a man who was morally guilty of the murder of Hypatia, and who was a notorious mob leader, and the brutal persecutor of the Jews, whom he drove out of Alexandria by the thousands, giving up their houses to pillage. This turbulent pagan claims notice here only because he was the ruling spirit in the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 451), which dealt with the heresies of Nestorius (386-451). Cyril had hurled anathemas against him for refusing to acknowledge the Virgin Mary as the ‘Mother of God,’ and he procured his condemnation by means that would discredit the lowest political contest, including the free use of a hired mob. So disgraceful was the disorder which prevailed that the Emperor dissolved the Council with the rebuke, ‘God is my witness that I am not the author of this confusion. His providence will discover and punish the guilty. Return to your provinces, and may your private virtues repair the mischief and scandal of your meeting.’

“No one need suppose that a wider outlook would lead us to reverse the judgment to which these facts and testimonies point. A portly volume would not contain the evidence available to prove the utter apostasy of ‘the primitive church of the Fathers.’ One more testimony, however, is all I will here adduce. In his early life, Salvian of Marseilles (400-490) was the contemporary of Jerome and Augustine, the greatest of all the Latin Fathers. A century had elapsed since ‘the conversion of Constantine.’ The ‘persecution’ which the Christians had most to fear from the State was due to their vices and crimes, and to the operation of penal laws of drastic severity, designed to prevent their lapsing back to paganism. Why was it, then, that God seemed to have forsaken the church? Here is Salvian’s answer, ‘See what Christians actually are everywhere, and then ask whether, under the administration of a righteous and holy God, such men can expect any favour? What happens every day under our very eyes is rather an evidence of the doctrine of Providence, as it displays the divine displeasure provoked by the debauchery of the church itself.’

“The following are further extracts from the same treatise, ‘How can we wonder that God does not hearken to our prayers?...Alas! how grievous and doleful is what I have to say! The very church of God, which ought to be the appeaser of God, is but the provoker of God. And a very few excepted who flee from evil, what is almost every assembly of Christians but a sink of vices? For you will find in the church scarcely one who is not either a drunkard or a glutton, or an adulterer, or a fornicator or frequenter of brothels, or a robber, or a murderer. I put it now to the consciences of all Christian people whether it be not so...The churches are outraged by indecencies...You may well imagine what men have been thinking about at church when you see them hurry off, some to plunder, some to get drunk, some to practice lewdness, some to rob on the highway.’

“In accounting for the growth of Christianity in early days, Gibbon the Infidel gives prominence to the morality of the Christians. And Tertullian declared that no one who transgressed the rules of Christian discipline and propriety was recognized as a Christian at all. And yet two centuries later, almost every assembly of Christians had become a ‘sink of vices.’

“There is no need in this connection to speak of the church of the Middle Ages—the fiendish enemy and persecutor of all who feared the Lord and followed righteousness and truth. The estimates formed of the number of the martyrs are unreliable—for though not one of those many

millions is forgotten in heaven, the records on earth are altogether faulty. This at least is certain, that for long ages God was on the side of the martyrs, and that the church of Christendom was the most awful impersonation of the powers of hell that earth has ever known” (From “Forgotten Truths” by Sir Robert Anderson, pp. 88-96).

Much of the profligacy which obtained among professing Christians in the early centuries of this era is to be attributed unto the decay of sound doctrine in the church and the rise and spread of fundamental error. We give one quotation thereon, “There was another sort of heresies, and so of real apostasy from the mystery of the Gospel, whose authors and followers yet pretended an adherence unto and profession thereof. These may be reduced to two heads—(1) Concerning the person, and (2) concerning the grace of Christ. Of the first sort, the principal and most prevalent was that of the Arians, in denying His deity. The latter, that of the Pelagians, in opposing His satisfaction, merit, and grace.

“The first of these (in the fourth century) was poured out as a flood from the mouth of the old serpent, and bore all before it like a torrent. The latter insinuated itself as poison into the very vitals of the church. The first, as a burning fever, carried present death with it and before it. The latter, as a gangrene or heretical distemper, insensibly consumed the vital spirits of religion. In the first, we have a most woeful evidence of the instability of professors, and their readiness to forego the saving mysteries of the Gospel. For in little more than half an age after its first rise, the generality of Christians in the world, bishops, priests, and people, fell under the power of it, and in their public confessions renounced and denied the true eternal deity of the Son of God. For having obtained the patronage of some emperors, as Constantius and Valens, and the suffrage of innumerable prelates, who jointly promoted this heresy by force and fraud—almost the whole world, as to outward profession, was for a season led into this apostasy, wherein some whole nations (as the Goths and Vandals) continued for sundry ages afterward. And for the latter, or Pelagianism, it secretly, subtly, and gradually so insinuated itself into the minds of men, that for the substance of it, it continues to be no small part of that religion which the generality of Christians do at this day profess” (John Owen, 1670, Vol. 17, p. 359). Arminianism is but a slightly refined Pelagianism.

THE BLESSED MAN

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful” (Psa 1:1). We have been much impressed by the fact that the wondrous and precious Psalter opens with the word “Blessed,” and yet a little reflection shows it could scarcely begin with any other. As most of our readers are doubtless aware, “Psalms” means “Praises,” and the key note is here struck at the very outset, for it is only the “Blessed man” who can truly praise God, as it is *his* praises which are alone acceptable to Him. The word “Blessed” has here, as in so many places in Scripture (like Mat 5:3-11), a double force. First and primarily, it signifies that the divine benediction—in contrast from God’s curse, rests upon this man. Second and consequently, it denotes that he is a *happy* man.

“Blessed is the man,” not “blessed are they.” The singular number emphasises the fact that piety is strictly a personal and individual matter. Now it is very striking to observe that God has opened this book of Psalms by describing to us the one whose “praises” are alone acceptable to Him. In all that follows to the end of verse 3, the Holy Spirit has given us a portrait (by which *we*

may honestly compare ourselves) of the man on whom the divine benediction rests, the only man who can worship the Father “in spirit and in truth.” The outstanding features in this portrait of the “blessed” man may be briefly expressed in three words—his separation (v. 1), his occupation (v. 2), his fertilization (v. 3).

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly” (Psa 1:1). As most readers are doubtless aware, the best of the commentators (as Spurgeon’s, 1834-1892, “Treasury of David”) take as the leading thought of this verse, *the downward course of the wicked*—walking, then standing (a more fixed state), and ending by sitting—thoroughly confirmed in evil—tracing a similar gradation of deterioration in their “counsel,” “way,” and “seat,” as also in the terms by which they are designated—“ungodly—sinners—scornful.” But personally, we do not think this is the thought of the verse at all, for it is *irrelevant* to the passage as a whole and would destroy its unity. No, the Spirit is here describing the character and conduct of the “blessed man.”

How very significant it is to note—how searching for our hearts—the first characteristic of the “blessed man” to which the Spirit here called attention is his walk, a walk in separation from the wicked! Ah, my reader, it is *there*, and nowhere else, that personal piety begins. There can be no walking with God, no following of Christ, no treading of the way of peace, till we separate from the world, forsake the paths of sin, turn our backs upon the “far country.” “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.” But notice exactly *how* it is expressed—it is not “who walketh not in the open wickedness” or even “the manifest folly,” but “walketh not in the *counsel* of the ungodly.” How searching that is! How it narrows things down!

The ungodly are ever ready to “counsel” the believer, seeming to be very solicitous of his welfare. They will warn him against being too strict and extreme, advising him to be broadminded, and to “make the best of both worlds.” But the policy of the “ungodly”—i.e., of those who leave *God* out of their lives, who have not His “fear” before their eyes—is regulated by self-will and self-pleasing, and is dominated by what they call “common sense.” Alas, how many professing Christians regulate their lives by the advice and suggestions of ungodly friends and relatives—heeding such “counsel” in their business career, their social life, the furnishing and decorating of their homes, their dress and diet, the choice of school or avocation for their children.

But *not so* with the “blessed man.” He “walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly” (Psa 1:1). Rather is he afraid of it, no matter how plausible it sounds, apparently good the intention of those who proffer it. He shuns it, and says, “Get thee behind me, Satan” (Mat 16:23). Why? Because divine grace has taught him that he has something infinitely better to direct *his* steps. God has given him a divine revelation, dictated by unerring wisdom, suited to his every need and circumstance, designed as a “lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path” (see Psa 119:105). His desire and his determination is to walk by the wholesome counsel *of God*, and not by the corrupt counsel of the ungodly. Conversion is the soul’s surrender to and acceptance of God as *Guide* through this world of sin.

The “blessed” man’s separation from the world is given us in three details. First, he “walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,” that is, according to the maxims of the world. Eve is a solemn example of one who walked in the counsel of the ungodly, as is also the daughter of Herodias. On the other hand, Joseph declining the wicked suggestion of Potiphar’s wife, David refusing to follow the counsel of Saul to meet Goliath in his armour, and Job’s refusal to heed his wife’s voice and “curse God,” are examples of those who did not do so. Second, “nor standeth in the way of sinners” (Psa 1:1). Here we have the *associations* of the blessed man—he fellowships not with sinners. No, rather does he seek communion with the righteous. Precious examples of this

are found in Abram's leaving Ur of the Chaldees, Moses turning his back on the honours and treasures of Egypt, Ruth's forsaking Moab to accompany Naomi. Third, "nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Psa 1:1). The "scornful" may here be regarded as the ones who despise and reject the true Rest-giver. "The seat" here speaks of relaxation and delectation—to sit not in the scorner's seat means that the blessed man takes not his ease nor seeks his joy in the *recreations* of the world. No, he has something far better than "the pleasures of sin" (Heb 11:25)—"in *thy* presence is fulness of joy" (Psa 16:11)—as Mary found at the Lord's feet.

"But his delight is in the law of the LORD" (Psa 1:2). The opening "But" points a sharp contrast from the last clause of the previous verse and serves to confirm our interpretation thereof. The worldling seeks *his* "delight" in the entertainment furnished by those who scorn spiritual and eternal things. Not so the "blessed" man. His "delight" is in something infinitely superior to what this perishing world can supply, namely, in the divine Oracles. "The law of the LORD" seems to have been one of David's favourite expressions for the Word, see Psalm 19 and 119. "The law of the LORD" throws the emphasis upon its divine authority, upon God's *will*. This is a sure mark of those who have been born again. The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God" (Rom 8:7). To "delight in the law of the LORD" is a sure proof that we have received of the Spirit of Christ, for He declared, "I *delight* to do thy will, O my God" (Psa 40:8). God's Word is the daily bread of the "blessed" man—is it so with you?

The unregenerate delight in pleasing *self*, but the joy of the Christian lies in pleasing *God*. It is not simply that he is *interested* in "the law of the LORD," but he *delights* therein. There are thousands of people, like Russellites, and Christadelphians, and we may add, in the more orthodox sections of Christendom, who are keen students of Scripture, who delight in its prophecies, types, and mysteries, and who eagerly grasp at its promises, yet are they far from delighting in the *authority* of its Author and in being subject to His revealed will. The "blessed" man delights in its *precepts*. There is a "delight"—a peace, joy, and satisfaction of soul—pure and stable, to be found in subjection to God's will, which is obtainable nowhere else. As John tells us, "His commandments are not grievous" (1Jo 5:3), and as David declares, "In keeping of them there is great reward" (Psa 19:11).

"And in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psa 1:2). Thereby does he *evidence* his "delight" therein—where his treasure is, there is his heart also! Here, then, is *the occupation* of the "blessed" man. The voluptuary thinks only of satisfying his senses. The giddy youth is concerned only with sport and pleasure. The man of the world directs all his energies to the securing of wealth and honours. But the "blessed" man's determination is to please God, and in order to obtain a better knowledge of His will, he meditates day and night in His holy law. Thereby is light obtained, its sweetness extracted, and the soul nourished. His "meditation" herein is not occasional and spasmodic, but regular and persistent—not only in the "day" of prosperity, but also in the "night" of adversity; not only in the "day" of youth and strength, but in the "night" of old age and weakness.

"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jer 15:16). What is meant by "did *eat* them"? Appropriation, mastication, assimilation. Meditation stands to reading as mastication does to eating. It is as God's Word is pondered by the mind, turned over and over in the thoughts, and mixed with faith, that we assimilate it. That which most occupies the mind and most constantly engages our thoughts is what we most "delight" in. Here is a grand cure for loneliness (as the writer has many times proved)—to meditate on God's law day and night. But real "meditation" in God's law is an act of obedience, "Thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe *to do* according

to all that is written therein” (Jos 1:8). The Psalmist could thus appeal to God—can you, “Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my *meditation*” (Psa 5:1).

“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psa 1:3). Here we have the “blessed” man’s *fertilization*. But notice very carefully, dear reader, what *precedes* this. There must be a complete break from the world—separating from its counsel or policy, from fellowshiping its votaries, and from its pleasures. And there must be a genuine subjection to God’s authority and a daily feeding upon His Word, before there can be any real fruitfulness unto Him. “He shall be like a tree” (Psa 1:3). This figure is found in numerous passages, for there are many resemblances between a tree and a saint. He is not a “reed” moved about by every wind that blows, nor a creeper, trailing along the ground. A tree is upright, and grows heavenward. This tree is “planted”—many are not, but grow wild. A “planted” tree is under the care and cultivation of its owner. Thus, this metaphor assures us that those who delight in God’s law are owned by God, cared for and pruned by Him.

“Planted by the rivers of water” (Psa 1:3). This is the place of refreshment—rivers of grace, or communion, of renewing. Probably the more specific allusion is unto “and a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as *rivers of water* in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” (Isa 32:2). That refers to Christ, and tells us that just as a tree derives life and fruitfulness from the adjacent river, so the believer, by communion, draws from the fullness there is for him in Christ. “That bringeth forth his fruit in his season” (Psa 1:3). This is an essential character of a gracious man, for there are no fruitless branches in the true Vine. “In his season,” for all fruits do not appear in the same month, neither are all the graces of the Spirit produced simultaneously. Trial calls for faith, suffering for the exercise of patience, disappointment for meekness, danger for courage, blessings for thanksgiving, prosperity for joy, and so on. This word “in season” is a timely one. We must not expect the fruits of maturity in those who are but babes.

“His leaf also shall not wither” (Psa 1:3). This means that his Christian profession is a bright and *living reality*. He is not one who has a name to live, yet is dead. No, his works evidence his faith. That is why “his fruit” is mentioned *before* “his leaf.” Where there is no fruit to God’s glory our profession is a mockery. Note how it is said of Christ that He was “mighty in *deed* and word” (Luk 24:19). The same order is seen again in “that Jesus began both to *do* and teach” (Act 1:1). “And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psa 1:3). This necessarily follows, though it is not always apparent to the eye of sense. Not even a cup of water given in the name of Christ shall fail to receive its reward—if not here, certainly in the hereafter. How far, dear reader, do you and I resemble this “blessed” man? Let us again press the *order* of these three verses. Just so far as we fall into the sins of verse one will our delight in God’s law be dulled, and just so far as we are not in subjection to His will shall we be fruitless. But a complete separation from the world and wholehearted occupation with the Lord will issue in fruit to His praise.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

2. Its Grand Original

The decrees of God, His eternal purpose, the inscrutable counsels of His will, are indeed a great deep. Yet this we know, that from first to last they have *a definite relation to Christ*, for He is the Alpha and the Omega in all covenant transactions. Beautifully did Spurgeon express it, “Search for the celestial fountain, from which the divine streams of grace flow to us, and you will find Jesus Christ the well-spring in covenant love. If your eyes shall ever see the covenant roll, if you shall ever be permitted in a future state to see the whole plan of redemption as it was mapped out in the chambers of eternity, you shall see the blood-red line of atoning sacrifice running across the margin of every page, and you shall see that from the beginning to the end one object was always in view—the glory of the Son of God.” It therefore seems strange that many who see that election is the foundation of salvation, yet overlook the glorious *Head of election*, in whom the elect were chosen and from whom they receive all blessings.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:3-4). Since we were chosen *in* Christ, it is evident that we were chosen *out of* ourselves. And since we were chosen *in Christ*, it necessarily follows that He was chosen before we were. This is clearly implied in the preceding verse, wherein the Father is expressly designated “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now according to the analogy of Scripture (i.e., when He is said to be “the God” of anyone), God was “the God” of Christ first, because He chose Him to that grace and union. Christ as man was predestinated as truly as we were, and so has God to be His *God* by predestination and free grace. Second, because the Father made a covenant with Him (Isa 42:6). In view of the covenant made with them, He became known as “the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob” (Exo 3:6). So in view of the covenant He made with Christ, He became His “God.” Third, because God is the author of all Christ’s blessedness, Psalm 45:2, 7.

“According as he [God] hath chosen us in him” (Eph 1:4) means, then, that in election Christ was made *the Head* of the elect. “In the womb of election He, the Head, came out first [adumbrated in every normal birth, A.W.P.], and then we, the members” (Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680). In all things Christ must have the “pre-eminence,” and therefore is He “the firstborn” in election (Rom 8:29). In the order of *nature*, Christ was chosen first, but in the order of *time*, we were elected with Him. We were not chosen for ourselves apart, but *in Christ*, which denotes three things. First, we were chosen in Christ as the members of His body. Second, we were chosen in Him as the pattern which we should be conformed unto. Third, we were chosen in Him as the final end, i.e., it was for Christ’s glory, to be His “fulness” (Eph 1:23).

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; *mine elect*, in whom my soul delighteth” (Isa 42:1)—that this passage refers to none other than the Lord Jesus Christ is unmistakably plain from the Spirit’s citation of it in Matthew 12:15-20. Here, then, is the grand original of election. In its first and highest instance, election is spoken of and applied to the Lord Jesus! It was the will of the eternal three to elect and predestinate the second person into creature being and existence, so that as God-man, “the firstborn of every creature” (Col 1:15), He was the subject of the divine decrees, and the immediate and principal object of the love of the co-essential three. And as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son—considered as God-man—to have life in Himself (Joh 5:26), to be a fountain of life, of grace and glory, unto His beloved spouse, who received her being and wellbeing from JEHOVAH’s free grace and everlasting love.

When God determined *to create*, among all the myriad creatures, both angelic and human, which rose up in the divine mind, to be brought into being by Him, the man Christ Jesus was singled out of them, and appointed to union with the second person in the Blessed Trinity, and was accordingly sanctified and set up. This original and highest act of election was one of pure sovereignty and amazing grace. The celestial hosts were passed by, and the Seed of the woman was determined upon. Out of the innumerable seeds which were to be created in Adam, the line of Abraham was selected, then of Isaac, and then of Jacob. Of the twelve tribes which were to issue from Jacob, that of Judah was chosen, God elected not an angel to the high union with His Son, but “one chosen out of the people” (Psa 89:19). What shall those say who so much dislike the truth that the heirs of heaven are elected, when they learn that Jesus Christ Himself is the subject of eternal election!

“JEHOVAH is the first cause and the last end of all things. His essence and existence are of and from Himself. He is JEHOVAH, the self-existing essence—the fountain of life and essential blessedness—The King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, who alone hath immortality, dwelling in that light to which no mortal eye can approach. And throughout a vast eternity the eternal three enjoyed boundless and incomprehensible blessedness in the contemplation of those essential perfections which belong to Father, Son, and Spirit, the everlasting JEHOVAH, who is His own eternity, and cannot receive any addition to His essential happiness or glory by any or all of His creatures. He is exalted above all blessing and praise. The whole creation before Him, and as viewed by Him, is less than nothing and vanity. If any should curiously inquire, what was God engaged in before He stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth? The answer is: the blessed, co-equal, and co-essential three, Father, Son, and Spirit, had a mutual inbeing and society together, and were essentially blessed in that divine eternal life, in the mutual interests or propriety they have in each other, in mutual love and delight—as also in the possession of one common glory.

“But as it is the nature of goodness to be *communicative of itself*, so it pleased the eternal Trinity to purpose to *go forth into creature acts*. The ever blessed three, to whom nothing can be added or diminished, the spring and fountain of whose essential blessedness arises from the immense perfections in the infinite nature in which they exist—in the mutual love they have to each other—and their mutual converse together—were pleased to delight in creature fellowship and society. The eternal Father predestinated His co-essential Son into creature being and existence, and from everlasting He wore the form and bore the personage of God-man. The creation of all things is attributed in Scripture to divine sovereignty, ‘Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created’ (Rev 4:11). Nothing out of God can move Him or be a motive to Him. His *will* is His rule, His *glory* His ultimate end. ‘For of him [as the first cause], and through him [as the preserving cause], and to him [as the final cause], are all things,’ Romans 11:36.

“God in His actual creation of all, is the end of all. ‘The LORD hath made all things for himself’ (Pro 16:4), and the sovereignty of God naturally ariseth from the relation of all things to Himself as their Creator, and their natural and inseparable dependence upon Him, in regard of their being and well-being. He has the being of all things in His own will and power, and it was at His own pleasure whether He would impart it or not. ‘Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world’ (Act 15:18). He comprehends and grasps all things in His infinite understanding. As He hath an incomprehensible essence, to which ours is but as the drop of a bucket, so He hath an incomprehensible knowledge, to which ours is but as a grain of dust. His primitive decree and view, in the creation of heaven and earth, angels and men, being His own

glory, and that which gave foundation to it and was the basis to support it, was JEHOVAH's design to exalt His Son as God-man, to be the foundation and cornerstone of the whole creation of God. God had never gone forth into creature acts, had not the second person condescended by the assumption of our nature to become a creature. Though this took place after the fall, yet the decree concerning it was before the fall. Jesus Christ, the Fellow of the Lord of Hosts, was the first of all the ways of God" (S. E. Pierce, 1746-1829).

Nowhere does the sovereignty of God shine forth so conspicuously as in His acts of election and reprobation, which took place in eternity past, and which nothing in the creature was the cause. God's act of choosing His people in Christ was before the foundation of the world, without the consideration of the fall, nor was it upon the foresight and footing of works, but was wholly *of grace*, and all to the praise and glory of it. In nothing else is JEHOVAH's sovereignty so manifest. Indeed the highest instance of it was in predestinating the second person in the Trinity to be the God-man. That this came under *the decree* of God is clear, again, from the words of the apostle, "Who verily [says he in speaking of Christ] was *foreordained* before the foundation of the world" (1Pe 1:20), and who is said to be laid "in Sion a chief corner stone, *elect*, precious" (1Pe 2:6). This Grand Original of election, so little known today, is of such transcendent importance that we dwell upon it a little longer, to point out some of the reasons why God was pleased to predestinate the man Christ Jesus unto personal union with His Son.

Christ was predestinated for higher ends than the saving of His people from the effects of their fall in Adam. First, He was chosen for God Himself to delight in, far more so and infinitely above all other creatures. Being united to the second person, the Man Christ Jesus was exalted to a closer union and communion with God. The Lord of Hosts speaks of Him as, "the man that is *my fellow*" (Zec 13:7), "Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth" (Isa 42:1). Second, Christ was chosen that God might behold the image of Himself and all His perfections in a creature, so that His excellencies are seen in Christ as in no other, "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Heb 1:3), which is spoken of the person of Christ as God-man. Third by the union of the Man Christ Jesus with the everlasting Son of God, the whole fullness of the Godhead was to dwell personally in Him, He being "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15, 19).

The Man Christ Jesus, then, was chosen unto the highest union and communion with God Himself. In Him the love and grace of JEHOVAH shine forth in their superlative glory. The Son of God gave subsistence and personality to His human nature, so that the Son of God and His human nature are not merely one *flesh* as man and wife, nor one *spirit* only (as is the case between Christ and the church, 1Co 6:17), but one *person*, and hence this creature nature is advanced to a fellowship in the society of the blessed Trinity, and therefore to Him God communicates Himself without measure (Joh 3:34). Descending now to a lower plane, the Man Christ Jesus was also chosen to be a Head to an elect seed, who were chosen in Him, given a super-creation subsistence, and blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings.

If God will love, He must have an object for His love, and the object must have an existence before Him to exercise His love upon, for He cannot love a non-entity. It must therefore be that the God-man, and the elect in Him, existed in the divine mind as objects of God's everlasting love, before all time. In Christ, the church was chosen from everlasting—the one the Head the other His body; the one being the Bridegroom, the other His bride—the One being chosen and appointed for the other. They were chosen together, yet Christ first in the order of the divine decrees. As, then, Christ and the church had existed in the will, thoughts and purpose of the Father from the beginning, He could love them and rejoice in them. As the God-man declares,

“Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me...for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (Joh 17:23-24).

The Son of God being, before all time, predestinated to be God-man, was secretly anointed or set up as such, and His human nature had a covenant subsistence before God. In consequence of this, He was the Son of Man in heaven before He became the Son of Man on earth. He was the Son of Man secretly before God before he became the Son of Man openly and manifestly in this world. Therefore did the psalmist exclaim, “Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself” (Psa 80:17). And therefore did Christ Himself declare, “What and if ye shall see the *Son of man* ascend up *where he was before?*” (Joh 6:62). “God, out of His eternal and infinite goodness of love, and purposing Christ to become a creature, and communicate with His creatures, ordained in His eternal counsel that person in the Godhead should be united to our nature and to one particular of His creatures, that so in the person of the Mediator the true Ladder of Salvation might be fixed, whereby God might descend to His creatures and His creatures ascend unto Him” (Sir Francis Bacon, 1561-1626).

“Christ was first elected as Head and Mediator, and as the Cornerstone to bear up the whole building, for the act of the Father’s election in Christ supposes Him first chosen to this mediatory work and to be the Head of the elect part of the world. After this election of Christ, others were predestinated ‘to be conformed unto his image’ (see Rom 8:29), i.e., to Christ as Mediator, and taking human nature, not to Christ barely considered as God. This conformity being specially intended *in election*, Christ was in the purpose of the Father the first exemplar and copy of it. One foot of the compass of grace stood in Christ as the center, while the other walked about the circumference, pointing one here and another there, to draw a line, as it were, between every one of those points and Christ. The Father, then, being the prime cause of the election of some out of the mass of mankind, was the prime cause of the election of Christ to bring them to the enjoyment of that to which they were elected. Is it likely that God, in founding an everlasting kingdom, should consult about the members before He did about the Head? Christ was registered at the top of the book of election, and His members after Him. It is called, therefore, ‘the book of the Lamb’” (Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680).

That passage of Scripture which enters most fully into what we are here contemplating is the eighth chapter of Proverbs, at which we will now glance. There are many passages in that book wherein the “wisdom” spoken of signifies far more than a moral excellence, and something even more blessed than the personification of one of the divine attributes. In not a few passages (Pro 1:20-32 for example) the reference is *to Christ*, one of whose titles is “the wisdom of God” (1Co 1:24). It is as such He is to be regarded here in Proverbs, chapter eight. That it is a *person* which is there in view is clear from verse 17, and that it is a *divine* person appears from verse 15—yet not a divine person considered abstractedly, but as the God-man. This is evident from what is there predicated of Him.

“The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old” (Pro 8:22). The speaker is Christ Himself, the alone Mediator between the Creator and His creatures. The words, “The LORD possessed me *in* the beginning of his way” tend to hide what is there affirmed. There is no prefix in the original Hebrew, nothing there to warrant the interposed “in,” while the word rendered “beginning” signifies the first or chief. Thus it should be translated, “The LORD possessed me: the beginning [or chief] of his way, before his works of old.” Christ was the firstborn of all God’s thoughts and designs, delighted in by Him long before the universe was brought into existence.

“I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was” (Pro 8:23). “Our Redeemer came forth of the womb of a decree from eternity, before He came out of the womb of the virgin in time. He was hid in the will of God before He was made manifest in the flesh of a Redeemer. He was a Lamb slain in decree before He was slain upon the Cross—He was possessed by God in the beginning, or the beginning of His way (Pro 8:22-23, 31), the Head of His works, and set up from everlasting to have His delights among the sons of men” (S. Charnock).

“When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth” (Pro 8:24-25). Christ is here referring to His being “brought forth” in God’s mind, being predestinated into creature existence before the world was made. The first of all God’s intentions respected the union of the Man Christ Jesus unto His Son. The Mediator became the foundation of all the divine counsels, see Ephesians 3:11 and 1:9-10. As such the triune JEHOVAH “possessed” Him as a Treasury in which were laid up all His designs. He was then “set up” or “anointed” (Pro 8:23) in His official character as Mediator and Head of the church. As the God-man He had a virtual influence and was the Executor of all the works and will of God.

“Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him” (Pro 8:30). It is not the complacency of the Father in the Son considered absolutely as the second person, but His satisfaction and joy in the Mediator as He viewed Him in the glass of His decrees. It was as incarnate that the Father said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat 3:17), and it was with the foreordained God-man, who had a real subsistence before the divine mind, that He was delighted in by JEHOVAH before the world was. In His eternal thoughts and primitive views, the Man that was His Fellow became the object of God’s ineffable love and complacency. It was far more than that JEHOVAH simply *purposed* that the Son should become incarnate—His decree gave Christ a real subsistence before Him, and as such afforded infinite satisfaction to His heart.



April

THE LORD'S PRAYER—PART 2

“Our Father which art in heaven” (Mat 6:9). This opening clause presents to us the *object* to whom we pray, teaches us the covenant-*office* which He sustains, and denotes the *obligation* imposed upon us, namely, that of a filial spirit, with all that entails. All real prayer ought to begin with a devout contemplation and express acknowledgement of the name of God and His blessed perfections. We should draw near unto the throne of grace with suitable apprehensions of God’s sovereign majesty and power, yet with a holy confidence in His fatherly goodness. In these opening words, we are plainly instructed to preface our petitions by expressing the sense we have of the essential and relative glories of the One we address. The Psalms abound in examples of this, see Psalm 8:1 as a case in point.

“Our Father which art in heaven” (Mat 6:9). Let us first endeavour to ascertain the general principle which is embodied in this introductory clause. It informs us in the simplest possible manner that the great God is most graciously ready to grant us an audience. By directing us to address Him as “our Father,” we are definitely assured of His love and power. This precious title is designed to raise our affections, excite to reverent attention, and confirm our confidence in the efficacy of prayer. Three things are essential unto acceptable and effectual prayer—fervency, reverence, and confidence—and these this opening clause is designed to inspire in us. Fervency is the effect of our affections being called into exercise. Reverence will be promoted by the apprehension that we are addressing the heavenly throne. Confidence will be deepened by viewing the object of prayer as our Father.

Coming to God in acts of worship, we must “believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6). And what is more calculated to deepen our confidence and draw forth the strongest love and earnest hopes of our heart toward God, than by Christ’s here presenting Him to us in His most tender aspect and endearing relation?! How we are here encouraged to use holy boldness and to pour out our souls before Him! We could not suitably invoke an impersonal “First Cause,” still less could we adore or supplicate a great abstraction. No, it is unto a person, a divine person, One who has our best interests at heart we are invited to draw near—to our *Father*. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1Jo 3:1).

First, God is the “Father” of all men *naturally*, being their Creator. “Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?” (Mal 2:10); “But now, O LORD, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand” (Isa 64:8). The fact that such verses have been grossly perverted by some holding erroneous views on “the universal fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man,” must not cause us to utterly repudiate them. It is our

privilege to assure the most ungodly and abandoned that, if they will but throw down their weapons of their warfare and do as the Prodigal did, there is a loving Father ready to welcome them. If He hears the cries of ravens, will He turn a deaf ear to the requests of a rational creature? Simon Magus, while still “in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity” (Act 8:23) was directed by an apostle to repent of his wickedness and *pray* to God (Act 8:22).

But the depth and full import of this invocation can only be entered into by the believing Christian, for there is a higher relation between him and God than that which is merely of nature. God is his “Father” *spiritually*. Second, God is the Father of His elect because He is the Father of their Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 1:3), and therefore did He expressly announce, “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (Joh 20:17). Third, God is the Father of His elect by eternal decree. “Having predestinated us unto the *adoption* of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” (Eph 1:5). Fourth, He is the Father of His elect by *regeneration*, wherein they are born again and become “partakers of the divine nature” (2Pe 1:4), as it is written, “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6).

These words, “Our Father,” not only signify the office which God sustains to us by virtue of the everlasting covenant, but they clearly imply our obligations. They teach us both how we ought to dispose of ourselves toward God when we pray unto Him and the conduct which becomes us by virtue of this relationship. As His children, we must “honour” Him, be in subjection to Him, delight in Him, strive in all things to please Him. Again, it not only teaches us our personal interest in God Himself—by grace, our Father—but it also instructs us of our interest in our fellow Christians—in Christ, they are our brethren. It is not merely “*my* Father,” but “*our* Father.” We must express our love to them by praying for them—we are to be as much concerned about *their* needs as we are over our own. How much is included in these two words!

“Which art in heaven” (Mat 6:9). What a blessed *balance* this gives to the previous clause. If that tells us of God’s goodness and grace, this speaks of His greatness and majesty. If that teaches us of the nearness and dearness of His relationship to us, this announces His infinite elevation above us. If “our Father” inspires confidence and love, “which art in heaven” should fill us with humility and awe. These are the two things which should ever occupy our minds and engage our hearts. The first without the second tends to unholy familiarity. The second without the first produces coldness and dread. Combine them together and we are preserved from either evil, and a suitable poise is wrought in the soul as we duly contemplate both the mercy and might of God, His unfathomable love, and His immeasurable loftiness. Note how the same blessed balance was preserved by the apostle in “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory” (Eph 1:17).

“Which art in heaven”—not because He is confined there, for “will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee” (1Ki 8:27)—He is infinite and omnipresent. There is a particular sense, though, in which the Father is “in heaven,” because His majesty and glory are most eminently manifested there. “Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is *my throne*, and the earth is my footstool” (Isa 66:1), and the realization of this should fill us with the deepest reverence and awe. “Which art in heaven” (Mat 6:9) calls attention to His *providence*, as directing all things from on high. It announces His ability to undertake for us. Our Father is *the Almighty*—“Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased” (Psa 115:3). Yet though the Almighty, He is “our *Father*,” and “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him” (Psa 103:13), and “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to

them that ask him?” (Luk 11:13). Finally, it reminds us that *we* are journeying *there*—for heaven is our “home.”

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

123. The Apostle's Prayer (13:20-21)

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ” (Heb 13:20-21). Though this be in the form of a prayer yet it presents a succinct summary of the entire doctrine of the epistle. The “blood of the everlasting covenant” stands over against “the blood of bulls and of goats” (Heb 10:4), that “great shepherd of the sheep,” risen from the dead, is in contrast from Moses, Joshua, David, etc., who had long ago died. While “the God of peace” presents a striking antithesis to JEHOVAH’s descent upon Sinai “in fire” (Exo 19:18). Let us briefly consider these three things again, but this time in their inverse order.

“Through the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb 13:20). We consider that this clause has a threefold force, that it is connected—both grammatically and doctrinally—with *each of* the preceding clauses. First, it is through the blood which He shed for sinners that Christ became the great Shepherd of the sheep—He was so previously by ordination, but He became so actually by importation—the sheep were now His purchased property. Second, it was through or because of the atoning blood that God delivered Christ from the grave, for having fully satisfied divine justice He was fully entitled to deliverance from prison. Third, it was through or by virtue of the pacifying blood of Christ that God henceforth became “the God of peace” (Heb 13:20) unto His people, the whole controversy which their sins raised having been satisfactorily settled. And Christ shed His precious blood in fulfillment of the stipulations of the everlasting covenant or that agreement which He entered into with the Father before the foundation of the world.

“That brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep” (Heb 13:20). “The Father is frequently said to raise Christ from the dead because of His sovereign authority in the disposal of the whole work of redemption, which is everywhere ascribed unto Him. Christ is said to raise Himself or take up His life again when He was dead, because of the immediate efficiency of His divine person therein. But more is intended here than an act of divine power, whereby the human nature of Christ was quickened. The word used is peculiar, signifying a recovery out of a certain state—a moral act of authority is intended. Christ as the great Shepherd of the sheep was brought into the state of death by the sentence of the law, and was therefrom restored by the God of peace, to evidence that peace was now perfectly made. The bare resurrection of Christ would not have saved us, for so any other man may be raised by the power of God. But *the bringing* of Christ from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant is that which gives assurance of the complete redemption of the church” (condensed from John Owen, 1616-1683).

“The God of peace” (Heb 13:20) He is such first, because He takes this title from the covenant itself (Isa 54:10). He is so secondly, because as the supreme God He is pacified, and that because His law has received perfect satisfaction from our Surety. He is so, third, because He is, in consequence, reconciled to us. Having accepted the person, obedience, and soul-travail of Christ,

God is at peace with all His people in Him. Because He is at peace with them, He freely pardons all their iniquities and bestows every needed blessing upon them. When God removes from us all penalties and evils, and gives unto us all the privileges and good of the justified (such as the Holy Spirit to break the power and reign of sin in us), it is as the “God of peace” He does so. Yea, as the supreme Judge, acting according to the principles of His government constituted in the everlasting covenant, by virtue of the merits of Christ and of our interest in Him.

God is also called “the God of peace” because He is the Author of that tranquility which is felt at times in the hearts and consciences of His people, as He is also the Lover of that concord which obtains in measure among them upon earth. Owen suggests a further reason why the apostle uses this divine title here. “He might have also herein an especial respect to the present state of the Hebrews, for it is evident that they had been tossed, perplexed, and disquieted with various doctrines and pleas about the law, and the observance of its institutions. Wherefore, having performed his part and duty in the communication of the truth to them for the information of their judgments, he now in the close of the whole applies himself by prayer to the God of peace: that He, who alone is the Author of it, who creates it where He pleaseth, would, through his instruction, give rest and peace to their minds.” (John Owen).

So completely is God appeased that there is a new covenant procured and constituted, namely, the Christian covenant, called here “the everlasting covenant” (Heb 13:20). First, because it shall never be repealed and continueth unalterable, the called obtaining by it the title and possession of an eternal inheritance (Heb 9:15). Second, because Christ’s atoning blood is the foundation of this covenant, and as the virtue of it never ceases, therefore is it made effectual to secure its end, namely, the eternal salvation of sinful men who are converted and reconciled to God. This new covenant is also designated “the covenant of peace.” “I will make a covenant of peace with them” (Eze 37:26). First, because in the same this peace and reconciliation is published, and offered to us, “The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ” (Act 10:36 and cf. Eph 2:17), because in this covenant the terms of this peace between us and God are stated—God binding Himself to give to sinful men forgiveness of sins and eternal life upon the conditions of repentance, faith, and new obedience.

A most important practical question is, How do we come to be interested in this divine peace and reconciliation? A threefold answer may be returned—by ordination, impetration, and application. First, by the Father’s eternal decree or foreordination, for as to whom should enter into the same has not been left to chance. Hence, God’s elect are termed “the sons of peace” (Luk 10:6). Second, by the Son’s impetration or paying the purchased price, “Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself” (Col 1:20). Third, by the Spirit’s application, who subdues our enmity, bends our stubborn wills, softens our hard hearts, overcomes our self-righteousness, and brings us into the dust before God as self-condemned criminals suing for mercy. It is at our conversion this divine peace is actually conveyed to us, for it is only then that God’s wrath is removed from us (Joh 3:36) and that we are restored to His favour. Further grace is given us day by day as those already reconciled to God.

A final reason may now be advanced why God is here addressed as “the God of peace,” and that is, to afford us valuable instruction in connection with prayer. It is very striking to note that in more than half of the passages where this particular divine title occurs, it is where He is being *supplicated*—the reader may verify this for himself by consulting Romans 15:33 and 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 3:16, and here (Heb 13:20). Thus, it is employed for the purpose of *encouraging* us in our addresses at the throne of grace. Nothing will impart more confidence and enlarge our hearts than the realization that God

has laid aside His wrath and has only thoughts of grace toward us. Nothing will inspire more liberty of spirit than to look upon God as *reconciled to us* by Jesus Christ, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand” (Rom 5:1-2).

“Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ” (Heb 13:21). Before taking up the coherency of this sentence let us point out the great practical lesson it contains. No matter how diligent the minister has been in his pulpit preparations, nor how faithfully he has delivered his message, his duty is by no means then fully discharged. He needs to retire to the closet and beg God to apply the sermon to those who heard it, to write it on their hearts, to make it effectual unto their lasting good. This is what the great apostle did. In the body of this epistle, he had exhorted the Hebrews unto many good works and now he prays that God would *enable them thereto*. The same thing holds good for those in the pew. It is not enough to listen reverently and carefully, we must also entreat God to bless unto us what we have heard. It is failure at this point which makes so much hearing unprofitable.

Though the apostle’s prayer be brief, it is a most comprehensive one. It makes known the *method* by which divine grace is administered to us. The grand *fountain* of it is God Himself, as He is the God of peace—that is, as in the eternal counsel of His will, He designed grace and peace unto poor sinners, agreeably to His goodness, wisdom, justice, and holiness. The *channel* through which divine grace is communicated, and that in a way suitable to the maintenance of God’s glory, namely, by the mediation of Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection. God would have us know that while He is Himself the Giver, yet it is our Surety who merited for us every spiritual blessing we enjoy. The *nature* of this divine grace relates particularly to our sanctification or perfecting, and this is expressed under the two heads of this prayer, namely, the grand end to be ever kept in view and the means whereby that end is attained.

Having dwelt at some length upon the solemn manner in which the apostle addressed the throne of grace, we now turn to contemplate the *import* of His prayer, observing the two things here asked for the Hebrews. The first was that God would “make them perfect in every good work to do his will.” This will require us to inquire into the meaning of this petition, to ponder its extensiveness, and then to mark its implications. Different writers have given various definitions to the “make you perfect,” though they all amount to much the same thing. Thomas Scott (1747-1821) gives “rectifying every disorder of their souls and completely fitting them for every part of His holy service.” Matthew Henry (1662-1714) enters into more detail, “A perfection of integrity, a clear mind, a clean heart, lively affections, regular and renewed wills, and suitable strength for every good work to which they are called.”

Owen rendered it, “Make you meet, fit and able.” And adds, “It is not an absolute perfection that is intended, nor do the words signify any such thing, but it is to bring the faculties of the mind into that order so as to dispose, prepare, and enable them, so that they may work accordingly.” The Greek word for “make you perfect” is rendered “fitted” in Romans 9:22, “framed” in Hebrews 11:3, and “prepared” in 10:5, where the product of *divine workmanship* is seen in each instance. In the case before us, it is the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit in connection with the progressive sanctification of the believer. Personally, we regard the definition of Scott (given above) as the best—the most accurate and elucidating.

The work of divine grace in the elect begins when they are born again by the quickening operations of the Holy Spirit, and this work of grace is continued throughout the whole of their remaining days upon earth. Perfection of grace is not attained in this life (Phi 3:12-13), yet

additions to our present attainments in grace are to be diligently sought (2Pe 1:5-7). No matter what spiritual progress has, by grace, been made, we are never to rest satisfied with it. We still need to be further strengthened for duties and fortified for trials. A child grows until it becomes fit for all manly actions, yet further progress is attainable after the state of manhood is reached. So it is spiritually. God requires from us the mortification of every lust, and a universal and impartial obedience from us—and therefore we may perceive how perfectly suited is this prayer to our needs.

Next, we turn to consider the *extensiveness* of this petition, “Make you perfect in *every* good work” (Heb 13:21). This comprehensive expression includes, as Gouge (William Gouge, 1575-1653) pointed out, all the fruits of holiness Godwards and of righteousness manwards. There is to be no reservation. God requires us to love Him with “all our hearts” (see Deu 6:5), that we be sanctified in our “whole spirit, and soul, and body” (1Th 5:23), and that we “grow up into Christ in all things” (Eph 5:15). Many will do some good, but are defective in other things—usually in those which are most necessary. They single out those duties which make the least demand upon them, which require the least denying of self. But we shall never enjoy sound peace of heart till we are conformed unto all the revealed will of God, “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto *all* thy commandments” (Psa 119:6). Then pray daily to be divinely fitted unto every good work, especially those which you find the hardest and most exacting.

“To do his will” (Heb 13:21). Here we have a Scriptural definition of what is a “good work”—it is the performing of God’s preceptive will. There are many things done by professing Christians which, though admired by themselves and applauded by their fellows, are not regarded as “good works” by the One with whom we have to do—yea, “that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luk 16:15). Of old, the Jews added their own traditions to the divine commandments, instituting fasts and feasts, so that the Lord asked, “Who hath required this at your hand?” (Isa 1:12). We see the same principle at work today among the deluded Romanists, with their bodily austerities, idolatrous devotions, arduous pilgrimages, and impoverishing payments. Nor are many Protestants free from self-appointed deprivations and superstitious exercises. It is not the heeding of religious impulses, nor conforming to ecclesiastical customs, but doing the will of God which is required of us.

The *rule* of our duty is the revealed will of God. The “works” of man are his operations as a rational creature, and if his actions are conformed to God’s law, they are good—if they are not, they are evil. Therefore a man cannot be a good Christian without doing God’s will. If it be God’s will that he should refrain from an act or practice, he dare not proceed to do it, see Jeremiah 35:6; Acts 4:19. On the other hand, if it be the revealed mind of God that he should do something, he dare not omit it, no matter how it cross his inclination or fleshly interests, “To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin” (Jam 4:17). It is not enough that we thoroughly understand the will of God—we must *do* it, and the more we do it, the better shall we understand, John 7:17.

“Make you perfect in every good work to do his will” (Heb 13:21). Various things are clearly implied by these words. First, that we are imperfect or not qualified unto every good work. Yes, even after we have been regenerated, we are still unprepared to obey the divine will. Notwithstanding the life, light, and liberty we have received from God, yet we have not ability to do that which is well-pleasing in His sight. This is indeed a humbling truth, yet truth it is—Christians themselves are unable to perform their duty. Though the love of God has been shed abroad in their hearts, a principle of holiness or new “nature” communicated to them, this of itself is not sufficient. Not only are they still very ignorant of God’s will, but there is that in them which

is ever opposed to it, inclining them in a contrary direction. Nor do the Scriptures hesitate to press this solemn fact upon us—rather is it frequently iterated for the humbling of ourselves before God.

Second, yet our spiritual impotency is not to be excused, nor are we to pity ourselves because of it, rather is it to be confessed to God with self-condemnation. Third, none but God can fit us for the performing of His will, and it is both our duty and privilege to ask Him so to do. We need to diligently beg Him to strengthen us with might by His Spirit in the inner man, to incline our hearts unto His testimonies and not to covetousness, to so bedew our souls that we will grow in grace—for the new nature in the believer is entirely dependent upon God. “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God” (2Co 3:5). If we need divine grace to think a good thought or conceive a good purpose, much more do we need His strength to resolve and perform that which is good. Therefore did the apostle pray for supplies of sanctifying grace to be given unto the Hebrews, to enable them to respond to the will of God in the duties of obedience required of them.

“Working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight” (Heb 13:21). This is both an elucidation and amplification of that which has just preceded, intimating *how* God makes us perfect or fits us unto every good work. The previous petition expressed the grand *end* for which the apostle prayed, namely, the progressive sanctification of his readers. Here, he expresses the *means* by which this was to be accomplished in them. This is effected not by moral persuasion and instruction only, but by an actual and effectual inworking of divine power. So perverse are we by nature, and so weak even as Christians, that it is not sufficient for our minds to be informed by means of an external revelation of God’s will. In addition, He has to stimulate our affections and propel our wills if we are to perform those works which are acceptable to Him. “Without me ye can do *nothing*.”

“Working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight” (Heb 13:21). This respects the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the regenerate. It presents a striking and blessed contrast between the unsaved and the saved. Of the former we read, “The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2). Whereas of the latter it is said, “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13). First, God puts within us the will or desire, unto that which is good, and then He bestows His strength to actually perform. These are quite distinct and the latter is never commensurate with the former in this life. The distinction was clearly drawn by the apostle when he said, “For to *will* is present with me; but how to *perform* that which is good I find not” (Rom 7:18). Yet even that “will” or desire had been wrought in him by divine grace.

Only as these two truths are clearly recognized and honestly acknowledged by us—the Christian’s spiritual powerlessness and the efficiency of inwrought grace—will we rightly ascribe unto God the glory which is His due. To Him alone is due the honour for anything good which proceeds from us or is done by us, “By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1Co 15:10). Not only do we owe to God the new nature which He has placed within us, but we are entirely dependent upon Him for the renewing of that new nature “day by day” (2Co 4:16). It is God who works in His people spiritual aspirations, holy desires, pious endeavours, “from me is thy fruit found” (Hos 14:8). The more this be realized, the more will our proud hearts be truly humbled.

“Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight” (Heb 13:21). By linking the two sentences here we are taught the

important lesson that there cannot be conformity to the will of God in the *life*, till there be conformity to Him in the *heart*. Herein we see the radical difference between human efforts at reformation and the divine method. Man concentrates on that which is visible to the eyes of his fellows, namely, the external, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess” (Mat 23:25 and cf. 27). Not so with Him who looks on the heart—*He* works from within outward, fitting us for an obedient walk by effectually exciting the affections and empowering the will. It is thus that He continues and carries on to completion His work of grace in the elect.

Ere passing on to the next clause, let it be duly pointed out that while it is due alone to the gracious operations of the Spirit that we understand, love, believe, and do the things which God requires from us, it by no means follows that we are warranted to lie upon a bed of ease. No, far from it. We are responsible to *use every means* which God has appointed for our growth in grace and practical sanctification. Those who are fondest of quoting, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his pleasure,” are usually the slowest to emphasize the preceding exhortation, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phi 2:12). We are commanded to give all diligence to add to our faith the other graces of the Spirit, 2 Peter 1:5-7. Then let us shake off our carnal security and lethargy. Use the means and God will bless our endeavours, 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

“That which is wellpleasing in his sight” (Heb 13:21). First, let us endeavour to live day by day in the consciousness that all we do is done in the sight of God. Nothing can escape His view. He observes those who break His law, and those who keep it, “The eyes of the LORD are in *every* place, beholding the evil and the good” (Pro 15:3). How it should curb and awe us to realize that God is an observer of every action, “In holiness and righteousness *before him*” (Luk 1:75). Second, let this be our great aim and end—to please God. That is sound piety, and nothing else is. Pleasing man is the religion of the hypocrites, but pleasing God is genuine spirituality. More than once does the apostle inculcate this as the right end, “Not as pleasing men, but God” (1Th 2:4), “that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing” (Col 1:10).

Third, let us see to it that all our works are *so ordered as* to be pleasing *to* God. In order to this our actions must square with the rule of His Word—only that which is agreeable to His will is acceptable in His sight. But more—it is not sufficient that the substance of what we do be right, but it must issue from a right principle, namely, love to God and faith in Christ, “But without *faith* it is impossible to please him” (Heb 11:6), yet it must be a faith that “worketh *by love*” (Gal 5:6)—not as forced, but as the expression of gratitude. Finally, as to the *manner* of this—our good works must be done with soberness and all seriousness. “Serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb 12:28)—as becometh a menial in the presence of His Majesty. Remember that God actually takes delight in such works and those who do them, Hebrews 11:4—what an incentive unto such!

THE LIFE OF DAVID

76. *His Restoration*

There had been not a little to offset David's grief over the revolt and death of Absalom. As we have seen, his journey back to Jerusalem was marked by several incidents which must have brought satisfaction and joy to the king's heart. The radical change in the attitude of Shimei towards him, the discovery that after all the heart of Mephibosheth beat true to him, the affectionate homage of the aged Barzillai, and the welcome from the elders and men of Judah, were all calculated to cheer and encourage the returning exile. Things seemed to have taken a decided turn for the better and the sun shone out of a clear sky. Yes, but the clouds have a habit of returning even after a heavy rain. And so it was here. A dark cloud suddenly appeared on David's horizon which must have caused him considerable uneasiness, presaging as it did the gathering of another storm.

The leaders of the ten tribes had met David at Gilgal, and a dispute at once ensued between them and the man of Judah. This was the fly in the ointment. A foolish quarrel broke out between the two factions over the matter of bringing back the king. "It was a point of honour which was being disputed between them—which of them had most interest in David. 'We are more numerous' say the elders of Israel. 'We are nearer akin to him' say the elders of Judah. Now one would think David very safe and happy when his subjects are striving which should love him more, and be most forward to show him respect—yet even that strife proved the occasion for a rebellion" (Matthew Henry). No sooner was one of David's trials over than another arises, as it were, out of the ashes of the former.

Ah, my reader, we must not expect to journey far in this world without encountering trouble in some form or other. No, not even when the providence of God appears to be smiling upon us. It will not be long before we have some rude reminder that "this is not your rest." It was thus in the present experiences of our hero—in the very midst of his triumphs he was forced to witness a disturbance among his leading subjects, which soon threatened the overthrow of his kingdom. There is nothing stable down here, and we only court certain disappointment if we build our hopes on anything earthly or think to find satisfaction in the creature. Under the sun is but "vanity and vexation of spirit." But how slow we are to really believe that melancholy truth, yet in the end we find it *is* true.

We closed last month's article with a quotation which called attention to the typical significance of the incidents recorded in 2 Samuel 19. The opening verses of chapter 20 may be contemplated as bearing out the same line of thought. Christ's visible kingdom on earth is entered by profession, hence there are tares in it as well as wheat, bad fish as well as good, foolish virgins as well as wise (Mat 13 and 25). This will be made unmistakably manifest in the day to come, but even in this world, God sometimes so orders things that profession is tested and that which is false is exposed. Such is the dispensational significance of the episode we are now to consider. The Israelites had appeared to be very loyal and devoted to David, yea, so much so that they were hurt when the men of Judah had, without consulting them, taken the lead in bringing back the king.

But how quickly the real state of their hearts was made apparent. What a little thing it took to cause their affection for David not only to cool off, but to completely evaporate. No sooner did an enemy cry, "To your tents, O Israel," than they promptly responded, renouncing their professed allegiance. There was no reality to their protestations of fealty, and when the choice was set

before them, they preferred a “man of Belial” rather than the man after God’s own heart. How solemnly this reminds us of the multitudes of Israel at a later date—first crying out, “Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Mat 21:9), and a short time after, when the issue was drawn, preferring Barabbas to Christ. And how often since then, especially in times of trial and persecution, have thousands of those who made a loud profession of Christianity preferred the world or their own carnal safety?

“And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel” (2Sa 20:1). Alas! how often it appears that in a happy concourse of those who come together to greet and do homage to David there is “a son of Belial” ready to sound the trumpet of contention. Satan knows full well that few things are better calculated to further his own base designs than by causing divisions among the people of God. Sad it is that we are not more upon our guard, for we are not ignorant of his devices. And to be on our guard means to be constantly mortifying pride and jealousy. *Those* were the evil roots from which this trouble issued, as is clear from the “that our advice should not be *first* had in bringing back our king” (2Sa 19:43).

“And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel” (2Sa 19:43). This was only adding fuel to the fire. “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger” (Pro 15:1). If the spirit of jealousy prevailed among the leaders of Israel, pride was certainly at work in the hearts of the elders of Judah, and when those two evils *clashed*, anger and strife quickly followed. It is solemn to observe that God Himself took notice of and recorded in His Word *the fierceness* of the words of the men of Judah—a plain intimation that He now registers against *us* that language which is not pleasing unto Him. How we need to pray that God would set a watch before our mouths, that the door of our lips may be kept from allowing evil to pass out.

“And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse” (2Sa 20:1) Sheba belonged to the tribe of Saul, which had bitterly begrudged the honour done to Judah, when the son of Jesse was elected king. The Benjamites never really submitted to the divine ordination. The deeper significance of this is not hard to perceive—there is a perpetual enmity in the serpent’s seed against the antitypical David. How remarkably was this mysterious yet prominent feature of Christ’s kingdom adumbrated in the continued opposition of the house of Saul against David. First in Saul himself, then in Ishbosheth (2Sa 2:8-9; 3:1 etc.) and now Sheba. But just as surely as David prevailed over all his enemies, so shall Christ vanquish all His foes.

“And he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel” (2Sa 20:1). See how ready is an evil mind to place a false construction upon things and how easily this can be accomplished when determined so to do. The men of Judah had said, “The king is near of kin to us” (2Sa 19:42), but this son of Belial now perverted their words and made them to signify, “We have *no* part in David,” whereas they intended no such thing. Then let us not be surprised when those who secretly hate us give an entirely false meaning to what we have said or written. History abounds in incidents where the most innocent statements have been grossly wrested to become the means of strife and bloodshed. It was so with the Lord Jesus Himself, see John 2:19-21 and compare Matthew 27; 26:61-62—sufficient then for the disciple to be as his Master. But let the Christian diligently see to it that he does not let *himself* (or herself) be used as a tool of Satan in this vile work.

“Every man to his tents, O Israel” (2Sa 20:1). This call put them to the proof—testing their loyalty and love to David. The sequel at once evidenced how fickle and false they were. “So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri” (2Sa 20:2). Hardly had they returned to their allegiance, than they forsook it. How utterly unreliable human nature is and how foolish are they who put their trust in man. What creatures of extremes we be—now welcoming Moses as a deliverer, and next reviling him because the deliverance came not as easily and quickly as was expected. Now glad to escape from the drudgery of Egypt and a little later anxious to return thither. What grace is needed to *anchor* such unstable and unreliable creatures.

“So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri” (2Sa 20:2). Nothing is told us as to whether or not David himself had taken any part in the debate between the elders of Israel and of Judah, or whether he had made any attempt to pour oil on the troubled waters. If he did, it appears that he quite failed to convince the former, for they now not only refused to attend him any further on his return to Jerusalem, but refused to own him as their king at all. Nay more, they were determined to set up a rival king of their own. Thus the very foundations of his kingdom were again threatened. Scarcely had God delivered David from the revolt of Absalom, than he was now faced with this insurrection from Sheba. And is it not thus in the experience of David’s spiritual seed—no sooner do they succeed in subduing one lust or sin, than another raises its ugly head against them.

“But the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem” (2Sa 20:2). It is blessed to find there were some who remained loyal to David, refusing to forsake him even when the majority of his subjects turned away from him. Thus, though the test exposed the false, it also revealed the true. So it ever is. And *who* were the ones that remained steadfast to the king? Why, the men of his own tribe, those who were related to him *by blood*. The typical significance of this is obvious. Though in the day of testing there are multitudes who forsake the royal banner of the antitypical David, there is always a remnant which Satan himself cannot induce to apostatize, namely, those who are Christ’s brethren spiritually. How beautifully was that here illustrated.

“And David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women his concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood” (2Sa 20:3). Here we see one *of the gains* resulting from the severe chastening that David had undergone. As we have seen in earlier chapters, David had multiplied wives and concubines unto himself contrary to the law of God, and they had proved a grief and a shame to him (2Sa 15:16; 16:21-22). God often has to take severe measures with us ere we are willing to forsake our idols. It is good to note that from this point onwards we read nothing more of concubines in connection with David. But how solemn to discover, later, that this evil example which he had set before his family, was followed by his son Solomon—to the drawing away of his heart from the Lord. O that parents gave more heed to the divine threat that their sins shall surely be visited upon their descendants.

“Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present” (2Sa 20:4). Though the men of Judah had not followed the evil example of the ten tribes in their revolt against the king, yet it appears from this verse that many of them were no longer in attendance upon David, having no doubt returned unto their own homes. Considering the circumstances, it seems that they put their own comfort and safety first, at a time when their master’s regime was seriously threatened. “Though forward enough to attend the king’s triumphs, they were backward enough to fight his battles. Most love a loyalty, as well as a religion, that is cheap and easy. Many boast of their being akin to Christ that yet are very loath to venture for

Him” (Matthew Henry). On the other hand, let it not be forgotten that it is not without reason the Lord’s people are called “sheep”—one of the most *timid* of all animals.

“Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present” (2Sa 20:4). This shows the uneasiness of David at Sheba’s rebellion and his determination to take strong and prompt measures to quell it. Amasa, it may be pointed out, had been the “captain of the host for Absalom against David” (see 2Sa 17:25), yet he was near akin unto the king. He was the one whom David had intended should replace Joab as the commander of his armies (2Sa 19:13), and the rebellion of Sheba now supplied the opportunity for the carrying out of this purpose. Having received a previous notification of the king’s design may have been the main reason why Amasa, though an Israelite, did not join forces with the insurrectionists. He saw an opportunity to better his position and acquire greater military honour. But as we shall see, in accepting this new commission, he only signed his own death-warrant—so insecure are the honours of this world.

It is very much to be doubted whether David’s choice was either a wise or a popular one. Since Amasa had filled a prominent position under Absalom, it could scarcely be expected that the men whom Joab had successfully commanded would now relish being placed in subjection to the man who so recently had been the enemy of their king. It is this which, most probably, accounts for the delay, or rather Amasa’s lack of success in carrying out the king’s orders, for we are told, “So Amasa went to assemble the men of Judah: but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him” (2Sa 20:5). As Scott says, “The men of Judah seemed to have been more eager in disputing about their king, than to engage in battle under Amasa.” This supplied a solemn warning for Amasa, but in the pride of his heart he heeded it not.

“And David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than did Absalom: take thou thy lord’s servants, and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us” (2Sa 20:6). It had already been clearly demonstrated that Sheba was a man who possessed considerable influence over the men of Israel, and therefore David had good reason to fear that if he were allowed to mature his plans, the most serious trouble would be sure to follow. His order to Amasa shows that he was determined to frustrate the insurrectionists by nipping their plans while they were still in the bud, by sending a powerful force against them. Chafing at the delay occasioned by Amasa’s lack of success in promptly collecting an army, David now gave orders to Abishai to take command of the regular troops, for he was determined to degrade Joab.

“And there went out after him Joab’s men, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men: and they went out of Jerusalem to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri” (2Sa 20:7) This, we take it, defines “thy lord’s servants” of the previous verse, namely, the seasoned warriors which Joab had formerly commanded. Though he had no intention of employing Joab himself on this occasion, David gladly availed himself of his trained men. Abishai was a proved and powerful officer, being in fact brother to Joab. All seemed to be now set for the carrying out of David’s design, but once more it was to be shown that though man proposes, it is God who disposes. Even great men, yea, kings themselves, are often thwarted in their plans, and discover they are subordinate to the will of Him who is the King of kings. How thankful we should be that this is so, that the Lord in His infinite wisdom ruleth over all.

“When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them” (2Sa 20:8). It seems this was the appointed meeting place for the concentrated forces of David. Amasa now arrived on the scene at the head of the men which Abishai had mustered, and promptly placed himself in command of the army. But brief indeed was the moment of his military glory, for no sooner did he reach the pinnacle of his ambition than he was brutally dashed therefrom, to lay

weltering in his own blood. “Vain are earthly distinctions and preferments, which excite so much envy and enmity, without affording any additional security to man’s uncertain life. May we then be ambitious that honour which cometh from God only” (Thomas Scott).

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

6. *The Davidic*

“And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David” (Isa 55:3). “As we had much of Christ in the fifty-third chapter and much of the church of Christ in the fifty-fourth, so in this chapter we have much of the covenant of grace made with us in Christ” (Matthew Henry). The chapter opens with a gracious invitation, for those who felt their need of them, to partake of spiritual blessings. The prophet seems to personate the apostles as they went forth in the name of the Lord calling His elect unto the marriage supper. Then he expostulates with those who were labouring for that which satisfied not, bidding them hearken unto God, and assuring them that He would then place Himself under covenant bonds and bestow upon them rich blessings.

The “sure mercies of David” (Isa 55:3) were the things promised to the antitypical David in Psalm 89:28-29, etc. That it is not the typical David or son of Jesse who is here intended is clear from various considerations. First, the natural David had died centuries before. Second, *this* David whose mercies are sure was yet to come when the prophet wrote, as is plain from verses 4 and 5. Third, none but the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, answers to what is here predicated. Finally, all room for uncertainty is completely removed by the apostle’s quotation of these very words in, “And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David” (Act 13:34). Thus “the sure mercies” of the true David signified God would raise Him from the dead unto everlasting life.

These “sure mercies” are extended by Isaiah unto all the faithful as the blessings of the covenant, and therefore may be understood to denote all saving benefits bestowed on believers in this life or that to come. This need occasion no difficulty whatever. Those “mercies” were Christ’s by the Father’s promise and by His own purchase, and at His resurrection they became His in actual possession, being all laid up in Him (2Co 1:20), and from Him we receive them (Joh 1:16; 16:14-16). The promises descend through Christ to those who believe, and thus are “sure” to all the seed (Rom 4:16). It was the covenant which provided a firm foundation of mercy unto the Redeemer’s family and none of its blessings can be recalled (Rom 11:32).

Those “sure mercies” God swore to bestow upon the *spiritual* seed or family of David (2Sa 7:15-16; Psa. 89:2, 29-30), and they were made good in the appearing of Christ and the establishing of His kingdom on His resurrection, as Acts 13:34 so clearly shows, for His coming forth from the grave was the necessary step unto His assumption of sovereign power. God not only said “Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people,” but also “a leader and commander to the people” (Isa 55:4). As the “witness,” Christ is seen in Revelation 1:5 and 3:14, and again in John 18, where He declared to Pilate, “My kingdom is *not* of this world...then would my servants fight” (Joh 18:36)—it is not based on the use of arms as was David’s, but on the force of truth, see verse 37.

Christ became “commander” at His resurrection (Mat 28:20). As the apostles expressly announced, “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a *Prince* and a Saviour” (Act 5:31). It is the wielding of His royal sceptre which guarantees unto His people the good of all the promises God made unto Him—“the sure mercies of David” (Isa 55:3). “Behold, thou [it is God speaking to the antitypical David, designated in verse 4, “witness” and “commander”] shalt [showing this was yet future in Isaiah’s time] call *a nation* whom thou knowest not,” which is referred to in, “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to *a nation* bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Mat 21:43)—the “holy nation” of 1 Peter 2:9. “And nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee” (Isa 55:5) which manifestly has reference to the present calling of the Gentiles.

“I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David: he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd” (Eze 34:23). This is Jewish language with a Christian meaning. The reference here, as also in Psalm 89:3; Jeremiah 30:9; Hosea 3:5, is unto the antitypical David. “David is in the prophets often put for Christ in whom all the promises made unto David are fulfilled” (Robert Lowth, 1710-1787). A threefold reason may be suggested why Christ is thus called David. First, because He is the Man after God’s own heart—His “Beloved,” which is what “David” signifies. Second, because David, particularly in his kingship, so manifestly foreshadowed Him. Third, because Christ is the Root and Offspring of David, the One in whom David’s horn and throne is perpetuated forever.

“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Mat 1:1). These words are to be understood not only as an introduction to the Gospel of Matthew, but rather as the divine summary of the whole of the New Testament. The Redeemer is here presented in His official and sacrificial characters—the true Solomon, the true Isaac. Inasmuch as the beloved Son of God willingly submitted to the altar, and being now risen from the dead, He is seated upon the throne. It was to Him as the Son of David that the poor Canaanitish woman appealed. Dispensationalists tell us she was not answered at first because she, being a Gentile, had no claim upon Him in *that* character—as though our compassionate Lord would be (as another has expressed it) “a stickler for ceremonial, for court etiquette”! The fact is that she evidenced a faith in the grace associated with that title which was sadly lacking in the Jews, for one of the things specially connected with Solomon was *his grace to the Gentiles*.

“Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shalt be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luk 1:31-33). First, let it be duly noted that this is recorded by Luke, the essentially *Gentile* Gospel. Second, herein it was expressly announced that Christ should reign “for ever,” and not merely for a thousand years, and that of His kingdom “there should be no end,” instead of terminating at the close of “the millennium.” Third, the prophecy of verse 32 has already been fulfilled and that of verse 33 is now in course of fulfillment. Christ is already upon the throne of David and is now reigning over the spiritual house of Jacob. Clear proof of this is furnished in Acts 2, unto which we now turn.

The argument used by Peter in his Pentecostal sermon is easily followed and its conclusions are decisive. The central purpose of that sermon was to furnish proof that Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Jews had wickedly crucified, was the promised Messiah and Saviour. We cannot now analyze the whole of Peter’s inspired address, but confine ourselves to that portion which is pertinent to our present subject. In Acts 2:24, declaration is made that God had loosed Jesus from the pains of death. Then follows a quotation from Psalm 16. Upon that quotation the apostle made

some comments. First, David was not there referring to himself (Psa 16:2). Second, it was a Messianic prediction, for God having made known that His seed should sit upon his throne, David wrote his Psalms accordingly (i.e. with an eye to the Messiah), and therefore Psalm 16 must be understood as referring to Christ Himself (Act 2:30-31). The apostles themselves being eye-witnesses of the fact that God *had* raised up Christ (Act 2:32).

In Acts 2:33-36, the apostle made application of his discourse. First, he showed that what he had just set forth explained the wondrous effusion of Holy Spirit in the extraordinary gifts He had bestowed upon the twelve. In verse 12, the people had asked, “What meaneth this?”—the apostles—speaking in tongues. Peter answers, This Jesus having been exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and having received the promised Spirit from the Father, had now “shed forth” that which they both saw and heard (Act 2:33). Second, this was self-evident, for David had not ascended into heaven, but his Son and Lord had, as he himself foretold in Psalm 110:1 (Act 2:34-35). Third, therefore this proved what we are all bound to believe, namely, that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah and Saviour of sinners, for God has made Him “both Lord and Christ” (Act 2:36).

It is with the thirtieth verse of Acts 2 we are here more especially concerned—that God swore to David, Christ should sit on *his* throne. Let us consider the negative side first. There is *not* a hint or a word in Peter’s comments that Christ would ascend David’s throne in the *future*, and when in verse 34, he quoted Psalm 110:1 in fulfillment of Christ’s ascension—“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand”—he did *not* add “until thou assume the throne of David,” but “until I make thy foes thy footstool”! Coming now to the positive side, we have seen that the scope of the apostle’s argument was to show that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah, and that He was risen from the dead, had ascended to heaven, and we now add, was seated upon David’s throne.

That which clinches the last-made statement is the “therefore” of verse 36. The apostle there draws a conclusion, and unless his logic was faulty (which it would be blasphemy to affirm) then it *must cohere* with his premise, namely, Christ’s *present* possession of the throne of David in fulfillment of the oath God had sworn to the patriarch. For the purpose of clarity we paraphrase—the premise was that Christ should sit on David’s throne (Act 2:30)—the conclusion is that God has made Jesus “both Lord and Christ” (Act 2:36). None but those whose eyes are closed by prejudice can fail to see that in *such a connection* being “made Lord and Christ” can mean nothing else than that He is now seated on David’s throne. Peter’s hearers could come to no other possible conclusion than that God’s promise to the patriarch of the occupancy of his throne had now received its fulfillment.

Nor does the above passage stand alone. If the reader will carefully consult Acts 4:26-27, it will be found that the apostles were addressing God, and that they quoted the opening verses of Psalm 2, which spoke of those who were in governmental authority combining together against JEHOVAH and His Christ, which the apostles (by inspiration) applied to what had recently been done to the Redeemer (Act 4:27). They referred to the Saviour thus, “For of a truth against thy holy child [or “Servant”] Jesus, whom thou hast *anointed*” (Act 4:27). Now in *such a connection* the mention of Jesus as the One whom God had “anointed” could only mean what is more fully expressed in Psalm 2, My anointed *King*—“yet have I anointed [see margin] my king upon my holy hill of Zion” (Psa 2:6)—otherwise the application of Psalm 2 unto the crucifixion had been fitted only to mislead.

“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen” (Amo 9:11). This is another old covenant promise possessing a new covenant significance, as will appear by the inspired

interpretation of it in Acts 15. Let us first notice its time-mark, “In that day.” The immediate context explains this—it was to be the day when “the sinful kingdom” of Israel would be destroyed by God “from off the face of the earth” (Amo 9:8 saying that He would not utterly destroy the house of Jacob—the godly remnant), when He would “sift the house of Israel among all nations” (Amo 9:9), when “all the sinners of my people shall die by the sword” (Amo 9:10). What follows in verses 11 and 12 predicted the establishment of *Messiah’s* kingdom. Second, let us now observe its citation in Acts 15.

In Acts verses 7-11, Peter spoke of the grace of God having been extended to the Gentiles, and in verse 12, Paul and Barnabas bore witness to the same fact. Then in verses 13-21, James *confirmed* what they said by a reference to the Old Testament, “And to this [i.e., the saving of a people from the Gentiles and adding them to the saved of Israel, see vv. 8-9, 11] agree the words of the prophets” (Act 15:15). Yes, for the promised kingdom of the Messiah, in the Old Testament, was *not* placed in opposition to the Theocracy, but as a continuation and enlargement of it see 2 Samuel 7:12, and Isaiah 9:6 where it was said that the Prince of Peace should sit on David’s throne and prolong his kingdom forever. While in Genesis 49:10, it was announced that the Redeemer should spring from Judah and be the enlarger of his dominion.

Then James quoted Amos, “After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called” (Act 15:16-17). The “tabernacle of David” was but another name for God’s earthly kingdom (note how in 1 Kings 2:12, we read, “Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father,” while in 1 Chronicles 29:23, it is said, “Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD”), for during the last thousand years of Old Testament history *His* kingdom on earth was inseparably identified with *David’s* throne. But now the shadow has been displaced by the substance, and it is the “tabernacle” of the antitypical David. The church militant is aptly designated a “tabernacle” in allusion to the tabernacle in the wilderness, for it is (as that was) God’s habitation, the place where the divine testimony is preserved, and where He is worshipped.

The setting up of the kingdom of Christ was designated a raising of the fallen tabernacle of David, first, because Christ Himself was the seed of David, the One through whom the promises of 2 Samuel 7 were to be made good. Second, because He is the antitypical and true David—as the natural David restored the theocracy by delivering it from its enemies (the Philistines, etc.), and established it on a firm and successful basis, so Christ delivers the kingdom of God from its enemies and establishes it on a sure and abiding foundation. Third, because Christ’s kingdom and church is the continuance and consummation of the Old Testament Theocracy—New Testament saints are *added* to the Old, Ephesians 2:11-15; 3:6; Hebrews 11:40. Thus the prophecy of Amos received its fulfillment, first, in the raising up of Christ (at His incarnation) out of the ruins of Judah’s royal house. Second, when (at His ascension) God gave unto Christ the antitypical throne of David—the Mediatorial throne. Third, when (under the preaching of the Gospel) the kingdom of Christ was, and is, greatly enlarged by the calling of the Gentiles. Thus Acts 15:14-17 furnishes a sure key to the interpretation of Old Testament prophecy, showing us it is to be understood in its spiritual and mystical sense.

“And again Esaiah saith, There shall be the root of Jesse, and he that ariseth [Greek in the present tense] to rule [reign] over the Gentiles: on him shall the Gentiles hope” (Rom 15:12 R. V.). This was quoted here by the apostle for the express purpose of demonstrating that the true David was the Saviour of and King over the Gentiles—if the Davidic reign or kingdom of Christ were yet future, this quotation would be quite irrelevant and no proof at all. In Romans 15:7, the

apostle had exhorted unto *unity* between the Hebrew Gentile saints at Rome. In verses 8 and 9, he declared that Christ became incarnate in order to unite both believing Jews and Gentiles into one body. Then in verses 9-12, he quotes four Old Testament passages in proof—multiplying texts because this was a point on which the Jews were so prejudiced.

“These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that *hath* the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth” (Rev 3:7). This need not detain us long, for the meaning of these words is obvious. In Scripture the “key” is the well-known symbol of authority, and the key *of David* signifies that Christ is vested with *royal* dignity and power. To one of those who foreshadowed Christ, God said, “I will commit thy *government* into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the *key* of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open” (Isa 22:21-22). Note well, dear reader, that Revelation 3:7 was spoken by Christ to a Christian church and not to the Jews! The use of the present tense utterly repudiates the ideas of those who insist that Christ’s entering upon His Davidic or royal rights is yet future.

“Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book” (Rev 5:5). We cannot now enter into a detailed examination of the blessed scene presented in Revelation 5, but must content ourselves with the briefest possible summary. First, we take it that the sealed book is the title-deeds to the earth, lost by the first Adam—cf. Jeremiah 36:6-15. Second, Christ as the Lion of Judah “prevailed” to open it. He secured the right to do so by His conquering of sin, Satan, and death. Third, it is as the “Lamb” He takes the book (Rev 5:6-7), for as such He redeemed the purchased possession. Fourth, He is here seen “in the midst of the throne,” showing He is now endowed with royal authority. There is no hint in the chapter that its contents respect the future, and therefore we regard the vision as a portrayal of God’s placing His King upon the hill (mountain) of His holiness, and giving to Him the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. Christ’s throne is a heavenly and spiritual one, “Even so might grace *reign* through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 5:21).

CONDITIONS IN THE PAST

When the superiority and supremacy of the bishop of Rome was acknowledged by the other bishops (at the beginning of the 7th century), the papacy rapidly developed and dominated the whole of Christendom. Romanism was a strange combination of Judaism and paganism, thinly veiled by a Christian nomenclature. Idolatrous in doctrine, corrupt in practice, withholding from the people the pure Word of God, and making its appeal to the lusts of the flesh, millions of adherents were secured, but at the cost of quenching the Spirit. Most significant is it that men from within her own pale testified to Rome’s duplicity and wickedness. We quote from one such witness in the eleventh century.

“Woe to this generation which hath the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy. If indeed that should be called hypocrisy, which now through its prevalence cannot be hid and through its impudence seeks not to be hid. At present, rottenness and corruption affects the whole body of the church, and the wider it spreads, the more desperate; and the more inwardly it spreads the more dangerous; for if an *heretic*, an open enemy, should rise up, he would be cast out; if a violent enemy, she (i.e., the church), would perhaps conceal herself from him. But now, whom shall the

church cast out? or whom shall she hide herself from? All are friends, and all are enemies; all are in mutual connection as relations, yet in mutual contests as adversaries; all are fellow-members of one family, yet none are promoters of peace; all are neighbours, yet all are seekers of their own things; by profession servants of Christ, in reality they serve Antichrist; they make an honourable figure by the good things they have received from the Lord, while, at the same time, they give no honour to the Lord” (Bernard, sermon 33 on Canticles).

After the rise and domination of Romanism, there followed what has been aptly termed “the Dark Ages,” for that Word of God which is to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, was publicly put out. Nevertheless, from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries, God by no means left Himself without witnesses on earth. Claude in Italy and Gootschalk (old German for “the servant of God”) in Saxony preached the doctrine of grace in the ninth century. In the eleventh century, the Waldenses were active in evangelism all through the Alps. In England, such men as Bede, King Alfred the Good, Anselm and Bradwardine (archbishops of Canterbury) in the eleventh and fourteenth centuries and Wycliffe are well-known names. Peter Lombard and John Husse in Bohemia were mighty instruments in the hands of God long before the days of Luther and Calvin.

It is unnecessary for us to write about the grand Reformation of the sixteenth century, but it will be pertinent to give one brief quotation to show the almost incredible vileness of human nature as evidenced in the awful persecution to which the people of God were then subjected. Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* chronicles the murderous deeds of Rome in this country, but it is not so well-known what wholesale butchery took place in France. In his “History of Redemption,” Jonathan Edwards (a most cautious writer—1703-1758) says, “It is reckoned that about this time [1572] within thirty years there were martyred in France for the Protestant religion, 39 Princes, 148 Counts, 2,346 Barons, 147,518 Gentlemen, and 760,000 of the common people.” Were such a colossal tragedy to occur today, how “students of prophecy” would make capital out of it! We spare our readers’ feelings by refraining from a detailed account of the barbarous methods employed in torture—far worse than any we have read that the Bolsheviks use.

What we are now more concerned with is to observe *the ebb* of the Reformation tide and the rapid decay of piety which soon followed. “Go through all places, it shall be found that scarce one of a thousand in his dealings makes conscience of a lie. A great part of men get their wealth by fraud and oppression, and all kinds of unjust and unmerciful dealings...This doth appear to be true, by the practice and behaviour of men on the Lord’s day. If the number of those which come to hear God’s Word were compared with those which run about their worldly wealth and pleasure, I fear me the better sort would be found to be a little handful to a large heap, or as a drop to the ocean in respect of the other...Like to him [Herod] are many in these days, which gladly desire to hear the Gospel of Christ preached, only because they would hear speech of some strange things, laying aside all care and conscience to obey that which they hear. Yea, many in England delight to read the strange histories of the Bible, and therefore can rehearse the most part of it, yet come to the *practice* of it, the same persons are commonly found as bad in life and conversation, or rather *worse* than others...A rare thing it is to find the virtue of fidelity in the world now a-days—who is he that makes conscience of a lie? and is not truth banished out of our coasts?” (W. Perkins, 1595, Vol. 1, pp. 129, 154, 201, 275).

“Our lives shame us—open and manifest iniquities proclaim us unthankful. Fraud in our homes, drunkenness in our streets, oppression in our fields, adulteries in corners, corruption on benches...Irreligious and profane—other times have been notable for this, *ours* is notorious. The lusts of the flesh, if ever, are now manifest. Drunkenness reels in the streets, gluttony desires not

to be housed. Bribery opens his hand to receive in the very courts. Robbery and murder swagger in the highways. Whoredom begins to neglect curtains, and grows proud of its impudence” (Thomas Adams, 1605, Vol. 1, pp. 131, 145).

“In 1623, Charles the First revived his father’s edict for allowing sports and recreations on Sunday to such as attended public worship, and he ordered his proclamation for that purpose to be read by the clergy after divine service. Those who were puritanically affected refused obedience, and were suspended or deprived. Such encouragement and protection which the king and the bishops gave to wakes, church-ales, bride-ales, and other church festivals of the common people, were objects of scorn to the Puritan” (David Hume the historian, 1711-1776). There are few indeed today who have any conception of the fearful profligacy of that monarch’s court, the open immoralities which obtained in high places, the corruption of the law-courts, and the wickedness which abounded among the common people.

The servants of God who faithfully reprovved and rebuked were no more popular then than they are now. Those who have uncompromisingly denounced wickedness, bade their hearers or readers repent of it, and threatened the everlasting wrath of God if they did not, have ever been unwelcome—thorns in the side of all who hate to have their consciences searched. “If a preacher reprovves sin, he is thought to do it out of harshness or to be too bitter and uncharitable, and they say he should preach God’s love and mercy. Reprehension of sin is most condemned and least esteemed. But let a preacher preach dark mysteries and curious inventions, or odd conceits, and he will be widely welcomed” (Henry Smith, 1590, Vol. 2, p. 213).

In his comments upon, “Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness” (Jam 4:9), Thomas Manton (1660) said, “Frothy spirits love their pleasure and ease: ‘The fool’s heart is in the house of mirth’ (see Ecc 7:4). A loose, garish spirit doth not love to converse with mournful objects, or to be pressed to mourning duties. It showeth how instant and earnest we should be in pressing such duties as these: ‘weep,’ ‘mourn,’ ‘be afflicted.’ It is one of the fancies now in fashion that men would be altogether honeyed and oiled with grace—the wholesome severities of religion are distasteful. Some that would be taken for Christians of the highest form, are altogether prejudiced against such a doctrine as this is, and think we are *legal* when we press humiliation. How may the poor ministers of the Gospel go to God, and say as Moses did, ‘The children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me?’ (Exo 6:12) Lord, the professors will not brook such doctrine as this is, how shall we hope to prevail with the poor, blind, carnal world? Certainly it is very sad that that which was wont to be a badge of profaneness, men should now adopt it into their religion. I mean, *scoffing* at doctrines of *repentance* and humiliation” (Vol. 14, p. 374).

How shocked and saddened we are by what we now behold in the rising generation—their dislike of work, their mad craze for pleasure, their chaffing at all restraint. Yet the profligacy of youth, and the present-day immodesty of the female sex, is *no new thing*. No, not even the modern craze of women bobbing their hair. Writing in 1620, Thomas Fuller, the church historian, said, “We see so many women so strangely disguised with fantastic fashions, yea, so many of them affecting man-like clothes and *shorn hair*, it is hard to discern the sex of a woman through the attire of a man.”

“I have often marveled at your youth, and said in my heart, What should be the reason that they should be so generally at this day debauched as they are? For they are now *profane to amazement*; and sometimes I have thought one thing, and sometimes another. At last I have thought of this: How if God, whose ways are past finding out, should suffer it to be so now, that He might make of some of them the more glorious saints hereafter? I know sin is of the devil, but

it cannot work in the world without permission; and if it happens to be as I have thought, it will not be the first time that the Lord hath caught Satan in his own design. For my part, I believe the time is at hand that we shall see better saints in the world than have been seen for many a day. And this *vileness*, that at present does so much *swallow up our youth*, is one cause of my thinking so” (John Bunyan, about 1655, out of “The Jerusalem Sinner Saved”).

In the account of her experiences, Mrs. Brine, wife of John Brine (1703-1765), minister at Cripplegate, wrote, “Thus I went on near fifteen years of age, about which time (A.D. 1700) it pleased God to awaken me, and bring me to consider what state I was in. One night, being in my usual manner at play with my companions, and hearing them swear at a sad rate, taking the Lord’s name in vain in *almost every sentence* they spoke; this I thought was not right in them, though I myself had much ado to keep from bad expressions” (from the collected writings of J. Brine, Vol. 1, p. 544). “Were children and youth ever more disposed to despise and abuse pious parental instruction, than at this day?” (about 1760). “Where is pious, parental instruction and faithfulness more despised and abused than in this place? Is there scarcely a pious child or youth to be found, even in religious families?” (Sermons of Nathaniel Emmons, Vol. 2, p. 122, Franklin, Mass., U.S.A. [1745-1840]).

“Some of old thought that because they could cry, ‘The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD,’ (Jer 7:4) that therefore they were delivered, or had dispensation to do the abominations which they committed. For who (say they) have a right to the creatures, if not Christians, if not church members? and from this conclusion, let go the reins of their inordinate affections after pride, gluttony, pampering themselves without fear, daubing themselves with the lust-provoking fashions of the times; to walk with stretched out necks, naked breasts, frizzled foretops, wanton gestures, in gorgeous apparel” (John Bunyan from the “Barren Fig Tree”). The apostle biddeth the women to cover their heads because of the angels (see 1Co 11:10), their fashion being to come into the congregation with loose disheveled locks; he mindeth them of the presence of the angels. We may use a like argument to women to cover their naked breasts, now their immodesty is grown so impudent as to out-face the ordinances of God” (Manton, Vol. 5, p. 250).

Today the godly are grieved by the lack of reality and genuineness in so many bearing the name of Christ—bemoaning the fact that so very few who claim to believe His Gospel give evidence in their daily lives that they have taken His yoke upon them. But *the abounding of empty professors is no new thing*, as the following quotations will show. “In this respect may these also be called ‘the outward court,’ who with impudence do arrogate to themselves the name of the church, and under that name do in some places cast out the true worshippers; and who, by reason of their number—the *best* congregations of the first Reformation consisting of many more apparently bad than good—and many of those churches having none but men *unregenerate*” (Thomas Goodwin, about 1680, Vol. 3, p. 126).

“This is that apostasy which the Christian world groans under at this day [about 1660], and which, as is it is to be feared, will bring the judgments of God upon it. The very profession of piety is much lost, yea, much derided amongst many...Duties of holiness, strictness of conversation, communication unto edification are not only neglected, but *scorned*. It is in many places a lost labour to seek for Christianity among Christians, and the degeneracy seems to be *increasing every day*” (John Owen, Vol. 17, p. 475). “How few among the many, yea, among the swarms of professors, have heart to make conscience of walking before God in this world, and to study His glory among the children of men! How few, I say, have His name lying nearer their hearts than their own carnal concerns! Nay, do not many make His Word, His name, and His ways, a stalking-horse to their own worldly advantages? God calls for faith, good conscience,

moderation, self-denial, humility, heavenly-mindedness, love to saints, and to enemies, and for conformity in heart and life to His will, but *where is it?*” (John Bunyan from “The Strait Gate”).

“In those who enjoy the Gospel, profess the embracement of it, and yet continue *unfruitful*, none of all this appears. The world may make use of such barren souls as arguments that the Gospel is no such excellent doctrine, has no such divine power or efficacy, produces no such desirable effects. For why? No such thing is visible in the temper of *multitudes who profess* that they believe it. They are but like other men, and exceed not many who were *never* acquainted with the Gospel—no more humble, no more holy, no more self-denying, no more public-spirited, no more heavenly-minded, no more mortified as to many lusts and passions, no more crucified to the world as to the riches, delights, and splendour of it, no more candid and sincere in dealings, no more merciful, no more active to do good in the world, no more fruitful in good works—and where is then the singular excellency and power of the Gospel? The light of nature has been effectual in some to restrain them from those enormities, from which many that enjoy the Gospel abstain not. O what dishonourable reflections doth this cast upon the glorious Gospel of Christ” (David Clarkson, 1680, Vol. 2, p. 397).

“We seem to grow weary of the name of Christ; and in the end of time mockers and atheistical spirits swarm everywhere; and the holy, meek, sober, humble, heavenly spirit seemeth to be *banished* out of the Christian world, but that a few broken-hearted souls keep it up. Partialities and sects are countenanced, while unquestionable duties are little regarded, except by those few who have the courage to live in a counter-motion to the practices of *a loose age*, by their holiness and serious regard to the hopes of another world” (Thomas Manton, Vol. 15, p. 309, 1620-1677). “Our times may very justly be esteemed ‘perilous’—difficult, troublesome, and dangerous, for many, who are of the religious profession, are manifestly under the influence of such vices as the apostle in that place (2Ti 3) enumerates. Some are captivated by one, and others by other vices...In my opinion, they who make pretences to religion in words but in their behaviour are any way irregular, are the most dangerous companions a good man can intimately converse with—because he may be tempted to think that there is not much evil in this or that irregular practice through a charitable judgment he forms of the persons addicted to those practices....

“We have *lost* the chief glory of the Reformation, and the very life and soul of popery greatly flourishes amongst us, to our great scandal and the satisfaction of the Romanists. This is the dreadful condition of a multitude of those who pass under the denomination of Protestant Dissenters—and what will be the issue of these things, the Lord only knows...But *few* are careful to keep up *family worship*. There is reason to fear that it is very rarely practiced by many who would be thought to be Christians. The late hours of our clubs, which call for our attendance almost every evening, will not allow us time to give God thanks for the mercies of the day, to confess our sins to Him, and entreat His protection in the night in the presence of our children and servants. If worship is performed in the family at all, it is on the evening of the Lord’s Day, when alehouses cannot enjoy our company with any decency. This was not always the case, professors formerly did not behave themselves in this manner. We are *much degenerated* in our conduct” (John Brine, about 1740, Vol. 1, pp. 306, 7, 14, 27).

“The apostle Paul complained of professors who walked not according to the Gospel. There has been occasion for the same complaint ever since, *but never more than the present*. Many walk at this day who make some profession of Christ and yet never attain to any steadfastness, but are tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, and at last come to nothing. Others, pretending to be better settled, attain to some form of godliness, but are without the life and power of it. They appear to have some notions about the way of righteousness, but not being

taught them of God, nor ever brought under the mighty influence of them, their walk is very uneven, and generally in the end brings great scandal upon the name and cause of Christ. We have also many at this day who set out in the ways of religion who never felt the plague of their own hearts. These are commonly very confident and presumptuous. They make a shining profession and go on with great parade until they be tried, and then, in the time of temptation, they fall away” (William Romaine, about 1770, “The Walk of Faith,” p. 4).

“With all the preaching and printing ’tis but few indeed who know Christ and the power of His resurrection. I have been, you are, tried to the heart, to see how few know Him and have their minds enlightened by the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. Yet so it is, but here and there a person is really taken with the Lord” (S. E. Pierce’s Letters, 1796). “There are but few who have their minds enlightened so as to see the worth and beauty of the Lord Jesus. You may very easily discern it in conversation with the generality of professors—to get money is more with very many than to converse with Christ” (Ibid. 1808). “In some places I have found those who are alive to these great things, but the state of the church of Christ is very low—truth very little known, less beloved and received than is commonly apprehended. Anything and everything seems to go down except the truth as it is in Jesus. It is a great honour to live in *such* times as the present, *when sin is rampant*, and errors and heresies of all sorts abound—because the grace of God in preserving the feet of His saints, in keeping them alive in Christ, and delivering them from making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, is the more clearly evidenced” (Ibid. 1820).

SATAN’S ACCUSATIONS

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died,” etc. (Rom 8:33-34). Satan is the blackest enemy, and sin is the worst thing he can allege against me, or my soul is or can be subject unto, for hell is not so evil as sin. Inasmuch as hell is of God’s making, but sin only of mine. Hell is made against me, but sin is committed against God. Now I know Christ came to destroy the works, and to answer the arguments and reasonings of the devil. *Thou canst not stand before God, saith Satan, for thou art a grievous sinner, and He is a devouring fire.* But faith can answer—Christ is able both to cover and to cure my sin, to make it vanish as a mist, and to put it as far out of sight as the east is from the west—but *thou hast nothing to do with Christ—thy sins are so many and so foul*—but surely the blood of Christ is more acceptable to my soul, and much more honourable and precious in itself when it covereth a multitude of sins.

Paul was a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious, the greatest of all sinners, and yet he obtained mercy, that he might be for a pattern of all longsuffering to those that should after believe in Christ. If I had as much sin upon my soul as thou hast, yet faith could unload them all upon Christ, and Christ could swallow them all up in His mercy. *But thou hast still nothing to do with Him, because thou continuest in thy sin.* But doth He not call me, beseech me, command me to come unto Him? If then I have a heart to answer His calls, He hath a hand to draw me to Himself, though all the powers of darkness or sins of the world stood between. *But thou obeyest not His call.* True indeed and pitiful it is, that I am so dull of hearing, and slow of following the voice of Christ. I lack much faith, but yet Lord, Thou dost not use to quench the smoking flax or to break the bruised reed. I believe and Thou art able to help mine unbelief. I am resolved to venture my soul upon Thy mercy, to throw away all my own loading, and to cleave only to this plank of salvation.

But faith purifieth the heart, whereas thou art unclean still. True indeed, and miserable man I am therefore, that the motions of sin do work in my members. But yet Lord, I hate every false way. I delight in Thy law with my inner man. I do that which I would not, but I consent to Thy law that it is good. I desire to know Thy will, to fear Thy name, and to follow Thee whithersoever Thou leadest me. *But these are but the empty wishings and wouldings of an evil heart.* Lord, to me belongeth the shame of my failings, but to Thee belongeth the glory of Thy mercy and forgiveness. Too true it is that I do not all I should, but do I *allow* myself in anything that I should not? do I make use of mine infirmities to justify myself by them, shelter myself under them? Though I do not the things I should, yet I love them and delight in them. My heart and all the desires of my soul are towards them. I hate, abhor, and fight with myself for not doing them. I am ashamed of mine infirmities, as the blemishes of my profession. I am weary of them and groan under them as the burden of my soul.

I have no lust, but I am willing to know it. And when I know it, crucify it. I hear of no further measure of grace, but I admire and hunger after it, and press on to it. I can take Christ and affliction, Christ and persecution together. I can take Christ without the world, I can take Christ without myself. I have no unjust gain, but I am ready to restore it. I have followed no sinful pleasure, but I am ready to abandon it—no evil company, but I mightily abhor it. I never swore an oath, but I remember it with a bleeding conscience. I do not in any man see the image of Christ, but I love Him the more dearly for it and loathe myself for being so much unlike Him. I know Satan—I shall speed never the worse with God, because I have him for mine enemy. I know I shall speed much the better, because I have myself for mine enemy. Certainly, he that can take Christ offered, that can in all points admit Him—as well to purify as to justify, as well to rule, as save—need not fear all the powers of darkness, nor all the armies of the foulest sins which Satan can charge his conscience with.—Edward Reynolds, 1648.

THE LOVE OF GOD

“I will love them freely” (Hos 14:4). God’s love is a most free and bountiful love, having no motive or foundation but *within itself*, and His free love and grace is the ground of all His other mercies to His people. He showeth mercy on whom, and because He will show mercy (Rom 9). From the beginning to the end of our salvation, nothing is primarily alive but free grace—freely loved (Deu 7:7-8), freely chosen (Eph 1:5-6), Christ the gift of free love (Joh 3:16), His obedience freely accepted for us and bestowed upon us (Rom 5:15, 18). Justification free (Rom 3:24), adoption free (Eph 1:5), faith and repentance free (Phi 1:29; 2Ti 2:25), good works free (Eph 2:10), salvation free (Ti 3:5). Thus the foundation of all mercies is free love.

We do not first give to God that He may render to us again. We turn, we pray, we covenant, we repent, we are holy, we are healed, only because He loves us—and He loves us not because He sees anything lovely or amiable in us, but because He will show the absoluteness of His own will, and the unsearchableness of His own counsel towards us. We are not originally denominated good by anything which flows from us, or is done by us, but by that which is bestowed upon us. Our goodness is not the motive of God’s love, but His love the fountain of our goodness. None indeed are healed and saved, but those that repent and return. But *repentance* is only a condition, and that freely *given* by God, disposing the subject for salvation—not a cause or procuring God to save us. It is necessary as the means to the end, not as the cause to the effect. That which looks least free of any other gift of God is His *rewarding* of obedience, but that is all and only of *mercy*.

When we sow in righteousness, we must reap in mercy (Hos 10:12), but when He renders according to our works, it is because of His mercy (Psa 62:12).

This is the solid bottom and foundation of all Christian comforts, that God loves freely. Were His love to us to be measured by *our* fruitfulness or carriages towards Him, each hour and moment might stagger our hope, but He is therefore pleased to have it all of grace, that “the promise might be sure to all the seed” (Rom 4:16). This comforts us against the guilt of the greatest sin, for love and free grace can pardon what it will. This comforts us against the accusations of Satan drawn from our own unworthiness. ’Tis true, I am unworthy, and Satan cannot show me unto myself more vile, than without his accusations I will acknowledge myself to be. But that love that gave Christ freely, doth give in Him more worthiness than there is or can be unworthiness in me. This comforts us in the assured hope of glory, because when He loves He loves to the end (Joh 13), and nothing can separate from His love (Rom 8:35-39). This comforts us in all afflictions, that the free love of God, who has predestinated us thereunto, will wisely order it unto the good of His servants (Rom 8:28).

And what is our *duty* in response thereto? First, to labour for assurance of this free love. It will assist us in all duties. It will arm us against all temptations. It will answer all objections that can be made against the soul’s peace. It will sustain us in all conditions which the saddest of times can bring us into—“If God be for us, who can be against us”! Though thousands should be against us to *hate* us, yet none shall be against us to *hurt* us. Second, if God loves us freely we should love Him thankfully (1Jo 4:19), and let love be the salt to season all our sacrifices. For as no benefit is saving unto us which does not proceed from love in Him, so no duty is pleasing unto Him which does not proceed from love in us (1Jo 5:3). Third, *plead* this free love and grace in prayer. When we beg pardon, nothing is too great for love to forgive. When we beg grace and holiness, nothing is too good for love to grant. There is not any one thing which faith can manage unto more spiritual advantages, than the free grace and love of God in Christ.

Fourth, yet we must so magnify the love of God as that we turn not free grace into wantonness. There is a corrupt generation of men, who under pretence of exalting grace, do put disgrace upon the law of God, by taking away the mandatory power thereof from those that are under grace—a doctrine most extremely contrary to the nature of this love. For God’s love to us works love in us to *Him*—and our love to Him is this, that we *keep His commandments*. And to keep a commandment is to confirm and to subject my conscience with willingness and delight unto the rule and preceptive power of that commandment. Take away the obligation of the law upon conscience as a rule of life, and you take away from our love to God the very matter about which the obedience thereof should be conversant. It is no diminution to love that a man is bound to obedience (nay it cannot be called “obedience” if I be not *bound* unto it), but herein the excellency of our love to God is commended, that whereas other men are so bound by the law that they fret at it, swell against it, and would be glad to be exempted from it, they who love God and know His love to them delight to be thus bound, and find infinitely more sweetness in the strict rule of God’s holy law than any that man can do in that presumptuous liberty, wherein he allows himself to shake off and break the cords of it.—Edward Reynolds (1648).

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

3. *Its Grand Original*

So little understood is this blessed aspect of our subject, and so important do we deem it, that some further remarks thereon seem called for. That Christ is the Firstborn or Head of the election of grace was prefigured at the beginning of God's works. In fact, the creation of this world and the formation of the first man were on purpose to make *Christ* known. As we are told in Romans 5:14, "who is the figure of him that was to come." In his creation, formation, and constitution as the federal head of our race, Adam was a remarkable type of Christ as God's Elect. In amplifying this statement, it will be necessary to go over some of the same ground that we covered in our articles upon Mystical Union some years ago, but we trust our older readers will bear with us if we here repeat a number of the things to which we then called attention.

There is a certain class of people—despising all doctrine and particularly disliking the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty—who often exhort us to "preach Christ," but we have long-observed that *they* never preach Christ in *His highest* official character, as the covenant-Head of God's people—that they never say one word about Him as God's "elect, in whom his soul delighteth"! Preaching Christ is a far more comprehensive task than many suppose, nor can it be done intelligently by any man until he begins at the beginning and shows that the Man Christ Jesus was eternally *predestinated* unto union with the second person of the Godhead. "I have exalted one chosen out of the people" (Psa 89:19)—that exaltation commenced with the elevation of Christ's humanity to personal union with the eternal Word—unique honour!

The very words "chosen in Christ" necessarily imply that He was chosen *first*, as the soil in which we were set. When God chose Christ it was not as a single or private person, but as a public person, as Head of His Body, we being chosen in Him as the members thereof. Thus, inasmuch as we were then given a representative subsistence before God, God could make a covenant with Christ on our behalf. That He *did* so enter into an eternal compact with Christ in this character as Head of the election of grace is clear from, "I have made a covenant with *my chosen*, I have sworn unto David my servant" (Psa 89:3)—adumbrated in the covenant He made in time with him who was typically the "man after his own heart" (1Sa 13:14), for David was as truly shadowing forth Christ when God made a covenant with him as Joseph was when he supplied food to his needy brethren, or as Moses was when he led forth the Hebrews out of the house of bondage.

Let those, then, who desire to preach Christ, see to it that they give Him the pre-eminence in *all* things—election not excepted! Let them learn to give unto Jesus of Nazareth His full honour, that which the Father Himself has given to Him. It is a superlative honour that Christ is the channel through which all the grace and glory we have, or shall have, flows to us, and that He was set up as such from the beginning. As Romans 8:29 so plainly teaches, it was in connection with *election* that God appointed His own beloved Son to be "the firstborn among many brethren." Christ being appointed as the Masterpiece of divine wisdom, the grand Prototype, and we ordained to be so many little copies and models of Him. Christ is the first and last of all God's thoughts, counsels, and ways.

The universe is but the theatre and this world the principal stage on which the Lord God thinks fit to act out some of His deepest designs. His creating of Adam was a shadow to point to a better Adam, who was to have an universal headship over all the creatures of God, and whose glories were to shine forth visibly in and through every part of the creation. When the world was created

and furnished, man was brought forth. But before his formation we read of that renowned consultation of the Eternal Three, “And God said, Let *us* make man in our image” (Gen 1:26). This respected *Christ*, the God-man, who was from all eternity the Object and Subject of all the counsels of the Trinity. Adam, created and made after God’s image—which consisted of righteousness and true holiness—was the type, for Christ is par excellent, “*the image* of the invisible God” (Col 1:15).

The formation of Adam’s body, by God’s immediate hand, out of the dust of the ground, was a figure or shadow of the assumption of human nature by the Son of God, whose humanity was formed immediately by the Holy Spirit—as Adam’s body was produced from the virgin earth, so Christ’s human nature was produced from the Virgin’s womb. Again—that union of soul and body in Adam was a type to express that most profound and greatest of all mysteries, the hypostatical union of our nature in the person of Christ. As it is justly expressed in what is commonly called the Athanasian Creed, “As the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ.” Again—as Adam’s person comprised the perfections of all creatures, and was suited to take in all the comforts and pleasures they could afford and impart, so the glory of Christ’s humanity excels all creatures, even the angels themselves. The more attentively we consider the person and position of the first Adam, the better may we discern how fully and fittingly he was a figure of the last Adam.

As Adam, placed in paradise, had all the creatures of the earth brought before him and was made to have dominion over them all (Gen 1:28), thus being crowned with mundane glory and honour, so in this too he accurately foreshadowed Christ. He has universal empire and dominion over all worlds, beings, and things, as may be seen from the eighth Psalm, which is applied to the Saviour in Hebrews 2:9, where sovereignty over all creatures is ascribed to Him, the earth and the heavens, sun, moon, and stars magnifying Him. For though He was for a little while abased beneath the angels in His humiliation, yet now in His exaltation, He is crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. Moreover, though the God-man, the “fellow of the LORD of hosts” (see Zec 13:7), went through a season of degradation before His exaltation, nevertheless His glorification was foreordained before the world began, “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath *appointed* unto me” (Luk 22:29). “It is he which was *ordained* of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead” (Act 10:42).

That Christ had both a precedence and presidency in election was also shadowed forth in this primo-primitive type, for we read, “And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him” (Gen 2:20). Yet mark the perfect accuracy of the type—when God created Adam, He created Eve *in* him (and in blessing Adam—Gen 1:28—He blessed all mankind in him). So when God elected Christ, His people were chosen *in* Him (Eph 1:4), and therefore they had a virtual being and subsistence in Him from all eternity, and consequently He was styled, “the everlasting *Father*” (Isa 9:6 and cf. Heb 2:13), and consequently in blessing Christ, God blessed all the elect in Him and together with Him (Eph 1:3).

Though Adam came forth “very good” from the hands of his Maker and was given dominion over all the creatures of the earth, yet we read, “but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him” (Gen 2:20). Consequently, He provided a suitable partner for him, which being taken out of his side was then “builded” (Gen 2:22 margin), brought to, and welcomed by him. In like manner, though Christ was the Beginning of God’s way, set up from everlasting, and delighted in by the Father (Pro 8:22-23, 30), yet God did not think it good for Him to be alone, and therefore He decreed a spouse for Him, who should share His communicable graces, honours, riches, and

glories—a spouse which, in due time, was the fruit of His pierced side and brought to Him by the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit.

When Eve was formed by the Lord God and brought to Adam so as to effect a marriage union, there was shadowed forth that highest mystery of grace, of God the Father presenting His elect and giving them to Christ, “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me” (Joh 17:6). Foreviewing them in the glass of the divine decrees, the Mediator loved and delighted in them (Pro 8:31), betrothed them unto Himself, taking the church as thus presented by God unto Him in a deed of marriage settlement, and covenant contract as the gift of the Father. As Adam *owned* the relation between Eve and himself saying, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23), so Christ became an everlasting Husband unto the church. And as Adam and Eve were united *before* the fall, so Christ and the church were one in the mind of God *prior* to any foreviews of sin.

If, then, we are to “preach Christ” in His *highest* official glory, it must be plainly shown that He was not ordained in God’s eternal purpose for the church, but the church was ordained *for Him*. Notice how the Holy Spirit has emphasized this particular point in the type. “For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is *the glory of the man*. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man” (1Co 11:7-9). Yet as Adam was not complete without Eve, so neither is Christ without the church. She is His “fullness” or “complement” (Eph 1:23), yea, she is His crown of glory and royal diadem (Isa 62:3)—the church may be said to be necessary for Christ as an empty vessel for Him to supply with grace and glory. All His delights are in her, and He will be glorified in her and by her through all eternity, putting His glory upon her (Joh 17:22). “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife...descending out of heaven from God, *having the glory of God*” (Rev 21:9-11).

In His character as God’s “elect,” Christ was shadowed-forth by others than Adam. Indeed it is striking to see what a number of those who were prominent types of Christ were made the subjects of a *real election* of God, by which they were designated to some special office. Concerning Moses we read, “Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his *chosen* stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath” (Psa 106:23). Of Aaron it is said, “No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is *called* of God, as was Aaron” (Heb 5:4). Of the priests of Israel it is recorded, “The sons of Levi shall come near; for them the LORD thy God hath *chosen* to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the LORD” (Deu 21:5). Regarding David and the tribe from which he came, it is written. “He *refused* the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: but *chose* the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved....he *chose* David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds” (Psa 78:67-68, 70). Each of these cases adumbrated the grand truth that the man Christ Jesus was chosen by God to the highest degree of glory and blessedness of all His creatures.

“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev 21:27). This expression “the book of life” is doubtless a figurative one, for the Holy Spirit delights to represent spiritual, heavenly, and eternal things—as well as the blessing and benefits of them—under a variety of images and metaphors, that our minds may the more readily understand and our hearts feel the reality of them, and thus we be made more capable of receiving them. Yet this we are to know—the similitude thus made use of to represent them to our spiritual view are but shadows, yet what is shadowed-forth by them has *real* being and substance.

The sun in the firmament is an instituted emblem in nature of Christ—He being that to the spiritual world which the former is to the natural—yet the former is but the shadow, and Christ is the real substance, hence He is styled “the sun of righteousness.” So when Christ is compared to the light, He is the “*true* Light” (Joh 1:9). When compared to a vine, He is the “*true* vine” (Joh 15:1). When to bread, He is “the true bread” (Joh 6:32), the Bread of life, that Bread of God which came down from heaven (Joh 6:31). Let this principle, then, be duly kept in mind by us as we come across the many metaphors which are applied to the Redeemer in the Scriptures. So here in Revelation 21:27, while allowing that “the book of life” is a figurative expression, we are far from granting that there is not in heaven that which is figured by it, nay, the very reality itself.

This expression “the book of life” has its roots in Isaiah 4:3, wherein God refers to His chosen remnant as “every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem,” and it is this which explains the meaning of all the later references thereto. God’s eternal act of *election* is spoken of as writing the names of His chosen ones in the book of life, and the following things are suggested by this figure. First, the exact knowledge which God has of all the elect, His particular remembrance of them, His love for and delight in them. Second, that His eternal election is one of particular persons whose *names* are definitely recorded by Him. Third, to show they are absolutely safe and secure, for *God* having written their names in the book of life, they shall never be blotted out (Rev 3:5). When the seventy returned from their missionary journey, elated because the very demons were subject to them, Christ said, “But rather rejoice, because your names are *written in heaven*” (Luk 10:20 and cf. Phi 4:3; Heb 12:23), which shows that God’s election to eternal life is of particular persons—by name—and therefore is sure and immutable.

Let us now particularly observe that this election-register is designated “the *Lamb’s* book of life,” and this for at least two reasons. First, because the Lamb’s name heads it, His being the *first* one written therein, for He must have the pre-eminence—after which follows the enrollment of the particular names of all His people—note how *His* name is the first one recorded in the New Testament, Matthew 1:1! Second, because Christ is the Root and His elect are branches, so that they receive their *life from Him* as they are in Him and supported by Him. It is written, “When Christ, who is *our life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col 3:4). Christ is our life because He is the very “Prince of life” (Act 3:15). Thus, the divine register of election in which are enrolled all the names of Christ’s members, is aptly termed “the Lamb’s book of life,” for they are entirely dependent upon Him for life.

But it is in connection with the first reason that we would offer a further remark. It is called the Lamb’s book of life because *His* is the first name in it. This is no arbitrary assertion of ours, but one that is clearly warranted by the Bible. “Lo I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me)” (Heb 10:7). The speaker here is the Lord Jesus, and as is so often the case (such is the fullness of His words), there is a *double* reference in it. First to the archives of God’s eternal counsels, the scroll of His decrees. Second, to the Holy Scriptures, which are a partial transcript of them. In keeping with this twofold reference is the *double* meaning of the word “volume.” In Psalm 40:7, “volume” is unquestionably the signification of the Hebrew word there used, but in Hebrews 10:7, the Greek word most certainly ought to be rendered “*head*”—“*kephale*” occurs seventy-six times in the New Testament, and it is *always* rendered “head” except here. Thus, properly translated, Hebrews 10:7 reads, “At *the head* of the book it is written of me.”

Here, then, is the proof of our assertion. The book of life—the divine register of election—is termed “the Lamb’s book of life” because *His* name is the first one written therein, and He, who had Himself scanned that roll, said, as He entered this world, “At the *head* of the book it is written of me.” A further reference to this book was made by Christ in, “In thy book all my members

were written” (Psa 139:16). The psalmist was referring to his natural body, first as formed in the womb (Psa 139:15), and then as being the subject of the divine decrees (Psa 139:16). But the deeper reference is to Christ, speaking, as the antitypical David, of the members of His mystical body. “The substance of the church, whereof it was to be formed, was under the eyes of God, as proposed in the decree of election” (John Owen).

Should an exercised reader be asking, How may I now be assured that my name is written in the Lamb’s book of life? We answer, very briefly. First, by God’s having taught you to see and brought you to feel your inward corruption, your personal vileness, your awful guilt, your dire *need of* the sacrifice of the Lamb. Second, by causing you to make Christ of first importance in your thoughts and estimation, perceiving that He alone can save you. Third, by bringing you to believe in Him, rest your whole soul upon Him, desiring to be found in Him, not having your own righteousness, but His. Fourth, by making Him infinitely precious to you, so that He is all your desire. Fifth, by working in you a determination to please and glorify Him.



May

THE LORD'S PRAYER—PART 3

“Hallowed be thy name” (Mat 6:9). This begins the petitions of Christ’s pattern prayer. They are seven in number, which are significantly divided into three and four—the first three concerning God, the last four (the number of the creature) our own selves. Similarly the ten commandments—the first five teach us our duty toward God (in the fifth, the parent stands to the child in the place of God), in the last five our duty toward our neighbour. Our primary duty in prayer is to disregard ourselves, and give God the pre-eminence in our thoughts, desires, and supplications. This petition necessarily comes first, for the glorifying of God’s great name is the ultimate end of all things. All other requests must be subordinate to this one and be in pursuance of it. We cannot pray aright unless the glory of God be dominant in our desires. We are to cherish a deep sense of the ineffable holiness of God and an ardent longing for the honouring of it, and therefore we must not ask anything which would be against the divine holiness to bestow.

“Hallowed be thy name” (Mat 6:9). How easy it is to utter these words without any thought of their solemn importance! In seeking to ponder them, four questions are naturally raised in our minds. First, what is meant by “hallowed”? Second, what is signified by God’s “name”? Third, how are we to understand “Hallowed *be* thy name”? Fourth, why does this petition come first? The “hallowed” is an old English word, the Greek term is elsewhere translated “sanctified.” It means to set apart for a sacred use. “Hallowed by thy name” signifies revered, adored, glorified, be Thy matchless name—let it be held in the utmost respect and honour, let its fame spread abroad and be magnified.

“Thy name” is put for *God Himself*, as in “let them also that love thy name (i.e., Thyself) be joyful in thee” (Psa 5:11). “The name of the God of Jacob defend thee” (Psa 20:1), that is, the God of Jacob Himself defend thee. “The name of the LORD is a strong tower” (Pro 18:10)—JEHOVAH Himself is such. Again—the name of God stands for *the divine perfections*. It is striking and blessed to observe that when He “proclaimed the name of the LORD” to Moses, God enumerated His blessed attributes (see Exo 34:5-7). So again, when it is said, “They that know thy name (i.e., Thy wondrous perfections) will put their trust in thee” (Psa 9:10). But more particularly, His “name” signifies God as He is *revealed*, made known to us. It is in such titles as the “Almighty,” “the Lord of hosts,” “JEHOVAH,” “the God of peace,” “our Father,” that He has discovered Himself unto us. (Gen 17:1, Psa 46:7, Exo 6:3, Phi 4:9, Mat 6:9).

What is intended by “Hallowed *be* thy name”? First, in its widest sense we ask that *God* “by His overruling providence, would direct and dispose of all things to His own glory” (Larger Catechism). Hereby we pray that God Himself would sanctify His name, that He would cause it—by His providence and grace—to be known and adored, through the preaching of His law and Gospel. Second, that His name be sanctified and magnified in and by *us*. Not that we can add anything to God’s essential holiness, yet we should promote His manifestative glory—so we are

exhorted, “Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name” (Psa 96:8). Yet we cannot do this of ourselves and hence the verb is in the passive form. Nevertheless, it is the desire and must be the determination of every Christian’s heart *to advance* the revealed glory of God on earth.

By praying “Hallowed *be* thy name” (Mat 6:9), we beg that God, who is most holy and glorious, would enable us to *acknowledge and honour* Him as such. As Thomas Manton (1620-1677) forcefully expressed it, “In this petition the glory of God is both desired and promised on our part, for every prayer is both an expression of a desire and also an implicit vow or solemn obligation that we take upon ourselves to prosecute what we ask. Prayer is a preaching to ourselves in God’s hearing. We speak to God to warm ourselves—not for His information, but for our edification.” Alas that this necessary implication of prayer is not more insisted upon in the pulpit today and more clearly perceived in the pew. We but mock God if we present to Him pious words and have no intent of striving with our might to live in harmony therewith.

To “hallow” or sanctify His name means that we give God the supreme place, that we set Him above all in our thoughts, affections, and lives. It is the antithesis of the builders of the tower of Babel, of whom we read, “Let us make *us* a name” (Gen 11:4), and of Nebuchadnezzar, who said of Babylon, “That I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of *my* power, and for the honour of *my* majesty” (Dan 4:30). “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts” (1Pe 3:15), that the awe of His majesty and holiness be upon you, so that all within may be reduced unto entire subjection to Him. For this we must pray and strive to obtain right views and a deeper knowledge of Him, that we may worship Him aright and serve Him acceptably.

Third, this petition not only expresses the desire that God would sanctify Himself in and through us, and enable us to glorify Him, but it also voices our longing that *others* may know, adore, and glorify Him. “In the use of this petition we pray that the glory of God may be more and more displayed and advanced in the world in the course of His providence, that His Word may run and be glorified in the conversion and sanctification of sinners, that there may be an increase of holiness in all His people, and that all profanation of the names of God among men may be prevented and removed” (John Gill, 1697-1771). Thus, this petition includes the asking of God to grant all needed effusions of the Holy Spirit to raise up faithful pastors, to move His churches to maintain a Scriptural discipline, to stir up the saints to an exercise of their graces.

It is obvious, then, why this is the *first* petition in the prayer. It must be the basis of all our other requests. The glory of God is to be our chief and great concern. Whatever comes to me, however low I may sink, no matter how deep the waters through which I may be called to pass, Lord, magnify Thyself in and by me. Mark how blessedly this was exemplified by our perfect Saviour, “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name” (Joh 12:27-28). Though He must be baptized with the baptism of suffering, yet the Father’s glory was what most concerned Christ.

The following beautifully summarizes the meaning of this petition. “O Lord, open our eyes that we may know Thee aright and may discern Thy power, wisdom, justice, and mercy. Enlarge our hearts that we may sanctify Thee in our affections, by making Thee our fear, love, joy, and confidence. Open our lips that we may bless Thee for Thine infinite goodness. Yea, O Lord, open our eyes that we may see Thee in all Thy works, and incline our wills with reverence for Thy name appearing in Thy works. Grant that when we use anyone of them, that we may honour Thee in our sober and sanctified use thereof” (William Perkins, 1558-1602).

In conclusion, let us point out very briefly the uses to be made of this petition. 1. Failures to be bewailed and confessed. We are to humble ourselves for those sins whereby we have hindered God’s manifestative glory and profaned His name, by pride of heart, coldness of zeal,

stubbornness of will, impiety of life. 2. Earnest seeking of those graces whereby we may hallow His name—a fuller knowledge of Himself, His fear to be more upon our hearts, increased faith and love, and a spirit of praise, the right use of His gifts. 3. Duties to be practiced—that there be nothing in our conduct which would cause His name to be blasphemed by unbelievers (Rom 2:24), and that “whatsoever we do, we may do all to the glory of God” (see 1Co 10:31).

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

125. Divine Exhortations (13:22)

Before taking up our present verse, let us offer some further remarks upon the last portions of verse 21, which, through lack of space, we had to omit from last month’s article. The central thing which we sought to make clear last month, was, that while the believer received at his regeneration a new nature or principle of grace (often termed by the older writers “the *habit* of grace”), yet it is not sufficient of itself to empower us unto the actual execution of good works. At the beginning, God *did* place in Adam everything necessary to equip him for the performing of all obedience, but *not so* with the Christian. God has not communicated to us such supplies of grace that we are self-sufficient. No indeed—rather has He placed *in Christ* all “fullness” of grace for us to draw on (Joh 1:16), thereby making the members dependent on their Head. And as we shall now see, it is from Christ that fresh supplies of grace are communicated to us.

“Working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ” (Heb 13:21). The “through Jesus Christ” has a double reference—to God’s working in us and to the acceptance of our works. First, in the light of verses 20 and 21 as a whole, it is clear that what is there insisted upon is that there are no communications of grace unto us from the God of peace except in and by Jesus Christ—by His mediation and intercession. This is a most important point to be clear upon if the Redeemer is to have that place in our thoughts and hearts which is His due. All the gracious operations of the Spirit within the redeemed, from their regeneration to their glorification, are conducted according to the mediation of the Saviour and are in response to His intercession for us. Therein we may perceive the admirable wisdom to God, which has so contrived things that *each* divine person is exalted in the esteem of His people—the Father as the fountain of all grace, the One in whom it originates; the Son, in His mediatorial office, as the channel through which all grace flows to us; the Spirit as the actual communicator and bestower of it.

Second, in our judgment, these words “through Jesus Christ” have also more immediate connection with the clause “that which is wellpleasing in his sight,” the reference being to those “good works” unto which the God of peace perfects or fits us. The best of our duties, wrought in us as they are by divine grace, are not acceptable to God simply as they are *ours*, but only on account of the merits of Christ. The reason for this is that divine grace issues through an imperfect medium—sin is mixed with our best performances. The light may be bright and steady, yet it is dimmed by an unclean glass through which it may shine. We owe, then, to the Mediator not only the pardon of our sins and the sanctification of our persons, but *the acceptance* of our imperfect worship and service, “To offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God *by Jesus Christ*” (1Pe 2:5) states that aspect of truth we are here emphasising.

“To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Heb 13:21). Here the apostle, as was his custom, adds praise to petition. This is recorded for our instruction. The same principle is inculcated in that pattern prayer which the Lord Jesus has given to his disciples, for after its seven petitions He teaches us to conclude with, “for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen” (Mat 6:13). There is some uncertainty as to whether the ascription of praise in our text be unto the God of peace, to whom the whole prayer is addressed, or whether it be unto Jesus Christ, the nearest antecedent. personally, we believe that both are included and intended. Both are equally worthy, and both should receive equal recognition from us. In Philippians 4:20, praise is offered distinctively unto the Father; in Revelation 1:5-6 to the Mediator; while in Revelation 5:13 it is offered unto both.

“And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words” (Heb 13:22). We will first give a brief exposition of this verse, and then make some remarks upon its central theme. The opening word is misleading in our Version, for it is contrastive and not connective, being rightly rendered “But” in the R.V. In the preceding verse, the apostle had spoken of *God* working in His people that which is well-pleasing in His sight. Here he addresses *their responsibility* and urges unto diligence on their part. Herein we may perceive again how perfectly Paul ever preserved the *balance* of truth—unto the divine operations must be added our endeavours. Though it is God who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, nevertheless, we are exhorted to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling: Philippians 2:12-13.

The “word of exhortation” (Heb 13:22) refers, in our judgment, to the entire contents of this epistle. The Greek word for “exhortation” is quite a comprehensive one, including within its meaning and scope, direction, admonition, incitation, and comfort. It is mostly translated “consolation” or “exhortation,” one as often as the other. Manifestly it was very appropriate for the apostle to thus summarize the whole of his epistle, for, from beginning to end, its contents are a most powerful and impressive incitation unto perseverance in the faith and profession of the Gospel, in the face of strong temptations to apostasy. “The word of exhortation is the truth and doctrine of the Gospel applied unto the edification of believers, whether by way of exhortation or consolation, the one of them including the other” (John Owen, 1616-1683—and so all the best of the commentators). But let us observe the tactfulness and gentleness with which the apostle urged the Hebrews to attend unto the exhortations that had been addressed to them.

First, he said, “But I *beseech* you” (Heb 13:22). This was “an affectionate request that they would take kindly what on his part was meant kindly” (John Brown, 1784-1858). Paul did not set himself on some lofty pedestal and *command* them—as he might well have done by virtue of his apostolic authority—but placing himself on their level, he tenderly urged them. “This word of exhortation as it comes out of the bright atmosphere of truth, so it comes out of the genial atmosphere of affection” (Adolph Saphir, 1831-1891). Second, he added, “I beseech you, *brethren*” (Heb 13:22), “denoting (1) his near relation unto them in nature and grace, (2) his love unto them, (3) his common interest with them in the case at hand—all suited to give an access unto his present exhortation” (John Owen)—to which we may add, (4) it evidenced his commendable humility and lowliness of heart.

Third, he added, “And I beseech you, brethren, *suffer* the word of exhortation” (Heb 13:22). This of course implied there were things in this epistle which were *opposed to* their corruptions and prejudices. This also revealed once more the deep solicitude which the apostle had for the Hebrews. He had written to them some pointed warnings and some severe admonitions, and he was deeply concerned that they should not miss the benefit thereof, either through their

negligence or because of their natural antipathy. “Probably he records (uses) the word of *exhortation* for this reason: though men are by nature anxious to learn, they yet prefer to hear something new, rather than to be reminded of things known and often heard before. Besides, as they indulge themselves in sloth, they can ill bear to be stirred and reprov’d” (John Calvin, 1509-1564).

Here we may perceive again what a blessed *example* the apostle has left all ministers of the Word. The preacher must be careful to stir up his hearers to seek their own good, “Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand” (Eze 3:17-18). In nothing are our hearers (even the saints) more backward than to appreciate and respond to the word of *exhortation*. Yet exhortation was the apostle’s keynote all through this epistle. God has given His Word to us for *practical* ends, and the faith of God’s elect is “the acknowledging of the truth *which is after godliness*” (Ti 1:1). The Holy Scriptures have been placed in our hands that we may be furnished unto all good works, instructed in every duty, fortified against every temptation. No doctrine is rightly understood unless it affects our *walk*. But in pressing unto a compliance with the divine precepts, let us seek grace that we may do it with the fidelity, wisdom, humility, and tenderness that the apostle evidenced and exemplified.

“For I have written a letter unto you in few words” (Heb 13:22). Strange to say some have been puzzled by this clause, because most of Paul’s epistles are much shorter than this one, and hence they have invented the wild theory that verse 22 alludes only to this final chapter, which Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918) strangely designated “a kind of covering letter.” But the apostle was not here referring *absolutely* to the length of his epistle, but to the *proportion between* its length and the momentousness and sublimity of the theme of which it treats. In comparison with the importance and comprehensiveness of the many subjects which he had touched upon, brevity had indeed marked his treatment throughout. Nothing more than a short compendium had been given of the new covenant, the office and work of Christ, the superiority of Christianity over Judaism, the life of faith, and the varied duties of the Christian.

The principal subject referred to in our present verse is the divine *exhortations*, which is one of great practical importance and value, yet alas, it is sadly neglected and generally ignored today. In Calvin’s time, men preferred “to hear something new, rather than to be reminded of things known and often heard before” (see Act 17:21), but the present generation is woefully ignorant of those paths of righteousness which God has marked out in His Word, and so far from *often* hearing of many of those duties that God requires us to perform, most pulpits are largely silent thereon, substituting themes and topics which are more agreeable to the flesh, studiously avoiding that which searches the conscience and calls for reformation. Now an “exhortation” is an urging to the performance of duty, an incitation unto obedience to the divine precepts. In developing this theme, we feel that we cannot do better than follow the order set forth in Psalm 119.

We are there shown, first, the *blessedness* of those who respond to God’s claims upon them, “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart” (Psa 119:1-2). The psalmist began here because it is essential that we should have a right understanding of what true blessedness consists. All men desire to be happy, “There be many that say, Who will show us any good?” (Psa 4:6). This is the cry of the world, “Good, good”—it is the yearning of nature for contentment and satisfaction.

Alas, sin has so blinded our understandings that by nature we neither know where real blessedness is to be found nor how it is obtained. So thoroughly has Satan deceived men they know not that happiness is the fruit of *holiness*, a conscience testifying to God's approbation. Consequently, all, until divine grace intervenes, seek happiness in riches, honours, and pleasures, and thus they flee from it while they are seeking it—they intend joy, but choose misery. “Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased” (Psa 4:7)—yes, “*their* corn and their wine”—not only possessed by them, but chosen by them as their portion and felicity. But David found that by treading the highway of holiness, God had put a gladness in his heart to which the pleasures of the worldling could not for a moment compare.

The main difference in thought between the first two verses of Psalm 119, wherein the secret of true happiness is revealed is this—in the former the outward conduct of the man of God is described, in the latter, the inward principle which actuates him is seen, namely, whole-hearted seeking unto the Lord. As it is out of the heart there proceeds all the evils enumerated by Christ in Matthew 13:19, so it is out of the heart there issues all the graces described in Galatians 5:22-23. It is for this reason we are bidden, “Keep thy heart *with all diligence*; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23). This is very solemn and searching, for while “man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1Sa 16:7). Therefore there must be the exercise of faith and of love before our outward conduct can be pleasing unto God.

After affirming and describing the blessedness of those who walk in the law of the Lord (Psa 119:1-3), the psalmist next reminds us that God has “*commanded us* to keep thy precepts diligently” (Psa 119:4). First, he sets before us a most attractive inducement to heed the divine commands and then we are reminded of God's righteous claims upon us. We are His creatures, His subjects, and as our Maker and Ruler He has absolute authority over us. God's will has been clearly revealed in His Word, and we are obligated to give our best attention and respect thereunto. God will not be put off with anything. He requires to be served with the utmost care and exactness. Thus, it is not left to our caprice as to whether or not we will walk in God's law—an absolute necessity is imposed.

“O that my ways *were* directed to keep thy statutes” (Psa 119:5). Awed by a sense of the authority of God, conscious of the propriety of His commanding His creatures, and of the justice of His claims, the psalmist now felt his own weakness and utter insufficiency, his deep need of divine grace, to enable him to fulfill his duty. This is one of the marks of a regenerate soul. First he is enlightened and then he is convicted. Knowledge of the path of duty is communicated to him and then consciousness is awakened of his inability to walk therein. Holiness begins with holy desires and aspirations. O that I were walking in the law of the Lord, and keeping His precepts diligently. He realized that in the past, he had followed his *own* ways, and paid little or no attention unto God's authority. But now he longs for this to be radically altered.

This panting after a conformity to the divine will is the breathing of the new nature, which is received at regeneration. A change of heart is ever evidenced by new desires and new delights. “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Rom 8:5). When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, *our* love goes out to God, and as His love is a regard for our good, so our love for Him is a regard for His glory. Love to God is testified by a longing to be subject to Him, “For this is the love of God, that we *keep his commandments*: and his commandments are not grievous” (1Jo 5:3). The more clearly the believer discerns the wisdom, goodness, purity, and holiness of the divine precepts, the more earnestly does he long to obey them, “O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes” (Psa 119:5)—this is the longing of the heart for directing grace.

Passing over the intervening verses, we observe, next, the psalmist's prayer for enabling grace, "Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes" (Psa 119:12). One of the duties of God's people in connection with the divine precepts is to turn them into prayer. This is in accord with the new covenant, where precepts and promises go hand in hand. What God requires from us, we may ask of Him, "Why doth God require what we cannot perform by our own strength? He doth it (1) to keep up His right; (2) to convince us of our impotency, and that upon a trial, without His grace, we cannot do His work; (3) that the creature may express his readiness to obey; (4) to bring us to lie at His feet for grace" (Thomas Manton).

Prayer is the expression of our desires, and if we truly long to obey God, then we shall earnestly supplicate Him for enabling grace. The first thing sought is that God would *teach us* His statutes, which has reference to both the outward means and the inward grace. The letter of the Word and the preaching thereof must not be despised, for it is an ordinance which is appointed by God. Yet it is only as the divine *blessing* attends the same that we are truly profited. When the Lord Jesus taught His disciples, we are told that He first opened to them the Scriptures and then He opened their understandings (Luke 24:27, 45). The inward teaching of the Spirit consists in enlightening the understanding, inflaming the affections, and moving the will, for divine teaching is ever accompanied by drawing (Joh 6:44-45).

The great need for such inward teaching by the Spirit is our *obstinacy and prejudice*. To live for eternity instead of for time, to walk by faith and not by sight, to deny self and take up the cross daily, seems utter foolishness to the natural man. To yield ourselves wholly to God is to row against the raging stream of our lusts. The old nature has a long start of the new, so that we are confirmed in evil habits, and therefore to act contrary to our natural bent and bias is likened unto cutting off right hands and plucking out right eyes. Moreover, every step we take, yea, attempt to take, along the highway of holiness, is hotly opposed by Satan. Thus, the need is real, urgent, imperative, that we should be divinely empowered to discharge our duties. None but God Himself can work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Next we find the psalmist declaring, "I *will meditate* in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways" (Psa 119:15). Prayer is vain unless it be accompanied by faithful endeavour on our part. Here is David's hearty resolution and purpose to discharge his responsibility. He knew that he would never have that respect for God's ways of holiness which is their due, unless he made His precepts the subject of his constant thoughts. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (see Pro 23:7). If our minds were constantly engaged with sacred things, the savour thereof would be apparent in our conversation. But the fear of God and a delight for His Word must first be established in our hearts, for our thoughts follow our affections—that which the heart has no relish for, the mind finds irksome to dwell upon. Difficulties in holy duties lie not in the duties themselves, but in the backwardness of our affections.

"I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways" (Psa 119:15). The *order* is deeply suggestive—meditation precedes obedient conduct. Meditation is to be far more than a pious reverie. It is an appointed means to God-pleasing conduct, "Thou shalt meditate therein day and night, *that* thou mayest observe *to do* according to all that is written" (Jos 1:8). Meditation is not for the purpose of storing the mind with curious notions and subtle ideas, but is to be turned to practical use. Observe well, dear readers, it is not, "I will meditate in thy promises" (Psa 119:15), (though that, too, has its proper place), but "in thy *precepts*." And why is it so essential that we *should* meditate therein? That they may be fixed more permanently in the memory, that they may make a deeper impression on the heart, and that we should the better discern their manifold application unto the varied duties of our lives.

“I will meditate in thy precepts” (Psa 119:5). This was no passing fancy with David, like the forming of a New Year’s resolution that is never carried into execution. He repeats his determination, “I *will* meditate in thy statutes” (Psa 119:48), and again he declares, “I will meditate in thy precepts” (Psa 119:78). It is often said that in this strenuous and bustling age meditation is a lost art. True, and is not this one of the chief reasons why obedience to God’s commands is a lost practice? God complained of old, “My people doth not *consider*” (Isa 1:3), what goes in one ear, goes out the other. “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and *understandeth it not*, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart” (Mat 13:19). And how can the Word be understood unless it be prayerfully pondered, turned over and over in the mind. “Let these sayings *sink down* into your ears” (Luk 9:44)—by means of serious reflection and steady contemplation thereof.

“Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight” (Psa 119:35). Here we find David praying for *compelling grace*. Though he were a regenerate man and delighted in the divine precepts, he was painfully conscious of the fact that there was still much in him which pulled the other way. The flesh lusted against the spirit, so that he could not do the things which he would. True, divine grace has placed within the born again soul an inclination and tendency toward that which is good, yet fresh supplies of grace are needed daily before he has strength *to perform* that which is good. And for this grace God would be sought unto. Why so? That we may learn that power belongs unto Him alone, and that we may be kept lowly in our own esteem. Were God to send sufficient rain in a day to suffice for a year, no notice would be taken of His acts of providence, and were He to grant us sufficient grace at the new birth to suffice the rest of our lives, we would quickly become prayerless.

It is a very humbling thing to be brought to realize that we must be “*made to go*” in the path of God’s commandments, yet sooner or later each believer experiences the truth of it. Godly desires and holy resolutions are not sufficient to produce actual obedience: God has to work in us to *do*, as well as to “*will*” of His good pleasure. Peter’s resolution was strong when he declared that he would not deny Christ, though all others should do so, yet in the hour of testing he discovered that he was as weak as water. We are told of Hezekiah that “God *left him*, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart” (2Chr 32:31), and at times He does this with all His people, that they may discover that without Him they can do *nothing*. When this discovery *is* made, the soul feels the suitability of this prayer, “*Make me to go in the path of thy commandments*” (Psa 119:35).

“Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness” (Psa 119:36). In these words there is a confession implied, as well as a supplication expressed. There is an acknowledgment that the natural bent of the heart is away from God unto worldly things. That for which he prayed was that the bias of his heart should be turned unto God and His precepts. For the heart to be “inclined” unto God’s Word means for the affections to be so inflamed unto holiness that *the will* is carried after them. Just as the power of sin lies in the love it has for the objects attracting us, so our aptness for godly duties lies in the *love* we have for them. When God says, “I will *cause you* to walk in my statutes” (see Eze 36:27). it means that He will so enlighten the understanding and kindle the affections that the will is inclined thereto.

But let it be said again that diligent effort *on our part* must be added to praying, for God will not heed the petitions of the slothful and careless. Hence we must carefully note that not only did David beg God to, “Incline my heart unto thy testimonies,” but he also declared, “*I have inclined* mine heart to perform thy statutes always” (Psa 119:112). It is our bounden duty to incline our hearts unto God’s law, yet it is only by God’s enablement we can do so. Nevertheless, God deals

not with us as sticks and stones, but as rational agents. He sets before us motives and inducements which it is our responsibility to respond unto. He appoints means, which it is our duty to use. He bestows blessings, which it is our obligation to improve—*trading with* the pound He has given us. And this David had done. True, it was all of grace, as he had been the first to acknowledge—nevertheless the fact remained he *had co-operated with* grace—working out what God had worked in, and all is vain till that be done.

Our space is exhausted. Does some captious critic ask, What has all the above to do with Hebrews 13:22? We answer, much every way, *How* are we to “suffer the word of exhortation?” Psalm 119 supplies a detailed answer! (1) By frequently reminding ourselves that compliance therewith is the way of true blessedness. (2) By constantly calling to mind the divine authority with which it is invested. (3) By owning and bewailing our perverse disinclination thereto. (4) By earnest prayer for enabling grace. (5) By meditating daily therein. (6) By begging God to make us go in the path of His commandments, and (7) by diligent improvement of the grace given.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

77. His Purpose Thwarted

In previous articles, it has been pointed out that Joab was a man of a fierce and intractable spirit, and that he was ungodly and unscrupulous in principle. Once David had placed himself in his power (by making him his secret agent in the death of Uriah, 2Sa 11:14-15), Joab thenceforth took matters more and more into his own hands, executing or disregarding the king’s orders as best suited himself. Imperious and ruthless to the last degree, Joab would brook no interference with his own policy. Devoid of natural feeling, fearing neither God nor man, he hesitated not to slay any who stood in his way. Fearfully does his arrogance, treachery, and brutality appear in the incident which is to be before us. Feign would we pass by an episode so revolting, yet it is recorded in Holy Writ, and therefore it must contain some message that is needed by us.

We have also seen how that, at length, David made a determined effort to strip Joab of his power, by removing him from the head of the army. Accordingly Amasa was selected as the one to replace him. But the king’s design was thwarted, frustrated by one of the vilest deeds chronicled in the Scriptures. Under pretence of paying obeisance to the new general, Joab thrust him through with the sword. Such an atrocity staggers the thoughtful, making them to wonder why God suffers such outrages to be perpetrated. This is indeed one of the dark mysteries of divine providence—why the Lord permits such monsters of wickedness to walk the earth. Faith is assured that He must have some sufficient reason. Though often God giveth “not account of any of his matters” (Job 33:13), yet His Word does indicate, more or less clearly, the general principles which regulate His governmental dealings.

Much help is afforded upon the mystery of Providence when it is perceived that God makes “all things *work together*” (Rom 8:28). When incidents are contemplated singly, they naturally appear distorted, for they are viewed out of their proper perspective. But when we are able to examine them in relation to their antecedents and consequences, usually their significance is much more evident. The detached fragments of life are meaningless, bewildering, staggering, but put them together, and they manifest a design and purpose. Much in the present finds its explanation in that which preceded it in the past, while much in the present will also become

intelligible by the sequel in the future—"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" (Joh 13:7). If these principles were more steadily borne in mind, we should be less non-plussed by startling occurrences.

Our present incident is a case in point. Viewed by itself apart, the brutal murder of Amasa is indeed overwhelming—as to why God should permit him to come to such a fearful end. But viewed in relation to other things, contemplated in connection with that inexorable but righteous principle of sowing and reaping, light is cast on that dark scene. If we take the trouble to go back from effect to cause, we shall find that God had a just reason for employing Joab to thwart David's purpose, and that in meeting with such a death, Amasa but received his just deserts. If this can be demonstrated, then we may perceive much more clearly why this revolting incident is recorded in Holy Writ. For since it is evident that God had a sufficient reason for suffering *this* tragedy to occur, we may rest the better assured that He has His own wise ends in things which often appear so puzzling and appalling to us in the world today.

There was a reason why God permitted Jacob to be so basely deceived about the fate of his beloved Joseph (Gen 37:31-35). He was but reaping what he had sown in the deceiving of his father Isaac (Gen 27). There was a reason why God permitted the Egyptians to treat the Hebrews with such cruelty and severity (Exo 1 and 5). They were His instruments in punishing them for their idolatry and their refusal to heed the divine call to cast away the heathen abominations with which they had defiled themselves (Eze 20:7-8). There was a reason why God permitted Doeg to brutally slay no less than eighty-five of the priestly family (1Sa 22:18). It was the execution of the solemn judgment which He pronounced upon the house of Eli (1Sa 2:31-36; 3:12-16), the sins of the fathers being visited upon the children. There is a reason why God has permitted the Jews to be more hated and persecuted throughout this Christian era than any other people—the guilt of Christ's crucifixion rests on them and their children (Mat 27:25).

"The curse causeless shall not come" (Pro 26:2). While God is absolute sovereign and exercises His justice or His mercy as and when He pleases, yet He acts not arbitrarily. He neither punishes the innocent, nor does He pardon the guilty without reparation—i.e., through a Substitute. Hence, we may rest assured that when the divine curse falls upon a person, there is due cause for the same. But let not the reader misunderstand us—we do not wish to imply that any of *us* are capable of ascertaining the reason or reasons which lie behind any calamity that may overtake either ourselves or any of our fellows. On the contrary, it lies entirely outside of our province to explain the mysteries of divine Providence, and it would be the height of presumption to say *why* an affliction has been sent upon another—the book of Job warns loudly against such a procedure.

No, what we have been seeking to do is to point out that the most mysterious of divine Providences, the most appalling events in history—whether involving individuals only or nations—*have* a satisfactory explanation, that God *has* sufficient reason for all that He does or permits. And in His Word He has graciously made this evident, by revealing in instance after instance the obvious connection between sowing and reaping. True, He has by no means done so in every case, for God has not written His Word either to vindicate His own character and conduct or to satisfy our curiosity. Sufficient is said in His Word to show that God is infinitely worthy of our utmost confidence, so that we should say with him whose faith was tried in a way and to an extent that few ever have been, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

We have followed out the present train of thought because some are so overwhelmed by the shocking things which take place in the world from time to time, that their faith is shaken. They know that so far from its affording any solution to the problem, to affirm that *God* has no

connection with such things, is a serious error—denying His present government over and control of the wicked. Nay, it is because they recognize that God actually permits these outrages that they find it so difficult to harmonize this with His revealed character. We have called attention to some outstanding cases because they are to be regarded as *examples* of a general principle. Retributive justice is one of the divine perfections, and though we are often far too short-sighted to perceive its workings, nevertheless, we may have implicit confidence in its operations, and as it is regulated by Omniscience, we know it makes no mistakes.

Resuming now at the point where we left off last month, “When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them” (2Sa 20:8). It will be remembered that in connection with David’s journey back to Jerusalem, upon his crossing of the Jordan, there had occurred a sharp controversy between the elders of Judah and the elders of Israel. The old spirit of rivalry and jealousy was stirred up, and an evil man, by name of Sheba, who belonged to the tribe of Saul, sought to capitalize the situation, and called upon those belonging to Israel to abandon the cause of David. In this he was, for the moment, successful, for we are told, “So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri” (2Sa 20:2). This threatened the most serious consequences, and unless Sheba’s plans were nipped in the bud, David would be faced with another rebellion.

The king recognized the danger and at once took measures to meet it. Now was the opportunity, he felt, to put into execution the plan which he had formed for the removing of Joab from the head of his forces. Calling Amasa to him, he said, “Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present” (2Sa 20:4). As we saw, there was some delay, so, “David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than did Absalom: take thou thy lord’s servants, and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us” (2Sa 20:6). Then we are told, “And there went out after him Joab’s men, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men: and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba” (2Sa 20:7). They had some distance to go, and apparently the great stone in Gibeon was to be the gathering-point of David’s forces, for, “When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them” (2Sa 20:8). By this we understand that the men whom Amasa had gathered together came up with those led by Abishai, and that Amasa, according to David’s orders, now took charge of the entire expedition.

“And Joab’s garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle with a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof; and as he went forth it fell out” (2Sa 20:8). It seems from this that Joab had accompanied the soldiers in a private capacity. He pretended to gladly submit to the new arrangement, and to be full of zeal for David’s cause, prepared to do his part in preventing another general uprising. But outward appearances are often deceptive. In reality, Joab was determined to avenge the dishonour done to him and assassinate the one who had been appointed to displace him. As he advanced to greet the new commander-in-chief, his sword fell out of its sheath, and to prevent its falling to the ground he caught it in his left hand. It looked as though the sword had become unsheathed by accident, but the sequel shows it was by design, and was but a subtle devise to cloak his vile purpose.

“And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab’s hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died” (2Sa 20:9-10). How the real character of Joab was here displayed! Treacherous, ruthless, blatant, utterly hardened. Amasa was his own cousin, yet ties of blood meant nothing to this callous wretch. Amasa had been definitely appointed by the king to lead his

forces, but the royal authority counted for naught to Joab. Moreover, it was in front of all the troops that Joab committed this awful crime, caring not what they thought nor afraid of what they might do. Thoroughly lawless and defiant, he never hesitated to take matters into his own hands and crush whoever stood in his way.

Viewed as an isolated event, here was a most appalling crime. A man in the path of duty brutally murdered without a moment's warning. And yet a holy God permitted it, for most certainly He could have prevented it had He so pleased. Why, then, did He suffer David's purpose to be so rudely thwarted? And why was Joab allowed to slay Amasa? The two questions are quite distinct and must be considered separately. Unspeakably solemn though the subject be, yet earlier events cast their light on this dark scene. After David's murder of Uriah, God had said, "The sword shall never depart from thine house" (2Sa 12:10), and Amasa was David's *own nephew*, see 2 Samuel 17:25 and compare 1 Chronicles 2:13, 16. "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num 32:23). It found David out—in the death of Bathsheba's child, in the raping of Tamar, in the murder of Ammon, in the death of Absalom, and now in the slaying of Amasa.

And what of Amasa himself? Ah, was he one who had served the king with unswerving loyalty? No indeed, far from it. And what of the stock from which he came? Were his parents pious, so that the blessing of the Lord might be expected upon their offspring? And again the answer is no. "And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab" (2Sa 17:25). Thus, Amasa had not only failed David at the most critical juncture, but he had taken an active and prominent part against him. And now he was slain, justly slain, by one who had fought for the king. 2 Samuel 17:25 also tells us, "Which Amasa was a man's son, whose name was Ithra an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruiah Joab's mother"—so that here again it was a case of the sins of the parent being visited upon the child. Thus, revolting though this episode be, we may see in it the righteous judgment of God.

"So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri. And one of Joab's men stood by him, and said, He that favoureth Joab, and he that is for David, let him go after Joab" (2Sa 20:10-11). This was playing politics with a vengeance, pretending that fealty to David demanded that the army should follow the leadership of Joab—how often the people are induced to follow a course which is evil under the impression that they are furthering a righteous cause! Why, these soldiers had just seen Joab slay the very man whom the king had called to head his forces, how, then, could they be for David if they followed this murderer? But few people think for themselves and fewer still are regulated by moral principle. The great majority are easily imposed upon, accepting what any glib-tongued or forcible leader tells them.

"And Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a cloth upon him, when he saw that every one that came by him stood still. When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri" (2Sa 20:12-13). Though none had raised a hand against the cold-blooded murderer, they had sufficient decency to stand their ground until the body of his victim was removed from the public highway and respectfully covered. This done, they unanimously followed Joab. He might be impetuous and imperious, still he was a valiant warrior, and in the eyes of these soldiers, *that* covered a multitude of sins. Moreover, was he not pursuing Sheba, the enemy of their king? There could not, then, be anything radically wrong with him. Such has often been the superficial logic of the multitude, as the testimony of history abundantly illustrates. Yet faith discerns One behind the scenes working all things after the counsel of His own will.

Sheba had meanwhile taken refuge in the “city,” or fortified town of Abel. Thither came Joab and his forces to besiege it, battering upon the outer wall to throw it down. Whereupon a “wise woman” of the city expostulated with Joab, protesting against the needless destruction of the town and the slaying of its inhabitants, reminding him that by so doing, he would “swallow up the inheritance of the LORD” (2Sa 20:19). Joab at once made it known that all he was after was the capture of the arch-rebel against David, assuring the woman that as soon as that son of Belial was delivered up to him, he and his forces would withdraw. Accordingly, Sheba was executed and his head thrown over the wall. Thus perished one more of those who set themselves against the Lord’s anointed. “Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him” (Psa 140:11).

The readiness of Joab to heed the wise counsel of the woman of Abel is not to be taken as a redeeming feature on this occasion, still less as conflicting with what we have said above about his general character. Joab had no personal grievance against the inhabitants of that city—had *that* been the case, it had indeed gone hard with them. Moreover, to have made a wholesale slaughter of those innocent Israelites, would obviously have been against the interests of the kingdom at large and Joab was too politic to be guilty of so grave a blunder. “And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king” (2Sa 20:22). Unabashed at his crime, conscious of the guilty hold which he had over him, Joab feared not to face his royal master. Thus was David’s purpose thwarted, and as though to particularly emphasize the fact, the chapter closes saying, “Now Joab was over all the hosts of Israel” etc. (2Sa 20:23).

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

7. *The Messianic*

We have designated this final covenant “the Messianic” rather than “the Christian” or “the New” covenant, partly for the sake of alliteration and partly for the sake of emphasis. Before we consider its special nature and contents, we must first bridge the interval that elapsed between the making of the Davidic covenant and the commencement of the Christian era—an interval of approximately a thousand years. From the times of David, a special feature gradually became more prominent in the history of the covenant people. *The gift of prophecy*, enjoyed by the psalmist, was now more widely diffused than it had been previously, and was conferred in greater fullness and upon a larger number of individuals, who in succession were raised up and in different degrees exercised a most important influence upon the nation of Israel.

This gift of prophecy was by no means a new one. Moses possessed it in a large measure, yet under conditions which separated him from all who followed up to the coming of Christ. With him, God spake “mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches, and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold” (Num 12:8). In this respect he was an eminent type of Him that was to come, on whom the prophetic influence rested in unlimited measure. Of this, God, through Moses, gave intimation when He said, “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him” (Deut. 18:18-19). To others, during the life of Moses, the gift was communicated, if only for a season. The most striking case was that of

Balaam, a worthless character, who, against his own intentions, was constrained to pronounce blessings on Israel.

In the period that followed we find traces of its bestowment, though only occasionally, and after considerable intervals, until the last of the judges. That eminent person, Samuel, was not only a prophet himself, but on him was conferred the honour of founding schools for young men for the prophetic office. The object of those institutions, so far as we can gather, seems to have been to impart a knowledge of the law to men suitably endowed, fitting them to teach and influence the nation. From what little is recorded of them, we may conclude that those sons of the prophets enjoyed, as circumstances required, special assistance from God in the work to which they were devoted. On David, however, the gift was conferred in unusual measure, the fruit of which appears in his inspired Psalms. Several of his contemporaries were similarly endowed. From this period the prophetic element, with some brief intervals, became more prominent and influential in Israel, increasing in the copiousness of its communications till the depression of the house of David during the captivity.

The peculiar work of the prophet has not been always correctly understood. That element in some of them which had respect to the foretelling of future events has attracted undue attention and been magnified out of all proper proportions. This may be accounted for from its striking uniqueness, and the use to which it has been put as an important department of Christian evidence—drawing from it an invincible argument for the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. Yet this concentration upon the predictive aspect of prophecy has served to create a widespread misconception concerning the nature of the gift itself and the chief design in its exercise. The main purpose of the prophetic office has almost been lost sight of. By many today it is unknown that its leading object contemplated *the practical* spiritual interests of the people—that the prophets were principally employed in imparting instruction to them, exposing their sins, calling them to repent, setting before them the paths of duty, and in various ways seeking to promote their religious improvement.

Prediction, in the strict sense of the term, occupies a very inconspicuous place in the ministry of Moses, the chief of all the prophets. Some of the more prominent among them—as Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha—seem hardly to have uttered any predictions at all. Their business consisted mainly in denouncing the idolatrous practices of the people, and in vindicating the claims of God to their homage and service. It is true that in the writings of two or three predictions largely abound, nevertheless, if they are examined with care it will quickly be seen that *their* ministry, too, had largely to do with the existing spiritual conditions of those among whom they laboured. Take for example Isaiah, who of all the prophets was perhaps most honoured with revelations of the future, and a cursory investigation will show that foretelling constituted only one portion of the message he delivered. The true idea of the prophet is that of a man raised up to witness for God, His mouthpiece to the people—to rebuke sin, counsel in perplexity, and instruct them in the ways of the Lord.

Even the positive predictions delivered by the prophets, while contemplating the benefit of future generations (by which alone, on their fulfillment they could be fully understood), were subservient to the immediate purposes of their ministry, by affording encouragement and hope unto those who feared God amidst the general disorders and declension of the times in which they lived. This plain view of the case, which numerous and obvious facts support, requires to be understood in order to a correct conception of the prophetic Scriptures in their general structure. On the subject of *the covenants*, the predictive portions of their writings, as would naturally be expected, have the more direct bearing, yet the practical parts, which deal with the sins and duties

of the people, make their own contribution—the practical sections furnishing many striking illustrations of the previous revelations and give definiteness to the meaning of many particulars embraced in the covenants.

The didactic and the practical are often strangely mingled. Statements which at first bear on present duty, sometimes insensibly, and at other times more abruptly, pass into representations of the future which startle us, not less by the suddenness of their introduction, than by the vividness of their colouring. All, however, is made strictly subservient to the immediate purpose which the prophets had in view. The intimate blending of these different elements makes it far from easy to separate them in all instances, nor is it necessary to attempt it. As they now stand, they more effectually promoted the end in view in the spiritual improvement of the people. The glowing prospects of the future either supplied an incentive to the discharge of present duty or ministered to their support under present trial. Still, to the predictions, strictly so called, we must look as the chief means of furnishing the fullest light on the prospective covenant transactions of God with His people.

The nature and extent of the help we shall derive from these intimations of the future will turn, to a large extent, on the mode in which we deal with them. The interpretation of prophecy, in all its principles and results, is a large subject, but a few words are called for here so as to prevent misconception. A slight examination of the prophetic Scriptures is enough to show that their language is not infrequently taken—leaving out of consideration the figures which natural scenery supply—either from past events in the history of Israel or from the sacred institutions and arrangements with which they had long been familiar. And of course this is quite natural when we bear in mind the typical character impressed on the Old Testament dispensation throughout. Yea, probably it was necessary as the best means of imparting to the Jewish people an intelligible representation of the future.

The creation of an entirely new nomenclature in literal adaptation to the better things to come, instead of being understood, would only have occasioned perplexity and defeated the object for which the revelation was given. Be this as it may, the fact is certain that in terms peculiar to the theocracy, or descriptive of theocratic events, the revelation of future things was made. In other words, the language of the type is familiarly employed in delineation of the antitype. Thus, for example, “Israel” is the term used in reference to the spiritual seed. “Visions and dreams” (the current mode of the divine communications in those times) describe the future operations of the Holy Spirit under the Gospel dispensation. “David,” in like manner, is the name applied again and again to the Messiah, the true Shepherd of Israel. And the events of the future are represented in terms derived from the dispensation then existing. Occasionally express statements are made affirming that the order of things then in being was destined to pass away—as in Jeremiah 3:16. At other times, the change impending was as plainly implied.

On this principle, then, these predictions are constructed almost throughout, and on no other can they be correctly interpreted. It was thus that the apostles dealt with them, yet it is sadly overlooked by many of our moderns. A slavish adherence to a literal interpretation—which is the survival of a Jewish error—if consistently carried out, necessarily leads to consequences which few are prepared to face, opposed as they are to both the letter and the spirit of the Gospel. It is certainly a humiliating proof of human infirmity, even in good men, that at this late date, the principle on which so large a part of the Word is to be interpreted has yet to be settled, and that from the same prophetic statements the most diverse conclusions are derived. Surely it should be apparent that since the literal cannot be fairly applied without eliciting conclusions

contradicting apostolic testimony, we are bound to abide by the typical and figurative as the only safe principle.

There is one other misconception against which we must guard. It must not be concluded that because the Messianic predictions are for the most part plain to us, acquainted as we are with the events in which they found their fulfillment, that therefore they must have been equally plain unto those to whom they were first delivered, but from whose times these events were far distant. In dealing with those Scriptures for our own edification, it is our privilege to take advantage of all the light furnished by the New Testament, but in so doing we must not forget that *our* position is vastly different from that of those amongst whom the prophets exercised their ministry. Take, for instance, the predictions expecting the Messiah—the great subject of the covenant promises. Consider the many references to His lowly condition, His sufferings and death, and then to the triumphant strain in which His exaltation and glory are so largely set forth. Some passages represent Him as a man amongst His fellow men, others as the mighty God. How perplexing must those representations—apparently so much at variance with each other—have been to the Jews!

Keeping these things in mind, we may now observe that the ministry of the prophets, commencing with David, and after a break, continuing from Joel onwards, was of considerable value in filling up the truth which, in brief outline, the covenants exhibited, yet leaving much to be still supplied by the actual fulfillment of the promises they contained. No one contributed more to this result than Isaiah. On the one hand, he furnishes the most vivid portrayals of the treatment which the Messiah would receive from His countrymen, and of the nature and severity of the sufferings He was to endure, both at the hands of God and of men, in the accomplishment of His work. On the other hand, he supplies the most blessed testimony to the essential dignity of His person, and the most animating assurances of the extent and glory of His kingdom, and under highly figurative language, describes the beneficial and peaceful effects of His government and the spiritual results of His reign.

With few exceptions, the rest of the prophets corroborated and supplemented the testimony of Isaiah. The person and work of the Messiah are represented from various angles, the stupendous results of His undertaking depicted under striking imagery, and divine wisdom is clearly evidenced in the phraseology—derived from the religious institutions of the Jews or from events of their history—which is employed to give vividness to their representations. The effects of this must have been to impart to the mass of the people a new and deeper realization of the magnitude of the results involved in the covenants under which they were placed, however perverted their views of the nature of these results may have been, and to awaken in the godly remnant of them expectations of a future immensely surpassing anything yet realized in their history—a future with which, in some mysterious way, their own spiritual life was bound up.

As the earthly prospects of Israel became darker, through the growing corruption of the nation, hastening towards that catastrophe which destroyed their temple, and for a time removed them as captives into a strange land, those prophets who then exercised their ministry were far more explicit in regard to the nature of the great alteration which the appearing of the Messiah would produce and of the blessings which He would dispense. In their hands the future assumed a more precise shape and the expectations warranted by their language exhibited an expansion far in advance of anything to be found in the Scriptures. This was just what the circumstances of the time required. One can readily conceive the despondency with which the pious Jews must have looked on the course which events were taking. The idolatrous propensities of the masses, the general immorality which was encouraged by idol worship, the common contempt with which

God's servants were treated, the wickedness of their kings, and the frequent invasion of their land by hostile forces, all presaged the dissolution of their state.

When assured that the divine patience was at last exhausted, that the infliction of the oft-threatened punishment was nigh at hand, and that the triumph of their enemies was certain, at what conclusion could they arrive than that for their sins they were forsaken of God, that the covenant was about to be made void, and that all their hopes would soon be buried in the ruin of their country? They might not unreasonably have supposed that the stability of the covenant was dependent upon their obedience, and since that obedience had been withheld, and all the gracious measures taken to reclaim them had failed—since, in the review of their past history, no lesson was so impressively taught as their incurable tendency to sin—they might have concluded that God was absolved from His promise, and that even His righteousness demanded the people should be cut off and left to the ruin which they had so persistently courted, the near approach of which everything seemed to indicate.

Such a despondent condition required special encouragement and the form which that encouragement assumed deserves particular attention. It consisted in the assurance of a thorough change in the dispensation under which Israel had hitherto been placed, and of the establishment of a *new covenant* under the immediate administration of the Messiah, the purely spiritual character of which is described in language far more explicit than had hitherto been given. This more glorious constitution of things they were taught was the designed issue of all God's dealings towards them and to it their hopes were henceforth to be confined. Notwithstanding their present calamities, the continuance of their national existence was assured to them until in due time the new order of things was inaugurated. Could anything be conceived better fitted to enkindle the hopes and communicate the richest consolation to the devout portion of the Jews than such an assurance?

CONDITIONS IN THE PAST

There is nothing more outstanding today in the sad state of Christendom than *the abounding of empty professors* (those with a non-saving or dead faith), and as so many suppose that this is a certain precursor of the great apostacy which will mark the terminal of this age, we give further quotations to show that identically the same feature has prominently marked other generations in the past. "Christ is a Lord to command us to walk in the way of life. The fault of our times is that multitudes profess Christ, yet many allow of no Christ but of their own devising, namely, a Christ that must be a Saviour to deliver from hell, but not a Lord to command them—that they cannot brook...Faith was never more professed, yet there was never less true faith" (Perkins, Vol. 2, pp. 163, 230). And this, be it noted, was in the palmy days of the Reformation!

"These are days wherein we have as sad and tremendous examples of apostasy, backsliding, and falling from high and glorious pitches in profession, as any age can parallel. As many washed swine returning to their mire, and as many Demases going after the present evil world, and men going out from the church which were never truly and properly of it, as many sons of the morning and children of high illumination and gifts sitting in darkness, and that of all sorts—as ever in so short a space of time since the name of Christ was known upon the earth. What through the deviating of some to the ways of the world, and the lusts of the flesh; what of others, to spiritual

wickedness and abominations; it is seldom that we see a professor to hold out in the glory of his profession to the end” (John Owen, Vol. 6, p. 123).

“It were enough to excite a smile if the subject was not too serious for laughter, to behold the seeming zeal with which numbers in the present day [A.D. 1800] are hastening to convert *others*, many of whom, it is to be feared, were never converted *themselves*; and to hear the indignation expressed by many against infidels, who, as far as relates to any saving work of grace wrought upon their own souls, are no less infidels under a different bearing. All such Christians are Christians only by system. Their creed is derived from their fathers, and is either the effect of habit or education” (Robert Hawker, 1753-1827, Vol. 7, p. 500). As it is now, so it was then—as it was then, so it is now—thousands of nominal Christians engaged in “personal” and “missionary” work, who are ignorant of some of the most rudimentary principles of the faith, working merely in the energy of the flesh.

How the true servant of God bemoans the *lack of response* today unto faithful preaching, the stolid indifference of his hearers—neither the terrors of the law nor the attractions of the Gospel making any impression. Elderly evangelists are complaining how much rarer genuine conversions are now than they were thirty years ago. But this is no new thing. “This age is miserable if we regard the practice of faith and repentance which God requireth—for men live in ignorance, without knowledge, they go on in looseness of life without reformation, which is both odious to God and scandalous to men. Not one in an hundred turn to God at the preaching of His Word, renewing his ways by daily repentance” (Perkins, Vol. 3, p. 249). “How many have melting hearts when they hear God blasphemed and the religion of Christ wronged? How few are there that yield to the motions of the Spirit! We may take up a wonderful complaint of the hardness of men’s hearts in these days, who never tremble at the Word of God. Neither His promises, nor threatenings, nor commands, will melt their hearts” (Richard Sibbes, about 1630, Vol. 6, p. 40).

“We are fallen into times in which the thing and doctrine of it is forgotten and laid aside, in which there are multitudes of professors but few converts, many that seem to walk in the way of life, but never came in at the strait gate. There is a zeal amongst us to advance this or that reformation in religion, and it hath been all the cry. But my brethren, where is *regeneration* called for or regarded? We have seen the greatest outward alterations that ever were in any age—kingdoms turned and converted into commonwealths, the powers of heaven and earth shaken, but men, although they turn this way and that, from this or that way, from this opinion to that, yet their hearts generally turn upon the same hinges they were hung upon when they came into this world. In this University of Oxford we have had puttings out and puttings in, but where is putting off the old man and putting on the new? Where do we hear (as we did formerly) of souls carrying home the Holy Spirit from sermons, of their being changed and made new, and of students running weeping to their studies crying out, ‘What shall I do to be saved?’ This was heretofore a common cry. Conversion is the only standing miracle in the church, but I may truly say this miracle is *well-nigh ceased*. We hear of few of them” (Thomas Goodwin, 1670, Vol. 6, p. 157).

Nor is the low state of spirituality which now obtains so generally amongst those we have reason to believe *are* the Lord’s people, any new thing. “O that this union among saints was more conspicuous and evident. But with grief of heart be it spoken, little is to be seen of that, whilst much of that which is the opposite to it is everywhere too apparent. What schisms, rents, divisions are to be found even amongst the Lord’s people” (J. Jacombe, 1647, p. 55). “The English Christians heretofore were famous for their strict walking, constant communion with God, undaunted zeal, sweet experiences, holy conferences and communications, whereas now we meet with but such as are, like the vain men of Israel, of a light spirit, loose conversation, given to vain wranglings and

disputes, more than to practicing a holy life, and measuring religion not so much by the power of godliness as by form and faction, and siding with parties” (Thomas Manton, Vol. 5, p. 424).

“We are departed from the Lord, and the Lord is in great measure departed from us. What a woeful withering wind has blown upon God’s vineyard in the land! We are fallen from our first love, our former zeal for God and His precious truths, and the royalties of our Redeemer’s crown. And is there not a lamentable decay as to the power and life of godliness, which has dwindled away into an empty form with the most? To conclude, it is not with the nobles, gentry, ministers, or people in Scotland, as once in a day it has been. And the worst of it is, that though it be so, though gray hairs are here and there upon us, yet we do not perceive it. We make our faces harder than a rock and refuse to return to the Lord” (Ebenezer Erskine, about 1760, Vol. 1, p. 112).

“We live in a day when the love of many (of whom we would hope the best), is, at least, grown very cold. The effects of a narrow, suspicious, censorious, and selfish spirit are but too evident amongst professors of the Gospel. If I were to insist at large upon the offenses of this kind which abound amongst us, I should seem almost reduced to the necessity either of retracting what I have advanced or of maintaining that a great part (if not the greatest part) of those who profess to know the Lord are deceiving themselves with a form of godliness, being destitute of its power. For though they may abound in knowledge and gifts and have much to say upon the subject of Christian experience, they appear *to lack* the great, the inimitable, the indispensable criterion of true Christianity, *a love to the brethren*—without which all other seeming advantages and attainments are of no good” (John Newton, 1770, Vol. 1, p. 180). “Whether the present age be worse than others which have preceded it, I shall not determine [wise man!], but this is manifest, that it abounds not only in infidelity and profligacy, but with great numbers of loose characters among professing Christians. Even of those who retain a decency of character, many are sunk into a *Laodicean lukewarmness*” (Andrew Fuller, 1810, Vol. 4, p. 355).

Reference has previously been made to the fearful profligacy of the court of Charles the First (1600-1649), and the open wickedness which prevailed generally in this land throughout his reign. Under the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell (1599-1659) conditions greatly improved, but after his demise (in 1658) and upon the enthronement of Charles the Second (1630-1685), the rivers of evil soon broke their banks, spreading moral desolation far and wide. “Few have any idea of the flood of ungodliness and profanity which characterized the reign of Charles II. It was not merely libertinism and the most unblushing profligacy which stalked abroad in open day, but the most avowed infidelity and coarsest profaneness. It was as if all hell had broken loose, and as if ungodliness, chained up by the iron hand of Cromwell, would now take its full swing, and make ample amends for past deprivations. The Puritans, called so derisively from their purity of principle and conduct, were hooted down and driven from society as disturbers of the public peace” (The Gospel Standard, 1852, p. 334).

“Alas, do not many prop up themselves in some earthly thing, as if there were no God in Israel to be sought unto—strengthening themselves in their own righteousness, as if there were no Mediator...I am sore afraid that most of the knowledge of God and Christ we have in this age [1670] is a mere notion of faith without value, like a ring without the diamond” (Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680, Vol. 4, p. 58). In his dedication of George Swinnock’s (1627-1673) “The Beauty of Magistracy,” Thomas Hall (1610-1665), addressing “All the prudent, zealous, and magnanimous Magistrates, Judges, and Gentry in England, Scotland, and Ireland, in September, 1659, began, ‘My Lords, and Gentlemen—The dedication of this treatise was intended for the Parliament, but that being dissolved, it most properly falls to you, who are, under God, the pillars of the state. *Such is the corruption of the times* we live in, that we are put to dispute every inch of

the way with enemies of truth—Magistracy, ministry, Sabbaths, sacraments, Trinity, Scriptures—all things are now questioned, nothing believed or practiced by many’ ” (Swinnock’s Works, Vol. 4, p. 147).

“How is this land filled with sin, yea, with the worst of sins, against the Holy One of Israel. Hell seems to be broken loose, and men try to exceed and excel one another in all kinds of wickedness. Oh the scarlet sins that are now to be found under many scarlet robes! [Romanist Bishops.] Oh the black transgressions that are now to be found under many black cassocks! [Priests.] Oh the new-found oaths, the hellish blasphemies, the horrible filthiness, and abominable debaucheries that are committed daily in the face of the sun! How shameless, how senseless are sinners grown in these days! Sin everywhere now appears with a whore’s forehead. What open opposition does Christ meet with in His Gospel, offices, members, ways, worship, and works! How does all iniquity abound, and how bold and resolute are multitudes now in dishonouring of God, in polluting His ordinances, in destroying their own souls, and in treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath (Rom 2:5)! But the worse the times are, the better every Christian must labour to be—the more profane the age is wherein we live, the more holy must we endeavour to be” (Thomas Brooks, 1650, Vol. 4, p. 364).

“Wickedness like a flood is like to drown our English world. It begins already to be above the tops of the mountains. It has almost swallowed up all—our youth, our middle age, old age. O debauchery, debauchery, what hast thou done in England! Thou hast corrupted our young men, hast made our old men beasts. Thou hast deflowered our virgins, and hast made numerous whores. Thou hast made our earth to reel to and fro like a drunkard. It is in danger to be removed like a cottage. Yea, it is, because transgression is so heavy upon it, like to ‘fall, and not rise again’ (Isa 24:20). O that I could mourn for England, and for the sins that are committed therein, even while I see that, without repentance, the men of God’s wrath are about to deal with us (Eze 9:1-2). Well, I have written, and by God’s assistance shall pray, that this flood may abate in England, and could I but see the tops of the mountains above it, I should think these waters were abating.

“It is the duty of those that can, to cry out against this deadly plague. Yea, to lift up their voice as with a trumpet against it, that men may be awakened about it, fly from it, as from that which is the greatest evils. Sin pulled angels out of heaven, pulls men down to hell, and overthroweth kingdoms. Who that sees the land in danger will not set the beacons on a flame? Who that sees the devils as roaring lions continually devouring souls will not make an outcry? But above all, when we see sin, sinful sin, swallowing up a nation, sinking of a nation, and bringing its inhabitants to temporal; spiritual, and eternal ruin, shall we not cry out, ‘They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink’ (Isa 29:9); they are intoxicated with deadly poison of sin, which will, if its malignity be not by wholesome means allayed, bring soul and body, estate and country, and all, to ruin and destruction” (John Bunyan, 1660, from “The Life and Death of Mr. Badman”). And for such faithful witnessing Bunyan was cast into prison.

One of the saddest features of our day is the blatant and almost universal desecration of the Holy Sabbath. Yet other ages besides ours have been cursed with the same fearful sin. “Men make this their business—they will be rich, and hence it is they are not only unmerciful to themselves in wearing and wasting their own spirits with carking cares, but to such also as they employ—neither regarding the souls or bodies of men, scarce affording them the liberty of the Lord’s Day (as has been too common in our Newfoundland employments), or if they have it, yet they are so worn out with incessant labours that that precious time is spent either in sleep or idleness. It is no wonder God gives you more rest than you would have, since that day of rest hath been no better improved. This over-doing hath not been the least cause of our undoing” (John

Flavel, 1660, Vol. 5, p. 272). It has long been our own conviction that the frequent spectacle of millions of artisans, in different countries, being out of work, *is a divine judgment* for so much labour upon His day.

“In these late years how has profaneness, like a flood, broke in upon us on the Lord’s Day! And therefore it highly concerns all the profaners of God’s Sabbath to lay their hands upon their hearts, and to say, The Lord is righteous, the Lord is righteous, though He has laid our habitations desolate. Who is so great a stranger in our English Israel as not to know that God was more dishonoured on the Sabbath, within and without the walls of London, than He was in all the other six days of the week? and therefore let us not think it strange that such a fire (the terrible fire of London in 1666) was kindled on that day as has reduced all to ashes. What antic habits did men and women put on, on this day! What frothy, empty discourses and intemperance was to be found at many men’s tables this day! How were ale-houses, stews, and Moorfields filled with debauched sinners this day! No wonder then if London be laid desolate” (Thomas Brooks, 1667, Vol. 6, p. 114).

We are not unmindful of the fact that some evilly-minded persons may be inclined to turn to a wrong use of what has been advanced, making the same a cloak for their own carnality, arguing that *they* are no worse, nay, not so bad as many who lived in by-gone days. Nor must Christians persuade themselves that they are obliged to swim with the tide, that in view of the degeneracy of our days it cannot be expected that they should be as godly and fruitful as if they had lived during a time of spiritual revival. Let each of us earnestly endeavour to take to heart and turn into fervent prayer those timely words of Thomas Brooks, “The worse the times are, the better every Christian must labour to be. The more profane the age wherein we live, the more holy must we endeavour to be.”

Nor are we unmindful of another danger. In discovering that the evils of our decadent age are but fresh outbursts of those moral and spiritual diseases which have often plagued previous generations, we lose or lessen our horror and sorrow over the wickedness which now stalks through the world. May God graciously deliver us from stoical indifference at the sad sights which now stare us in the face on every hand. God has promised a special blessing to those who “sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done” in our land (Eze 9:4). Let us seek to drink more deeply into the spirit of Him who wept over Jerusalem. Finally, let us marvel and adore the infinite patience of Him who “bears with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.”

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

4. *Its Verity*

Before proceeding further with an orderly opening up of this profound but precious doctrine, it may be better (especially for the benefit of those less familiar with the subject) if we now demonstrate *its Scripturalness*. We must not take anything for granted, and as numbers of our readers have never received any systematic instruction upon the subject—yea, some of them know next to nothing about it—and as others have heard and read only perversions and caricatures of this doctrine, it seems essential that we should pause and establish its verity. In other words, our present object is to furnish proof that what we are now writing upon is not some

theological invention of Calvin's or any other man's, but is clearly revealed in Holy Writ, namely, that God, before the foundation of the world, made a difference between His creatures, singling out certain ones to be the special objects of His favour.

In this article, we shall deal with the subject in a more or less general way—occupying ourselves with *the fact itself*, reserving the more detailed analysis and the drawing of distinctions for later articles. Let us begin by asking, Has God an elect people? Now this question must be propounded to God Himself, for He alone is competent to answer it. It is, therefore, to His Holy Word we have to turn, if we would learn *His* answer thereto. But ere doing so, we need to earnestly beg God to grant us a teachable spirit, that we may humbly receive the divine testimony. The things of God can no man know, till God Himself declares them, but when He *has* declared them, it is not only crass folly, but wicked presumption, for anyone to contend or disbelieve. The Holy Scriptures are the Rule of Faith as well as the Rule of Conduct. To the law and the testimony, then, we now turn.

Concerning the nation of Israel we read, “The LORD thy God hath *chosen* thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the earth” (Deu 7:6). “For the LORD hath *chosen* Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure” (Psa 135:4) “But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have *chosen*, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, thou art my servant; I have *chosen* thee, and not cast thee away” (Isa 41:8-9). These testimonies make it unmistakably plain that ancient Israel were the favoured, elect people of God. We do not here take up the question as to why God chose them, or as to *what* they were chosen unto, but notice only the bare fact itself. In Old Testament times God had an elect nation.

Next it is to be observed that even in favoured Israel God made a distinction—there was an election within an election. Or in other words, God had a special people of His own from amongst the nation itself. “For they are *not all Israel*, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all *children*: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Rom 9:6-8). “God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew....I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the *election* of grace....Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the *election* hath obtained it” (Rom 11:2-7). Thus we see that even in invisible Israel, the nation chosen to outward privileges, God had an election—a *spiritual* Israel, the objects of His love.

The same principle of divine selection appears plainly and conspicuously in the teaching of the New Testament. There, too, it is revealed that God has a peculiar people, the subjects of His special favour, His own dear children. The Saviour and His apostles describe this people in various ways and often designate them by the term of which we here treat. “For the *elect's* sake those days shall be shortened....insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very *elect*....and they shall gather together his *elect* from the four winds” (Mat 24:22, 24, 31). “Shall not God avenge his own *elect*, which cry day and night unto him?” (Luk 18:7). “Who shall lay anything to the charge of *God's elect*?” (Rom 8:33). “That the purpose of God according to *election* might stand” (Rom 9:11). “I endure all things for the *elect's* sake” (2Ti 2:10), “The faith of *God's elect*” (Ti 1:1). Many other passages might be quoted, but these are sufficient to clearly demonstrate that God has an elect people. God Himself says He has, who will dare say He has not?!

The word “elected” in one of its forms, or its synonym “chosen” in one of its forms, occurs upon the sacred page considerably over one hundred times. The term, then, belongs to the divine

vocabulary. It must mean something—it must convey some definite idea. What, then, is its significance? The humble inquirer will not force a construction upon the word, or seek to read into it his own preconceptions, but will prayerfully endeavour to ascertain the mind of the Spirit. Nor should this be difficult, for there is no word in human language which has a more specific meaning. The concept universally expressed by it is that one is taken and another left, for if all were taken there would be no “choice.” Moreover, the right of choice always belongs to him who chooses—the act is his, the motive is his. Therein “choice” differs from compulsion, the paying of a debt, discharging an obligation, or responding to the requirements of justice. Choice is a free and sovereign act.

Let there be no uncertainty about the meaning of our term. God has made a choice, for election signifies selection and appointment. God has exercised His own sovereign will and singled out from the mass of His creatures those upon whom He determined to bestow His special favours. There cannot be an election without a singling out, and there cannot be a singling out without a passing by. The doctrine of election means, that, from all eternity, God made a choice of those who were to be His special treasure, His dear children, the co-heirs of Christ. The doctrine of election means that before His Son became incarnate, God marked out the ones who should be saved by Him. The doctrine of election means that God has left nothing to chance—the accomplishment of His purpose, the success of Christ’s undertaking, the peopling of heaven, is not contingent upon the fickle caprice of the creature. God’s will, and not man’s will, fixes destiny.

Let us now call attention to a most remarkable and little known example of divine election. “I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and *the elect angels*” (1Ti 5:21). If then, there are “elect angels” there must necessarily be non-elect, for there cannot be the one without the other. God, then, in the past made a selection amongst the hosts of heaven, choosing some to be vessels of honour and others to be vessels of dishonour. Those He chose unto His favour, stood steadfast, remained in subjection to His will. The rest fell when Satan revolted, for upon his apostasy he dragged down with himself one third of the angels (Rev 12:4). Concerning them we read, “God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness” (2Pe 2:4). But those of them who belong to the election of grace are “the holy angels”—holy as the consequence of their election, and not elected because they were holy, for election antedated their creation. The supreme example of election is seen in Christ—the next highest in that God made choice amongst the celestial hierarchies.

Let us next observe and admire the marvel and singularity of God’s choice among men. He has selected a portion of Adam’s race to be the high favourites of heaven. “Now this is a wonder of wonders, when we come to consider that the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, is the Lord’s. If God must have a chosen race, why did He not select one from the majestic order of angels, or from the flashing cherubim and seraphim who stand around His throne? Why was not Gabriel fixed upon? Why was he not so constituted that from his loins there might spring a mighty race of angels and why were not those chosen of God from before the foundation of the world? What could there be in *man*, a creature lower than the angels, that God should select him rather than the angelic spirits? Why were not the cherubim and seraphim given to Christ? Why did He not assume the nature of angels and take *them* into union with Himself? An angelic body might be more in keeping with the person of deity, than a body of weak and suffering flesh and blood. There was something congruous if He had said unto the angels, ‘Ye shall be My sons.’ But no! Though all these were His own, He passes them by and stoops to man” (Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892).

Some may suggest that the reason why God made choice of Adam's descendants in preference to the angels, was that the human race fell in Adam, and thus afforded a more suitable case for God to display His rich mercy upon. But such a supposition is entirely fallacious, for as we have seen, one third of the angels themselves fell from their high estate, yet so far from God showing them mercy, He "hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 1:6). No Saviour was provided for them, no Gospel has ever been preached to them. How striking and how solemn is this—the fallen angels passed by—the fallen sons of Adam made the recipients of the overtures of divine mercy.

Here is a truly marvellous thing. God determined to have a people who should be His peculiar treasure, nearer and dearer to Himself than any other creatures—a people who should be conformed to the very image of His Son. And that people was chosen from the descendants of Adam. Why? Why not have reserved that supreme honor for the celestial hosts? They are a higher order of beings, they were created before us. They were heavenly creatures, yet God passed them by—we are earthly, yet the Lord set His heart upon us. Again we ask, why? Ah, let those who hate the truth of God's high sovereignty and contend against the doctrine of unconditional election, carefully ponder this striking example of it. Let those who so blatantly insist that it would be unjust for God to show partiality between man and man, tell us why did He show partiality between race and race, bestowing favours upon men which He never has upon angels? Only one answer is possible—*because it so pleased Him*.

Election is a divine secret, an act in the will of God in eternity past. But it does not forever remain such. No, in due time, God is pleased to make openly manifest His everlasting councils. This He has done in varying degrees, since the beginning of human history. In Genesis 3:15, He made known the fact that there would be two distinct lines—the woman's "seed," which denoted Christ and His people, and the serpent's "seed," which signified Satan and those who are conformed to his likeness—God placing an irreconcilable "enmity" between them. These two "seeds" comprehend the elect and the non-elect. Abel belonged to the election of grace, evidence of this being furnished in his "faith" (Heb 11:4), for only those "ordained to eternal life" (Act 13:48) savingly "believe." Cain belonged to the non-elect, evidence of this is found in the statement, "Cain, who was of that wicked one" (1Jo 3:12). Thus at the beginning of history, in the two sons of Adam and Eve, God "took" the one into His favour and "left" the other to suffer the due reward of his iniquities.

Next, we behold election running in the line of Seth, for it was of his descendants (and not those of Cain's) we read, "Then began men to call upon the name of the LORD" (Gen 4:26). But in the course of time they too were corrupted, until the entire human race became so evil that God sent the flood and swept them all away. Yet even then the principle of divine election was exemplified—not only in Enoch, but that "Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Gen 6:8). It was the same after the flood, for a marked discrimination was made between the sons of Noah, "Blessed be the LORD God of Shem" (Gen 9:26) which imports that God had chosen and blessed him. On the other hand, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren" (Gen 9:25), which is expressive of preterition and all that is involved in God's rejection. Thus, even of those who emerged from the ark, God made one to differ from another.

From the sons of Noah sprang the nations which have peopled the world. "By these [i.e., Noah's three sons] were the nations divided in the earth after the flood" (Gen 10:32). From those seventy nations God chose the one in which the great current of His election would run. In Genesis 10:25, we read that this dividing of the nations was made in the time of Eber, the grandson of Shem. Why are we told this? To intimate that God then began to separate the Jewish

nation unto Himself in Eber, for Eber was their father. Hence it is also that at the beginning of Shem's genealogy we are told, "Shem [the elected and blessed of God] also, the father of all the children of *Eber*" (Gen 10:21). This is very striking, for Shem had other and older children (whose line of descendants is also recorded), as Asshur and Elim, the fathers of the Assyrians and the Persians.

The seemingly dry and uninteresting detail in Genesis 3:10, to which we have just alluded, marked a most important step forward in the outworking of the divine counsels, for it was then that God began to separate unto Himself the Israelites in Eber, whom He had appointed to be their father. Till then the Hebrews had lain promiscuously mingled with the other nations, but now God "divided" them from the rest, as the other nations were divided from one another. Accordingly we find Eber's posterity, even when very few in number, were designated "Hebrews" as their national denomination ("Israel" being their *religious* name) in distinction from those amongst whom they lived, "Abram the *Hebrew*" (Gen 14:13), Joseph "the *Hebrew*" (Gen 39:14). Hence, when they became a nation in numbers, and whilst living in the midst of the Egyptians, they are again styled "Hebrews" (Exo 1:15), while in Numbers 24:24, they are distinctly called "*Eber*"!

What we have sought to explain above is definitely confirmed by, "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High *divided* to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. *For* the LORD's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance" (Deu 32:7-9). Notice, first, the Lord here bade Israel cast their minds back to ancient times, the traditions of which had been handed down by their fathers. Second, the particular event alluded to was when God "divided" to the nations their inheritance, the reference being to that famous division of Genesis 10. Third, those nations are spoken of not "as the sons of Noah" (who was in the elect line), but as "the sons of *Adam*"—another plain hint that *he* headed the line of the reprobate. Fourth, that when God allotted to the non-elect nations their earthly portion, even then the eye of His grace and favour was upon the children of Israel. Fifth, "according to the *number* of the children of Israel," which was seventy when they first settled in Egypt (Gen 46:27)—the exact number of the nations mentioned in Genesis 10!

The chief link of connection between Eber and the nation of Israel was, of course, Abraham, and in his case the principle of divine election shines forth with sunlight clearness. The divine call which he received marked another important stage in the development of God's eternal purpose. At the tower of Babel, God gave over the nations to walk in their own evil ways, afterward taking up Abraham to be the founder of the favoured nation. "Thou art the LORD the God, who didst *choose* Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur" (Neh 9:7). It was not Abraham who chose God, but God who chose Abraham. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia" (Act 7:2). This title "the God of glory" is employed here to emphasize the signal favour which was shown to Abraham, the glory of His grace in electing him, for there was nothing in him by nature that lifted him about his fellows and entitled him to the divine notice. It was unmerited kindness, sovereign mercy, which was shown him.

This is made very evident by what is told us in Joshua 24 of Abraham's condition *before* JEHOVAH appeared to him, "Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served *other gods*" (Jos 24:2). Abraham was living in the heathen city of Ur and belonged to an idolatrous family! At a later date, God pressed this very fact upon his descendants, reminding them of the lowly and corrupt state of their original, and giving them to know it was

for no good in him that he had been chosen, “Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him” (Isa 51:1-2). What a flesh-withering word is that—the great Abraham is here likened (by God) to “the hole of the pit”—such was his condition when the Lord first appeared unto him.

But there is more in the above passage. Observe carefully the words, “I called him *alone*” (Isa 51:2). Remember that this was while he dwelt in Ur, and as modern excavations have shown, that was a city of vast extent. Out of all its huge number of inhabitants God revealed himself to *one only*! The Lord here emphasized that very fact and calls upon us to mark the singularity of His election by this word “alone.” See here, then, the absolute sovereignty of God, exercising His own imperial will, choosing whom He pleases. He had mercy upon Abraham simply because He was pleased to do so, and He left the remainder of his countrymen in heathen darkness simply because it so seemed good in His sight. There was nothing more in Abraham than in any of his fellows why God should have selected him. Whatever goodness was found in him later, was what God Himself put there, and therefore it was the consequence and not the cause of His choice.

CONSCIENCE

1. Its Nature and Origin

There is in man, as man—as the creature of God—a “moral sense,” as it is called—a faculty of perception of moral quality in whatever comes into the field of view. This, of course, was his before the fall, indeed, without it, a fall would not have been possible. He would have been a mere beast, for which it is impossible to be *immoral*, just because it is *unmoral*—with no capacity of moral perception or reflection at all. Such a being could not *fall*. “Man that is in honour, and *understandeth* not”—here spoken clearly, not of rational, but of moral discernment—“is like the beasts that perish” (Psa 49:20). That is the character of the beast, then. Had man gained by the fall a moral sense, it would have been really in the phrase of a modern infidel, a “fall upward.” It would have brought him into a higher condition than that in which he was created.

When God said of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, “Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17), this was surely not to be understood by Adam as a mere consequence which would follow a certain course, a mere appeal to self-love, and no more! Had it been so, and he had merely understood it as an alternative proposed to him, he might have chosen the alternative, however fatal, yet without sin. But in this case “thou shalt not” could not have been said—the prohibition would have sunk into mere advice. Sin could not then have been, nor fall possible. The innocence in which man stood—as made “upright” (Ecc 7:29)—was not the immaturity of a babe which we call such. To confound the reality of innocence in upright Adam with the shadow of it only in the fallen creature would be to accuse the Creator and make the record of the fall an unintelligible mystery.

What, then, does the knowledge of good and evil, as acquired in the fall, imply? For it is of this that the very name of the prohibited tree speaks. It is this that the serpent proposed, “Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:5). And it is this that the divine Word after the fall assures us had resulted. “The man is become as one of us, to know good and evil” (Gen 3:22).

What, then, is this knowledge? It is, as all the inspired Word is, put before us to understand, and it will be a gain to us to understand it.

When the prohibition was first given, it is plain it was in a scene where God had pronounced everything, without exception, which He had created, “very good.” Evil there was not anywhere then to be perceived. The faculty of perception did not, of course, create the object to be perceived. Evil there yet was none. I do not mean that angels had not fallen. The whole history assures one that they had. But that did not necessarily introduce it into the world. This was, with all in it, very good and as such is committed into the hands of man its head. Upon his obedience the condition of all within this realm of his depended. Save through him, evil could not enter—for the presence of the devil in the serpent was not an entrance in the sense in which I speak of it. Man himself alone could really bring it in.

It may be asked, however, Did not the prohibition itself suppose (and imply the knowledge of) evil as possible, at least? To us, alas! it does, and here, indeed, is the great difficulty for us. How can we put ourselves back into that lost estate of innocence, so as to form any right conception of it at all? Prohibition to us, alas! awakens at once the thought of possible disobedience and in the fallen nature the lust of it. But Adam had no lust and no conception as yet of possible disobedience. This need not imply any mental or moral feebleness, but as to the latter (taking all into account), the very opposite.

To know good and evil means simply to discern the difference between these two. But for this to be, the two must be *together* within the field of vision. It was just the perfection of Adam’s world that in it there was none and in himself none. He could abide in good, and enjoy it, without thought of its opposite—a state for us difficult of conception, no doubt, but not impossible to conceive. Gratitude he could have and feel, without thought of ingratitude. Believe, praise, love, and adore he could, without realizing even the possibility of the opposite of these and with a moral nature which could yet recognize them immediately if they were presented.

The history of the fall confirms this. The serpent’s first approach is by a question, which under the form of a question of fact, suggests a moral one, “Yea [is it so] that God *hath said*, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Gen 3:1). But to entertain a moral question as to God is fatal. Implicit confidence in God is gone and evil is already there known in the soul of her who entertains the question. The woman’s answer already shows the consequence of this, “Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, and ye shall not touch it, lest ye die” (see Gen 3:2)! Here, in her mind the prohibited tree had displaced the tree of life. The prohibition, increased to harshness in the manner of it, is weakened in the certainty of its attending penalty. God’s love and truth are obscured in her doubting soul and the devil can say, “Surely ye shall not die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat of it your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil” (see Gen 3:5).

Here it should be plain that faith in God, receiving all at His hand, prohibition and all, as good alike, would have foiled the enemy, and remained master of the field. By faith, from the first, and of necessity, man stood. All dispensations are, in this, alike. The evil that gained entrance into the world began as unbelief in the woman’s soul, and this having speedily ripened into the positive transgression, conscience awoke—the inward eyes were opened—they knew evil in contrast with good—knew it in themselves, and their actions show plainly that they did so, “They knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Gen 3:22).

The evil that had come in was in themselves alone, for of moral evil alone is capable. And thus the moral perception in man is become a judgment of good and evil in himself, and of

himself in view of it—and this is *conscience*. There is always in it a reference to one's self. It is always, as it were, testifying to our nakedness. It is the inheritance of fallen Adam's children, to whom innocence is no longer possible—a watch set upon us by God as under His just suspicion. It is the knowledge of good and evil as found in one who has obtained it by disobedience.

Yet how the grace of God to man shines out already here! “The man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.” How significant in its connection with that eternal purpose which was even then, when these words were spoken, beginning to be declared! A return to innocence was indeed impossible, but holiness might yet be, if divine love so willed. And thus out of the ruin of the first, a new creation yet more glorious was indeed to spring.

2. *Its Office and Character*

It is evident, and easy to see, that conscience *reveals* nothing. It simply declares the character of whatever is presented and that according to the light it has. As the eye is the light, only as it is the *inlet* of light, to the body, so the conscience is simply the *inlet* of whatever light morally there may be for the spirit. And just as disease may, to any extent, affect the bodily eye, so may it affect also the spiritual. Alas! the solemn consideration is that sin has thus affected, to a greater or lesser degree, the consciences of all men. Yet in none, perhaps, is it altogether darkened, and its power will manifest itself often in the most unexpected and striking way in those who, notwithstanding, resist to the last its convictions.

The scribes and Pharisees, plotting to entrap the Lord by the case of the adulteress condemned by Moses' law, are thus driven out of His presence by the simple yet penetrating words, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (Joh 8:7). Conscience in Herod sees in Christ the murdered Baptist risen from the dead (Mar 6:16). Stephen's adversaries, on the other hand, rush into murder, cut to the heart by the conviction that they have resisted the Holy Spirit (Act 7:54). Thus, in the midst of the most frantic opposition to the truth, nay, *by* this, the power of the truth over the conscience is clearly shown.

Scripture declares it in doctrine as well as example, “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (Joh 3:19-21). Here is the principle of which the example last given is the illustration. The evil-doer is aware of the light when he shuns it—would quench it, if possible, because he is aware of it. In it he is not, because he flees, not welcomes it. Yet in fleeing, carries the unmistakable witness of it in his heart.

Again, in the parable of the sower the Lord declares the same thing in another form. Of the seed sown by the wayside He says, “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart” (Mat 13:19). Now this is one apparently quite unconvinced. He does not understand the seed lies merely upon the surface of the ground, inviting the fowls of the air to catch it away. The heart of this man, hard as the roadside with the traffic of other things, if you could say of any that it was untouched by the Word, you could say it here. Yet the Lord expressly says, “Catcheth away that which was sown *in his heart*.” Even here the Word has not only touched, but *penetrated*. The heart, unchanged by it, has rejected it—true, but it has *had* to reject it. Satan is allowed to remove the Word, and it is taken away, but its rejected witness will come up in terrible memory at another day.

And this exactly agrees with the words of the apostle, “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which *believe not*, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2Co 4:3-4). Here again the unbelief which refuses the Gospel shuts the unbeliever up into the enemy’s hand. The blinding of the mind by the god of this world, like the removal of the seed by the fowls of the air, is the direct result of this first rejection of unwelcome testimony.

How immensely important, then, to the soul, is the treatment it accords to whatever it has to own as truth. As little or as much as it may seem to be! God is the God of truth, and where souls are themselves true, the possession of any portion of it is the possession of a clue-line which leads surely into His presence—the giving it up is the deliberate choice of darkness as one’s portion. And this applies in measure to everyone, sinner and saint alike, and to every truth of revelation. Every truth really bowed to in the soul leads on to more. Every error received requires, to be consistent with it, the reception of more. It is darkness and darkness is a kingdom—as the light is—part of an organized revolt against God. As the truth leads to and keeps us in His presence, so error is, in its essence, departure from Him.

[To be continued in June issue.]



June

THE LORD'S PRAYER—PART 4

“Thy kingdom come” (Mat 6:10). This second petition is the briefest and yet the most comprehensive one contained in our Lord’s Prayer, nevertheless, strange and sad to say that, in some circles, it is the least understood and the most controverted. The following questions call for careful consideration. First, what is the *relation* between this petition and the one preceding it? Second, *Whose* “kingdom” is here in view? Third, exactly what is meant by “Thy *kingdom*”? Fourth, in what sense or senses are we to understand, “Thy kingdom *come*”?

The first petition, “Hallowed be thy name” (Mat 6:9), concerns God’s glory itself, the second and third respect the *means* whereby His glory is manifested and promoted on earth. God’s name is manifestatively glorified here just in proportion as His “kingdom” comes to us and His “will” is done by us. The relation between this petition and the former one, then, is quite apparent. Christ teaches us to pray first for the sanctifying of God’s great name and then directs us to the means thereunto. Among the means for promoting God’s glory none is so influential as the coming of His kingdom, and hence it is we are exhorted to “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Mat 6:33). But though men ought to glorify God’s name upon earth, yet of themselves they cannot do so—God’s kingdom must first be set up in their hearts. God cannot be honoured by us until we voluntarily submit to His rule over us.

“Thy kingdom come” (Mat 6:10). Whose “kingdom”? Why, God’s, of course, or more specifically, the Father’s—yet *not* as something that is separate from the kingdom of the Son. The Father’s kingdom is no more a distinct one from Christ’s than “the church of the living God” (1Ti 3:15) is other than the body of Christ, or the “gospel of God” (Rom 1:1) is something different from the “gospel of Christ” (Rom 1:16), or than “the word of Christ” (Col 3:16) is to be distinguished from the Word of God. Rather does “Thy kingdom” (the Father’s kingdom) point a contrast between God’s and *Satan’s* “kingdom” (Mat 12:25-28), which is a kingdom of darkness and disorder—the opposite from and hinderer of God’s.

The Father’s *kingdom* is, first and more generally, His universal *rule*, His absolute dominion over all creatures and things, “Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all” (1Ch 29:11). Second, and more specifically, it is the external sphere of His grace on earth, where He is ostensibly acknowledged (Mar 4:11, etc.). Third, and more definitely still, it is God’s spiritual and internal kingdom which is entered by regeneration, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:5).

Now, as the Father and the Son are one in nature, so is their kingdom the same, and thus it appears in each aspect of it. In the kingdom of *providence*, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I

work” (Joh 5:17), i.e., in the government of the world (cf. Heb 1:3). In the *mediatorial* kingdom, Christ has it by the Father’s appointment (Luk 22:29) and establishment (Psa 2:6). In the kingdom of *grace*, as it is set up in the hearts of the Lord’s people, it is the kingdom of God (1Co 4:20), yet of the Son (Col 1:13). In the kingdom of *glory*, Christ will drink the fruit of the vine, “in my Father’s kingdom” (Mat 26:29), yet it is also called, “The everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 1:11). Hence we read of “the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ” (Rev 12:10).

It may be inquired, *Which aspect* of the “kingdom” is here prayed for as yet future? Not God’s providential, since *that* has existed and continued from the beginning. It must, then, be the kingdom of His grace, which is consummated in the kingdom of glory. There is to be a voluntary surrender of the whole man—spirit and soul and body—to the revealed will of God, so that His rule over us is entire. The character or nature of this reign is summed up in three things—“the kingdom of God is...righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom 14:17). First, Christ’s righteousness imputed, and then the righteousness of a good conscience, the basis of which is our sanctification by the Holy Spirit. Second, peace—peace of conscience toward God, peace with His people, and with all creatures—under “peace” is included all the duties of love. Third, joy—which is a fruit of the other two—a delighting in God in all estates.

“Thy kingdom *come*” (Mat 6:10). This has a threefold force, for it applies to each aspect of God’s kingdom. First, to the external kingdom of grace—let Thy Gospel be preached, the power of Thy Spirit attend it, the church be strengthened, Thy cause on earth be advanced, the works of the devil be destroyed. Second, to the internal and spiritual kingdom of grace—let Thy throne be set up in our heart, Thy laws be administered in our lives, Thy name be magnified by our walk. Third, to the kingdom of glory—let the days be hastened when Satan and all his hosts shall be completely vanquished, when Thy people shall be done with sin forever, when Christ shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

God’s kingdom “comes” in the following degrees. First, when He gives to men the outward means of salvation, Luke 11:20 and cf. 17:21. Second, when the Word preached enters the mind so that the mysteries of the Gospel are understood. Third, when the Spirit’s regeneration actually bring us into the kingdom or state of grace. Fourth, at death, when the soul is freed from all sin. Fifth, at the resurrection, when we are fully glorified. “O Lord, let Thy kingdom come to us who are strangers and pilgrims here on earth. Prepare us for it and conduct us into it, that be yet outside to it. Renew us by Thy Spirit that we may be subject to Thy will. Confirm us who are in the way, that our souls after this life, and both soul and body in the day of judgment may be fully glorified. Yea, Lord, hasten this glorification to us and all Thine elect” (William Perkins, 1558-1602).

We say again, Though this be the briefest petition, it is the most comprehensive one. In praying, “Thy kingdom come” (Mat 6:10), we ask for the power and blessings of the Holy Spirit to attend the preaching of the Word, for the church to be furnished with God-given and God-equipped officers, for the ordinances to be purely administered, for an increase of spiritual gifts and graces in its members, for the overthrow of Christ’s enemies—and thus that the kingdom of grace may be further extended till the whole of God’s elect are brought into it. By necessary implication, we pray that God will wean us more and more from the perishing things of this world.

In conclusion, let us point out some of the *uses* to which this petition should be put. First, *failures* to be bewailed and confessed by us. We are to own before God our wretched estate by nature, whereby we are the servants of sin and so under bondage to Satan, Romans 7:14, 24. We

are to mourn over the sad state of the world—its woeful transgressions of God’s law, whereby He is so dishonoured and the kingdom of Satan furthered, Mark 3:5. Second, we are to earnestly *seek those graces* which will influence our heart and lives whereby God’s kingdom is erected and maintained, an endeavouring to be so subject to Christ that we are wholly ruled by Him. Third, *duties* to be performed—we are to bring forth the fruit of the kingdom (Mat 21:43, Rom 14:17), and diligently use all the divinely appointed means for the furthering of it. Thus, the sum of this petition is that God, and not sin and Satan, may reign over us.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

126. Spiritual Freedom (13:23)

Before turning to our present verse, we must complete our observations on the one which occupied our attention last month, for the practical importance and value of it cannot be over-estimated or over-emphasized. “Suffer the word of exhortation” (Heb 13:22). In its local meaning to the Hebrews, this expression comprehended the entire contents of the epistle which Paul had addressed to them, for from beginning to end, it was in the nature of an earnest entreaty that they would relinquish the now effete system of Judaism, and remain steadfast in the profession of Christianity and the performance of Gospel duties. This was, then, a final word from the apostle that his readers would duly take to heart the message he had delivered to them—that no matter how radically it conflicted with their traditions, sentiments, and prejudices—their eternal welfare depended upon receiving what was worthy of all acceptance. It was an affectionate appeal to them that they would not, through natural disinclination, miss and lose the inestimable value of what he had written.

But this expression “the word of exhortation” has a still wider meaning and application for *us*. It may legitimately be taken for the entire Word of God, for what are the Scriptures—considered from one essential viewpoint—but a continuous exhortation? Just as in Romans 9:9, we read of “the word of promise” and in 2 Peter 1:19, of the more “sure word of prophecy,” so here the Scriptures are designated “the word of exhortation”—the *emphasis* being changed in each case. And just as responding to the word of exhortation meant to the Hebrews that they must first *relinquish* something, and then *adhere* to another thing in its place—so it is with us. The Hebrews were called upon to forsake the Christ-dishonouring camp of Judaism and act by faith in the revelation which God had made in His Son. Whereas we are called upon to forsake the world and its vanities, to forsake the pleasures of sin and the indulging of our fleshly lusts, and to tread that highway of holiness which alone conducts unto everlasting life. No matter how much the divine exhortations cross our wills and oppose our corruptions, obedience thereto is absolutely necessary if we are to escape the wrath to come.

Last month, we sought to show *how* we are to “suffer the word of exhortation” (Heb 13:22). How we are to *respond* thereto, by making use of what is found in Psalm 119 on this subject, for it is there, more fully than anywhere else in Scriptures, we are taught how the man of God conducts himself with reference to the divine law. We briefly touched upon seven things, and pointed out that we are to “suffer” or give the word of exhortation that place in our hearts and

lives to which it is entitled, by frequently reminding ourselves that obedience thereto is the way of true blessedness (Psa 119:1-3), by constantly calling to mind the divine authority with which it is invested (Psa 119:4), by earnestly praying for enabling grace (Psa 119:12, 27), by frequently meditating therein (Psa 119:15, 48, 78), by begging God to make us go in the path of His commandments (Psa 119:35), by praying to Him to incline our hearts thereto (Psa 119:36), by our own diligent improvement of the grace which God has already given to us (Psa 119:112). Let us now add a few more words upon this last point.

“I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end” (Psa 119:112). Was this creature boasting? Most certainly not, any more than Paul was guilty of the same when he declared, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2Ti 4:7). It is not unusual for Scripture to ascribe to us what God works in us, and that because of our subservient endeavours to divine grace, as we pursue the work of God. The soul responds to the impressions which the Spirit makes upon it. God gives us breath, yet we breathe. God supplies food, yet we have to prepare and eat it. God sets motives before us, but we have to respond thereto. God imparts grace, but we must improve it. This is the way to get more, Luke 8:18. It is our duty to heed that injunction “now *set your heart* and your soul to seek the LORD your God” (1Ch 22:19), and as Paul, “If that I may apprehend [lay hold of] that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Phi 3:12).

Moreover, there are certain *aids and helps* thereto, which it is our privilege to employ. For example the psalmist said, “I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts” (Psa 119:63). We are largely affected and influenced by the company we keep, “Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go” (Pro 22:24). We must not expect to love and obey God’s precepts if we have fellowship with those who despise them. But communion with godly souls will be a stimulus to our own piety, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise” (Pro 13:20). Here, too, our responsibility is exercised, for we are free to choose our companions. So far as Providence permits, it is our duty to cultivate acquaintances with those who make conscious efforts of obeying God’s commands. Pious conversation with them will kindle the spark of grace in our own hearts, “Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel” (Pro 27:9).

There is one other thing we would notice in Psalm 119 as it bears upon the subject of obedience to God’s commands, and that is, profiting from divine chastenings, begging God to sanctify to us the various trials through which we pass. “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word” (Psa 119:67). It is in seasons of temporal prosperity that we are most apt to decline spiritually, and generally we have to pass through deep waters of trouble before we are restored—the snapping dog of adversity is employed to recover the strayed sheep. Afflictions are blessings in disguise when they cool our lusts, wean us from the world, make us realize our weakness, and cast us back immediately upon God. So declared the psalmist, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted: that I might learn thy statutes” (Psa 119:71). Then “despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him” (Heb 12:5).

Ere turning from this subject, let us remind the reader that the Greek word rendered “exhortation” in Hebrews 13:22 is translated “consolation” in 6:18, for the term not only signifies to entreat and incite, but it also means to relieve and refresh. It may seem strange to some that the same word should have such different forces as exhortation and consolation, yet these two things have a much closer affinity than is generally realized, and this twofold meaning is designed by the Spirit to inculcate an important practical lesson. To despise the word of exhortation is to forsake our own comforts, as many a backslidden Christian can testify. Obedience to the divine precepts

carries its own reward now—peace of conscience, tranquility of mind, contentment of heart, and assurance of God’s approbation. Divine consolation is secured by heeding the word of exhortation!

“Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you” (Heb 13:23). Following our usual custom, we will first raise the question, What is the *connection* between this verse and the context? At first glance there does not appear to be any relation between them, yet further examination seems to indicate otherwise. Some of our readers may deem us fanciful, but it appears to the writer that this historical allusion to the “liberty” of Timothy supplies an *illustrative encouragement* for us to respond to the call contained in the preceding verse. Let us set it forth thus—those who refuse to heed the word of exhortation, and instead give free play to their own corruptions, are in the worst servitude of all—the bondage of sin and Satan. But those who yield submission to the commands and precepts of God enter into true spiritual *freedom*.

It is one of the great delusions of the natural man that he is free only so long as he may please himself, supposing that to be placed under the authority of another is to curtail his liberty and bring him into bondage. But that is a putting of darkness for light and light for darkness. For just so far as the language of our hearts be, “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Psa 2:3), are we tyrannized over by our lusts. In proportion as we follow the inclinations and devices of our evil hearts are we in servitude to sin and Satan. Lawlessness is not liberty, but libertinism, which is the worst bondage of all, “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the slaves of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (2Pe 2:19).

Alas, what widespread ignorance and delusion abounds on this subject today. Carnal liberty is but moral thralldom. To make this the more evident let it be pointed out, first, that which most infringes upon a man’s real liberty is that which most hinders and disables him to prosecute his true happiness. When the things of sense crowd out the things of the Spirit, when the concerns of time oust the interests of eternity, when Satan is given that place in our lives which belongs only to God, then we are forsaking our own mercies and come under the most cruel task-masters. Second, that which disorders the soul and puts reason out of dominion is certain spiritual bondage. When the base prevail over the honourable, it is a sign that a country is enthralled, and when our fleshly lusts, rather than our understanding and conscience, prevail over the will, it is sure proof that we are in spiritual bondage.

Again—consider the great power and tyranny of sin. Sin, in various forms and ways, has such complete dominion over the unconverted that it robs them of all control over themselves and their actions. They are “*serving* divers lusts and pleasures” (Ti 3:3). This is most evident in the case of the confirmed drunkard and the drug addict—what fetters they have forged for themselves, and how helpless they are to break from them! Yet, the bondage of pleasure and worldly pursuits is just as real, if not so apparent. Sin, even in its most refined forms, obtains such a mastery over its victims that they have no command of their affections and still less of their wills, so that they are quite unable to forsake what they themselves believe to be vanity or follow that which they know to be good. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil” (Jer 13:23). Therefore do many of them say, “There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart” (Jer 18:12).

Now on the contrary, true liberty is to be found in the ways of God, for spiritual freedom is a freedom from sin and not to sin—a freedom to serve God and not self, a freedom to take upon us

the easy yoke of Christ and not the despising of it. Genuine liberty is not a liberty to do what we please, but to do what we ought. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is *liberty*” (2Co 3:17). Contrariwise, where Satan rules there is captivity (2Ti 2:26). Said the psalmist, “And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts” (Psa 119:45). Yes, just so far as we walk according to the divine precepts, are we freed from the fetters of our corruptions. It is that miracle of grace which brings the heart to love the divine statutes, that sets the heart at rest. “The way of holiness is not a track for slaves, but the King’s highway for freemen, who are joyfully journeying from the Egypt of bondage to the Canaan of rest” (Chares Haddon Spurgeon, 1834-1892).

First, the way of God’s precepts is in itself liberty, and therefore God’s law is called “the perfect law of *liberty*” (Jam 1:25). How grievously are they mistaken, then, who accuse us of bringing souls into bondage when we insist that the law is the believer’s Rule of Life—the bondage of the law from which divine grace delivers, is from the law as a covenant of works, and therefore from its condemnation and curse, and not from the preceptive authority of the law. Yet ever since we drank that poison, “Ye shall be as gods,” (Gen 3:5) man desires dominion over himself and would be lord of his own actions. But Scripture makes it clear that the most dreadful judgment which God inflicts upon the wicked in this world is when He withdraws His restraints and gives them over to do as they please, Psalm 81:12; Romans 1:26-29.

Real liberty is found in the ways of God, because it is there we are directed to attain unto true felicity. The way of sin seems broad and easy to the flesh, yet is it strait and painful to the spirit—“the way of transgressors is hard” (Psa 13:15). Contrariwise, the way of holiness seems strait and narrow to the flesh,

yet, because it is life and peace, it is broad and easy to the spirit—all of wisdom’s ways are “ways of pleasantness” (Pro 3:17). He lives the freest life who lives under bonds of duty, who makes conscience of pleasing God, for it is the truth which makes us free (Joh 8:32). The fuller be our obedience, the more completely emancipated are we from the fetters of moral slavery. The only unshackled ones are those who walk with God.

Second, liberty is given to walk in God’s ways. At regeneration, the soul, hitherto in prison, is set free by Christ (Luk 4:18; Joh 8:36). “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2). Conversion is a change of masters, “But God be thanked, that ye were the *servants of sin*, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the *servants of righteousness*” (Rom 6:17-18). Redemption is a being delivered from the cruel task-masters of Egypt and coming under the Lordship of Christ. In loving, fearing, serving, and praising God, the highest faculties of the soul are exercised in their noblest and most regular way of operation. The soul is lifted above the things of time and sense, elevated to occupation with heavenly and eternal things. For some things in the last few paragraphs we are indebted to Thomas Manton’s (1620-1677) sermon on Psalm 119:45.

We trust that the reader is now able to perceive the connection between the deeper spiritual significance of Hebrews 13:23 and the verse which immediately precedes it. The historical allusion to the physical release of Timothy from his imprisonment, coming immediately after the call for us to heed the word of exhortation, is to be regarded as *an illustration* of the spiritual freedom which attends our compliance with that divine injunction. Just in proportion as we yield subjection to the divine precept, do we enter into and enjoy *real freedom of soul*. If this should seem too fanciful to some of our more prosaic readers, perhaps they will be willing that others should be permitted to exercise their own judgment thereon.

“Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty” (Heb 13:23). “Who this Timothy was, what was his relation unto Paul, how he loved him, how he employed him and honoured him, joining him with himself in the salutation prefixed unto some of his epistles, with what care and diligence he wrote unto him with reference unto his office of an evangelist, is known out of his writings. This Timothy was his perpetual companion in all his travels, labours and sufferings, serving him as a son serveth his father, unless when he designed and sent him unto any special work for the church. And being with him in Judea, he was well known unto the Hebrews also, as was his worth and usefulness” (John Owen 1616-1683).

Timothy means “precious to God.” His father was a Greek, his mother a Jewess. Nothing is known of the former. That his mother was a true believer we learn from 2 Timothy 1:5, where the apostle makes mention of the unfeigned faith which “dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice.” The expression “unfeigned faith” testifies to the reality and genuineness of it, in contradistinction from the empty profession of others who, without just cause, posed as believers. From the above reference, many have concluded that Timothy, in his early days, received a godly training. This is confirmed by, “From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2Ti 3:15). Apparently the family resided at Lystra.

The first visit of the apostle Paul to Lystra is recorded in Acts 14. There he and Barnabas “preached the Gospel” (Act 14:7). There, too, God wrought a mighty miracle through Paul, by healing an impotent man who had never walked, being a cripple from his mother’s womb (Act 14:8-10). A deep impression was made upon the heathen inhabitants, who could scarce be restrained from doing homage to the apostles as gods. But shortly after, Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and persuaded the people—so fickle is human nature—to stone Paul. The writer believes that he was then actually stoned to death and that God restored him to life. Possibly the following passage refers to that incident, “We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us” (2Co 1:8-10).

It was during this first visit of Paul to Lystra that young Timothy was converted. This seems clear from the fact that in 1 Timothy 1:2, he refers to him as “my own son in the faith,” while in 2 Timothy 3:10-11, Paul reminds him how that he fully knew the persecutions and afflictions which befell his spiritual father “at Antioch, at Iconium, *at Lystra*.” The expression, “my own son in the faith” signifies that Paul had, ministerially, begotten him through the Gospel (1Co 4:17). The Lystrians had dragged the body of Paul outside the city (Act 14:19), but he rose up and returned into it. Next day he departed to Derbe, but after preaching the Gospel there, he returned to Lystra, “confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (v. 22).

What has been pointed out above explains the fact that when Paul revisited Lystra some three or four years later, Timothy is already spoken of as a “disciple” (Act 16:1). The second verse intimates how he had acquitted himself during the apostle’s absence. During that time he had established a reputation for godliness, not only in Lystra, but in Iconium. He had become well-known to the churches at both cities and was “well reported of.” Probably it was this good report which attracted Paul, who then stood in need of a fellow-helper—Barnabas and Mark having in the interval deserted him (Act 15:39). The commendation of Timothy’s “brethren” (Act 15:40) inclined Paul to select him for a wider work. But there was, however, one hindrance in the way—

Timothy was a Gentile, and the Jewish Christians were not yet, generally, prepared to receive an uncircumcised leader. To place him in office as a teacher might arouse prejudice, so Paul, in deference to their scruples, circumcised the young disciple.

Nothing is told us of what it must have cost Eunice to give up such a son, but *God* took notice (Psa 56:8). From now on Timothy figured prominently in the history of Paul, becoming his companion and fellow-labourer. Two of his epistles were addressed to him, and in six others he is associated with him in the superscription, compare 2 Corinthians 1:1. Timothy was with the apostle during his second great missionary tour, accompanied him to Jerusalem, and was with him in his first imprisonment. In 1 Corinthians 4:17, we find Paul affirming Timothy was “faithful in the Lord.” Philippians 2:19-22 presents to us a lovely picture of the gracious power of the Spirit triumphing over the affections of the flesh and the love of Christ constraining unto unselfishness. The apostle was prisoner in Rome and Timothy, who was there, was very dear unto him, yet was he willing to part with his beloved companion, even in his sorrow and solitariness. He was solicitous for the welfare of the Philippian saints, and having none other he could send, authorized Timothy to visit them.

In referring to Timothy as being “like minded” with himself, Paul gives us an insight into his ability. Not only was Timothy his “own son in the faith,” but he speaks of him “as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel” (Phi 2:22). Young believers generally become like those with whom they associate most intimately. Blessed is it when we see them growing up to follow the example of godly leaders—“followers of *us*, and of the Lord” (1Th 1:6). How solemnly important it is, then, that the leaders should live so that the younger Christians may not stumble!

From the personal exhortations addressed by Paul to Timothy (in the epistles bearing his name), it seems clear that he was of a sensitive, shrinking, and timid nature. The word in 2 Timothy 1:6 (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12, 14, 16) seems to imply that he was almost ready to give up in despair. The “God hath not given us the spirit of fear”—really “cowardice” (2Ti 1:7) and the “be not thou therefore ashamed” (v. 8) intimate that there was need for the exhortation “fight the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12) and “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2Ti 2:3 and cf. 4:5). That he was a man of frail constitution is evident from 1 Timothy 5:23. Yet to Paul he was his “dearly beloved son” (2Ti 1:2). Timothy’s “tears” (2Ti 1:4) over Paul’s imprisonment show that he was a man of feeling.

“Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you” (Heb 13:23). This supplies one more incidental confirmation that Paul was the writer of the Hebrews’ epistle, for it is clear from this verse that Timothy was the one who accompanied him on his missionary journeys—there is no hint elsewhere that Timothy was the fellow-worker of anyone else but Paul. The actual incarceration of Timothy is not recorded in the Acts or elsewhere, but it is clear from this verse that he had been restrained, but that he was now free. The imprisonment of faithful ministers is an honour to them, yet is their release an occasion of rejoicing to the saints, and therefore the apostle acquaints the Hebrews of this good news, for he knew how highly they esteemed Timothy. He had not yet returned to Paul himself—apparently having been imprisoned at some other place than Rome, but if God directed him thither, Paul purposed that they should again visit the churches in Judea. Whether this hope was realized, we know not.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

78. *His Honourable Conduct*

There does not seem to be much in common between the murder of Amasa and the famine which afflicted the land of Israel, yet that the contents of 2 Samuel 20 and 21 are definitely linked together is clearly intimated by the opening “Then” of the latter. What that connection is, a little reflection should make clear—that which is now to be before us supplies a further illustration of the principal thought developed last month. It is *the retributive justice* of God which is again seen in exercise. There it had to do with an individual, here it affected a whole nation. Valuable light is here shed upon the subject of the divine government of this world, for we are not only given to see how that God fully controls even its physical history, but are also shown something of the moral principles which regulate His procedure. So far from that government being a capricious one, it is regulated by definite design and method. It is the noting of this which supplies the key to the philosophy of history.

“Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year” (2Sa 21:1). When faced with droughts and famines, the scientists (so-called) and other wiseacres prate about planetary disturbances, sun-spots, the recurring of astronomical cycles, etc., but the Christian looks beyond all secondary causes and discerns the Maker of this world directing all its affairs. And thus the simplest believer has light which the most learned of this world’s savants possess not. They, and all who follow them, leave God out of their thoughts, and therefore the light which is in them is darkness, and how great is that darkness. It is only the eye of faith which sees the hand of the Lord in everything, and where faith is in exercise there is secured a satisfying resting-place for the heart.

“And David inquired of the LORD” (2Sa 21:1). Wise man—he declined to lean unto his own understanding. Nor did he, like the monarchs of Egypt and Babylon before him, send for the astrologers and soothsayers. There was no need to, when he had access to the living God. The pity is that he did not consult Him earlier, instead of waiting till the situation got really desperate. By inquiring of the Lord in the time of trouble, David left us an example which we do well to follow. The Sender of trouble is the only One who can remove it. And if it be not His pleasure to remove it, He is the One who can show us how best to meet it. He did so for David, and He will for us, if we seek Him aright—that is, with an humble, penitent, yet trustful heart.

Troubles do not come by haphazard. The poor worldling may talk of his “bad luck” and “ill fortune,” but the believer ought to employ more God-honouring language. He should know that it is his *Father* who orders all his circumstances and regulates every detail of his life. Therefore, when famine comes upon him—be it a spiritual or a financial one—it is both his privilege and his duty to seek unto the Lord and ask, “Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me” (Job 10:2). When the smile of God is withdrawn from us, we should at once suspect that something is wrong. True, His favour is not to be measured by His material benefits, and true also that His withholding of them does not always indicate His displeasure. No, He may be testing faith, developing patience, or preparing us for an enlarged trust. Nevertheless, it is always the part of wisdom to think the worst of ourselves, for the promise is “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these [material] things shall be added unto you” (Mat 6:33).

“And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites” (2 Sa 21:1). The Lord did not turn a deaf ear unto David’s inquiry, even though it was such a tardy one. How longsuffering He is with His own! How many of us have been like

David in this! Smarting under the chastening rod of God, yet allowing a lengthy interval to pass before we definitely inquired of Him as to its cause. Rightly did the poet say, “O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pains we bear, All because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer.” Yes, oftentimes they are quite “needless,” for if God shows us what is wrong, and we put matters right, His rod will quickly be removed.

It is solemn to note that the controversy which the Lord had with Israel at this time was not over some recent thing, but one which had been committed years previously, yet was it one that had never been put right. God does not forget, if we do. Many afflictions, both upon individuals and upon nations, are expressly sent by Him for the purpose of “bringing to remembrance” (see 1Ki 17:18) the sins of the past. In the case before us, Israel was now suffering because of the transgression of Saul, for it is an unchanging principle in the divine government that God deals with nations according to the conduct of their rulers or responsible heads. No truth is more clearly revealed in Scripture than this and the same is plainly exemplified in the history of the world all through this Christian era. Nor need this fact and principle at all surprise us, for in the great majority of instances the rulers follow that policy which will best please their subjects.

The earlier history supplies no record of that which occasioned this calamity upon the nation. We mention this in order to correct the assertion which is often made in some quarters that Scripture always explains Scripture, by which it is meant that every verse or statement in the Word may be understood by some other statement elsewhere. As a general principle this is true, yet it is by no means without exception, and therefore it needs qualifying. The above is an example of what we mean—there is no historical account of Saul’s slaying the Gibeonites. Nor is this example by any means an isolated one. Paul said, “Thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep” (2Co 11:25), yet we know not when and where this occurred. In connection with the giving of the law at Sinai, “Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake” (Heb 12:21), but there is no record in the Old Testament of this. Hebrews 13:23 tells of Timothy being “set at liberty,” yet his imprisonment is nowhere recorded in Scripture.

“Now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them” (2Sa 21:2). The allusion is to what is found in Joshua 9. It will be remembered that after Joshua had overthrown Jericho and Ai, the inhabitants of Gibeon were afraid and resorted to dishonest strategy. They succeeded in deceiving Joshua. After telling a plausible tale, the Gibeonites offered to become the servants of Israel. And we are told, “And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them” (Jos 9:15). A little later, Israel learned that they had been deceived, that instead of the Gibeonites being travelers from a far country (as they had affirmed), they were really Canaanites. The sequel is very striking and contains a lesson which governmental leaders would do well to take to heart today.

Three days later, as they continued their advance, the Israelites reached the cities of the Gibeonites, and we are told, “And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel” (Jos 9:18). The heads of the nation respected the solemn treaty into which they had entered with the Gibeonites. Then they were put to a more severe test, “And all the congregation murmured against the princes” (Jos 9:18). The common people urged their leaders to regard that treaty as a scrap of paper—human nature was just the same then as it is now—unprincipled, blind to its own highest interests, utterly selfish, indifferent to the divine approval. But in the merciful providence of God, Israel at that time was favoured with conscientious leaders who refused to yield to the popular clamour and do that which they knew was wrong.

“But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them. This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we swore unto them” (Jos 9:19-20). What a mercy it is when the responsible heads of the nation are God-fearing men, whose word is their bond, who cannot be induced to forsake the paths of righteousness. And my reader, how we need to *pray* (as we are commanded to do, 1Ti 2:1-2) for all in authority over us, that God will make them honest, just, truthful, and that He will keep them steadfast in the performance of duty. Their position is no easy one. They are in need of divine grace and prayer is the appointed channel through which supplies of grace are communicated—to the ministers of state as truly as to the ministers of the Gospel. Then instead of criticizing and condemning them, let us hold up their hands by daily supplication for them.

Joshua confirmed the stand taken by the “princes”—the heads of the tribes. Calling the Gibeonites unto him, he asked why they had beguiled him. Whereupon they confessed it was out of fear for their very lives that they had resorted to the imposture, and then cast themselves upon his mercy and fidelity. “And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not. And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day” (Jos 9:26-27). From that time onwards, the Gibeonites remained in Israel’s midst, acting as their servants—a peaceful and useful people, as Nehemiah 3:7 and other passages intimate.

“And Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah” (2Sa 21:2). In utter disregard for the solemn treaty which guaranteed their security, Saul determined to exterminate these Gibeonites, but this was done not out of zeal for the Lord, but “in his zeal to the children of Israel.” How perverse human nature is! God had given Saul no commission to slay the Gibeonites, but He *had* commanded him to destroy the Philistines and Amalekites, but this he left undone. Ah, the extirpation of the Philistines was a difficult and dangerous task, for they were a well-armed and powerful people, fully prepared to resist—whereas the Gibeonites were an easy prey. And is there not much fleshly zeal being displayed in corrupt Christendom today?—thousands engaged in work to which God has never called them, whilst neglecting the great task He *has* assigned them. What numbers of the rank and file of professing Christians are now busy in seeking to “win souls to Christ,” while neglecting the mortifying of their fleshly and worldly lusts—ah, the former is far easier than the latter.

Saul, then, broke public faith with the Gibeonites, for the solemn covenant entered into with them by Joshua assured their preservation. This is clear from verse 5, for while verse 2 says only that he “sought to slay them,” here the Gibeonites referred to him as “the man that consumed us, and that devised against us, that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel,” which is an amplification of the Lord’s words, “It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites” (2Sa 21:1). This brought down heavy guilt upon the nation, which had not been expiated by the punishment of the guilty. The three years’ famine which now came upon the land was proof of this. “It pleased God in this manner, and so long after, to proceed against the nation for it, to show His abhorrence against such crimes, to teach rulers to keep at a distance from similar offenses themselves, and to punish them in others, and to intimate that the chief punishment of sin is *after* the death of the offenders” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

The fact that God waited so many years before He publicly evidenced His displeasure against Israel for this heinous transgression, manifested His longsufferance, granting them a lengthy space for repentance. But they repented not, and now He made them to realize that He had neither overlooked nor forgotten their crime. Learn then, my reader, that the passage of time does not

remove or lessen the guilt of sin. Let us also learn what a solemn thing it is for a strong nation to go back upon its pledged word when they have promised protection to a weak people. This is something which the present government of Great Britain needs to take to heart, for if they should violate their promises to protect the lives and property of the Jews in Palestine, then we may most certainly expect the righteous judgment of God to fall heavily on our land.

God made known unto David the reason for his present controversy with Israel, that he might take proper measures for expiating the national guilt. As a God-fearing man, David at once recognized the binding obligation of the league Joshua had made with the Gibeonites and the nation's guilt in violating the same. Accordingly, "David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD?" (2Sa 21:3). This was but fair. They were the ones who had been wronged and therefore it was but just that they should be given the opportunity for deciding what form the reparation should take. Incidentally, let it be carefully noted that this is still another passage which plainly teaches that "atonement" is made for the express purpose of turning away the displeasure of the Lord—there is no thought of atonement or reconciliation here, for the Gibeonites were not alienated from Him!

"And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel" (2Sa 21:4). Most generous and noble was their reply. It showed they were neither mercenary nor spiteful. They neither desired to turn this situation to their own material advantage, nor did they harbour a spirit of revenge. For centuries they had acted as servants and now that Israel had broken the covenant, they might well have demanded their freedom. How their unselfishness puts to shame the greedy, grasping spirit of this much-vaunted twentieth century! It is not often that the poor are free from covetousness and avarice—the great majority are not poor from choice, but from necessity of circumstances. No wonder the Lord was ready to plead the cause of so meek and mild a people.

"And he said, What ye shall say, that will I do for you. And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel, let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD did choose" (2Sa 21:4-6). Here we perceive their spiritual intelligence and piety. Their asking for "seven" of the descendants of Saul showed they understood that number signified completeness. Their suggestion that these seven men should be "hanged," intimated that they knew this form of death betokened accursedness (Deu 21:23). Their words "hang them up before the LORD in Gibeah" evinced their knowledge that satisfaction must be offered unto God's justice before His wrath could be turned away from Israel. Their declaration, "Saul, whom the LORD did choose" was an open acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God. Their offer, "We will hang them up unto the LORD" (2Sa 21:6) was very magnanimous—willing to spare David and themselves bear any public criticism which was likely to be offered.

But let us now notice the nobility of David's conduct in this connection. First, in his inquiring of the Lord as to the reason why the famine had been sent on his land. Those who have followed us throughout this lengthy series will recall how often this grace was seen in him—signal evidence of his piety. Second, in his readiness to consult with the Gibeonites. How many a man would have considered it beneath his dignity to hold conference with menials!—but humility was another grace which shone brightly in David. Third, in his fairness. An unscrupulous man would have disputed their claim, saying that the league made in the days of Joshua was long since obsolete. Fourth, in his consenting to their proposal. We know from other passages that he was

sentimentally attached to the family of Saul, but with him the claims of justice superseded all personal considerations. Finally, his fidelity to the promise he had made to Jonathan, “But the king spared Mephibosheth...the son of Saul, because of the LORD’s oath that was between them” (2Sa 21:7).

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

7. *The Messianic*

In last month’s article, it was pointed out that following the times of David, the prophets occupied a more and more prominent place in Israel, and that the primary purpose of their office was a *practical* one, designed for the good of those to whom they immediately ministered. As the spiritual life of the nation degenerated, the voice of the prophets was heard more frequently—pressing the claims of God, rebuking the people for their sins, and affording comfort to the faithful. It was this third item that we enlarged upon in the closing paragraphs last month, calling particular attention to the large place given in the communications of the “major” prophets unto things to come. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, for as things went from bad to worse in the earthly kingdom of Israel, God was pleased to grant much fuller revelations concerning the heavenly kingdom of the Messiah.

What has just been pointed out reveals a principle which is of great practical value for our own souls today. The further Israel’s religious apostasy advanced and wickedness increased, the more were the godly handful among them taught to look away from the present to the future, to walk by faith and not by sight, to regale their desponding hearts with those covenant blessings which the Messiah would obtain for all His people. It is not necessary to suppose that they fully understood the import of that which the prophets set before them—yea, they were far from comprehending the entire truth which they contained—nevertheless, they must have gathered sufficient from them to relieve their minds from that distressing anxiety which their present circumstances had awakened. Those predictions which more particularly dealt with the new order of things which God promised should yet be ushered in, supply the real key to the interpretation of the numerous predictions regarding the Messiah’s work with which they had long been familiar.

Here, then, is the grand lesson for us to heed. Though the present state of Christendom be so deplorable and saddening, though the enemy has come in like a flood, threatening to carry everything before him, though the voice of the true servant of God be no more heeded today than was the prophet’s before the captivity, yet God still has a remnant of His people upon the earth. Heavy indeed are their hearts at the dishonour done to the name of their Lord, at the low state of His cause on earth, at their own spiritual leanness. Yet, while it is meet they should sigh and cry for the abominations in the churches, deplore the wickedness abounding in the world, and penitently confess their own sad failures, nevertheless it is their privilege to look forward unto the grand future which lies before them, to the sure accomplishment of all God’s covenant promises. Nor is it necessary that they should understand the order of coming events or the details of unfulfilled prophecy. Sufficient for them that Christ will yet see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, reign till every enemy be placed under His feet, and come again to receive His people unto Himself.

Both the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who exercised their ministry about the same time among different portions of the covenant people, spoke the same language and gave the same assurances, in close connection with the promise of their future re-establishment in their own land. That particular promise was partly accomplished in their return from Babylon, but is fully understood only when viewed in the light of the *typical* import of the language used. The grand statement found in Jeremiah 31:31-34 is repeated with equal definiteness in the thirty-second chapter (37-40), "Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make *an everlasting covenant* with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." So again in Jeremiah 33:14-16.

In a similar strain and in terms equally explicit, Ezekiel addresses that portion of the Jews amongst whom he exercised his ministry, "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince amongst them; I the LORD have spoken it. And I will make with them *a covenant of peace*, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing" (Eze 34:23-26). And again, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you....and cause you to walk in my statutes" (Eze 36:25-27).

But the clearest of all of these later communications by the prophets is that furnished in Jeremiah 31:31-34, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make *a new covenant* with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the LORD: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." On the two main points adverted to by us, namely, the *change* of the then existing dispensation, and the *spiritual* nature of that which was to succeed, its testimony is most decisive.

First, we must seek to remove a radical misconception which obtains in certain quarters, and that is as to the ones with whom God here promised to make this "new covenant," namely, "with the house of Israel and Judah." Modern dispensationalists insist that this says just what it means, and means just what it says—and with this the present writer is in hearty accord. Nevertheless, we would point out that it is entirely a matter of *interpretation* if we are to rightly understand what is said, and this can only be accomplished as the Spirit Himself enlightens our minds. Any method of Bible study, or any system of interpretation (if such it could be called), that renders us self-sufficient, independent of the Holy Spirit, is self-condemned. An unregenerate man, by diligent application and the use of a good concordance, may soon familiarize himself with the letter of Scripture, and persuade himself that because he takes its letter at its face value, he has a

good understanding of it, but that is a vastly different thing from a *spiritual insight* into spiritual things.

The first time the name “Israel” occurs upon the sacred page is in Genesis 32:28, where it was given to Jacob, “And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.” This is most suggestive and significant. It was not his name by nature, but by grace! In other words, “Israel” stamped Jacob as a *regenerate* man, thereby intimating that this name primarily pertains to the spiritual seed of Abraham and not to his natural descendants. That this term “Israel” would henceforth possess this double significance (primary and secondary), was more than hinted at here in Genesis 32, for from this point onwards the one to whom it was originally given became the man with the *double* name—sometimes he is referred to as “Jacob,” at other times he is designated “Israel,” and this according as the flesh or the Spirit was uppermost in him.

In what has just been before us, there was most accurately anticipated the subsequent usage of the term, for while in many passages “Israel” has reference to the *natural* descendants through Jacob, in many others it is applied to his *mystical* seed. Take for example, “Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart” (Psa 73:1). Who are the ones referred to under the name “Israel” in this verse? Obviously it does not refer to the nation of Israel, to all the fleshly descendants of Jacob who were alive at the time Asaph wrote this Psalm, for most certainly it could not be said of by far the greater part of *them* that they were “of a clean heart”—cf. Psalm 12:1. A “clean heart” is one which has been cleansed by the sanctifying operations of divine grace (Ti 3:5), by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus on the conscience (Heb 10:22), and by a God-communicated faith (Act 15:9). Thus, the second clause of Psalm 73:1 *obliges* us to understand the “Israel” of the first clause as the *spiritual* Israel—God’s chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people.

Again—when the Lord Jesus exclaimed concerning Nathanael, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile” (Joh 1:47), exactly what did He mean? Was nothing more signified than, “Behold a fleshly descendant of Jacob?” Assuredly it was, Christ’s language here was discriminating, as discriminating as when He said, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples *indeed*” (Joh 8:31). When the Saviour declared that they were “disciples indeed,” He intimated they were such not only in name, but in fact—not only by profession, but in reality. And in like manner, when He affirmed that Nathanael was “an Israelite *indeed*,” He meant that he was a genuine son of Israel, a man of faith and prayer, honest and upright. The added description, “in whom is no guile,” supplies still further confirmation that a spiritual and saved character is there in view. Compare, “Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile” (Psa 32:2).

“Behold Israel after the flesh” (1Co 10:18). Here again discriminating language is used. Why speak of “Israel *after the flesh*” unless it be for the express purpose of distinguishing them from Israel after the Spirit, that is the regenerated and spiritual Israel. Israel “after the flesh” were the natural descendants of Abraham, but *spiritual* “Israel,” whether Jews or Gentiles, are those who are born again and who worship God in spirit and in truth. Surely it must now be plain to every unbiased reader that the term “Israel” is used in the Scriptures in more senses than one, and that it is only by noting the qualifying terms which are added, that we are able to identify *which* “Israel” is in view in any given passage. Equally clear should it be that to talk of Israel being an “earthly people” is very loose and misleading language, and badly needs modifying and defining.

Some passages are admittedly more easy than others to determine *which* Israel is in view—the natural or the spiritual. Yet in the great majority of instances, the context furnishes a definite

guide. When Christ said, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mat 15:24), He certainly could not intend the fleshly descendants of Jacob, for as many Scriptures plainly state, He was equally sent unto the Gentiles. No, “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” there means the whole election of grace. “Of this man’s seed hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus” (Act 13:23). Here too it is the spiritual Israel which is meant, for He did not save the nation at large. So, too, when the apostle declared, “For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain” (Act 28:20), he must have had in view the anti-typical Israel. “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16). This could not possibly refer to the nation for God’s *curse* was on *that*—it is the Israel chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, regenerated by the Spirit.

“Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom 9:6). In this verse, the apostle begins his discussion of the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles, and shows that God had predetermined to cast off the nation as such, and extend the Gospel call to all men indiscriminately. He does this by showing God was free to act thus (Rom 9:6-24), that He had announced through His prophets He would do so (Rom 9:25-33). This was a particularly sore point with the Jew, who erroneously imagined that the promises which God had made to Abraham and his seed included all his natural descendants, that those promises were sealed unto all such by the rite of circumcision, and that those inherited all the patriarchal blessings. Hence their claim, “We have Abraham to our father” (Mat 3:9). It was to refute this error, common among the Jews (and now revived by the dispensationalists) that the apostle here writes.

First, he affirms that God’s Word was not being annulled by his teaching (Rom 9:6, first clause), no indeed. His doctrine did not contravene the divine promises, for they had never been given to men in the flesh, but rather to men in the spirit—regenerate. Second, he insisted upon an important distinction (Rom 9:6, second clause), which we are now seeking to explain and press upon our readers. He points out there are *two kinds* of “Israelites”—those who are such only by carnal descent from Jacob and others who are so spiritually, these latter being alone the “children of the promise” (Rom 9:8)—cf. Galatians 4:23, where “born after the flesh” is opposed to born “by promise”! God’s promises were made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, AS BELIEVERS, and they are the spiritual food and property of *none but believers*, Romans 4:13, 16. Until this fact be clearly grasped, we shall be all at sea in understanding scores of the Old Testament promises.

When the apostle here affirms that, “*they are not all Israel, which are of Israel*” (Rom 9:6), he means that not all the lineal descendants of Jacob belonged unto “the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16)—those who were God’s people in the highest sense. So far from that being the case, many of the Jews were not God’s children at all (see Joh 8:42, 44), while many who were Gentiles by nature, have (by grace) been made “fellowcitizens with the [Old Testament] saints” (Eph 2:19) and “blessed *with* faithful Abraham” (Gal 3:9). Thus the apostle’s language in the second clause of Romans 9:6 has the force of—Not all who are members of the (ancient) visible church are members of the true church. The same thought is repeated in Romans 9:7, “Neither because they are the [natural] seed of Abraham, are they all children”—that is the “children [or inheritors] of the promise,” as verse 8 explains—“but, In Isaac [the line of God’s election and sovereign grace] shall thy [true and spiritual] seed be called” (Rom 9:7). God’s promises were made unto the *spiritual* seed of Abraham and not to his natural descendants as such.

This same principle of *double application* holds equally good of many other terms used of the covenant people. For example, Christ said to His spouse, “Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as *Jerusalem*, terrible as an army with banners” (Song 6:4). Now the church goes

under this name of “Jerusalem” in both the Old Testament and the New. “Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem” (Isa 40:2). Obviously this did not mean the literal city, nor even its inhabitants in general, for the great majority of them were unregenerate idolaters, and God sends no message of *comfort* to those who despise and oppose Him. No, it was the godly remnant. “For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us *all*” (Gal 4:25-26). One of Christ’s promises to the overcomer is, “I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is—*new Jerusalem*” (Rev 3:12)!

CONDITIONS IN THE PAST

It will be observed that most of the quotations in the previous article were taken from writers of the seventeenth century, that is, when Puritanism was in its heyday. If, then, during the time that sound preaching and vital godliness flourished most in these favoured Isles, wickedness also held high carnival, why should it be thought strange that in our day—when faithful preaching and personal piety are at a discount—sin is in the saddle and lawlessness abounds on every side? But to continue our review of conditions in the past. Bad as the seventeenth century was, the eighteenth was far worse. No human pen can adequately depict the moral degeneracy and the spiritual stagnation of its first five decades. Page after page might be filled with quotations from the few men of God who lived then. A brief selection must suffice.

Upon the abdication of James II, Prince William of Orange was invited to occupy the English throne, for the surer establishment of Protestantism. Describing the assembling of the English gentry to welcome him to London, Lord Macauley wrote, “The attractions must have been great, for the risks of the journey were not trifling. The peace had, all over Europe, and nowhere more than in England, turned crowds of soldiers into marauders. Several aristocratic equipages had been attacked, even in Hyde Park. One day the British mail was robbed, another day the Dover coach. On Hounslow Heath a company of horsemen with masks over their faces watched for the great people who had been to pay their court to the King at Windsor.

“There are few periods in the history of the world that have been marked by deeper spiritual darkness than the commencing part of the eighteenth century. From 1700 to 1750 seemed to have lapsed into lifeless formality, and this, together with the matured abominations of Popery, opened the way for that tide of infidelity of which the French Revolution was the manifested result. The latter part of the eighteenth century was, through the Lord’s great mercy, marked by a very decided revival of evangelical truth. The effect of the writings and preachings of Whitefield, Romaine, Newton, and others, was widely felt in Europe and America” (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899, “Aids to Prophetic Enquiry,” first series, p. 3).

“The darkest period which the church of God in this country has ever seen since the Reformation was in the reign of Queen Anne. Dissent had obtained a legal footing at the Revolution of 1688. From that era commenced the decline of vital religion till the time of Whitefield. The eighteenth century arose in the thickest cloud that has overspread this country since Popery fell. We live, it is true, in a day of much spiritual declension, but *things were much worse then*. Nearly all the Dissenting churches were sunk into Arianism (which denied the Godhead both of Christ and the Holy Spirit). Little else but dead morality was heard in pulpits where free grace was formerly proclaimed. Religion, in fact, had sunk so low that when

Whitefield went about proclaiming the new birth, it was a doctrine as new to the Dissenters as to the adherents of the National Establishment. A national religion was the order of the day, and as much preached in the chapel as in the church” (The Gospel Standard, 1852, p. 336).

“Another thing wherein the state of things is altered for the worse from what it was in the times of the Reformation, is the prevalency of licentiousness in principles and opinions. There is not now that spirit of orthodoxy which there was then; there is very little appearance of zeal for the mysteries and spiritual doctrines of Christianity; and they never were so ridiculed and held in contempt as they are in the present age, and especially in England, the principal kingdom of the Reformation. In that kingdom, those principles on which the power of godliness depends, are in a great measure exploded; and Arianism and Socinianism, Arminianism and Deism, are the things which prevail and carry almost all before them. History records no age wherein there was so great an apostasy of those who had been brought up under the light of the Gospel to infidelity; never was there such a casting off of Christianity and all revealed religion, never any age when it was so much scoffed at and the Gospel of Christ ridiculed” (Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758, Vol. 1, p. 471). Nor were conditions, generally, any better in the U.S.A. at that period.

“Surely the Lord has a controversy with this land; and there hardly can be a period assigned in the annals of the ages, when it was more expedient or seasonable for those who fear Him to stir up each other to humiliation and prayer than at present. What is commonly called our National Debt is swelled to an enormous greatness. It may be quickly expressed in figures; but a person must be something versed in calculation to form a tolerable idea of accumulated millions. But what arithmetic is sufficient to compute the immensity of our National Debt in a *spiritual* sense? or in other words, the amount of our *national sins*? The spirit of infidelity, which, for a time, distinguished comparatively few, and like a river, was restrained within narrow bounds, has of late years broken down its banks and deluged the land. This wide-spreading evil has, in innumerable instances, as might be expected, emboldened the natural heart against the fear of God, hardened it to an insensibility of moral obligation, and strengthened its prejudices against the Gospel. The consequence has been that profligate wickedness is becoming almost as universal as the air we breathe and is practiced with little more reserve or secrecy than the transactions of common business, except in such instances as would subject the offender to the penalty of human laws. O the unspeakable patience of God!

“The multiplied instances of impiety, blasphemy, cruelty, adultery, villainy, and abominations not to be thought of without horror, under which this land groans, are only known to Him who knoweth all things. There are few sins which imply greater contempt of God, or a more obdurate state of mind in the offender, than *perjury*, yet the guilt of it is so little regarded, and temptations to it so very frequent, that perhaps I do not go too far in supposing there are more deliberate acts of perjury committed amongst us than among the rest of mankind taken together. Though some of the Roman poets and historians have given very dark pictures of the times they lived in, their worst descriptions of this kind would hardly be found exaggerated if applied to our own. But what are the sins of heathens, if compared with the like evils perpetrated in a land bearing the name of Christian, favoured with the Word of God, the light of the Gospel, and enjoying the blessings of civil and religious liberty and peace in a higher degree, and for a longer continuance, than was afforded to any people of whose history we have heard?” (John Newton, 1725-1807, Vol. 1, p. 197).

In his “Foolish Virgins Described,” William Huntington (1797) wrote, “We have more need to fear a certain army in the bowels of our own country, than all the combined forces on the frontiers (i.e. of Napoleon)...the daily elopement of women from their husbands, and the unclean spirit of

whoredom that so universally reigns and rules among the higher classes...Another thing I fear is the threatened stroke of judgment upon *the oppressor*. The last hard frost gave the coal merchant his opportunity to grind the face of the poor to the utmost, which will never be forgotten by the days of this generation. The year following, the whole staff of life was confined in the hands of the farmer, the monopolist, and the miller, who exhibited such hardness of heart, covetousness, and cruel oppression, as is not to be found in the annals of history” (Vol. 2, p. 568). So that “cornering” of food and unjust “profiteering” is no new thing.

Spiritual conditions in Scotland at this same period may be readily visualized from the following quotation. “The darkness of a dead, blasted, profane, or ignorant ministry prevails upon the withholding of the lamp of God’s Anointed. Indeed God may leave something in the land called the Gospel, and a set of men who call themselves ministers of the Gospel. But what sort of a lamp is it that is left, when the true Gospel lamp is taken away? It is the devil’s lamp; it is not the narrow way, but a broad-way lamp, to set folk straightway to the bottomless pit. And what sort of ministers or lamp-bearers are left? Why, they are blind guides leading the blind, and both fall into the ditch together” (Ebenezer Erskine, 1680-1754, Vol. 2, p. 285).

Perhaps the reader would inquire, Do you, then, wish to make out that conditions now are better, or at least no worse, than they were in the past? That expression “the past,” dear friend, is entirely a relative one. It all depends upon the unit of comparison. We are certainly not so mad as to argue that things now wear a more favourable appearance than they did a generation ago. No indeed, we freely grant and sadly acknowledge that during the past fifty years there has been a most decided and terrible deterioration, both spiritually and morally, and that not locally or provincially, but universally. The law winks at many things today which had been punished before the War. The press smiles upon things now which it had not dared to do then. The rank and file of the public countenance today was formerly condemned by all decent people. Professing Christians are no longer shocked by sights which once horrified them.

But what does the degeneracy and wickedness of our generation prove? That the end of the age is certainly upon us? By no means. That evil is more rampant today than it has ever been before? Certainly not—the testimony of history proves otherwise. Conditions *are* far worse than they were fifty years ago, yet, in many respects, they are not nearly so bad as they were two hundred years ago. Things generally were in an awful state during the first half of the eighteenth century, but even *they* were better than much which obtained before the Reformation, during the Dark Ages. All of this simply serves to illustrate what we said in our first article—there is *an ebb and flow of the tide*—manifest throughout the history of Israel in Old Testament times—equally evident during the course of this Christian era. What is coming next? We know not. No man knows. Only fools will prophesy. Whether God will soon graciously grant a widespread revival or whether He will let loose the bolts of His judgment, remains to be seen.

This very imperfect review of Conditions in the Past would lack anything approaching completeness if we failed to notice some of the *physical judgments* which, from time to time, God has sent upon men’s wickedness. Our special object in here referring to these is to protest against our “Signs-of-the-Times” men, who magnify out of all proportion and historical perspective such phenomena when they occur in our own days. If some terrible calamity happens, bringing with it great loss of life and destruction of property, and especially if such calamities quickly follow one another (for they rarely come singly), scaremongers and lovers of the sensational declare that nothing like it has ever happened before, and that such things “prove” the coming of the Lord is at our very doors. But, “There is *no* new thing under the sun.” These very calamities have occurred all through human history.

“We have been visited with famines, earthquakes, pestilence, inundations, thunder and lightnings in winter, and most strange and unseasonable weather. But alas, all these have taken no effect—where is the humiliation, repentance, and reformation which they have wrought? therefore it must needs be there remains behind a great judgment” (William Perkins, 1587, Vol. 3, p. 424).

The earthquakes which have happened in our own lifetime, at San Francisco and Quetta, severe as they were, were mild in comparison with those which occurred at earlier dates. In the opening century of this Christian era, the entire cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii were totally destroyed. In more recent times, that at Lisbon, in 1755, to mention no others, resulted in no fewer than fifty thousand people losing their lives. Thomas Brooks (1608-1680, Vol. 6. p. 191) makes reference to a famine in England in 1316, which was so terrible, “that horses, dogs, yea, men and children, were stolen for food; and the thieves newly brought into the jails were torn in pieces and eaten at once, half alive, by such as had been there longer.”

Andrew Fletcher (1655-1716), the Historian of Salton, tells us that in 1690 conditions were such that, “besides many wretchedly provided for, there were two hundred thousand people, or one fourth or fifth of the total population of Scotland begging from door to door.” As recently as 1847, there occurred a most fearful famine in Ireland. “One correspondent from the County of Cork to whom we sent aid, mentions that in his district forty or fifty people die daily, either of famine or of disease produced by famine. The graveyards are full; through the number of the dead and the general distress, coffins cannot be procured” (Gospel Standard, 1847, p. 122). Probably some of our own readers can recall the fearful poverty and suffering in Lancashire in 1867-8, following the closing of all the cotton mills—owing to the Civil War in the U.S.A., when cotton ceased to be shipped from there.

“On one night in the month of August, 1846, a fatal blast traversed the length and breadth of Ireland, the effect of which was that the growing potatoes which, to use the language of an eye-witness, the day before stood up like gooseberry trees, next morning drooped and flagged, and in a few days filled the air with the stench of putrefaction. Men of science bring their microscopes, and talk very learnedly of fungus, and worn-out stock, and improper soil, and over-much moisture; but the leaf blotched in a single night tells its own tale, and proclaims the *air* as the bringer of the corrupting taint. The vial of wrath thus poured into the air, swept off in a single night the food of a nation, and in spite of the noble assistance, publicly and privately, of maligned and ill-requited England, herself suffering under a similar infliction, sent at least a million Irishmen to the grave, either by positive famine or by its invariable and more fatal accompaniments, fever” (Gospel Standard, 1854, p. 227).

“When the plague was in London, in 1665, when the Lord, to correct and punish the inhabitants of this kingdom for their national impieties, sent amongst them the most dreadful plague that had been in the memory of man, it was preceded by an unusual drought. The meadows were parched and the highways burnt up: insomuch that there was no food for the cattle, which occasioned, first a murrain among *them*, and then a general contagion among the *human* species, which increased in the city and suburbs of London, till eight or ten thousand died in a week. The richest inhabitants fled to the remotest countries; but the calamities of those who stayed behind, and of the poorer sort, are not to be expressed. Trade was at a full stand; all the commerce between London and the country entirely cut off, lest the infection should be propagated thereby. Nay, the country housekeepers and farmers dared not entertain their city friends and neighbours or relations who came from London, till they had performed quarantine in the fields or outhouses. If a stranger passed through the neighbourhood, they fled from him as an

enemy. In London the shops and houses were quite shut up, and many of them marked with a red cross, and an inscription over the doors, 'Lord, have mercy on us!' Grass grew in the streets, and every night the bellman went his round with a cart, crying, 'Bring out your dead'" (S. E. Pierce's, 1746-1829, Letters, Vol. 1, p. 80). This dreadful plague was followed by a four day's fire in London (1666) so devastating that it destroyed 89 churches and 13,200 houses.

When the Revolution occurred in Russia twenty years ago, [1917] and also in the early days of the present conflict in Spain, sensationalists announced in the most extravagant terms that nothing like it had ever happened before. But those with the merest smattering of history would know that the Reign of Terror in France when the streets of Paris literally ran with blood at the close of the eighteenth century, witnessed that which was equally atrocious and on a far vaster scale. In his Annual-Fast sermon, Nathaniel Emmons (1745-1840) said, "From January 1789 to October 1795, the number of slain and banished in France amounted to 2,152,979." He added, "Since that period there have been five years of internal revolution and foreign wars, carried on with infinite waste and havoc in Holland, along the Rhine, in Switzerland, in the Pyrenean frontiers of Spain, in every part of Italy, in England, in Syria." Well did he conclude, "Human nature has been the same in all nations and in all ages."

Nor were sensationalists in those days slow to avail themselves of such material, and "students of prophecy" turned prophets themselves, announcing that such divine judgments were the immediate precursors of the return of Christ. The same occurred again in 1848 during the Chartist riots in England—"Who does not remember that memorable day, April 10, 1848, when London, commercial, political, and aristocratical, trembled to its very centre at the Chartist procession: when the Bank of England was armed and garrisoned like a fortress, and the greatest general of the age had made his military plans by disposing artillery and soldiers at various points, to drown the threatened insurrection in torrents of human blood" (Gospel Standard, 1854, p. 185). More so, sensationalists were in their heyday during the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny, and the Civil War in the U.S.A., as anyone can verify for himself, if he has access to books on "The Second Coming of Christ" written at that time.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

4. Its Verity

Striking as is the case of Abraham's own election, yet God's dealings with his offspring is equally if not more noteworthy. Therein God furnished an epitome of what has largely characterized the history of all His elect, for it is a very rare thing to find a whole family which (not simply makes a profession, but) gives evidence of enjoying His special favour. The common rule is that one is taken and another is left, for those who are given to really believe this precious but solemn truth, are made to experimentally realize its force in connection with their own kin. Thus Abraham's own family furnished in his next and immediate successors, a prototype of the future experience of the elect. In his family we behold the most striking instances of both election and preterition, first in his sons, and then in his grandsons.

That Isaac was a child of pure election grace (which was the cause and not the consequence of his faith and holiness), and that as such he was placed in Abraham's family as a precious gift, whilst Ishmael was excluded from that pre-eminent favour, is quite evident from the history of

Genesis. Before he was born, yea, before he was conceived in the womb, God declared unto Abraham that Isaac was heir of the same salvation with him, and had irrevocably estated the covenant of grace upon him, thereby distinguishing him from Ishmael—who, though blessed with temporal mercies, was not in the covenant of grace, but rather was under the covenant of works, see Genesis 17:19-21 and compare the Spirit's comments thereon in Galatians 4:22-26.

Later, while Isaac was yet young, and lay bound as a sacrifice upon the altar, God ratified the promises of blessing which He had made before his birth, confirming them with a solemn oath, "By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven" (Gen 22:16-17). That oath respected the spiritual seed, the heirs of promise, such as Isaac was, the declared son of promise. To that the apostle referred when he said, "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath" (Heb 6:17). And what was His "immutable counsel" but His eternal decree, His purpose of election? God's counsels are His decrees within Himself from everlasting (Eph 1:4, 9-10). And what is a promise with an oath but God's immutable counsel or election put into promissory form. And who are the "heirs of promise" (Gal 3:29) but the elect, such as Isaac was.

An objector would argue that the choosing of Isaac in preference to Ishmael was not an act of pure sovereignty, seeing that the former was the son of Sarah, while the latter was the child of Hagar, the Egyptian bondwoman—thus supposing that God's gifts are regulated by something in the creature. But the next instance precludes even that sophistry and entirely shuts us up to the uncaused and uninfluenced will of the Most High. Jacob and Esau were by the *same* father and mother, twins. Concerning them we read, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to *election* might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth: it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom 9:11-13). Let us bow in awed silence before such a passage.

The nation which sprang from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was God's chosen and favoured people, singled out and separated from all other nations, to be the recipients of the rich blessings of God. It was that very fact which added so greatly to the enormity of their sins, for increased privileges entail increased responsibility, and increased responsibility not discharged involves increased guilt. "Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel...*You only* have I *known* of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amo 3:1-2). From the days of Moses until the time of Christ, a period of fifteen hundred years, God suffered all the heathen nations to walk in their own ways, leaving them to the corruptions and darkness of their own evil hearts. No other nation had God's Word—no other nation had a divinely-appointed priesthood. Israel alone was favoured with a written revelation from heaven.

And why *did* the Lord choose Israel to be His special favourites? The Chaldeans were more ancient, the Egyptians were far wiser, the Canaanites were more numerous, yet they were passed by. What, then, was the reason why the Lord singled out Israel? Certainly it was not because of any excellency in them, as the whole of their history shows. From Moses till Malachi they were a stiff-necked and hard-hearted people, unappreciative of divine favours, unresponsive to the divine will. It could not have been because of any goodness in them. It was a clear case of divine sovereignty, "The LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose

you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers” (Deu 7:6-8). The explanation of all God’s acts and works was to be found in Himself—in the sovereignty of His will and not anything in the creature.

The same principle of divine selection is as plainly and prominently revealed in the New Testament as in the Old. It was strikingly exemplified in connection with the birth of Christ. First, in the place where He was born. How startlingly the sovereignty of God was displayed in that momentous event. Jerusalem was not the Saviour’s birthplace, nor was it one of the prominent towns of Palestine, instead, it was in a small village! The Holy Spirit has called particular attention to this point in one of the leading Messianic prophecies, “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be *little* among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of *thee* shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel” (Mic 5:2). How different are God’s thoughts and ways from man’s! How He despises what we most esteem and honours that which we look down upon. One of the most insignificant of all places was chosen by God to be the scene of the most stupendous of all events.

Again—the high sovereignty of God and the principle of His singular election appeared in those to whom He first communicated these glad tidings. To whom was it God sent the angels to announce the blessed fact of the Saviour’s birth? Suppose Scripture had been silent upon the point—how differently would we have conceived of the matter. Would we not have naturally thought that the first ones to be informed of this glorious event had been the ecclesiastical and religious leaders in Israel? Surely the angels would deliver the message in the *temple*. But no, it was neither to the chief priests nor to the rulers they were sent, but unto the lowly shepherds keeping watch over their flocks in the fields. And again we say, how entirely different are God’s thoughts and ways from man’s. And what thus took place at the beginning of this Christian era was indicative of God’s way throughout its entire course, see 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.

Let us next observe that this same grand truth was emphasized by Christ Himself in His public ministry. Look at His first message in the Nazareth synagogue. “And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor [i.e. the poor in spirit, and not to wealthy Laodiceans]; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted [not the stout- hearted, but those sorrowing before God over their sins], to preach deliverance to the captives, [and not to those who prate about their “free will”], and recovering of sight to the blind [not those who think they *can* see], and to set at liberty them that are bruised [not those who deem themselves whole]. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luk 4:17-19).

The immediate sequel is indeed solemn, “And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bear him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth” (Luk 4:21-22). So far so good—they were pleased at His “gracious words.” Yes, but would they tolerate the preaching of *sovereign grace*? “But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto *none of them* was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and *none of them* was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian” (Luk 4:25-27). Here Christ pressed upon them the truth of God’s high sovereignty, and *that* they could not endure, “And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city,” (Luk 4:28-29) and mark it

well that it was the respectable worshippers of the synagogue who thus gave vent to their hatred of this precious truth! Then let not the servant today be surprised if he meet with the same treatment as his Master.

His sermon at Nazareth was by no means the only time when the Lord Jesus proclaimed the doctrine of election. In Matthew 11, we hear Him saying, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast *hid* these things from the wise and prudent, and hast *revealed* them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Mat 11:25-26). To the seventy He said, “Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are *written in heaven*” (Luk 10:20). In John 6, it will be found that Christ, in the hearing of the multitude, hesitated not to speak openly of a company whom the Father had “given to him” (see Joh 6:37, 39). To the apostles He said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit” (Joh 15:16). How shocked would the great majority of church-goers be today if they heard the Lord say such words unto His own! In John 17:9, we find Him saying, “I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me.”

As an interesting and instructive illustration of the emphasis which the Holy Spirit has placed upon this truth we would call attention to the fact that in the New Testament, God’s people are termed “believers” but twice, “Christians” only three times, whereas the designation “*elect*,” is found fourteen times, and “saints” or separated ones sixty-two times! We would also point out that various other terms and phrases are used in the Scriptures to express election, “And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I *know* thee by name” (Exo 33:17). “Before I formed thee in the belly I *knew* thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee” (Jer 1:5 and cf. Amo 3:2). “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen” (Joh 13:18 and cf. Mat 20:16). “As many as were *ordained to eternal life* believed” (Act 13:48). “God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to *take out of them* a people for his name” (Acts 15:14). “Church of the firstborn, which are *written in heaven*” (Heb 12:23).

This basic truth of election undergirds the whole scheme of salvation—that is why we are told, “The *foundation of God* standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord *knoweth them that are his*” (2Ti 2:19). Election is necessarily and clearly implied by some of the most important terms used in Scripture concerning various aspects of our salvation, yea, they are unintelligible without it. For example, every passage which makes mention of “redemption” presupposes eternal election. How so? because “redemption” implies a previous possession. It is Christ *buying back* and delivering those who were God’s at the beginning. Again—the words “*regeneration*” and “*renewing*” necessarily signify a *previous* spiritual life—lost when we fell in Adam (see 1Co 15:22). So again the term “*reconciliation*”—this not only denotes a state of alienation before the reconciliation, but a condition of harmony and amity, before the alienation. But enough—the truth of election has now been abundantly demonstrated from the Scriptures. If these many and indubitable proofs are not sufficient, it would be a waste of time to further multiply them.

Let it now be pointed out that this grand truth was definitely held and owned by our forefathers. First, a brief quotation from the ancient Creed of the Waldenses (11th century)—those renowned confessors of the Christian faith in the dark ages, in the midst of the most terrible persecutions from the Papacy, “That God saves from corruption and damnation those whom He has chosen from the foundation of the world, not for any disposition, faith, or holiness that He foresaw in them, but of His mere mercy in Christ Jesus His Son; passing by all the rest, according to the irreprehensible reason of His own free will and justice.” Here is one of the Thirty-nine

Articles of the Church of England, “Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God whereby before the foundations of the world were laid He hath constantly decreed by His secret counsel to us to deliver from curse and condemnation those whom He had chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring by Christ to everlasting salvation as vessels made to honour.”

This is from the Westminster Confession of Faith, subscribed to by all Presbyterian ministers, “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and un-changeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.” And here is the third article from the old Baptist (English) Confession, “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of His glorious grace; others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of His glorious justice.”

Let it not be thought that we have quoted from these human standards in order to bolster up our cause. Not so—the present writer, by divine grace, would believe and teach this grand truth if none before him had ever held it and if everyone in Christendom now repudiated it. But what has just been adduced is good evidence that we are here advancing no heretical novelty, but a doctrine proclaimed in the past in each section of the orthodox church upon earth. We have also made the above quotations for the purpose of showing how far the present generation of professing Christians has *departed from the faith* of those to whom under God, they owe their present religious liberties. Just as the modern denials of the divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures (by the higher critics), the denial of immediate creation (by evolutionists), the denial of the deity of Christ (by Unitarians), so the present denial of God’s sovereign election and of man’s spiritual impotency are equally departures from the faith of our forefathers, which was based upon the inerrant Word of God.

The truth of divine election has been most conspicuously exemplified in the history of Christendom. If it be true that during the last two thousand years of the Old Testament dispensation the spiritual blessings of God were largely confined to a single people, it is equally true that for the last five hundred years one section of the human race has been more signally favoured by heaven than all the other sections put together. God’s dealings with the Anglo-Saxons have been as singular and sovereign as His dealings with the Hebrews of old. Here is a fact which cannot be gainsaid, staring us all in the face, exposing the madness of those who deny this doctrine—for centuries past the vast majority of God’s saints have been gathered out of the Anglo-Saxons! Thus, the very testimony of modern history unmistakably rebukes the folly of those who repudiate the teachings of God’s Word on this subject, rendering their unbelief without excuse.

Tell us, ye who murmur against the divine sovereignty, why is it that the Anglo-Saxon race has been singled out for the enjoyment of far the greater part of God’s spiritual blessings? Were there no other races equally needy? The Chinese practiced a nobler system of morality and were far more numerous—why, then, were they left for so long in Gospel darkness? Why was the whole African continent left for many centuries before the Sun of Righteousness shone there again with healing in His wings? Why is America today a thousand times more favoured than India, which has thrice its population? To all of these questions we are compelled to fall back upon the answer of our blessed Lord, “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Mat 11:26). And just as with Israel of old there was an election within an election, so in Germany, in Great Britain, and in the U.S.A., certain particular places have been favoured with one faithful

minister after another, while other places have been cursed with false prophets. “I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city” (Amo 4:7)—true now in a spiritual way.

Finally, the veracity of election is clearly evidenced by the fierce opposition of Satan against it. The devil fights *truth*, not error. He vented His hatred against it when Christ proclaimed it (Luk 4:28-29); he did so when Paul preached it (as Rom 9:14, 19 more than hints); he did so when the Waldenses, the Reformers, and the Puritans heralded it—using the Papists as his tools to torment and murder thousands of them who confessed it. He still opposes it. Today he does so in his guise as an angel of light. He pretends to be very jealous of the honour of God’s character and declares that election makes Him out to be a monster of injustice. He uses the weapon of ridicule—if election be true, why preach the Gospel? He seeks to intimidate—even if the doctrine of election be Scriptural, it is not wise to preach it. Thus, the teaching of Scripture, the testimony of history, and the opposition of Satan, all witness to the veracity of this doctrine.

CONSCIENCE

2. Its Office and Character [Continued from May issue]

Of course the truth may be received merely intellectually, not believingly—and if trifled with, it is no wonder if it results in terrible hardening of the heart. The more orthodox Pharisees were worse persecutors of the Lord than the infidel Sadducees. And the Jews everywhere led the heathen in their early attacks on Christianity. But in these cases it was still rejected truth that stirred up their opposition. But the truth is really and decisively rejected where its claim over the heart and life is allowed in word, and in word only—he who to his father’s claim of service said openly, “I will not,” yet afterward repented and went—while he who respectfully answered, “I go, sir,” and *never* went.

And this is the character of truth, that it stirs up opposition. It speaks, prophet-like, *for God*, affirming His authority over the soul and abasing the glory of man in His presence. Unbelief says, as Ahab of Micaiah, “I hate it, for it does not prophesy good of me, but evil.” And even in the believer, it runs counter to all that is not of faith within him, and alas! how much within us is not faith! Thus, among Christians themselves, the truth in any fullness causes many to stumble and at every fresh unfolding of it, some who had followed thus far are left behind. It is even well if they do not become active opponents of it. Thus He who in the angel’s announcement brings “peace on earth,” brings in fact, nevertheless, because of man’s condition, “not peace, but a sword.” The fellowship of saints is disturbed and broken up—the thousands drop to hundreds in the very presence of the enemy. Romanism boasts, with a certain reason, of her unity at least in outward organization, while Protestantism proclaims the sanctity of conscience and divides into a hundred sects!

Yet if conscience be in any respect given up, all is. For its principle is obedience to God, and to God only, and this is a first necessity for a walk with God. Conscience is, above all things, therefore individual. It refuses to see with other eyes than its own, and refuses, too, subjection or guidance without seeing. It will easily incur in this way the reproach of obstinacy, contumacy,

pride, self-will. While on the other hand there is constant danger of mistaking these for it. It is thus a thing which all ecclesiastical systems find it difficult to recognize or deal with, and which makes large demands for wisdom, patience, and forbearance with one another. “We see in part; we prophecy in part,” and what we see may seem in ill accord with what is really truth seen by others, just for want of knowledge of a larger truth embracing both. But even if we see not, and but think we see, conscience, because it touches our practical relationship with God, is a solemn thing to deal with. He who meddles with it interferes with God’s rights over the soul and usurps a vicegerency which He commits to no one.

Yet the voice of God, let us carefully remember, conscience is not. It is an ear to hear it only—and which may be dull and deaf, and hear with little clearness after all. God’s voice is that which utters itself by the Spirit through the Word. But this voice speaks to the individual, to him that has an ear to hear. None can, but at his peril, resign his responsibility in this to another—and none can, but at his peril, require this to be done. Yet, alas! how often, in various ways, consciously and unconsciously, is this required and yielded to!

3. Purged and Pure

“To serve the living God,” the conscience must first of all be “purified from dead works” (see Heb 9:14). A soul alarmed on account of sin, is driven by conscience into an effort to escape from the wrath which it foresees as the necessity of divine holiness. In an awakened condition, not so much conscience drives from God, as the heart, estranged, refuses One in whom it finds no pleasure. Its pleasure is in banishing Him, if possible, from the thought. Aye, terrible as it is to realize, sin as sin, an offense to Him whom it counts an enemy, is a real pleasure. Many, it is true, are quite ignorant of this, and would resent the imputation of it, for the heart is deceitful above all things, as it is desperately wicked, and who can know it? But when we wake up to realize our condition, we shall assuredly begin to realize it to be so, and none who has been truly brought to God, but will own with the apostle, the remarkable example of it, that “when we were *enemies*, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son” (Rom 5:10).

When awakened, the holiness of God is seen as necessary wrath against sin, and then effort begins to secure shelter from it. And naturally this takes the shape of an attempt to keep those commandments of God, hitherto despised and broken. Ignorant of how complete the ruin sin has caused—ignorant of the unbending requirements of God’s holiness—ignorant of the grace which has provided complete atonement, the soul persists (often for how long!) in trying to bring to God some fruit that He can accept, and which will secure or help to secure, the one who brings it. But this is only “dead works.” It is neither “work of faith” nor “labour of love.” It is self-justification, the fruit of fear and unbelief—hence truly called “*dead works*,” the mere outside of holiness at the best, with no life—no inward spirit in it to make it acceptable to the “living God.” It is rather itself an offense and thus a necessary defilement of the soul.

The blood of Christ therefore it is that purifies the conscience from dead works. Justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Brought to God, and to God known in Him, there is “no more conscience of sins” in the rejoicing worshipper. Free from the load of guilt, he is able to welcome the light fully and without reserve—yea, with eager desire. The yoke of Christ is rest and freedom. Thus the apprehension of grace delivers from a morbid self-occupation to enable one for real holiness. The conscience is purified so as faithfully to receive, without partiality or distortion, the communications of the Father’s will. “The fruit of the *light* is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (see Eph 5:9).

And if that were all, how blessed—how wholly blessed would be this condition! “Light is good” indeed, “and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun” (see Ecc 11:7). If in this all nature rejoices, how the new nature in that which is the “light...of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”! Thus the fruit of the light is found in this eternal day and summer of the soul.

From the side of God there is no more need of change or variation. His grace is perfect. His gifts and calling are without repentance. Here, in the enjoyment of its own things, the soul is called to abide. Here all its own interests summon it to abide. What might be expected then but continual growth in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Alas! that this rightful expectation should be so little fulfilled, but in whom is it perfectly fulfilled? in how many do we see almost the opposite of it, retrogression instead of progress?! And how many are there who remain apparently almost stationary, although in reality of course with loss of zeal and fervour, year after year?! What is the cause of all this, which we find acknowledged in apostolic times as in the present? For the Galatians were no solitary exception of those who “did run well,” being hindered from steadfast obedience to the truth. At Rome, those whose faith had once been “spoken of throughout the whole world,” we find testified of by the same witness as all seeking their own and not the things of Jesus Christ (Rom 1:8; Phi 2:21). And later he says of them, “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me” (2Ti 4:16). Corinth went into worldliness and immorality. Ephesus left its first love. Of some of these it may be pleaded that it is assemblies that are spoken of, not individuals, but the two ordinarily go together, and the magnitude of the departure shows that the plea can hardly avail. The general fact is as plain as it is intensely solemn.

But the decay of the fruits of faith means the decay of faith itself. And this decay of faith, whence does it proceed but from failure to maintain the purity of conscience? In the case of some, (who had, no doubt, got far away) the apostle argues thus, “Holding faith, and a good conscience; which [i.e., the latter] some having put away concerning *faith* have made shipwreck” (1Ti 1:19). It is easy to show how heresies and false doctrines, and the reception of these by others, spring from a conscience defiled, but this is not now my point. For simplicity of faith itself, a good conscience must be maintained. As another apostle says, “If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God” (1Jo 3:20-21). And so the Lord, in view of Peter’s grievous fall, and the natural result of it, assures him, “I have prayed for thee, that thy *faith fail not*” (Luk 22:32). How vital, then, to the whole spiritual condition is the maintenance of a pure conscience!

But again, this pure conscience can only be maintained by exercise. “Herein do I *exercise* myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men” (Act 24:16). And how many mistake—how easy, therefore, is it to mistake—a conscience dulled by neglect, for one that is really “good”! How many persuade themselves all is well with them, while they are simply not near enough to God to detect the evil! “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord,” we are admonished, “walk ye in him” (Col 2:6). This alone is the Christian “rule” (Gal 6:16), and that is alone a good conscience which keeps to the measure of this. Yet how easy to have the theory, nay, in some respects, the faith of where we are, without this becoming the real measure for conscience of practical walk!

In the sanctuary, with God alone, we find the light in which things take their true shape and character. In Israel’s sanctuary of old, the light of common day was jealously excluded. The light of the golden candlestick guided the priests alone in their daily sacrifice. For us, the light of the holiest is that of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And in this, things look very differently, indeed, from the mere common light in which the natural conscience views them. Yet

many Christians are able to be at peace with themselves merely because they are judging themselves by a standard little beyond the common use. They even ignorantly bring in the grace of God to quiet the stirring of self-accusation, which they suppose is legality, and go on in a careless dream, as far as possible removed from the peace of communion—"peace of Christ." But the apostle was not legal when he said, "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be acceptable to him" (2Co 5:9, Greek), nor in his exercise to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.—Frederick William Grant (1834-1902).



July

THE LORD'S PRAYER—PART 5

“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Mat 6:10). The connection between this petition and the preceding ones is not difficult to trace. First must be our concern for God’s glory, then our desire for His kingdom, and then an honest endeavour to serve Him. The glory of God is the grand object of our *desires*—the coming of His kingdom is the chief *means* by which it is secured—our personal obedience makes it *manifest* that His kingdom *is* come to us. When God’s kingdom really comes to a soul he must necessarily be brought into obedience to its laws and ordinances, for it is worse than useless to call God our King if His commandments are disregarded by us. Broadly speaking, there are two parts to this petition—a request for the spirit of obedience and the manner in which it is to be performed.

“Thy will be done.” This may present a difficulty to a few of our readers—is not God’s will always done? In one respect, Yes—in another, No. Scripture presents the will of God from two main viewpoints—His secret will and His revealed will, or His decreative and His preceptive will. The former is the rule of *His own* actions: in creation (Rev 4:11), in providence (Dan 4:35), and in grace (Rom 9:15)—this is always unknown to men until revealed by prophecies of things to come or by events which transpire. The latter is the rule of *our* actions, God having made known in the Scriptures that which is pleasing in His sight. The secret or decreative will of God is always done, equally on earth as in heaven, for none can thwart or even hinder it.

This distinction in connection with God’s will is clearly drawn in, “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are *revealed* belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may *do* all the words of this law” (Deu 29:29). The same is true of His “counsel.” “My counsel [His eternal decree] *shall* stand” (Isa 46:10). “The Pharisees and lawyers *rejected* [margin, “frustrated”] the counsel [or revealed will] of God” (Luk 7:30). On the one hand, we read, “Who hath resisted his will?” (Rom 9:19), and on the other hand, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1Th 4:3). The revealed or preceptive will of God is stated in the Word, defining our duty, making known the path we should walk in, “That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Rom 12:2).

“The will of God,” then, is a phrase which, taken by itself, may express either what God has purposed to do, or what He has commanded to be done by us. With regard to the will of God in the first sense, it is already and always done upon earth as it is in heaven, for neither human policy nor infernal power can prevent it. The text which is now before us contains a prayer that we might be brought into complete accord with God’s revealed will. We *do* the will of God when, from a regard for His authority, we regulate our hearts and lives according to His commandments. Such is our bounden duty, and should be our fervent desire and diligent endeavour. We mock God if we present this request and then do not make the conforming of ourselves to His will our main business—ponder the solemn warning in Matthew 15:8.

“Thy will be done on earth.” The one who sincerely prays this, necessarily intimates his unreserved surrender to God, and implies the renunciation of the will of Satan (2Ti 2:26), his own corrupt inclinations (1Pe 4:2), and the rejecting of all things opposed to God. Nevertheless, such a soul is painfully conscious that there is still much in him that is in conflict with God, and therefore he humbly and contritely acknowledges that he cannot do His will without divine assistance, and earnestly desires and seeks enabling grace. Possibly the meaning and scope of this petition will best be opened up if we express it thus, O Father, let Thy will be revealed *to* me, let it be wrought *in* me, let it be performed *by* me.

From the positive side, when we pray, “Thy will be done,” we beg God, first, for spiritual *wisdom* to learn His will, “Make me to understand the way of thy precepts...Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes” (Psa 119:27, 33). Second, we beg God for spiritual *inclination* unto His will, “I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart...Incline my heart unto thy testimonies” (Psa 119:32, 36). Third, we beg God for spiritual *strength* to perform His bidding, “Quicken thou me according to thy Word...Strengthen thou me according unto thy Word” (Psa 119:25, 28). “Draw me: we will run after thee” (Song 1:4). “Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight” (Heb 13:21). “Thy will be done *on earth*,” because this is the place of our discipleship, where we are to practise self-denial—and because if we do not His will here, we never shall in heaven.

“As it is in heaven”—by the saints and the angels. This is the standard set before us on earth. *How* is God’s will done in heaven? Not sullenly and reluctantly, not pharisaically nor hypocritically, not tardily or fitfully, nor partially and fragmentally. But gladly and joyfully—both “the living creatures” (not “beasts”) and the “elders” of Revelation 5:8 are pictured with “*harps*” in their hands! Yet humbly and reverently—the seraphim *veil* their faces before the Lord, Isaiah 6:2. With alacrity—“Then *flew* one of the seraphim” (Isa 6:6). Constantly—“Therefore are they before the throne of grace, and serve him *day and night* in his temple” (Rev 7:15). The angels obey God promptly, wholly, perfectly, with ineffable delight. But *we* are sinful and full of infirmities. With what propriety, then, can the obedience of celestial beings be proposed as an example for us? We raise this question not as a concession to our imperfections, but because honest souls are exercised by it.

First, *to sweeten* our subjection to the divine will—we on earth are set no harder task than those in heaven. O my reader, heaven is what it is because the will of God is done by all who dwell there, and the measure in which a foretaste of its bliss may be obtained by us upon earth will largely be determined by the degree to which we perform the divine bidding. Second, to show us the blessed *reasonableness* of our obedience to God, “Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word” (Psa 103:20)—then can God require less of us? O my reader, if we are to have communion with the angels in glory, then we must be conformed to them in grace. Third, to make known to us the standard at which we must ever aim, “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing...That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Col 1:10; 4:12). Fourth, to teach us not only *what* to do, but *how* to do it. We are to imitate the angels in the *manner* of their obedience, though we cannot equal them in measure or degree.

“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” Weigh this attentively in the light of what precedes. First, “Our Father which art in heaven.” Then should we not do His will? We must, if we are His children—disobedience is what characterizes His enemies. Did not His own dear Son render Him perfect obedience! Second, “hallowed be thy name.” Does not a real concern for God’s glory oblige us to make a conformity to His will our supreme quest? We certainly must if

we desire to honour God, for nothing dishonours Him more than self-will and defiance. Third, “Thy kingdom come.” Should we not seek to be in full subjection to its laws and ordinances? We must if we are subjects thereof—it is alienated rebels who despise His sceptre.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

127. Conclusion (13:24-25)

Everything down here comes, sooner or later, to its end. Terrible prospect for the wicked, for there awaits them naught but the blackness of darkness forever. Blessed outlook for the righteous, for then they are done with sin and suffering forever, and only everlasting glory and bliss stretches before them. How would it be with *you*, my reader, if the hand of time were now writing the *final lines* of your earthly history? Did the apostle experience a pang of regret as he arrived at the parting salutation? did his readers? We cannot be sure, but this writer certainly feels sorry that the closing verses are now reached—and we are assured that not a few of those who have followed us throughout this series will feel much the same. For rather more than ten years we have journeyed together through this epistle and now we have come to the conclusion.

It is very doubtful if the writer will ever again attempt a task of such dimensions. Be that as it may, he certainly will never be engaged with a more momentous and glorious subject. There is no book in the New Testament of greater importance and few of equal. First, it furnishes us a sure guide to the interpretation of the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit moving the apostle to here open up its principal types. Second, it supplies us with a vivid description and explanation of the Mediator’s office and work, demonstrating the worthlessness and needlessness of all other intermediaries between the soul and God. Third, it therefore places in our hands the most conclusive exposure of the errors and fallacies of the Papacy. Fourth, it makes clear to us why Judaism has passed away and how that it can never again be restored.

The deep importance of this epistle is intimated by a feature which is peculiar to it, namely, the absence of the writer’s name. But let it be noted that he did not conceal himself, for in Hebrews 13:18-24, especially, Paul made it quite clear to the Hebrews who was the penman of this epistle. He plainly declared himself and his circumstances as one who was well-known to them. The true reason why he did *not* prefix his name to this epistle, as to his others, was this—in all his other epistles, he dealt with the churches by virtue of his apostolic authority and the revelation of the Gospel which he had personally received from Christ, but in dealing with the Hebrews, he laid his foundation in the authority of the Holy Scriptures, which they acknowledged, and resolved all his arguments and exhortations thereunto.

They who regard the body of this epistle as concerned merely with the refutation of those arguments brought against the Gospel by the ancient Jews, do greatly err. That which the apostle here took up is of vital moment for *each* generation. Human nature does not change, and the objections brought against the truth by its enemies, are in substance, the same in every age. As the best means of getting rid of darkness is to let in the light, so the most effectual antidote for the poison of Satan is the pure milk of the Word. Only as we are established in the truth are we fortified against the sophistries of error. In this epistle, the apostle deals with the *fundamental* principles of Christianity and no effort should be spared to arrive at a sound understanding of

them. The foundations of the faith are ever being attacked and the ministers of Christ can perform no better service than to establish their people in the grand verities of the faith.

The chief design of the Holy Spirit in this epistle is to set forth the great difference between the *administration* of the everlasting covenant before Christ came and since His coming. The following contrasts may be observed. First, the difference between the instruments God used—the “prophets”—His own Son, Hebrews 1:1-2. Second, the difference between priesthood and Priesthood, Hebrews 7:11-17. Third, the difference between surety and Surety, Hebrews 7:21-22. Fourth, the difference between the law and the “Oath,” Hebrews 7:28. Fifth, the difference between mediator and Mediator, Hebrews 8:6; 9:15. Sixth, between promises and Promises, Hebrews 8:6. Seventh, between blood and Blood, Hebrews 9:12-14. Eighth, between sacrifices and the Sacrifice, Hebrews 9:26. Ninth, between sprinkling and Sprinkling, Hebrews 9:13-14. Tenth, between tabernacle and Tabernacle, Hebrews 9:8, 24. Eleventh, between the “shadow” and the Substance, Hebrews 10:1 and cf. Col. 2:17. Twelfth, between “country” and Country, Hebrews 11:9, 16. In all these contrasts, the difference is between the Old and New Testament *administrations* of the everlasting covenant.

The outstanding contrast between the Old and New Testament regimes is that the one was but evanescent, whereas the other is abiding. Judaism was but preparatory, a temporary economy, whereas Christianity is permanent, ushering in an everlasting order of things. This is intimated in the opening sentence of the epistle, “God hath in these *last* days spoken unto us in his Son.” *Finality* has now been reached!—there is no other dispensation to follow this, cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11; 1 Peter 4:7; 1 John 2:19. In keeping with this we may note how frequently the emphasis is laid upon the abiding and finality of what is here treated of. We read of “He became the author of *eternal* salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb 5:9), of “*eternal* judgment” (Heb 6:2), that “He is able also to save them for *evermore* that come unto God by him” (Heb 7:25), of “*eternal* redemption” (Heb 9:12), of “the *eternal* Spirit” (Heb 9:14), of an “*eternal* inheritance” (Heb 9:15), of “the *everlasting* covenant” (Heb 13:20).

“Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you” (Heb 13:24). It was the custom of the apostle to close his epistle with a warm greeting, not that this was merely a courtesy or pleasantry, for in those days the love of Christians was strong and fervent, both unto the Lord Himself and to His redeemed, “But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another” (1Th 4:9). How radically different things were then from what they now are! Yet only so in degree, and not in essence, for wherever the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, the affections of that soul will necessarily flow unto all His people. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1Jo 3:14), which is as true today as it was in the first century.

“Salute all that have the rule over you” (Heb 13:24). This evinced the apostle’s good will unto the ministers and officers of the churches in Judea, as well as according honour to whom honour is due. Mutual amity between the servants of Christ is to be sedulously sought and lovingly maintained. The large-heartedness of the apostle in this important particular shines forth again and again in the New Testament. John Calvin (1509-1564) suggested that the reason why this salutation was sent particularly unto the rulers of the churches was “as a mark of honour, that he might conciliate them, and gently lead them to assent to his doctrine”—which was so radically opposed to their earlier training. The “rulers” referred to in this verse are, of course, the same as those mentioned in Hebrews 13:7, 17.

“And *all* the saints.” One lesson here inculcated is that the servants of Christ should be absolutely impartial, manifesting equal respect unto the highest and lowest of God’s dear people.

This clause also condemns that detestable spirit of partiality, fostered so much by Rome. The Gospel has no secrets reserved for the initiated only, but the whole of it is the common property of *all* believers. “This epistle, containing strong meat for the perfect, is addressed to the whole congregation. If any part of Scripture was to be kept from the common people, we might fancy it would be this epistle. The writings of the apostles, as well as the prophets, were read in the public assembly, how much more ought it now to be left to everyone to read them according his need” (Johann Albrecht Bengel, 1687-1752).

Believers are here designated “saints” or *separated ones*, which is their common appellation in the New Testament. They are so in a fourfold respect. First, by the Father’s sovereign choice, whereby before the foundation of the world, He singled them out from the mass of their fellows, to be the objects of His special favour. Second, by the Son’s redemption, whereby, He purchased “a peculiar people” unto Himself, thereby distinguishing between the sheep and the goats. Third, by the Spirit’s regeneration, whereby He quickens them unto newness of life, thus making them to differ from those who are left in their natural state—dead in trespasses and sins. Fourth, by their own consecration, whereby they surrender themselves unto the Lord, and dedicate themselves to His service. Their saintship is *evidenced* by their lives—devoted to the love, fear, and will of God. Such are the only proper members of a local church and such are the only true members of the church of God.

“They of Italy salute you.” They did so through the apostle unto the entire body of the Hebrews, knowing of his intention of sending a letter to them, they desired to be remembered to them. “They of *Italy*” if not all of them Gentiles, certainly included many among their number. A most significant detail was this. In the previous verse, Paul had referred to sending “Timothy” unto them, and *his* father was a *Gentile*! But still more striking was this word. It was more than a hint that the “middle wall of partition” was already broken down. Certainly “Italy” was “*outside* the camp” of Judaism. Jerusalem was no longer the centre of God’s earthly witness!

“They of Italy salute you.” This is very blessed, showing the victory of the Spirit over the flesh. “How Christianity melts down prejudices! Romans and Jews, Italians and Hebrews, were accustomed to regard each other with contempt and hatred. But in Christ Jesus there is neither Romans nor Jews, neither Italians nor Hebrews—all are one in Him. Christians of different countries should take all proper opportunities of testifying their mutual regards to each other. It is calculated to strengthen and console, and to knit them closer and closer in harmony. Proper expressions of love increase love on both sides” (John Brown, 1784-1858).

“Grace be with you all. Amen” (Heb 13:25). The epistle closes with the sign-manual of Paul himself. He commonly employed an amanuensis (Rom 16:22), but *this* sentence was written by his own hand. This particular apostolic benediction was his own distinctive token. “The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle, so I write: that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen” (2Th 3:17-18). If the reader will turn to the closing verse of each of the other thirteen epistles of this apostle, it will be found that the same token, substantially, is given in each one. This is the more striking for neither James, Peter, John, nor Jude employed it. Thus, this closing “Grace be with you all” is conclusive evidence that *Paul* was the writer of this epistle.

“Grace be with you all. Amen.” This is the most comprehensive petition that can be presented to God on behalf of His people, either individually or collectively, for it comprises all manner of the blessings of His free favour. Divine grace comprehends and contains all things pertaining to life and godliness. By grace we are saved (Eph 2:8), in grace we stand (Rom 5:2), through grace we are preserved. These words signify, Let the favour of God be *toward you*, His power be

working *in* you, bringing forth the fruits of holiness. Thus, the epistle closes with prayer! “When the people of God have been conversing together, by word or writing, it is good to part with prayer, desiring for each other the continuance of the gracious presence of God, that they may meet together in the world of glory” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). “Grace be *with* you all” denoted their actual participation therein.

And now our happy task is completed. Very conscious are we of our limitations and infirmities. We can but commit our poor efforts to God, pleading the merits of Christ to countervail our demerits, and asking Him to bless that which was pleasing to Himself. Let those who have accompanied us throughout these articles join the writer in asking, do we now better understand the contents of this difficult yet blessed epistle? Have we a deeper appreciation of that grand order of things that has superseded Judaism? Is Christ more real and precious to our souls? Are we more conscious of the sanctifying effects of the doctrine which it inculcates? Are we now paying more diligent heed to its weighty exhortations? Are our souls more deeply impressed by its solemn warnings against apostasy? May divine grace indeed be with us all.

N.B. The articles comprising this series have been written on land and sea. They were commenced in Australia, continued as we crossed three oceans, resumed in England, considerably added to during the years we spent in the U.S.A., and completed in Scotland and England.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

79. His Honourable Conduct

“Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year: and David inquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites” (2Sa 21:1). Last month we sought to show that this occurrence supplies a definite illustration or example of God’s governmental ways with the nations. On this occasion, He was dealing with Israel for a crime which they had committed many years previously. That crime respected their violation of a treaty which had been entered into between themselves and the Gibeonites in the days of Joshua. King Saul had ruthlessly ignored that solemn obligation, and instead of protecting the weak had brutally sought to exterminate them, thus bringing down upon his own house and upon the nation the holy wrath of the Lord.

God does not always manifest His displeasure at once, either against individuals or nations. Instead, He usually gives “space for repentance” (Rev 2:21). But alas, so perverse is fallen human nature that, instead of improving the divine mercy, it perverts the same, “Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness” (Isa 26:10). No, instead of “learning righteousness” man only adds iniquity to iniquity, “Because sentence against an evil work *is not executed speedily*, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecc 8:11). Men regard God’s patience as indifference to their sins, thereby emboldening themselves in their wickedness, “These things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes” (Psa 50:21). Yes, sooner or later, God will “reprove”—exhibiting His holiness, exercising His retributive justice. It was so here. Though Saul was now dead, yet his house was made to feel God’s avenging hand.

When David inquired the reason why God had sent this protracted famine upon the land of Israel, He made known to him the cause thereof. The king thereupon entered into a conference with those who had been wronged, and invited them to state what reparation should be made for Saul's outrages upon their people. Their response was very striking, illustrating the fact that those from whom it is to be the least expected often evince much more magnanimity than others who have enjoyed far greater privileges. The Gibeonites made it known that they sought no pecuniary gain, being far more concerned that the divine justice should be compensated, "Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up *unto the LORD* in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD did choose" (2Sa 21:6).

Let it be duly noted, first, that the Gibeonites had for many years held their peace, neither complaining to David for the unapprised wrong Saul had done them, nor disturbing the kingdom by their protests and demands. It was not until the Lord had interposed on their behalf, and until David himself had inquired what satisfaction should be made for the grievous wrong which had been done them, that they preferred the above request. It was in no blood-thirsty and vindictive spirit they now spoke. Their request was neither unjust nor unreasonable. They asked for no lives but those of Saul's own family. He had done the wrong, and therefore it was but right that *his house* should pay the price. To this day, the heirs may be lawfully sued for their parents' debts. True, in the ordinary course of things, children are not to be slain for the crimes of their father (Deu 24:16), but the case of the Gibeonites was altogether extraordinary.

Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that the Lord had definitely intervened on behalf of these injured ones, and therefore what is here before us should be considered from the *divine* viewpoint. However shocking this incident may appear to us, or however contrary to our sense of the fitness of things, let us beware of condemning or even criticizing that which the Most High inspired. "God had made Himself an immediate party to the cause, and no doubt, put it into the hearts of the Gibeonites to make this demand...Let parents take heed of sin, especially the sin of cruelty and oppression, for their children's sake, who may be smarting for it by the just hand of God, when they are in their graves. Guilt and a curse are a bad entail on a family" (Matthew Henry). A most solemn warning was furnished for all future generations in this tragic incident.

Finally, let it not be overlooked that God owned what was done on this occasion, "And after that God was entreated for the land" (2Sa 21:14). God's judgments are not subject to those rules which human judgments are to be regulated by, nor does He stand in need of any apology from us. JEHOVAH's actions are not to be measured by our petty tape lines. Where we cannot understand His ways, we must bow silently before Him, assured that He will yet fully vindicate Himself, and at the finish, close the mouth of every rebel who now quarrels with His providences. However, it should not be overlooked that, in this particular punishment which fell upon Saul's descendant, it was by no means a case of innocent and unoffending members of his house being dealt with, for God Himself speaks of them as a "bloody house" (2Sa 21:1)—they were actuated by their father's cruel spirit and walked in his steps.

"Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul whom the LORD did choose" (2Sa 21:6). Notice the "whom *we* will hang up," which showed their consideration for the king. They were quite willing to bear the odium of the execution. As we have already pointed out, this was not for the gratification of personal revenge—"not for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel" (2Sa 21:4). "Hang them *up unto the LORD*"—as a sacrifice unto His justice and also as a warning unto Israel to molest them no more. "In Gibeah of Saul"—as an object lesson to those who had assisted him in his persecution and slaughter of the innocent. "And the king said, I will give them" (2Sa 21:6). Obviously David had

never consented to their proposal had it been wrong in the sight of God. Inasmuch as the selection of these seven men was left to David, opportunity was afforded him to spare the son of Jonathan (2Sa 21:7).

“But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite” (2Sa 21:8). The first two were Saul’s own sons, which he had by a concubine. The other five were grandsons which his daughter had borne to Adriel, but who had been brought up by their aunt. Let it be recalled that the mother of these five men had been promised to David by her father, but he treacherously gave her to Adriel, with the intention of provoking the sweet singer of Israel (1Sa 18:19). Herein we may perceive more clearly the workings of divine justice. Commenting on this particular point, Joseph Hall (1574-1656) said, “It is a dangerous matter to offer injury to any of God’s faithful ones—if their meekness have easily remitted it, God will not pass it over without a severe rebuke, though it may be long afterwards.”

“And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites” (2Sa 21:9). We are well-aware that in this sentimental age and when capital punishment is being more and more opposed, many will consider David did wrong in carrying out the wishes of the Gibeonites. Some have so perversely wrested this incident that they have not hesitated to charge David with seizing the opportunity to wreak his own spite upon an old enemy. But surely it is evident to all right-minded people that David could do no other. It was not from any private animosity which he bore to the house of Saul, but that obedience to God required his compliance with the request of the Gibeonites, while his having at heart the good of the nation left him no other alternative. “Those executions must not be complained at as cruel which are become necessary in the public welfare. Better that seven of Saul’s bloody house be hanged, than that all Israel should be famished” (Matthew Henry).

“And they hanged them in the hill before the LORD: and they fell all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest” (2Sa 21:9). “As these persons were hanged by the express appointment of God for an anathema, an accursed thing, a national atonement to divine justice, they were left on the tree or gibbet till some tokens of the Lord’s reconciliation were afforded by seasonable rains” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). Yet here again we may perceive the absolute sovereignty of JEHOVAH and His superiority to all restrictions. Though He had expressly forbidden magistrates to slay children in order to avenge the crimes of their parents (Deu 24:16), nevertheless, God Himself is bound by no such limitations. He had also given command to Israel, “If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he is to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree; his body shall *not remain* all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day, (for he that is hanged is accursed of God)” (Deu 21:22-23). Yet here we see the Lord moving David to do exactly the contrary! Why? if not to make it plain that He Himself is *above* all law, free to do just as He pleases.

“And were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley harvest” (2Sa 21:9). Every detail here evidenced the superintending hand of the Lord. First, the *place* appointed for this execution, namely, in Saul’s own city, so that the seven victims were, practically speaking, put to death on their own doorstep. Second, the *manner* of their execution, which was by hanging before the Lord, to demonstrate they were accursed in His sight. Third, the *time* of their execution, namely, “in the days of harvest.” Those days were selected to make it the more manifest that they were being sacrificed for the specific purpose of appeasing God’s wrath, which had for three years withheld from them harvest mercies, and to obtain His favour for the

present season. Who, then, can reasonably doubt that everything was here done according to the divine ordering?

But is there not also an important practical lesson *for us*? Surely there must be, for the natural ever adumbrates the spiritual. Nor should it be difficult to ascertain what is here figuratively set forth. While those bloody sons of Saul were spared, the mercies of God were withheld, but when they had been hanged, “God was entreated for the land” (2Sa 21:14). And is it not the same with us today individually? If we fail to deny self, and on the contrary indulge our corruptions, how can we expect the smile of the Lord to be upon us? “Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you” (Jer 5:25). Do we sufficiently realize dear reader, that the One with whom we have to do is the thrice Holy God? If we play with fire we must expect to get our fingers burned, and if we trifle with sin and trample upon the divine precepts, we shall suffer severely.

We are well aware that this aspect of the truth is not a very palatable one. Those who lead a life of self-pleasing wish to hear only of the grace of God. But does not the very grace of God teach us *to deny* “ungodliness and worldly lusts” and to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Ti 2:12)! Grace is given not to countenance evil doing, but to counteract the workings of an evil nature. Grace is given to enable its recipient to pluck out right eyes and cut off right hands. In other words, it is a supernatural principle which produces supernatural effects. Is it doing so in you and me, or are we after all our profession, strangers to it? Have we diligently sought to use the grace already imparted? If not, can we really expect more grace until we penitently confess our failures and put right with God what we know to be displeasing in His sight?

We are also well-aware that this aspect of the truth is utterly ignored by the great majority of preachers and “Bible teachers” today, who instead of pressing the holy claims of God and rebuking self-indulgence, are seeking either to amuse or soothe their hearers in their sins. It is not that we are inculcating a strange doctrine, introducing that which opposes divine grace. No, those servants of God in the past who most extolled the grace of God also maintained the requirements of His righteousness. As a sample of what we have in mind, take these words of Matthew Henry’s on 2 Samuel 21:9, “There is no way of appeasing God’s anger, but by mortifying and crucifying our lusts and corruptions. In vain do we expect mercy from God, unless we do justice upon our sins.” What have we said above which is any stronger than that? If there were no other way of placating God’s wrath than the slaying of Saul’s sons, so now our sins must be put to death if His approbation is to be enjoyed.

“Then there was a famine in the days of David, three years, year after year” (v. 1). Is that nothing more than an item of ancient history? Has it no voice for us today? Does it not accurately describe the actual experience of many a backslidden Christian? Is it not pertinent to the case of some of our readers? Has there not long been a famine *in your soul*, dear friend? Ah, there *is* indeed a most important practical application of the above incident to our own lives. If you are painfully aware that such is the case with you, are you not desirous of that famine being removed? Then take to heart what has been before us above. Put matters right with God—banish from your life that which withholds from you His approval. “He that covereth his sin shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Pro 28:13).

“And Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night” (2Sa 21:10). It is touching to behold this poor mother keeping so lengthy a vigil over the corpses of her two sons.

True, she made no attempt to cut down the bodies, thereby evidencing her submission to the righteous judgment of God, yet was she not guilty of inordinate grief? As Matthew Henry says, “She indulged her grief, as mourners are apt to do, to no good purpose. When sorrow, in such cases, is in danger of excess, we should rather study how to divert and pacify it, rather than humour and gratify it. Why should we thus harden ourselves in sorrow?”

“And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabeshgilead, which had stolen them from the street of Bethshan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa. And he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son, and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged. And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son they buried in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father” (2Sa 21:12-14).

This respectful interment of the bones of Saul and his descendants by the king is clear proof that David had not been actuated by a spirit of spite and revenge when he had delivered them up to the Gibeonites. But what, let us ask, is the spiritual lesson for us in this detail? If those sons of Saul may justly be taken as a figure of our sins (that which withholds God’s blessings from us), and if the slaying of them adumbrates the believer’s mortification of his lusts, then surely it is no far-fetched fantasy to regard the interment of their bones as indicating we are to *bury in oblivion* those disgraceful things of the past, “Never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee” (Eze 16:63). Instead of holding up to the public view—under the pretence of “giving your testimony”—those things we hope are under the blood, let us draw a veil over them.

The last eight verses of our chapter give a brief summary of the events which occurred during the closing years of David’s reign. That which is most prominent in them is the further battles which took place between Israel and the Philistines, and the slaying of certain antagonistic giants. Here, too, the spiritual application is not difficult to perceive. There is *no furlough* in the fight of faith! The flesh continues to lust against the spirit till the end of our earthly pilgrimage, and therefore the work of mortification is to go on till God calls us to our rest. When the seven sons of Saul have been put to death, other foes (lusts) will seek to prevail against us, and they, too, must be resisted, and (by grace) be overcome. Let it be duly noted that, though David grew old and feeble, he did not grow indolent (2Sa 21:15, 22)! The mention of the “giants” at *the close* of the chapter intimates that the most powerful of our enemies are reserved for the last great conflict—yet through our “David” we shall be more than conquerors.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

8. *The Messianic*

In the second half of last month’s article, it was shown that the name “Israel” has a twofold application, both in the Old Testament and in the New, being given to the natural descendants of Jacob and also to all believers. Nor should this in anyway surprise or stumble us, seeing that the one whom God first denominated “Israel” was henceforth the man with the *double name*, according as he was viewed naturally or spiritually. It should also be duly noted that God’s giving this name unto Jacob is *recorded twice* in Genesis, “And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast

prevailed” (Gen 32:28). “And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name” (Gen 35:10). Is there not here something more than bare emphasis, namely, a divine intimation to us of the *dual* application or usage of the name?

This double significance of the word “Israel” holds good of other similar terms. For example, to the “seed of Abraham,” “Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham” (Gal 3:7). The “children of Abraham” are of two kinds, physical and spiritual—those who are his by nature, and those who are connected with him by grace. “To be the children of a person in a figurative sense, is equivalent to ‘resemble’ him, and to be involved in his fate, good or bad. The idea is of similarity both in character and in circumstances. To be ‘the children of God,’ is to be like God, and also, as the apostle states, it is to be ‘heirs of God.’ To be ‘the children of Abraham’ is to resemble Abraham, to imitate his conduct, and to share his blessedness” (John Brown). To which we may add, to be “the children of the wicked one” (Mat 13:38) is to be conformed to his vile image, both in character and in conduct (Joh 8:44), and to share his dreadful portion (Mat 25:41).

The carnal Jews of Christ’s day boasted, “Abraham is our father,” to which He made answer, “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham” (Joh 8:39). Ah, the *spiritual* children of Abraham “*walk in the steps of that faith*” which he had (Rom 4:12). Those who are his spiritual children are “*blessed with faithful Abraham*” (Gal 3:9). The apostle was there combating the error which the Judaisers were seeking to hoist upon the Gentiles, namely, that none but Jews, or Gentiles proselyted by circumcision, were the “children of Abraham,” and that none but those could be partakers of his blessing. But so far from that being the case, all unbelieving Jews shut heaven against themselves, while all who believed from the heart, being united to Christ—who is “*the Son of Abraham*” (Mat 1:1)—enter into all the blessings which God covenanted unto Abraham.

The *double* significance pertaining to the expression “children” or “seed” of Abraham, was very plainly intimated at the beginning, when JEHOVAH said unto the patriarch, “In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the seashore” (Gen 22:17). What anointed eye can fail to see in the likening of Abraham’s seed unto the “stars of heaven” a reference to his *spiritual* children, who are partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb 3:1), and in the likening of his seed unto the “sand which is upon the seashore” a reference to his *natural* descendants, who occupied the land of Palestine?

Again—the same is true of the word “Jew.” “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one *inwardly*; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom 2:28-29). What could be plainer than that? In the light of such a Scripture, is it not passing strange that there are today those—boasting loudly of their orthodoxy and bitterly condemning all who differ—who insist that the name “Jew” belongs only to the natural descendants of Jacob and ridicule the idea that there is any such thing as spiritual Jews? When the Holy Spirit here tells us, “He is a Jew, who is one inwardly,” He manifestly signifies that the true “Jew,” the antitypical “Jew,” is a *regenerate* person, who enjoys the “praise” or approbation of God Himself.

Here, then, is the reply to the childish prattle of those who declare that “Israel” means *Israel*, and “Jew” means *Jew*, and that when Scripture speaks of “Jerusalem” or “Zion” nothing else is referred to than those actual places. But this is nothing more than a deceiving of ourselves by the mere *sound* of words—as well argue that “flesh” signifies nothing more than the physical body, that “water” (Joh 4:14) refers only to that material element, and that “death” (Joh 5:24) means

naught but physical dissolution. There is an end to all interpretation when such a foolish attitude is adopted. Each passage calls for careful and prayerful study, and it has to be fairly ascertained *which* the Spirit has in view—whether the carnal Israel or the spiritual, the literal “seed of Abraham” or the mystical, the natural “Jew” or the regenerate, the earthly Jerusalem or the heavenly, the typical “Zion” or the antitypical. God has not written His Word so that the ordinary reader is made independent of that help which He deigns to give through His accredited *teachers*.

It may seem to some of our readers that we have wandered a considerable distance away from the subject of the Messianic Covenant. Not so—that covenant is made with “the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,” and it is impossible to understand those terms aright until we can determine *which* “Israel” is meant. So many, assuming that there is but one “Israel” in Scripture, namely, the Hebrew nation, have insisted that the promise of Jeremiah 31:31 is entirely future, receiving its accomplishment in “the millennium.” To make good their contention, they must show—first, that it does not and cannot refer to the mystical “Israel,” second, that it has not already been made good, third, that it will be accomplished in connection with the literal nation in a day to come—concerning which we ask, Where is there one word in the *New Testament* which declares God will yet make a new covenant with national Israel?

What, then, does Jeremiah 31:31 signify? Has that divine promise already received its fulfillment, or is it now in course of receiving its fulfillment, or does it yet await fulfillment? This is far more than a technical question devoid of practical interest. It raises the issue, has the Christian a personal interest therein? If the older commentators be consulted—the ablest teachers God has granted to His people since the Reformation—it will be found that they unanimously taught that Jeremiah 31:31 receives its accomplishment in this present dispensation. While we freely grant this is not conclusive proof that they were right, and while we must call no man (or set of men) “father,” yet the writer for one is today very slow in allowing that the godly Puritans were all wrong on this matter, and slower still to turn away from those luminaries which God granted in the brightest period of the church’s history since the time of the apostles, in order to espouse the theories of our moderns. Then let us seek to “*Prove* all things: hold fast that which is good” (1Th 5:21).

In his comments upon Jeremiah 31:31-33, Matthew Henry said, “This refers to Gospel times...for of Gospel times the apostle understands it (Heb 8:8-9), where the whole passage is quoted, as a summary of the covenant of grace made with believers in Jesus Christ.” “The first solemn promulgation of this new covenant, made, ratified and established, was on the day of Pentecost, seven weeks after the resurrection of Christ. It answered to the promulgation of the law on mount Sinai, the same space of time after the deliverance of the people out of Egypt. From this day forward the ordinances of worship and the institutions of the new covenant became obligatory upon all” (John Owen, 1616-1683). To which we may also add that Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892), throughout his sermon on Jeremiah 31:32, speaks of that covenant as the Messianic one, “In the covenant of grace God conveys Himself to you and becomes yours.”

But we are not dependent upon human authorities—each one may see for himself that the New Testament makes it unmistakably plain that the promises contained in Jeremiah 31:31-33 are made good in the Christian economy. In the epistle to the Hebrews—which supplies an infallible key to the interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures—Paul quotes this very passage for the express purpose of showing that its terms provided an accurate description of Gospel blessings. The apostle’s argument in Hebrews 8 would be entirely meaningless did not Jeremiah’s prediction supply a vivid portrayal of that order of things which Christ has established. First, he declares, “But *now* [and not in some future “millennium”!] hath he obtained a more excellent

ministry, by how much also he *is* [not “will be”!] the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Heb 8:6), and what is added is in confirmation of this statement.

Before turning to the light which the New Testament casts upon Jeremiah 31, it should be noted that at the time God announced His purpose and promise through the prophet, the fleshly descendants of Abraham were divided into *two* hostile groups. They had separate kings and separate centres of worship, and were at enmity one with another. As such they fitly adumbrated the great division between God’s elect among the Jews and the Gentiles in their natural and dispensational state. There was between these a “middle wall of partition” (Eph 2:14), yea, there was actual “enmity” between them (Eph 2:16). But just as God announced through Ezekiel that Judah and Israel “shall become one” (Eze 37:16-17), so His elect amongst the Jews and the Gentiles are now one in Christ (Gal 3:28; Eph 2:14-18), and therefore are all born again believers designated the “children” and “seed” of Abraham, and blessed with him (Gal 3:7, 9, 29).

It is pertinent to raise the point, If the principal reference in Jeremiah’s prophecy was unto the Gospel church of this era, wherein *Gentiles* so largely predominate, why is the covenant there said to be made with “the house of *Israel* and the house of Judah?” Several answers may be given to this question. First, to make it clear that this covenant is not made with all the fallen descendants of *Adam*, but only with God’s *chosen* people. Second, because during Old Testament times the great majority of God’s elect were taken out of the Hebrew nation. Third, to signify that the Jewish theocracy has given place to the Christian church, “He taketh away the first [covenant] that he may establish the second” (Heb 10:9 and cf. Mat 21:43). Fourth, to intimate that the Old Testament saints and the New Testament form one body, being the same church of God in different dispensations. Fifth, because it is a common thing to call the antitype by that designation which belongs to its type.

Returning now to Hebrews 8. The grand design of the apostle in this epistle was to demonstrate that the Lord Christ is the Mediator and Surety of a vastly superior covenant (or economy) than that wherein the worship and service of God obtained under the old covenant or economy of the law. From which it necessarily followed that His priesthood was far more excellent than the Aaronic, and to this end he not only gives Scriptural proof that God had promised to make a new covenant, but he declares the very nature and properties of it in the words of the prophet. In particular, from this Old Testament citation, the imperfections of the old covenant (the Siniatic) is evident by *its issues*—it did not effectually secure peace and fellowship between God and the people, for, being broken by them, they were cast off by Him, and this rendered all its other benefits and advantages useless. This demonstrated the need for a new and better covenant, which would infallibly secure the obedience of the people forever.

“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second” (Heb 8:7). The reference is to that solemn transaction which took place at Sinai. That was not the “first” covenant absolutely, but the first entered into with Israel nationally. Previously, God made a covenant with Adam (Hos 6:6), which in some respects the Siniatic adumbrated, for it was chiefly one of *works*. So too He had made a covenant with Abraham, which shadowed out the everlasting covenant, inasmuch as *grace* predominated in it. The “faultiness” of the Siniatic covenant was due to the fact that it was wholly *external*, being accompanied by no internal efficacy. It set before Israel an objective standard, but it communicated no power for them to measure up to it. It treated with *natural* Israel, and therefore the law was impotent “through the weakness of the flesh” (Rom 8:3). It provided sacrifices for sin, yet their value was only ceremonial and transient. Because of its inadequacy a new and better covenant was needed.

“For finding fault with them, he said, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Heb 8:8). The opening “For” intimates that the apostle was now confirming what he had declared in verses 6-7. The “finding fault” may refer either to the covenant or the covenantees—“with it” or “with them.” In view of what is said in verse 9, the translation of the A. V. is to be preferred—it was against the people God complained, for their having broken His covenant. The word “Behold” announces the deep importance of what follows, calling our diligent and admiring attention to the same. The time fixed for the making of this new covenant is defined in “the days come.” In the Old Testament, the season of Christ’s appearing was called “the world to come” (Heb 2:5) and it was a periphrasis of Him that He was—“He that should come” (Mat 11:3). The faith of the Old Testament church was principally exercised in the expectation of His advent.

The subject-matter of what Jeremiah specially announced was a “covenant.” “The new covenant, as collecting into one all the promises of grace given from the foundation of the world, accomplished in the actual exhibiting of Christ, and confirmed in His death, and by the sacrifice of His blood, thereby became the sole rule of new spiritual ordinances of worship suited thereunto, being the great object of the faith of the saints of the Old Testament, and is the great foundation of all our present mercies [‘Whereof the Holy Spirit also is witness *to us*: for after that he had said before, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord,’ Heb 10:15-16—yes, ‘is witness *to us*,’—and not to those who live in some future ‘millennium,’ (Arthur W. Pink, 1886-1952)].

“There was in it a recapitulation of all promises of grace. God had not made any promise, any intimation of His love or grace unto the church in general, nor unto any particular believer, but He brought it all into *this* covenant, so as that they should be esteemed, all and every one of them, to be given and spoken unto every individual person that hath an interest in this covenant. Hence all the promises made unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with all the other patriarchs, and the oath of God whereby they were confirmed, are *all* of them made *unto us*, and do belong unto us, no less than they did unto them to whom they were first given, if we are made partakers of this covenant. The apostle gives an instance of this in the singular promise made unto Joshua, which he applies unto Christians, Joshua 13:6” (John Owen).

A FOURFOLD SALVATION

Some twenty years ago, we wrote a booklet entitled, “A Threefold Salvation,” and in 1929 (p. 64) published the same in article form in this magazine. It was based upon the instruction we had received during our spiritual infancy. Like most of that early teaching, it was defective, because inadequate. As we have continued our study of God’s Word, further light has been granted us on this subject—yet, alas, how ignorant we still are—and this has enabled us to see that, in the past, we had started at the wrong point, for instead of beginning at the beginning, we commenced almost in the middle. Instead of salvation from sin being threefold, as once supposed, we now perceive it to be fourfold. How good is the Lord in granting us additional light, yet it is now our duty to walk therein, and as Providence affords us opportunity, to give it out. May the Holy Spirit so graciously guide us that God may be glorified and His people edified.

The subject of God’s “so great salvation” (Heb 2:3), as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures and made known in Christian experience, is worthy of a life’s study. Anyone who supposes that

there is now no longer any need for him to prayerfully search for a fuller understanding of the same, needs to ponder, “If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know” (1Co 8:2). The fact is that the moment any of us really takes it for granted that he already knows all that there is to be known on *any* subject treated of in Holy Writ, he at once cuts himself off from any further light thereon. That which is most needed by all of us in order to a better understanding of divine things is not a brilliant intellect, but a truly humble heart and a teachable spirit, and for *that* we should daily and fervently pray—for we possess it not by nature.

The subject of divine salvation has, sad to say, provoked age-long controversy and bitter contentions even among professing Christians. There is comparatively little real agreement even upon this elementary yet vital truth. Some have insisted that salvation is by divine grace, others have argued it is by human endeavour. A number have sought to defend a middle position, and while allowing that the salvation of a lost sinner must be by divine grace, were not willing to concede that it is by grace *alone*, alleging that God’s grace must be plussed by something from the creature, and very varied have been the opinions of what that “something” must be—baptism, church-membership, the performing of good works, holding out faithful to the end, etc. On the other hand, there are those who not only grant that salvation is by grace alone, but who *deny* that God uses any *means* whatever in the accomplishment of His eternal purpose to save His elect—overlooking the fact that the sacrifice of Christ is the grand “means”!

It is true that the church of God was blessed with super-creation blessings, being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and predestinated unto the adoption of children, and nothing could or can alter that grand fact. It is equally true that if sin had never entered the world, none had been in need of salvation from it. But sin *has* entered, and the church fell in Adam, and came under the curse and condemnation of God’s law. Consequently, the elect, equally with the reprobate, share in the capital offense of their federal head and partake of its fearful entail, “In Adam *all* die” (1Co 15:22), “By the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation” (Rom 5:18). The result of this is that all are “alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts” (Eph 4:18), so that the members of the mystical body of Christ are “by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph 2:3), and hence they are alike in dire need of God’s salvation.

Even where there is fundamental soundness in their views upon divine salvation, yet many have such inadequate and one-sided conceptions that other aspects of this truth, equally important and essential, are often overlooked and tacitly denied. How many, for example, would be capable of giving a simple exposition of the following texts, “Who *hath* saved us” (2Ti 1:9). “*Work* out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phi 2:12), “Now is our salvation *nearer* than when we believed” (Rom 13:11). Now those verses do not refer to three different salvations, but to three separate aspects of one and unless we learn to distinguish sharply between them, there can be nothing but confusion and cloudiness in our thinking. Those passages present three distinct phases and stages of salvation—salvation as an accomplished fact, as a present process, and as a future prospect.

So many today ignore these distinctions, jumbling them together. Some contend for one and argue against the other two, and vice versa. Some insist they are already saved, and deny that they are now being saved. Some declare that salvation is entirely future, and deny that it is in any sense already accomplished. Both are wrong. The fact is that the great majority of professing Christians fail to see that “salvation” is one of the most comprehensive terms in all the Scriptures, including predestination, regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. They have far too cramped an idea of the meaning and scope of the word “salvation” (as it is used in the Scriptures),

narrowing its range too much, generally confining their thoughts to but a single phase. They suppose “salvation” means no more than the new birth or the forgiveness of sins. Were one to tell them that salvation is a protracted process, they would view him with suspicion, and if he affirmed that salvation is something awaiting us in the future, they would at once dub him a heretic. Yet *they* would be the ones to err.

Ask the average Christian, Are you saved, and he answers, Yes, I was saved in such and such a year, and that is as far as his thoughts on the subject go. Ask him, to what do you owe your salvation? and “the finished work of Christ” is the sum of his reply. Tell him that each of those answers is seriously defective, and he strongly resents your aspersion. As an example of the confusion which now prevails, we quote the following from a tract on Philippians 2:12, “To whom are those instructions addressed? The opening words of the epistle tell us, ‘To the saints in Christ Jesus.....Thus they were all believers! and could not be required to work for their salvation, for they already possessed it.’ Alas that so very few today perceive anything wrong in such a statement. Another “Bible teacher” tells us that “save thyself” (1Ti 4:16) must refer to deliverance from *physical* ills, as Timothy was already saved spiritually. True, yet it is equally true that he was then in process of being saved, and also a fact that his salvation was then future.

Let us now supplement the first three verses quoted and show there are other passages in the New Testament which definitely refer to each distinct *tense* of salvation. First, salvation as *an accomplished fact*, “Thy faith hath saved thee” (Luk 7:50), “by grace ye have been saved” (Greek, and so translated in the R.V.—Eph 2:8), “according to his mercy he saved us” (Ti 3:5). Second, salvation as *a present process*, in course of accomplishment, not yet completed, “Unto us which are being saved” (1Co 1:18—R.V. and Bagster Interlinear), “Them that believe to the saving [not ‘salvation’] of the soul” (Heb 10:39). Third, salvation as *a future prospect*, “Sent forth to minister for them who *shall be* heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14), “Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able *to save* your souls” (Jam 1:21), “Kept by the power of God through faith *unto* salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time” (1Pe 1:5). Thus, by putting together these different passages, we are clearly warranted in formulating the following statement—every genuine Christian has been saved, is now being saved, and will yet be saved—how and from what, we shall endeavour to show.

As further proof of how many-sided is the subject of God’s great salvation, and how that in Scripture it is viewed from various angles, take the following, “by *grace* are ye saved” (Eph 2:8), “saved by His [Christ’s] *life*” (i.e.) by His resurrection life (Rom 5:9), “thy *faith* hath saved thee” (Luk 7:50), “the engrafted word which is able to save your souls” (Jam 1:21), “saved by hope” (Rom 8:24), “saved yet as by *fire*” (1Co 3:15), “the like figure where unto *baptism* doth also now save us” (1Pe 3:21). Ah, my reader, the Bible is not the lazy man’s book, nor can it be soundly expounded by those who do not devote the whole of their time, and that for years, to its prayerful study. It is not that God would bewilder us, but that He would *humble* us, drive us to our knees, make us dependent upon His Spirit. Not to the proud—who are wise in their own esteem—are its heavenly secrets opened.

In like manner it may be shown from Scripture that the *cause* of salvation is not a single one, as so many suppose—the blood of Christ. Here, too, it is necessary to distinguish between things which differ. First, the *originating* cause of salvation is the *eternal purpose of God*, or in other words, the predestinating grace of the Father. Second, the *meritorious* cause of salvation is the mediation of Christ, this having particular respect to the legal side of things, or in other words, His fully meeting the demands of the law on the behalf and in the place of those He redeems. Third, the *efficient* cause of salvation is the regenerating and sanctifying operations of the Holy

Spirit which respect the experimental side of it, or in other words, the Spirit works *in us* what Christ purchased *for us*. Thus, we owe our personal salvation equally to each Person in the Trinity, and not to one (the Son) more than to the others. Fourth, the *instrumental* cause is our faith, obedience, and perseverance—though we are not saved because of them, equally true is it that we cannot be saved (according to God’s appointment) without them.

In the opening paragraph, we have stated that in our earlier effort we erred as to the starting point. In writing upon a threefold salvation, we began with salvation from the penalty of sin, which is our justification. But our salvation does not begin there, as we knew well enough even then—alas that we so blindly followed our erring preceptors. Our salvation originates, of course, in the *eternal purpose of God*, in His predestinating of us to everlasting glory. As this prime aspect of our salvation is being fully covered in our present articles upon Election, there is no need for us to write thereon here.

“Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2Ti 1:9). That has reference to God’s *decree* of election—His chosen people were *then* saved, completely, in the divine purpose, and all that we shall now say has to do with the performing of that purpose, the accomplishing of that decree, the actualization of that salvation.

I. Salvation from the Pleasure of Sin.

It is here that God begins in His actual *application* of salvation unto His elect. God saves us from the pleasure or love of sin before He delivers from the penalty or punishment of sin. Necessarily so, for it would be neither an act of holiness nor of righteousness were He to grant a full pardon to one who was still a rebel against Him, loving that which He hates. God is a God of order throughout, and nothing ever more evidences the perfection of His works than the orderliness of them. And *how* does God save His people from the pleasure of sin? The answer is by imparting to them a nature which hates evil and loves holiness. This takes place when they are born again, so that actual salvation begins with regeneration. Of course it does—where else could it commence? Fallen man can neither perceive his desperate need of salvation, nor come to Christ for it, till he has been renewed by the Holy Spirit.

“He hath made everything beautiful in his time” (Ecc 3:11), and much of the beauty of God’s spiritual handiwork is lost upon us unless we duly observe our “time.” Has not the Spirit Himself emphasized this in the express enumeration He has given us in, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom 8:29-30)? Verse 29 announces the divine foreordination, verse 30 states the manner of its actualization. It seems passing strange that with this divinely-defined method before them, so many preachers begin with our justification, instead of with that effectual call (from death unto life—our regeneration) which precedes it. Surely it is most obvious that regeneration must first take place in order to lay a foundation for our justification. Justification is by faith (Act 13:39; Rom 5:1; Gal 3:8), and the sinner must be divinely quickened before he is capable of believing savingly.

Ah, does not the last statement made throw light upon and explain what we have said is so “passing strange”? Preachers today are so thoroughly imbued with free-willism that they have departed almost wholly from that sound evangelism which marked our forefathers. The radical

difference between Arminianism and Calvinism is that the system of the former revolves around the *creature*, whereas the system of the latter has the *Creator* for the center of its orbit. The Arminian allots to *man* the *first* place, the Calvinist gives *God* that position of honour. Thus the Arminian begins his discussion of salvation with justification, for the sinner must *believe* before he can be forgiven, further back he will not go, for he is unwilling that man should be made *nothing of*. But the instructed Calvinist begins with election, descends to regeneration, and then shows that being born again (by the sovereign act of God, in which the creature has *no part*) the sinner is made capable of savingly believing the Gospel.

Saved from the pleasure or love of sin. What multitudes of people strongly resent being told that they delighted in evil! They would indignantly ask if we suppose them to be moral perverts? No indeed—a person may be thoroughly chaste and yet delight in evil. It may be that some of our own readers repudiate the charge that they have ever taken *pleasure* in sin, and would claim, on the contrary, that from earliest recollections they have detested wickedness in all its forms. Nor would we dare to call into question their sincerity. Instead, we point out that it only affords another exemplification of the solemn fact that “the heart is *deceitful* above all things” (Jer 17:9). But this is a matter that is not open to argument—the plain teaching of God’s Word deciding the point once and for all, and beyond its verdict there is no appeal. What, then, say the Scriptures?

So far from God’s Word denying that there is any delight to be found therein, it expressly speaks of “the *pleasures* of sin,” yet it immediately warns us that those pleasures are but “for a season” (Heb 11:25), for the aftermath is painful and not pleasant. Yea, unless God intervenes in His sovereign grace, they entail eternal torment. So, too, the Word refers to those who are “*lovers of pleasure* more than lovers of God” (2Ti 3:4). It is indeed striking to observe how often this discordant note is struck in Scripture. It mentions those who “*love vanity*” (Psa 4:2), “him that loveth violence” (Psa 11:5), “thou *lovest evil* more than good” (Psa 52:3), “scorners delight in their scorning” (Pro 1:22), “they which *delight in* the abominations” (Isa 66:3), “their abominations were according as they loved” (Hos 9:10), “who hate the good and love the evil” (Mic 3:2), “if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1Jo 2:15). To *love* sin is far worse than to *commit* it, for a man may be suddenly tripped up and commit it through frailty.

The fact is, my reader, that we are not only born into this world with an evil nature, but with hearts that are thoroughly in love with sin. Sin is a native element. We are wedded to our lusts, and of ourselves no man is able to alter the bent of our corrupt nature any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots. But what is impossible with man is possible to God, and when He takes us in hand this is where He begins—by saving us from the pleasure or love of sin. This is the great miracle of grace, for the Almighty stoops down and picks up a loathsome leper from the dunghill, and makes him a new creature in Christ, so that the things he once loved he now hates, and the things he once hated he now loves. God commences by saving us from ourselves. He does not save us from the penalty until He has delivered us from the love of it.

And how is this miracle of grace accomplished, or rather, exactly *what does it consist of*? Negatively, not by eradicating the evil nature, nor even by refining it. Positively, by communicating a new nature, a holy nature which loathes that which is evil and delights in all that is truly good. To be more specific. First, God saves His people from the pleasure or love of sin by putting His holy awe in their hearts, for “the fear of the LORD is to *hate evil*” (Pro 8:13), and again, “by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil” (Pro 16:6). Second, God saves His people from the pleasure of sin by communicating to them a new and vital principle, “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:5), and where the love of God rules the

heart, the love of sin is dethroned. Third, God saves His people from the love of sin by the Holy Spirit's drawing their affections unto things above, thereby taking them off the things which formerly enthralled them.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

5. *Its Justice*

Somewhat against our inclinations, we have decided to depart again from the logical method of exposition, and instead of now proceeding with an orderly unfolding of this doctrine, we pause to deal with the principal objection which is made against the same. No sooner is the truth set forth of God's singling out certain of His creatures to be subjects of His special favours, than a general cry of protest is heard. No matter how much Scripture is quoted to the point nor how many plain passages be adduced in illustration and demonstration of it, the majority of those who profess to be Christians loudly object, alleging that such teaching slanders the divine character, making God guilty of gross injustice. It seems, then, that this difficulty should be met, that reply should be made to such a criticism of the doctrine, ere we proceed any further with our attempt to give a systematic setting forth of it.

In such an age as ours, when the principles of democracy, socialism, and communism are so widely and warmly espoused, in a day when human authority and dominion are being more and more despised, when it is the common custom to "speak evil of dignities" (Jude 1:8), it is scarcely surprising that so many who make no pretension of bowing to the authority of Holy Writ should rebel against the concept of God's being partial. But it is unspeakably dreadful to find the great majority of those who profess to receive the Scriptures as divinely inspired, gnashing their teeth against its Author when informed that He has sovereignly elected a people to be His peculiar treasure, and to hear them charging Him with being a hateful Tyrant, a Monster of cruelty. Yet such blasphemies only go to show that "the carnal mind *is* enmity against God."

It is not because we have any hope of converting such rebels from the error of their ways that we feel constrained to take up the present aspect of our subject—though it may please God in His infinite grace to use these feeble lines to the enlightening and convicting of a few of them. No, rather is it that some of God's dear people are disturbed by these ravings of His enemies, and know not how to answer in their own minds this objection, that if God makes a sovereign selection from among His creatures and predestinates them to blessings which He withholds from countless millions of their fellows, then, such partiality makes Him guilty of treating the latter unjustly. And yet the fact stares them in the face on every hand, both in creation and providence, that God distributes His mercies most *unevenly*. There is no equality in His bestowments either in physical health and strength, mental capacities, social status, or the comforts of this life. Why, then, should we be staggered when we learn that His *spiritual* blessings are distributed unevenly?

Before proceeding further it should be pointed out that the design of every false scheme and system of religion is to depict the character of God in such a way that it is agreeable to the tastes of the *carnal* heart, acceptable to depraved human nature. And *that* can only be done by a species of misrepresentation—the ignoring of those of His prerogatives and perfections which are

objectionable, and the disproportionate emphasizing of those of His attributes which appeal to their selfishness—such as His love, mercy, and long suffering. But let the character of God be faithfully presented as it is actually portrayed in the Scriptures—in the *Old Testament* as well as the New—and nine out of every ten church-goers will frankly state that they find it “impossible to love Him.” The plain fact is, dear reader, that to the present generation the Most High of Holy Writ is “the unknown God.”

It is just because people today are so ignorant of the divine character and so lacking in godly fear, that they are quite in the dark as to the nature and glory of divine justice, presuming to arraign it. This is an age of blatant irreverence, wherein lumps of animate clay dare to prescribe what the Almighty ought and ought not to do. Our forefathers sowed the wind, and today their children are reaping the whirlwind. The “divine right of kings” was scoffed at and tabooed by the sires, and now their offspring repudiate the “divine rights of the King of kings.” Unless the supposed “rights” of the creature are “respected,” then our moderns have no respect for the Creator, and if His high sovereignty and absolute dominion over all be insisted upon, they hesitate not to vomit forth their condemnation of Him. And “evil communications corrupt good manners” (1Co 15:33)! God’s own people are in danger of being infected by the poisonous gas which now fills the air of the religious world.

Not only is the miasmic atmosphere obtained in most of the “churches” a serious menace to the Christian, but there is in each of us a serious tendency to humanize God—viewing His perfections through our own intellectual lenses instead of through the glass of Scripture, interpreting His attributes by human qualities. It was of this very thing that God complained of old when He said, “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself” (Psa 50:21), which is a solemn warning for us to take to heart. What we mean is this—when we read of God’s mercy or righteousness we are very apt to think of them according to the qualities of *man’s* mercy and justice. But this is a serious mistake. The Almighty is not to be measured by any human standard: He is so infinitely above us that any comparison is utterly impossible, and therefore it is the height of madness for any finite creature to sit in judgment upon the ways of JEHOVAH.

Again—we need to be much on our guard against the folly of making invidious distinctions between the divine perfections. For example, it is quite wrong for us to suppose that God is more glorious in His grace and mercy than He is in His power and majesty. But this mistake is often made. How many are more thankful unto God for blessing them with health than they are for His bestowing the Gospel upon them, but does it therefore follow that God’s goodness in giving material things is greater than His goodness in bestowing spiritual blessings? Certainly not. Scripture often speaks of God’s wisdom and power being manifested in creation, but where are we told of His grace and mercy in making the world? Inasmuch as men commonly fail to glorify God for His wisdom and power, does it thence follow that He is not to be so much adored for them? Beware of extolling one of the divine perfections above another.

What is justice? It is treating each person equitably and fairly, giving to him his due. Divine justice is simply doing that which is right. But this raises the question, *What is* due unto the creature? what is it that God *ought* to bestow upon him? Ah, my friend, every sober-minded person will at once object to the introduction of that word “ought” in such a connection. And rightly so. The Creator is under no obligation whatever unto the works of His own hands. He alone has the right to decide whether such and such a creature should exist at all. He alone has the prerogative to determine the nature, status, and destiny of that creature—whether it shall be an animal, a man, or an angel; whether it shall be endowed with a soul and subsist forever, or be

without a soul and endure only for a brief time; whether it shall be a vessel unto honour and taken into communion with Himself, or a vessel unto dishonour which is rejected by Him.

As the great Creator possessed perfect freedom to create or not create, to bring into existence whatever creatures He pleased (and a visit to the zoo will show He has created some which strike the beholder as exceedingly strange ones), and therefore He has the unquestionable right to decree concerning them as He pleases. The justice of God in election and preterition, then, is grounded upon His high sovereignty. The dependence of all creatures upon Him is entire. His proprietorship of all creatures is indisputable. His dominion over all creatures is absolute. Let these facts be established from Scripture—and their complete demonstration therefrom is a very simple matter—and where is the creature who can with the slightest propriety say unto the Lord Most High, “What doest *Thou*?” Instead of the Creator being under any obligation to His creature, it is the creature who is under binding obligations to the One who gave it existence and now sustains its very life.

God has the absolute right to do as He pleases with the creatures of His own hand, “Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?” (Rom 9:21) is His own assertion. Therefore He may give to one and withhold from another, bestow five talents on one and only a single talent on another, without any imputation of injustice. If He may *give* grace and glory to whom He will without such a charge, then He may also *decree to do so* without any such charge. Are men chargeable with injustice when they choose their own favorites, friends, companions, and confidants? Then obviously there is no injustice in *God’s* choosing whom He will to bestow His special favours upon, to indulge with communion with Himself now, and to dwell with Him for all eternity. Is a man free to make selection of the woman which he desires for his wife? and does he in anyway *wrong* the other women whom he passes by? Then is the great God *less free* to make selection of those who constitute the Spouse of His Son? Shame, shame, upon those who would ascribe less freedom to the Creator than to the creature.

Upon a little reflection it should be evident to all right-minded people that there is no parity between human and divine justice. Human justice requires that we should give each of our fellows his due, whereas no creature is due *anything* from God, not even what He is pleased to sovereignly give him. In his most reverent discussion of the nature of God’s attributes, William Twisse (1578-1646) (moderator of the Westminster Assembly), pointed out that if human justice be of the same nature with divine justice then it necessarily follows: First, that which is just in man is just with God. Second, that it must be after the same manner just, as human justice consists in subjection and obedience to God’s law, so God Himself must be under obligation to His own law. Third, as man is *under obligation* to be just, so God is under obligation to be just, and therefore as Saul sinned and acted unjustly in slaying the priests, so had God been unjust in doing the like.

Unless the perversity of their hearts blinded their judgment, men would readily perceive that divine *justice* must necessarily be of quite another order and character than human, yea, as different from and superior to as divine *love* is from human. All are agreed that a man acts unjustly, that he sins, if he suffers his brother to transgress when it lies in his power to keep him from so doing. Then if divine justice were the same in kind, though superior in degree, it would necessarily follow that God sins every time He allows one of His creatures to transgress, for most certainly He has the power to prevent it, yea, and can exercise that power without destroying the liberty of the creature, “I also *withheld thee from sinning* against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her” (Gen 20:6). Cease, then, ye rebels from arraigning the Most High, and attempting to

measure *His* justice by your petty tape-lines—as well seek to fathom His wisdom or define His power, as comprehend His inscrutable justice. “Clouds and darkness are roundabout him,” and this be it noted, is expressly said in connection with “righteousness [justice] and judgment are the habitation of *his throne*” (Psa 97:2).

Lest some of our readers demur at our quoting from such a high Calvinist as Mr. Twisse, we append the following from the milder James Usher (1581-1656). “What is the divine justice? It is an essential property of God, whereby He is infinitely just in Himself, of Himself, for from and by Himself, and none other, ‘For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness’ (Psa 11:7). What is the *rule* of His justice? Answer: His own *free will* and nothing else—for whatsoever He willeth is just, and because He willeth it therefore it *is* just; not because it is just, therefore He willeth it (Eph 1:11; Psa 115:3).” Such men as these were conscious of their ignorance, and therefore they cried unto heaven for instruction, and God was pleased to grant them clear vision. But the pride-inflated Pharisees of our day think they can *already* see, and therefore feel no need of divine illumination—consequently they remain blind (Joh 9:40-41).

So again that justly-renowned teacher William Perkins (1558-1602), “We must not think that God doth a thing because it is good and right, but rather is the thing good and right because *God* willeth and worketh it. Examples hereof we have in the Word. God commanded Abimelech to deliver Sarah to Abraham, or else He would destroy him and all his household (Gen 20:7). To man’s reason that might seem unjust, for why should Abimelech’s servants be punished for their master’s fault? So again, Achan sinned, and all the house of Israel were penalized for it (Jos 7). David numbered the people, and the whole nation was smitten by a plague (2Sa 24). All these to *man’s reason* may seem unequal, yet being the works of God, we must with all reverence judge them most just and holy.” Alas, how little of this humility and reverence is manifested in the churches today! How ready is the present generation to criticize and condemn whatever of God’s ways and works suit them not!

So far from the truth are most of those who are now looked up to as “the champions of orthodoxy,” that even they are often guilty of turning things upside down or putting the cart in front of the horse. It is commonly assumed by them that God Himself is under law, that He is under a moral constraint to do what He does, so that He cannot do otherwise. Others wrap this up in more sophisticated terms, insisting that it is His own *nature* which regulates all His actions. But this is merely an artful subterfuge. Is it by a necessity of His nature or by the free exercise of His sovereignty that He bestows favour upon His creatures? Let Scripture answer, “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth” (Rom 9:18). Why, my reader, if God’s nature obliged Him to show saving mercy to *any*, then by parity of reason it would oblige Him to show mercy to *all*, and thus bring every fallen creature to repentance, faith, and obedience. But enough of this nonsense.

Let us now approach this aspect of our subject from an entirely different angle. How could there possibly be any injustice in God’s electing those whom He did, when had He *not* done so *all* had inevitably perished, angels and men alike? This is neither an invention nor an inference of ours, for Scripture itself expressly declares, “*Except* the Lord of hosts had left us a seed, *we* had been as Sodom” (Rom 9:29). Not one of God’s rational creatures, either celestial or earthly, had ever been eternally and effectually saved apart from the grace of divine *election*. Though both, angels and men were created in a state of perfect holiness, yet they were mutable creatures, liable to change and fall. Yea, inasmuch as their continuance in holiness was dependent upon the exercise of their own wills, unless God was pleased to supernaturally preserve them, their fall was certain.

“Behold, he put no trust in his servants, and his *angels* he charged with *folly*” (Job 4:18). The angels were perfectly holy, yet if God gave them no other assistance than that with which He had capacitated them at their creation, then no “trust” or reliance was to be placed in them or their standing. If they were holy today, they were liable to sin tomorrow. If God but sent them on an errand to this world, they might fall before they returned to heaven. The “folly” which God imputes to them in the above passage is their creature *mutability*—for them to maintain their holiness unchangeably to eternity, without the danger of losing the same, was utterly beyond their *creature* endowment. Therefore, for them to be immutably preserved is a grace which issues from another and higher spring than the covenant of works or creation endowment, namely, that of election grace, super-creation grace.

It was meet that God should, from the beginning, make manifest the infinite gulf which divides the creature from the Creator. God alone is *immutable*, without variableness or shadow of turning. Fitting was it, then, that God should *withdraw* His preserving hand from those whom He had created upright, so that it might appear that the highest creature of all (Satan, “the anointed cherub,” Eze 28:14) *was mutable*, and would inevitably fall into sin when left to the exercise of his own free will. Of God alone can it be predicated that He “cannot be tempted with evil” (Jam 1:13). The creature, though holy, may be tempted to sin, fall, and be irretrievably lost. The fall of Satan, then, made way for evidencing the more plainly the absolute *necessity* of electing grace—the imparting to the creature the image of God’s own immutable holiness.

Because of the mutability of the creature-state, God foresaw that if all His creatures were left to the conduct of their own wills, they were in a continual hazard of falling. He therefore made an election of grace to remove all hazard from the case of His chosen ones. This we know from what is revealed of their history. Jude tells us of “the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation” (v. 6), and the remainder of them would, sooner or later, have done so too, if left to the mutability of their own wills. So, also it proved with Adam and Eve—both of them evidenced the mutability of their wills by apostatising. Accordingly, God, foreseeing all of this from the beginning, made a “reserve” (Rom 11:4—explained in v. 5 as “election”), determining to have a remnant who should be blessed of Him and who would everlastingly bless Him in return. Election and preserving grace are never to be severed.

REPROACHES IMPROVED

In his sermon on Psalm 119:39, Thomas Manton (1620-1677) pointed out that though reproaches are a great and grievous affliction to the saint, yet he is to discern *God’s* hand in them. Reproaches come not by chance, but are a necessary part of God’s disciplinary dealings with His people—sent to humble, prove, and purge them. Our enemies intend us harm by them, but we should receive good by this as by every affliction. When God suffers others to judge and misjudge us, it is to awaken us *to self-judging*. Attend to this, and we be no losers by reproaches. Many times the voice of a slanderer will do for us that which the voice of a preacher cannot do. The renowned Puritan then went on to specify some of the believer’s sins which God visits with the sharp affliction of bitter reproaches and slanders. What follows is a quotation from his sermon.

1. *Pride*. There is a twofold pride—pride in mind, which is called self-conceit and pride in affections, which is called vain-glory. Now there is no such effectual cure as reproaches for either of these. (1) To speak of the pride in mind, *self-conceit*. We are very apt to be puffed up for our doing and suffering for God—poor empty bladders are soon puffed up—and think ourselves somebody if there be but a little self-denial, as Peter said, “Master, we have left all and followed thee” (Mat 19:27). He was conceited over what he had left for Christ. What had he left? A net, a fish-boat—it was a great *all* indeed! We are easily puffed up if we suffer a little for God, and the Lord entrenches us in our worldly conveniences, for self-conceit may grow out of self-denial. Too often we find it so. Pride is a sin that grows out of mortification of other sins. It lives in us while we live in the body, therefore it is called “the pride of life” (1Jo 2:16). Some compare it to a shirt, that garment is last put off. It is the most inward and nearest to the soul, and out of the conquest of other sins there ariseth pride.

Now if we have been too self-conceited the Lord will humble us, either by permitting us to fall into such scandals as may remind us of our frailty, and what unworthy weak creatures we are in ourselves—sometimes by taking off the restraints of His grace and of His Spirit, and permitting us to fall. Austin (?-604) is bold in saying it is profitable for proud men to fall sometimes into open sin, that they may know and understand themselves. He speaks it upon the occasion of Peter, when he was boasting of his own strength, “Though all men leave thee, yet will not I.” How foully did he fall! Ay, but at other times God uses more merciful dispensations, for He doth not let His people fall into those grievous sins but upon great provocation. Usually at other times He lets loose the tongues of virulent men to lessen us in our own opinion and in the opinion of the world. Now, however innocent we be of the crimes charged upon us, yet in all these cases we must look upward and inward.

Upward—this is not without God—He is the end of causes. He could blast these tongues and stop them at His pleasure. The Lord can “keep us from the strife of tongues” (Psa 31:20). But now, when He permits this, His hand must be owned. Look upward, “I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him” (Mic 7:9). At such a time God spits in the faces of His people, and puts us to shame, and therefore we should look upward and see His hand in it all. And look inward—there you will see such a sink of sin as deserves this and much more, and therefore a sense of our sinfulness in other things will make us more submissive to the Lord’s correcting hand. If we do not look to *that*, we will be drawn into reviling for reviling. Many times our graces do as much hurt as our sins. Self-conceit the Lord will mortify one way or other.

(2) For *Vain-glory*, the other sort of pride, valuing esteem too much, and our credit in the world, and pleasing ourselves in the opinion others have of us. We would usurp God’s throne in the hearts of men, therefore we are so touchy. Having set a high value upon ourselves, we are troubled when others will not come up to our price. Pride is one of the oldest enemies that ever God had. It was born in heaven in the breasts of the fallen angels, but God tumbled them out as soon as pride got into their hearts. Now, when His children harbour it, the Lord hath a quarrel with them, and therefore, for giving entertainment to pride He will lay us low, “Lest I should be exalted above measure, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me” (2Co 12:7). There is a great deal to do of what this thorn in the flesh is. Some will have it to be some trouble or sickness. Most probably so, but it takes in many afflictive evils, for in verse ten he mentions *reproaches*. Paul was too apt to be proud. The Lord made him an eminent instrument—by his faith he had abundance of revelations. But God will prick the bladder. He does it with thorns, and he calls it his infirmity, necessity, reproach. Infirmity, by that

I mean some reigning sickness. But reproach was one ingredient. Now lest we should be puffed up by vain conceit, the Lord humbles us with infirmities, necessities, reproaches.

2. Another sin for which God humbles us is *careless walking*. When we are negligent, and do not take notice of the carnality that grows upon us, and the fleshly frame and temper of heart which breaks out into our lives, the Lord suffers others to reproach. Then they gather up our filth, that we may see what cause we have to take our ways to heart. Every man that would live strictly has need either of faithful friends or watchful enemies—either faithful friends to admonish him or watchful enemies to censure him. They show us the spots in our garments that need to be washed off. Many times a friend is blinded with love, and grows as partial to us as we are to ourselves—will suffer sin upon us and not tell us of it. Then the Lord sets spies to watch for our halting (Jer 20:10), and therefore we need to go to God and pray, “Lord, lead me, in a plain path because of my enemies” (Psa 27:11). They lie in wait and seek to take us tripping in aught they can. We can no more be without watchful enemies than without faithful friends. How ignorant would a man be of himself if others did not put him in mind sometimes of his failings! Therefore God makes use of virulent persons in the world as a rod to thrash the dust out of our garments.

3. To humble us for *our censuring*. For if we have not been so tender of others’ credit, the Lord makes us see the bitterness of the affliction in our own case, by giving us the like measure that we have meted unto others (Mat 7:1-2)—that is, we shall find others as hardly think of us as we have of them. Good thoughts and speeches of other men are the best preservative of our own good names. God will take care of them that are careful not to judge and censure. And therefore it is no great matter whether the report be true or false, but a Christian is to *examine*, Have not I drawn it upon myself by slanderous others? for God usually pays us in our own coin. He that is much given to censuring seldom or never escapes great censure himself. It is said in the Psalms, “Let his own words grieve him,” that is, fall upon him. How do our own words fall upon us? Why, the Lord punishes us for our censuring of others. Oh! then, humble thyself before God for the reproaches thou hast cast upon others, “Take no heed to all the words spoken against thee, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee” (Ecc 7:21), that is, speaking evil against thee. Hard sayings and speeches of others against us may put us in mind of God’s just hand, of measuring to us as we have measured to others, and therefore we should be the more patient if they wrong us. It is but in the like kind that we have wronged others. God will humble us for our censuring, which is so natural and rife, especially with younger, weak, and more unmortified persons.

The Lord buffets by wicked men to make you better. Reproaches are like soap, that seem to defile the linen it cleans. There is nothing so bad but we may make a good use of it, and a Christian may gain some advantage by it. Or as dung which seems to stain the grass, but it makes the ground fruitful, and the grass spring up with a fresher verdure. So reproaches are a necessary help to make us more humble, heavenly, to make us walk with an holy awe. This holy revenge we should take upon our enemies, to make us more strict and watchful. The way is, not to contend for esteem, but to grow more serious, more faithful in our lives—for this is the way to muzzle the mouths of adversaries, as the mouth of a dog or wild beast is (1Pe 2:15). Passionate returns do but increase sin, but a holy conversation will silence all, and therefore you should confute calumnies, by binding their mouths thereby. An innocent, meek, unblameable, profitable life, will certainly have its due esteem in the consciences of men, do what they can. Therefore be more strict and reproaches will do you good.

A word to those that *devise* reproaches. You hazard the repute of your own sincerity, “If a man seem to be religious, and bridle not his tongue, that man’s religion is vain” (Jam 1:26). Such men, that are seldom at home, rarely look to the state of their *own* hearts. Alas! if they were

acquainted with themselves or their own failings, they would see themselves the worst people in the world. Paul can see himself worse than Judas—I am “the chief of sinners”—because he had a greater feeling of his own case. Now he that is much in judging others is seldom within. If a man had a catalogue of his own faults, he would not be so ready to blast others, but say, “I am the chief of sinners.” Hypocrites have nothing in them but empty shows and appearances. It is a cheap zeal to let fly (and yet this is the religion of a great many) at the miscarriages and faults of others. No—you should rather study your own.

But must we in no case speak evil of others? I answer, first, be sure that it be not a downright slander. Now, it is hard to avoid that. If the evil you speak be without cause, then it is against truth. If it be for a light and slender cause, then it is against charity. If it be for things indifferent or for lesser failings, the indiscretions and weaknesses of Christians, all this is against that charity which should pass especially between the disciples of Christ, “Speak not evil one of another, brethren” (Jam 4:11). It is worse in Christians, always to be whispering and speaking evil one of another—you gratify the triumphs of hell. In things doubtful, you should judge the best. In things hidden and secret, we cannot take cognizance of them—that is God’s work. Besides, if there be some grievous fault, you do not know what were their temptations, how it may be alleviated by the temptation—still you must “consider yourselves lest you also be tempted” (Gal 6:11), and you do not know whether they have repented of it.

Second, speak not *of* him, but *to* him. When men are absent it is not fit they should be judged, for then they are not able to make a defense—then it is backbiting. When you thus speak of them, you exchange a duty for a sin, admonition for reproach. It is an unquestionable duty to admonish one another, but it is an unquestionable sin to speak evil one of another. Third, if of him, it should be with tenderness and grief, “Of whom I have told you often, and now weeping,” saith the apostle (Phi 3:18). When they are incorrigible, when they are like to pervert others, and dishonour the Gospel, or the manifest glory of God, Oh! we would but lay restraints on ourselves in this kind, and never speak of others, but when manifestly the glory of God calls for it. Not out of idleness, and for want of other talk, that is tattle, forbidden in many places of Scripture. Not out of hatred and revenge, for that is malice—there may be malice where the thing you speak is truth. Not to please others, that is flattery. But if ever you speak of them (and it should be with these cautions) it must be out of zeal for the glory of God and the good of the church. If men did consider what restraints are upon them, they would not so easily fall upon censuring, reproaching, and speaking evil of others.

WELCOME TIDINGS

Our object in compiling this annual feature is to evoke praise and thanksgiving on the part of those who are most deeply interested in this work, by quoting excerpts from some of the letters at hand telling of help and blessing received, under God, from these pages. This magazine is not issued as a commercial undertaking, but as a labour of love. In the technical sense of the term, it has never paid its way. Owing to the smallness of the circulation, it actually costs us 3/6 (ninety cents) to send the “Studies” to each person for a year, and were we dependent upon these who send us this amount annually, we would have been obliged to cease publishing long ago. But the Lord has graciously given this written ministry favour in the eyes of a number of His stewards, who forward gifts from 5/- and upwards, a few sending in part of their tithes, and this enables us to forward the magazine gratis to several hundreds each year. Thus the majority are gainers by the

generosity of the few. It is specially that these few may see their gifts are not wasted the following quotations are made.

The “Welcome Tidings” messages are written by us much earlier in the year than they are read by you. On several occasions in the past it was a real test of faith to sound this cheery note, for the meal in the barrel was real low, and it *looked* as though we might not be able to publish the July issue, let alone complete the year. It was then that we sought to carry out that word, “*Hope thou in God*” (Psa 42:5), and not once did He mock our confidence in Him. Of late years, we have not been exercised along financial lines, rather is it a diminishing circulation which has most troubled us. Nor does it *look* as though there is any prospect of improvement—far otherwise. This shallow generation welcomes not anything that calls for *study*, and its flesh-pleasing devotees resent that which searches the heart or pricks the conscience. Thus we are still obliged to look unto the Lord—to prepare soil for the seed which He gives us to sow.

“Hope thou in God.” What is it to “hope in God”? It is an expectation founded on faith in God, which enables the soul to wait upon Him. Though faith and hope are distinct graces, yet the latter will not be exercised when the former is inactive. This is clear from such passages as, “We have access by *faith* into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in *hope* of the glory of God...Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in *believing*, that we may abound in *hope*, through the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:2; 15:13). Faith looks upwards, but hope looks onward. Faith appropriates, hope anticipates. Faith lays hold of the divine promises, hope sustains the soul during the interval of waiting for their fulfillment.

“Hope thou in God.” This is our desire in the face of a depressing outlook. With spirituality declining on every side, with genuine conversions becoming fewer, the prospects of securing new readers to take the place of old ones called home, is less and less promising. Many of our friends have tried hard to interest others in this publication, but have been unsuccessful. Yet these discouraging features are really a challenge to “Hope thou in God.” He changes not. He has again graciously sent in the necessary funds, and not a few encouraging letters, and therefore it seems clear He would have us continue plodding along, hoping in Himself.

“Once again I have the opportunity of thanking you for sending on your magazines. I cannot tell you what a help they are to me in the study of God’s Word, especially those on Sanctification. My earnest prayer is that you may be enabled to continue this work. I have done my best to get my friends to have a copy, but it is very sad—I have had them returned, and they do not want any more. One can only pray that their eyes may be opened to see the truth.” A much-tried Sister. Those who relish not the Holy Word of God and are unwilling to be probed by it are either unregenerate or in a terribly backslidden state.

“For another year I have been receiving the ‘Studies,’ and am thankful to be able to say I find them as profitable as ever. It would be difficult to say if one part were more helpful than another, for each article seems to meet a felt need. I may, however, say that your articles on Sanctification were very helpful, also the few papers on Experimental Preaching. I am, at times, inclined to almost envy you, that the Lord has called you apart from the strife, error, and bitterness of the organized church-life of today. May He continue to bless you.” Local Preacher. While it is still a great grief to be deprived of oral ministry, yet we are thankful God has brought us out from the humbuggery which now obtains so widely in the religious sphere.

“Thank you for sending me the ‘Studies’ for another year. I can truthfully say that I am always longing to get them, and usually read them twice before the next ones come. If only they would bring forth fruit to His glory. I am afraid I am like the lean kine which remained lean after all their eating—that is the way I feel anyway. What a blessing to have such a longsuffering

JEHOVAH—no one else would bear with such an unfruitful creature. Many a time I feel that I have reason to praise the Lord for sending the ‘Studies’ to me, and I must say that I have enjoyed reading your splendid article on ‘The Signs of the Times.’ Modern tracts are so deceiving. This is a barren wilderness, resembling Sodom. I wonder if it will ever blossom like the rose.” Reader in New Zealand. “Your ‘Studies’ have come to me regularly, and have been a source of great blessing. Certainly they cause one to ‘stop, look, and listen,’ searching the heart to see how far away from or how near to God we are walking in our daily lives. For myself I must acknowledge the need of correction often, and wonder many, many times how our loving heavenly Father can be so patient with me and so merciful to me. I do want to make my daily walk more acceptable and pleasing to Him.” Friend in New Jersey.

“It is with deep gratitude to God that I pen these few lines to you—in my old age He has given me bountiful tokens of His redeeming love. Your ‘Studies’ are very helpful to me, as you deal with subjects out of the common, of which I had been practically ignorant. Few seem to believe in the very important work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of saints. Your magazine is a great blessing under God to me, and my constant prayer is that your work may increase in blessing.” Brother in Australia. “The Lord hath in faithfulness afflicted me. I have called upon Him and He hath given me bodily loss and pain, but inward gain and peace. Praise Him! During my recent illness I fed upon the articles in the ‘Studies,’ and I do thank God always for you. I certainly value the ‘Studies’ above everything but the Bible itself. ‘Vain-glory’ was needed food to my soul.” Sister in Colorado.

“As we were reading the ‘Studies’ we thought of your ministry to us as being an illustration of ‘Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies’ (Psa 23:5). We are not able to find one in our town who would really value them. I am still praising God, although at times it seems to me I am nothing but a hypocrite, and my life so barren of fruit. I am glad He chastens me sore, and pray He will correct me as a child.” Brother in Michigan. “I want to thank you for the article on ‘Lying.’ For over a month I had been entirely miserable. I knew it was something in me, and kept asking God to reveal it to me. He did answer—I had written some letters which were misleading, and had also been guilty of lying in prayer. I thought it is sure that if I do these things I am not saved. One night I could not sleep, so kept asking God not to let me deceive myself. If I were not saved, to reveal it to me. Towards morning He gave me the blessed assurance I was saved, and, praise His name, forgiven. The following mail your article came! I cannot understand yet how one can be saved and do these things.” A Friend in Alaska.

“No one writes to my soul as you do. You get down to where I live, and get underneath my stress of soul and Satan’s assailing. I sit and meditate when I read, and have often said to my wife and others, ‘I find nothing in literature like this—it is just different, and gets down to where I live with all my sins and problems, my fears and doubts, my heart-longings and joys.’ I do try to preach the Word faithfully, and dare not preach anything else. Yet I find myself constantly in the midst of my messages bemoaning my failures, confessing my sinfulness, telling of my groanings and longings for victory. There are times when I go from the church or even while there, just after I have preached, that my heart overflows and feels that God is pleased and has blessed. Then there are seasons when it seems as if I am all in the way of the Spirit, and God just cannot smile upon me. I am grieved that I am such a miserable, selfish, respectable hypocrite. Yet I know that I hate to grieve Him, and am ashamed that I do. I hope it will be the Lord’s good pleasure to use you in furnishing us with these messages for a long while to come. I certainly do not have anything to fill the gap should they be discontinued.” U.S.A. What a refreshing contrast are the heart-groanings of regenerate souls from the boastings of self-righteous Pharisees!

“I am sorry the articles on the Holy Spirit are now finished—they have been such a blessing to me. By God’s grace your ‘Studies’ and book on ‘The Sovereignty of God’ have taught me more of the Word than ever I knew, and in such a way that my separation from the world’s thoughts and ways have been so marked to myself that I have asked myself again and again, could I have been saved.” A Brother in Canada. “The end of another year is at hand and I hope you have enough readers to encourage you to go on with this good work. I should be quite lost without it. I cannot express all that it has meant to me through the past difficult years. It has rebuked me, corrected, and encouraged, and I am indeed thankful to God for this light upon the way. I pray that His blessing may rest upon you and your dear wife during the coming year.” Brother in Australia. “I have sent all the extra copies of ‘Studies’ to friends, with the prayer that they may become interested in them. Have also prepared four short articles on ‘The Family Altar’ and ‘Believer’s Sacrifices’ based on your articles, and these are now appearing in our little paper. I know of one home where the Altar has been set up as a result of reading them. I wish it were possible to have your magazine in Spanish.” Missionary in San Salvador.

“Many times while reading ‘Studies’ I think if only I could have had such reading these many years since I have had a hope in the mercy of God. My life and walk would have been less worldly. The heart-searchings, which are so vital to the life of a Christian, which have come to me through the writings from your pen, have, I feel, made spiritual things more real and the vanities of this world less desirable.” Sister in New York. To God alone be all the glory.—

A. W. and V. E. Pink.



August

THE LORD'S PRAYER—PART 6

“Give us this day our daily bread” (Mat 6:11). We turn now unto those petitions which more immediately concern ourselves—we must labour to promote the manifestative glory of God, advance His kingdom, and do His will before we are permitted to supplicate for our *own* needs. These petitions which more immediately concern ourselves are four in number, and in them we may clearly discern an implied reference unto each of the persons in the blessed Trinity. Our temporal needs are supplied by the kindness of the Father, our sins are forgiven through the mediation of the Son. We are preserved from temptation and delivered from evil by the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit. Let us carefully note the *proportion* which is observed between these last four petitions—one of them concerns our bodily needs, three relate to the concerns of the soul—teaching us that in prayer, too, temporal things are to be subordinated unto spiritual.

“Give us this day our daily bread” (Mat 6:11). Perhaps it will be helpful if we begin by raising a number of questions. First, why does this request for the supply of bodily needs come *before* those petitions which concern the soul’s? Second, what is signified by and included in the term “bread”? Third, in what sense may we suitably beg God for our daily bread when we already have a supply on hand? Fourth, how can bread be a divine gift if we earn the same by our own labours? Fifth, what is inculcated by the request being restricted to our “daily bread”? Before attempting to answer these queries let us say that, with almost all of the best of the commentators, we regard the prime reference as being unto material “bread,” rather than unto spiritual.

Matthew Henry (1662-1714) has pertinently pointed out that the reason why this request for the supply of our temporal needs *heads* the last four petitions is, “Because our natural being is necessary in order to our spiritual well-being in this world.” In other words, God grants to us the outward things of this life as *helps* unto the discharge of our spiritual duties, because given by Him, they are to be employed in His service. What gracious consideration does God here show unto our weakness. We are unapt and unfit to perform our higher duties if deprived of the things needed for the sustenance of our bodily existence. May we not also suggest that this petition comes first in order to promote the growth of faith from strength to strength. Perceiving the goodness and faithfulness of God in supplying our temporal needs, we are encouraged and stimulated to ask for higher blessings—compare Acts 17:26-28.

“Our daily bread” refers, primarily to the supply of our temporal needs. With the Hebrews, “bread” was a generic term signifying the necessities and conveniences of this life (Gen 3:19; 28:20), such as food, raiment, and housing. Yet there is an emphasis in the specific term “bread,” rather than the more general “food,” teaching us to ask not for dainties or for riches, but for that which is wholesome and needful. “Bread” here includes health and appetite, apart from which

food serves us not. It also takes into account our *nourishment*, for this is not from the food alone, nor does it lie within the power of man's will. Hence God's *blessing* on it is to be sought. "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1Ti 4:4-5).

In begging God to give us our daily bread, we ask that He would graciously provide us with such a portion of outward things as He sees will be best suited to our calling and station, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal" (Pro 30:8-9). If God grants us the superfluities of life, we are to be thankful, and must endeavour to use them to His glory, but we must not ask for them, "Having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1Ti 6:8). "*Our daily bread*"—not by theft, not by taking by force or fraud what belongs to another—but by our personal labour and industry. "Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread" (Pro 20:13); "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness" (Pro 31:27).

How can I sincerely ask God for this day's bread when I already have a goodly supply on hand? First, because our present temporal portion may speedily be taken from us, and that without any warning. A striking and solemn illustration of this is found in 1 Samuel 30:16-17. Fire may burn down your house and everything in it, so by asking God for the daily supply of our temporal needs, we acknowledge our complete dependency upon His bounty. Second, because what we have will profit us nothing unless God designs to also *bless* the same unto us. Third, because this petition is more comprehensive than my own personal needs. It is not simply "give me," but *us*, thereby inculcating charity and compassion to others. God requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, to be as solicitous about our fellow Christians as we are of our own needs.

How can God be said to *give* us our daily bread if we ourselves have earned it? Surely such a quibble scarcely needs reply. First, because our right to the creature was forfeited when we fell in Adam. Second, because everything belongs to God, "The earth is the LORD's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psa 24:1); "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts" (Hag 2:8); "Therefore will I return, and take away *my* corn in the time thereof, and *my* wine in the season thereof" (Hos 2:9). Therefore we hold in fee from Him the portion which He bestows. We are but *stewards*. God grants us both possession and title. Third, because all we have comes *from God*, "These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good" (Psa 104:27-28 and cf. Act 14:17). Although by labour and purchase things may (relatively) be said to be "ours," yet it is God who gives us strength *to* labour.

What is inculcated by the request being restricted to our "*daily bread*"? First, it reminds us of our *frailty*. We are unable to continue in health for twenty-four hours and are unfit for its duties unless constantly fed from on High. Second, it emphasises the *brevity* of our mundane existence. None of us knows what a day may bring forth, and therefore we are forbidden to boast ourselves of the morrow (Pro 27:1). Third, it teaches us to suppress all anxious concern for the future—to live a day at a time—"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Mat 6:34). Fourth, it inculcates the lesson of *moderation*. We are to stifle the spirit of covetousness by forming the habit of being contented with a slender portion. Finally, observe that "give us *this* day" is to be prayed each morning, whereas "give us *day by day*" (Luk 11:3) is to be our request every night.

This petition, then, teaches us, first, that it is permissible and lawful to supplicate God for temporal mercies. Second, that we are completely dependent upon God's bounty for everything.

Third, that our confidence is to be in Him alone, and not in secondary causes. Fourth, that we should be grateful and return thanks for material blessings as well as for spiritual ones. Fifth, that we should practice frugality and discourage covetousness. Sixth, that we should have family worship every morning and evening. Seventh, that we should be equally solicitous of others as of ourselves, “Give us.”

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

1. Introduction

Matthew’s Gospel breaks the long silence which followed the ministry of Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets. The silence extended for four hundred years, and during that time God was withdrawn from Israel. Throughout this period there were no angelic manifestations, no prophet spoke for JEHOVAH, and though the chosen people were sorely pressed, yet were there no divine interpositions on their behalf. For four centuries God shut His people up to His written Word. Again and again had He promised to send the Messiah, and from Malachi onwards there was a believing remnant who anxiously awaited the appearing of the predicted One. It is at this point that Matthew picks up the thread dropped by the last of the Old Testament prophets. The first purpose of Matthew’s Gospel is to present Christ as the *Fulfiller* of the promises made to Israel and the prophecies which related to their Messiah. This is why the word “fulfilled” occurs in Matthew fifteen times, and why there are more quotations from the Old Testament in his Gospel than in the remaining three added together.

The *position* which Matthew’s Gospel occupies in the Sacred Canon indicates its character and scope. Standing immediately after the Old Testament and at the beginning of the New, it is therefore the connecting link between them. Hence it is *transitional*, and also more Jewish than any other book in the New Testament. Matthew reveals God appealing to and dealing with His Old Testament people. The numerical place of Matthew in the divine library confirms this, for being the *fortieth* book it shows us the nation of Israel in the place of *probation*, being tested by the presence of JEHOVAH in their midst. Matthew presents the Lord Jesus as Israel’s Messiah and King, as well as the One who shall save His people from their sins. The opening sentence gives the key to its contents, “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham” (Mat 1:1). Seven times over Christ is addressed as “the Son of David” in this Gospel, and ten times altogether is this title found there. “Son of David” connects Christ with the *throne*, while “Son of Abraham” associates Him with the *altar*.

This opening Gospel explains how it is that in the later books of the New Testament Israel is viewed as cast off by God, why it is Christendom has superseded the Jewish theocracy—the result of rejecting their Messiah. A striking foreshadowment of this is found in the second chapter, where a significant incident—passed over by the other evangelists—is recorded, namely, the visit of the wise men who came from the East to worship the Christ child. In the attendant circumstances, we may perceive prophetic anticipation of what is recorded throughout this Gospel and the New Testament. First, Christ is seen *outside* of Jerusalem. Then we have the *blindness* and indifference of the Jews to the presence of their Messiah—unaware that He was now among them, undesirous of accompanying the magi. Next there are the *strangers* from a far country with

a heart for the Saviour, seeking Him out and worshipping Him. Finally, we behold the civil head, so filled with hatred, determined to put Him to death—presaging His crucifixion by the Jews.

Not until the middle of his fourth chapter does Matthew tell us, “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mat 4:17). The time-mark here is, in the light of its context, most significant, emphasizing the same solemn aspect of truth as was adumbrated in chapter 2. First, we are told that our Lord’s forerunner had been “cast into prison” (Mat 4:12). Second, we are informed that Christ “leaving Nazareth” came “and dwelt in Capernaum” (Mat 4:13), for Nazareth (where He had dwelt so long, Mat 2:23) had openly rejected Him (see Luk 4:28-30). Third, it is here emphasized that the Saviour had gone “beyond Jordan” into “Galilee of the Gentiles,” where “the people which sat in darkness saw great light” (Mat 4:15-16)—another illustrative anticipation of His rejection by the Jews and His turning to the Gentiles.

The fourth chapter closes by telling us, “And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those which had the palsy...and there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis,” etc., (Mat 4:24-25). Some have wondered why our Lord performed these miracles of healing upon the bodies of the people *before* He delivered His great sermon on the Mount for the nourishing of their souls. First, it should be noted that these miracles of healing *followed* His “teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom” (Mat 4:23). Second, these miracles of healing were an essential part of His Messianic credentials (Isa 35:4-6). Third, these miracles of healing made way for His fuller preaching, by disposing the people to listen unto One who manifested such divine power and mercy.

The preface to the sermon is a very short one, “And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain, and when he was set, his disciples came unto him; and he opened his mouth, and taught them” (Mat 5:1-2). Yet brief as these verses be, there are several things in them which call for careful consideration. First, we must notice the *place* from which this sermon was preached. “As in other things, so in this, our Lord Jesus was but ill-accommodated. He had no convenient place to preach in, any more than to lay His head on. While the scribes and Pharisees had Moses’ chair to sit in, with all possible ease, honour, and state, and there corrupted the law—our Lord Jesus, the great Teacher of truth, is driven out to the desert, and finds no better place than a “mountain” can afford.

“Nor was it one of the *holy* mountains, nor one of the mountains of *Zion*, but a common mountain—by which Christ would intimate that there is no distinguishing holiness of places now, under the Gospel, as there was under the law—but that it is the will of God that men should pray and praise everywhere, anywhere, provided it be decent and convenient. Christ preached this sermon, which was an exposition of the law, upon a mountain, because upon a mountain the law was given, and this was also a solemn promulgation of the Christian law. But observe the difference. When the law was given the Lord came down upon the mountain, now the Lord “went up” (Mat 5:1) into one. Then He spoke in thunder and lightning, now in a still small voice. Then the people were ordered to keep their distance, now they are invited to draw near—a blessed change!” (Matthew Henry).

We believe there is a yet deeper significance in the fact that Christ delivered this sermon from a mountain. Very often the noting of *the place where* a particular utterance was made, supplies a key to its interpretation. For example in Matthew 13:36, Christ is seen entering “into the house,” where He made known unto His own the inner secrets of His kingdom. In Luke’s Gospel, Christ

is seen as man (the perfect Man) among men, and there He delivers a sermon “in the plain” (Luk 6:17)—descending as it were to a common level. But in Matthew, His royal authority is in view, and consequently He is seen again and again in an elevated place. In the seventeenth chapter, we behold Him transfigured on the mount. In Matthew 24:3, He delivers His great prophetic discourse from a mount. Then in Matthew 28:18-20, we see the Conqueror of Death commissioning His disciples from the mount. So here in Matthew 5:1, He ascends the mount when about to give forth the manifesto of His kingdom.

Next we would notice that our Lord was *seated* when He preached this sermon. It seems to have been His usual manner to preach sitting, “I *sat* daily with you teaching in the temple” (Mat 26:55). This was the custom of the Jewish teachers, “The scribes and the Pharisees *sit* in Moses’ seat” (Mat 23:2). Nevertheless, we are persuaded that the Spirit’s notice of our Lord’s posture on this occasion intimates something more important and significant than that He accommodated Himself to the prevailing mode of the day. In this sermon, Christ enunciated the laws of His kingdom and spoke with an authority infinitely transcending that of the Jewish leaders, and therefore His posture here is to be regarded as emblematic of a King sitting upon His throne or a Judge upon the bench.

“And he opened his mouth, and taught them” (Mat 5:2). Here the Spirit of God has noted the great prophet’s *manner of speaking*. First, it is to be understood naturally, and carefully emulated by all His servants. The first essential of any public speaker is that he open his mouth and articulate clearly, otherwise, no matter how good may be his subject matter, much will be lost on his hearers. Alas, how many preachers mutter and mumble their words, or employ a pious whine which elderly people cannot catch. It is most desirous that the young preacher should spare no pains to acquire a free and clear delivery—avoiding shouting and yelling on the one hand, and sinking his voice too much on the other.

Second, we may also behold here the perfections of our blessed Redeemer. So far as Scripture informs us, from the age of twelve till He reached thirty, Christ maintained a steady silence, for the time appointed by His Father to deliver His great message had not then arrived. In perfect submission to the One who sent Him, the Lord Jesus *waited* the hour which had been set Him—There is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Ecc 3:7). To one of His prophets of old God said, “I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover” (Eze 3:26). Later, He said, “Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening...and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb: then the word of the LORD came unto me” (see Eze 33:22-23). So it was here with the supreme prophet. The time had come for Him to enunciate the laws of His kingdom. The hand of God was upon Him, and He “opened his mouth.”

Third, as Scripture is compared with Scripture, this expression will be found to bear yet another meaning. “Supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may *open my mouth boldly*, to make known the mystery of the gospel” (Eph 6:18-19). The apostle was referring to a special kind of speech, upon far more weighty matters than his ordinary conversation. So when we are here told that Christ “opened his mouth and taught them” (Mat 5:2) we are to understand that He spoke with liberty and authority, with faithfulness and boldness, delivering Himself upon matters of the deepest weight and greatest importance. It means that, without fear or favour, Christ openly set forth the truth, regardless of consequences. That this is the meaning appears from what we read of at the finish of the sermon, “The people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one *having authority*, and not as the scribes” (Mat 7:28-29).

Let us now observe *the persons* to whom our Lord here addressed Himself. There has been considerable difference of opinion concerning the ones to whom this sermon really applies—the saved or the unsaved. Extreme positions have been taken on both sides, with a good deal of unnecessary dogmatism. Personally, we regard this sermon as a forecast and an epitome of the entire oral ministry of Christ, that it summarizes the general tenor of His whole teaching. The older we grow, the less do we approve of drawing hard and fast lines through the Scriptures, limiting their application by insisting that certain parts belong only to such and such a class, and under the guise of “rightly dividing” the Word, apportioning segments of it to the Jews only, the Gentiles only, or the church of God only. Man makes his canals rigidly straight, but God’s rivers wind in and out. God’s commandment is “exceeding broad” (Psa 119:96) and we must be on our guard against placing restrictions thereon.

A careful study of the four Gospels reveals the fact that Christ’s ministry had, first, a special application to the afflicted people of God. Second, it evidently had a peculiar reference to His own immediate disciples. And third, it had a general bearing upon the people at large. Such we take it was also the case with the Sermon on the Mount, embodying and illustrating these three distinctive features of Christ’s public ministry. First, its opening section (the “Beatitudes”) is most evidently addressed to those who were afflicted in their souls—those deeply exercised before God. Second, its next division referred directly to His public servants, as will be shown (D.V.), when we take it up in detail. Third, its larger part was a most searching exposition of the spirituality of the law and the refutation of the false teachings of the elders, and was meant mainly for the people at large.

We do not think that William Perkins (1558-1602) went too far when he said of the Sermon on the Mount, “It may justly be called the key of the whole Bible, for here Christ openeth the sum of the Old and New Testaments.” It is the longest discourse of our Lord’s recorded in the Scriptures. He began His public ministry by insisting upon repentance (Mat 4:17), and here He enlarges upon this vitally important subject in a variety of ways, showing us what repentance really is and what are its fruits. It is an intensely *practical* sermon throughout, as Matthew Henry tersely expressed it, “There is not much of the credenda of Christianity in it—the things to be believed, but it is wholly taken up with the agenda—the things to be done, for ‘if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine’ (Joh 7:17).”

Though we are told at the beginning of chapter 5 that it was His “disciples” whom Christ here taught, yet it is equally clear from the closing verses of chapter 7 that this sermon was spoken in the hearing of the multitudes. This must be steadily borne in mind throughout, for while it contains much instruction for believers in connection with their living a good, honest, and blessed life, yet not a little in it is evidently designed for unbelievers, particularly those sections which contain a most searching setting forth of the spiritual nature of His kingdom, and the character of those who enter and enjoy its privileges. Romish teachers have greatly erred, for they insist that Christ here propounded a *new* law—far more perfect than the law of Moses—and that He delivered now entirely *new* counsel to His disciples, which was never given in the law or the prophets, whereas His intention was to clear the true meaning of the law and the prophets which had been greatly corrupted by the Jewish doctors. But we will not further anticipate what we shall (D.V.) contemplate more fully in the studies to follow.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

80. His Sacred Song

2 Samuel 22 opens with the word “And,” which at once suggests there is a close connection between its contents and what has immediately preceded. The chapter which is now to be before us records David’s grand Psalm of thanksgiving, and as its opening verse intimates, it was sung by him in celebration of the signal deliverances which God had granted him from his many enemies. Last month, we had an account of the execution of the sons of Saul, followed by a summary of Israel’s victories over the Philistines and the slaying of a number of their giants. In our last article, we sought to point out the spiritual application of these things, as they bear upon the lives of Christians today, and the same line of thought is to be followed as we enter the present chapter. It is this looking for the *practical bearing* of the Scriptures upon ourselves which is so sorely needed, and which, alas, is now so much neglected by the present generation—only thus do we make the Bible a *living Book*, suited to our present need.

The spiritual and practical link of connection between 2 Samuel 21 and 22 is not difficult to perceive. As was shown last month, the execution of the sons of Saul (seven in number, for the work must be done *completely*) is to be regarded as a figure of the believer’s mortifying his lusts, and the conflicts which followed between Israel and the Philistines, David and the giants, symbolizes the fact that that warfare with sin which the saint is called upon to wage, continues till the end of his earthly course. Now the work of mortification is indeed a very painful one, nevertheless it issues in a joyful sequel. The plucking out of right eyes and the cutting off of right hands doubtless produces many a groan, yet will they be followed by melodious thanksgiving. Death figures prominently in 2 Samuel 21, but 2 Samuel 22 opens with a “Song”! Here, then, is the obvious connection—when *death* be written upon our lusts, music will fill the heart—when that which is displeasing to God has been put away, the Spirit will tune our souls to sing JEHOVAH’s praise.

It is a most interesting and instructive study to trace out the sacred, “Songs” of Scripture, paying particular attention to their *setting*. The first one is recorded in Exodus 15. We read not of the Hebrews celebrating the Lord’s praises while they were in Egypt, but only of their sighing and groaning (Exo 2:23-24). But when they had been delivered from the house of bondage, and their foes had been drowned in the Red Sea, a peal of worship ascended from their heart. Again, we read of Israel singing when the Lord supplied them with water (Num 21:17). Moses ended his wilderness wanderings with a song (Deu 31:22). Upon Israel’s victory over the Canaanites, they sang a song (Jdg 5:1). Job speaks of God giving “songs in the night” (Job 35:10)—a real, if a rare, experience, as many saints can testify. The psalmist said, “Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage” (Psa 119:54).

There is a most marked similarity between the Song of David in 2 Samuel 22 and the 18th Psalm (observe the latter’s superscription), indeed so close is the resemblance that almost all of the commentators have regarded them as being one and the same, attempting to account for their verbal variations (which though incidental are by no means few in number) on the supposition that the latter is a revised edition of the former. But such an assumption does not seem at all satisfactory—to us it appears a serious slight upon divine inspiration—surely the Holy Spirit never needs to make any amendments! We therefore greatly prefer the view of Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892), “We have another form of this 18th Psalm with slight variations in 2 Samuel 22, and this suggests the idea that it was sung by him on different occasions, when he reviewed his own remarkable history and observed the gracious hand of God in it all.”

This particular Song of David is no exception to a general, if not an invariable feature which marked all his inspired minstrelsy, in that we may see in it both a surface and a deeper allusion, both an historical and a prophetic significance. All doubt upon this point is definitely removed by the testimony of the New Testament, for there we find two of its verses quoted from as being the very words of Christ Himself, thus making it plain that a greater than David is here. In its deeper meaning, it is the utterance of the Spirit of Christ in David, making special reference to His triumph over death by the mighty power of God (Eph 1:19). David thankfully recounts the glorious actings of God on his behalf, yet in such language as rises above himself, to his Son and Lord, against whom all the powers of darkness were concentrated.

“And David spake unto the LORD the words of this song, in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul” (2Sa 22:1). One of the outstanding features of the checkered career of David was the large number of his foes, both from the surrounding nations and among his own people, the chief of all being Saul—the most formidable, malicious, and inveterate. Nor should this unduly surprise us, even though, as Matthew Henry tersely expressed it, “David was a man after *God’s* heart, but not after *man’s* heart: many were those who hated him.” Why was this? First, God so ordered it that he might be an eminent type of Christ, who, throughout the ages has been “despised and rejected of men.” Second, that thereby God might display the more conspicuously His faithfulness and power in preserving His own. Third, because this is generally the experience of the saints.

“And David spake unto the LORD the words of this song, in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul” (2Sa 22:1). Therefore was he well-qualified experimentally to declare, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all” (Psa 34:19). The Lord’s “deliverance” of David from his many foes assumed a great variety of forms—sometimes in one way, sometimes in another, for the Almighty is not limited to any particular means or method. On occasions He employs human instruments, and again, He wrought without them. Let this encourage the tried and Satan-harassed believer. Though every avenue of escape seem fast shut to your eyes, yet remember that closed doors are no barrier to the Lord (Joh 20:26). When the long drought completely dried up the water which sustained Elijah at Kerith, God maintained him with oil at Zarephath.

This too is written for our learning and comfort. As we have traced the life of David through the two books of Samuel, we have seen him in some sore straits. Again and again it looked as though his foes must surely prevail against him. Yea, on one occasion, he himself dolefully declared, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul” (1Sa 27:1). Yet he did not! No, One infinitely mightier than Saul was watching over him. And this is equally the case with you and me, dear reader, if we belong to Christ. The combined forces of hell shall never prevail against us—the united assaults of the flesh, the world, and the devil cannot destroy us. Why? “Because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1Jo 4:4). Then why should we be so fearful? Let us seek grace to rest on that sure promise, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psa 46:1).

Observe well David’s *response* to these divine interpositions on his behalf—deliverance calls for thanksgiving. This is the very least we can render unto the Lord in return for all His benefits. Nor should there be any tardiness in discharging this delightful obligation. Gratitude must issue promptly in praise. It did so with the sweet singer in Israel and it should also with us. Then let us take to heart this word, “And David spake unto the LORD the words of this song *in the day* that the LORD had delivered him” (2Sa 22:1). We ought to present unto God a sacrifice of praise

while His mercies are fresh and the heart is duly affected by them. We are not slow in crying to God when imminent danger threatens us. Then let us be just as prompt in acknowledging His goodness when His delivering hand is extended to us.

Many of the commentators are of the opinion that this Sacred Song was composed by David at an *early* date in his life, but personally we fail to see anything in the Scriptures which supports such a view. The very fact that the Holy Spirit has expressly told us it was uttered by David when, “The LORD had delivered him out of the hand of *all* his enemies” (2Sa 22:1), is surely a plain intimation that it was uttered by him late in life—the added words, “and out of the hand of Saul” do not modify this view when the mention of him is regarded as being intended for the purpose of *emphasis*, he being his predominant foe. The main divisions of the Song are fairly clearly defined. First, is the preface, in which David is occupied with extolling JEHOVAH’s perfections, verses 1-4. Second, he magnifies the Lord for His delivering mercies, verses 5-20. Third, he expresses the testimony of a clear conscience, verses 21-28. Fourth, he concludes with a prophetic anticipation of the glorious triumphs of the Messiah, verses 29-45.

“And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer” (2Sa 22:2). David begins by adoring JEHOVAH. He does so on the ground of his personal relation to Him—for all the benefits he had received, he bases upon his relation to God. Observe that in verses 2-3, he uses the personal pronoun no less than nine times. It is a grand thing when we have the assurance and can feelingly say, “The LORD is *my* rock.” While our enemies are hot upon our heels wounding us sorely, threatening our very life, we sometimes do not have this blessed assurance. But when God’s delivering grace is experienced afresh by us, new hope is kindled in the soul. ‘The LORD is my rock, and my fortress.’ Dwelling among the crags and mountains of Judea, David had escaped the malice of Saul, and here compares his God to such a place of concealment and security. Believers are often hidden in their God from the strife of tongues and the fury of the storm” (Charles H. Spurgeon).

“And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer” (2Sa 2:1). Let us not miss *the connection* between this and the preceding verse. They that trust God in the path of duty, will ever find Him a very present help in the greatest of dangers. And David *had* trusted God, with a faith which wrought miracles. Recall, for example, His intrepidity in facing Goliath. All Israel was afraid of the Philistine giant, so that none—not even Saul—dared to accept his haughty challenge. Yet David, though then but a youth, hesitated not to engage him in mortal combat, going forth to meet him without any material armour, and with naught but a sling in his hand. And wherein lay his strength? What was the secret of his courage and of his success? It was at once revealed in the words with which he met the enemy’s champion, “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel” (1Sa 17:45)!

And is *that*, my reader, nothing more than a striking incident of ancient history? Has it no message for our hearts? Is not God the same today—ready to respond to a faith that dares! Is it not written, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mar 9:23). Do we really believe this? If not, are we earnestly begging God to increase our faith? Faith is invincible, because it lays hold of One who is omnipotent. Faith is the hand which grasps the Almighty, and is anything too hard for Him?! Is it not also written, “according unto your faith be it unto you” (Mat 9:29)? Ah, does not that explain why it is we so often meet with defeat, why it is that our enemies prevail against us? O for faith in the living God, faith in the efficacy of Christ’s mediation to vanquish our lusts.

Yes, most important is it that we should heed the connection between the first two verses of our chapter—the deliverances David had from his enemies and his implicit confidence in God. Nor was he by any means alone in this experience. It was by the miracle-working power of God that the three Hebrews were delivered from Babylon's fiery furnace. Yes, but that divine power was put forth in response to their faith, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king" (Dan 3:17). So again with Daniel himself, yet how often *this* particular is overlooked. From early childhood most of us have been familiar with that divine marvel which preserved the prophet from the lions, but how many of us have noticed those words, "So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, *because he believed in his God*" (Dan 6:23).

"And he said, the LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer" (2Sa 22:2). When almost captured, the Lord's people are rescued from the hand of the mighty by One who is mightier still. God never fails those who really exercise faith in Him. He may indeed severely test, but He will not suffer them to be "utterly cast down." As our "Rock," God is the strength and support of His people, the One on whom they build their hopes, the One who affords shade from the burning heat of the desert. As our "Fortress," God gives His people shelter from their assailants, supplying protection and security—"The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Pro 18:10). As our "Deliverer," God saves us from ourselves, redeems us from the damning power of sin, rescues us from the roaring lion, secures us against the second death.

"The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence" (2Sa 22:3). This piling up of metaphors indicates the strong assurance which David had in the Lord, the realization of His sufficiency to meet his every emergency and supply his every need. He saw in God One who was infinitely worthy of his fullest confidence. No matter how critical his circumstances, how desperate his situation, how numerous or powerful his foes, and how great his own weakness, JEHOVAH was all-sufficient. Such, too, ought to be *our* confidence in God. Yea, we have more ground to rest *our* faith upon Him than ever David had. God is now revealed as the (penitent) sinner's Friend, as He never was then. In Christ, He is revealed as the Conqueror of sin, the Vanquisher of death, the Master of Satan. Then have we not cause to exclaim, "In him will I *trust*"? O that this may become more and more of an actuality in the lives of both writer and reader.

"The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence" (2Sa 22:3). These energetic figures of speech, which rise above the level of ordinary prose, reveal what God is to His believing people, for only as *faith* is lively and vigorous is He viewed thus. He is "my shield" with which to ward off every attack—faith interposes Him between our souls and the enemy. He is "the horn of my salvation," enabling me to push down my foes, and to triumph over them with holy exultation. He is "my high tower"—a citadel placed upon a high eminence, beyond the reach of all enemies, from which I may look down on them without alarm. He is "my refuge" in which to shelter from every storm. He is "my Saviour" from every evil to which the believer is exposed. What more do we need! What more can we ask! O for faith's realization of the same in our souls. "Thou savest me from violence." Again we would press the point that this is in response to faith—"He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, *because they trust in him*" (Psa 37:40).

“I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies” (2Sa 22:4). As an unknown writer has said, “The armour of a soldier does him no service except he put it on. So, no protection from God is to be expected unless we apply ourselves to prayer.” It is faith which girds on the spiritual armour. It is faith which finds all its resource in the Lord. “I will *call* on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: *so* shall I be saved from mine enemies.” Note carefully the words which we have placed in italics. This affords abundant confirmation of all we have said above—to “call upon the LORD” is to exercise faith in Him, such faith as praises Him *before* the victory—SO shall we be saved from our enemies—by God’s mighty power in response to believing prayer and sincere praise.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

7. *The Messianic*

The apostle’s design in Hebrews 8 is to evidence the immeasurable superiority of Christ’s priesthood above the Aaronic, and he does so by showing the far greater excellence of that *covenant* or dispensation of grace of which the Lord Jesus is the Mediator. When mentioning the “first covenant,” he refers to that economy or order of things under which the Hebrew people were placed at Sinai, and of which the Levitical priests were the mediators, interposing between God and the people. The “second” or “new covenant” is that grand economy or order of things which has been introduced and established by Christ, of which He is the sole Mediator. In proof of this Paul quoted Jeremiah 31:31-33, and it is quite obvious that the passage would have no relevance whatever to his argument, if the prophet were there referring to God’s dealings with carnal Israel in a period which is yet future. That covenant is made with the Gospel church, the “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16), on which peace rests forever.

Let us next point out that *this* “new covenant,” the Messianic, has assumed a form which no other covenant ever did or could, due to the death of its covenanter, namely, a “*testament*.” The same Greek term does duty for both English words, being rendered “covenant” in Hebrews 8:6, 8-9, and “testament” in 9:15-17. No word is more familiar to the reader of the Scriptures, for their second main division is rightly termed “The New Testament,” yet it had been just as accurate to designate it “The New Covenant.” But let it be clearly understood that it is called “New” not because its contents differ from the Old, for it is simply a fulfillment and confirmation of all that went before, everything in the Old Testament containing the shadow and type of the substance of the New Testament. The peculiar reason for naming it the New Testament is because it was newly accomplished and sealed by the precious blood of Christ just before it was written.

The second grand division of God’s Word sets forth the Gospel in all its unveiled fullness, and the Gospel (in contrast from the law, which is the predominant revelation of the Old Testament) was called “the New Testament” because it contains those legacies and testamentary effects which Christ has bequeathed His people. How inexpressibly blessed, then, should be the very name of the New Testament unto every one of the Lord’s people, who by the regenerating operations of the Holy Spirit can establish his own personal interest in the contents of it. “This is my blood of the new testament” (Mat 26:28). By His death, Christ has ratified the new covenant

and turned it into a “testament,” making all its riches and legacies secure and payable to His people. “For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth” (Heb 9:17). What has Christ left? to whom has He bequeathed His vast property? The answer is, every conceivable blessing—temporal, spiritual, eternal—the most durable treasure of all, unto “his own,” which He loved with an unquenchable love.

Before His departure, Christ expressed Himself to His disciples on this blessed subject when He said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you” (Joh 14:27). Thus we see that the Saviour’s legacies are to His dear people, His beloved spouse. As men, before they die, make their wills and give their property to their relatives and friends, so did the Redeemer, “Father, I *will* that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am” (Joh 17:24). O for grace to “prove” the Saviour’s will, to personally “lay claim to” all the rich legacies it contains. Have I been brought out of nature’s darkness and become a new creature in Christ? Has the Lord given me a new heart and mind? Then I have an interest in Christ’s will, and He died to make His testament valid, and ever lives to be the Executor and Administrator of it.

The covenant (the “new,” the “second,” the Messianic) to which the apostle alludes so often in his writings, particularly in the Hebrews’ epistle, is ratified by the death of Him who makes it, and therefore it is a “Testament” as well. This covenant was *confirmed* by Christ, both as that His death was the death of the Testator and as was accompanied by the blood of sacrifice. Hence it is *such* a “covenant” as that in it the covenanter bequeaths His goods in the way of a legacy, and thus we find Him calling this very covenant “the new testament in my blood.” It is in full accord with this that the believer’s portion is designated an “inheritance” (Rom 8:16-17; Eph 1:18; 1Pe 1:4), for in a “will” or “testament” there is an absolute grant made of what is bequeathed—the title which the believer has to his portion is not in himself, it has been made over to him by the death of Christ, and nothing can possibly rob him of it.

We must next consider the substance or *contents* of the Messianic covenant. Broadly speaking it is distinctly a covenant of *promise*, which gives security by pure grace for the sanctification of God’s people, and their preservation in a state and course of holiness, to their final salvation. In other words, their right of inheritance is not by the law or their own works, “For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect....therefore it is of faith, that it might be *by grace*; to the end the promise might be *sure* to all the seed” (Rom 4:14, 16). But is it not true that if the Christian should wholly and finally depart from God, that this would *deprive* him of all the benefits of grace? This hypothetical supposition is undoubted truth, yea, it is presupposed in the promise itself, which is likewise of certain and infallible truth, “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall *not* depart from me” (Jer 32:40).

Considering the contents of this covenant, we are fully in accord with John Owen (1616-1683) that there is in it, “a recapitulation and confirmation of all the promises of grace that have been given unto the church from the beginning, even all that was spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets that had been since the world began (see Luk 1:70).” The original promise (Gen 3:15) contained in germ form the whole essence and substance of the new covenant—all promises given unto the church afterwards being but expositions and confirmations of it. In the whole of them there was a full declaration of the wisdom and love of God in the sending of His Son, and of His grace unto men thereby. God solemnly confirmed those promises with an oath that they should be accomplished in their season. Thus the covenant promised by Jeremiah included the

sending of Christ for the accomplishment thereof, all promises being there gathered together in one glorious constellation.

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people” (Heb 8:10). In passing, be it duly noted that God did *not* here promise He would establish the nation in any earthly land, or bestow upon them any material inheritance. No, indeed, the blessings of this covenant immeasurably transcend any mundane or fleshly portion. Briefly, its contents may be summed up in four words: regeneration, reconciliation, sanctification, and justification. We will explain and amplify in what follows.

“I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts” (Heb 8:10). The “law” here signifies that which enjoins supreme love to God, and flowing out of it, love to our neighbour. Of this grand principle, the whole round of duty is to be the fruit and expression, and from it each duty is to take its character. If love be not the animating spring, then our obedience is of little worth. When it is said God will put His law in our inmost parts and write it in our hearts, it signifies that preparation of soul which is effected by divine power so that the law is cordially received into our affections. Elsewhere His miracle of grace is spoken of as, “I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Eze 36:26). It implies an inward spiritual appreciation of its goodness and equity—the result of divine illumination—an assimilation of the tastes or inclinations of the heart to it, and the conformity of the will to its righteous requirements.

There must be a true delight in the purity which the law inculcates, for this is the only effectual preparation for obedience. So long as the law of God utters its voice to us from *without only*, so long as there is no sympathy in the soul with its demands, so long as the heart is alienated from its spirituality, there can be no obedience worthy of the name. We may be awed by its peremptory utterances, alarmed at the consequences of its transgression, and driven to attempt what it requires, but the effort will be cold, partial, and insincere. We shall feel it a hard bondage, the pressure of which will certainly irritate, and against the restraints of which we shall inwardly rebel. Such is the real character of all graceless obedience, however it may be disguised. How can it be otherwise when, “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7)—as true today as nineteen centuries ago, as the modern hatred of and outcry against the law clearly manifests.

Concerning the Hebrew nation at Sinai who had stoutly affirmed, “all that the LORD hath spoken will we do” (Exo 19:8). God declared, “O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always” (Deu 5:29). Ah, *that* explains their wilderness perverseness, and the whole subsequent history—they had *no heart* to serve God, their affections were divorced from Him. And it is just at *this* point that the new covenant differs so radically from the old. God has given no new law, but He *has* bestowed upon His people a heart—a heart in harmony with its holiness and righteous requirements. This it is which enables them to render unto Him that obedience, which, through the mediation of Christ, is accepted by Him. Each of them can say with the apostle, “I *delight* in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom 7:22).

Once the law in all its spirituality and extent is not only intellectually apprehended, but wrought into the affections; once our inmost inclinations and tendencies are molded by it and brought into unison with it, genuine obedience will be the natural and necessary result. This is the import of the first great blessing here enumerated in the Messianic covenant. It necessarily comes first, for the miracle of regeneration is the foundation of reconciliation, justification, and

sanctification. The one in whom this divine work of grace is wrought finds enlargement of heart to run in the way of God's commandments. He now serves in "newness of spirit." What was before regarded as bondage, is now found to be the truest liberty. What was before an irksome task, is now a delight. Love for God inspires a desire to please Him. Love for its Author produces a love for His law.

"I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts" (Heb 8:10). The terms in which this blessing is expressed indicate a designed *contrast* between the old and new covenants. Under the former, the law was written upon tables of stone—not only to denote its abiding character, but also to symbolize the hard-heartedness of those to whom it was then given, and publicly exhibited as a rule which they were under solemn obligations to observe. But it contained no provision to secure obedience. By the vast majority of the people, its design was misunderstood and its requirements practically disregarded. It proved to them the ministration of condemnation and death. Under the Messianic covenant, the law is written on the heart—incorporated with the living springs of action in the inward parts, thus bringing the whole man into harmony with the will of God.

A further contrast is implied in the second blessing here specified, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Heb 8:10). While the Hebrews were yet in Egypt the Lord announced, "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God" (Exo 6:7). Later He declared, "I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people" (Lev 26:11-12). But that was a vastly different thing from what now obtains under the new covenant—that was a natural relationship, this a spiritual; that was external, this internal; that was national, this is individual; that was temporal, this is eternal. Under the theocracy, all of Abraham's natural descendants were true subjects and properly qualified members of the Jewish church—such only excepted as had not been circumcised according to the order of God, or were guilty of some capital crime. To be an obedient subject of the *civil* government and a full member of the *ecclesiastical* state was manifestly the same thing, because by treating JEHOVAH as their political Sovereign, they owned Him as the true God, and were entitled to all the blessings of the national covenant.

Under the Siniatic economy, JEHOVAH acknowledged all those to be "His people" and Himself to be "their God" who performed an *external* obedience to His commands, even though their hearts were disaffected to Himself (Jdg 8:23; 1Sa 8:6-7, etc.). Those prerogatives were enjoyed *irrespective of* sanctifying grace or of any pretension to it. But the state of things under the Christian economy is entirely different. God will not now acknowledge any as "His people" who do not know and revere Him, love and obey Him, worship Him in spirit and in truth. Only those are now owned as His people who have His law written on their hearts, and He is *their* "God" in a far higher and grander sense than ever He was of the nation of Israel. He is their enduring and satisfying portion. They are His people not by outward designation only, but by actual surrender of their hearts to Him. To be "their God" necessarily denotes they have been reconciled to Him, and have voluntarily accepted Him as such.

"I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Heb 8:11). This is a distinct promise which comprises and comprehends all the blessings and privileges of the covenant. It is placed in the centre of the whole as that from whence all the grace of it does issue, wherein all the blessedness of it does consist, and whereby it is secured. This relationship necessarily implies mutual acquiescence in each other, for it could not exist if the hearts and minds of those who are taken into it were not renewed. God could not approve of, still less rest in His love towards them, while they were at enmity against Him—nor could they find satisfaction in Himself so long as

they neither knew nor loved Him. Because they still have sin in them, this relationship is made possible through the infinite merits of the Mediator.

DATE FIXING

We have decided to write, or rather compile, this article, as an appendage to the recent ones on *Conditions in the Past*, that our readers may be furnished with a sample of the thoughts and opinions of men in previous generations respecting the coming of our Lord and the end of the age. Not only hysterical sensationalists, but some of the most sober-minded and spiritual servants of God have attempted to draw conclusions and forecast the future from the “signs of the times” (Mat 16:13) which appeared in *their* sky. The state of the world in their day, the corruption and apostasy of Christendom, and the calamitous judgments sent by God on an evil and adulterous generation, convinced them that such things were most certainly the immediate prelude to the appearing of Christ in person. Others averred that divine prophecy intimated the very year in which the Papacy would be overthrown or the day of judgment would occur.

“Towards the close of the tenth and at the beginning of the eleventh centuries the passion for pilgrimages was greatly increased by an opinion which prevailed all over Europe—that the thousand years mentioned by John in Revelation 20:2-4 were nearly accomplished, and the end of the world at hand. A general consternation seized the minds of men. Numbers relinquished their possessions, deserted their families and friends, and hastened to the Holy Land, where they imagined Christ would suddenly appear to judge the living and the dead” (From “A History of the Church” by Charles Goodrich, 1835, p. 104). Perhaps some of our readers are inclined to smile at the credulity of those who lived a thousand years ago, but we can assure them that human nature is still the same. The writer is personally acquainted with a lawyer of considerable repute, who thirty years ago was so convinced by “the signs of the times” that the coming of Christ was at the very doors, that he abandoned all thoughts of provision for old age and gave away his fortune to the promotion of missionary work. Recently, when past three score and ten, he has been obliged to take up again the practice of law to provide for his daily needs. Nor is this by any means an isolated case.

In his work on the Thessalonian epistles, John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury, (1583 A.D.) in his comments on 1 Thessalonians 5:1, said, “What may we think then, of them that write books and almanacs, and say such a year and at such a time Christ shall come, and with their fine speeches tray [frighten] and mock the world? These two hundred years past, there have ever been some which have adventured to tell such news. They have appointed many such years, and days, only to give witness to their folly” (p. 123). William Perkins informs us (Vol. 3, p. 473), “A Jew prophesied that in the year 1364, Messiah should come and deliver His own nation,” and that a celebrated astrologer, by the name of Albumazar (787-886), “prophesied that in the year of our Lord 1460 an end should be made of the Christian religion.” In his piece on “The End of the World” (which the printer in 1604 says “was written many years ago”), Perkins represents one saying, “All the signs of the coming of Christ are fulfilled—O what terrible earthquakes have there been! what famine! what wars and revolutions among men! what signs in the sun and moon! what flashing in the air! what blasting stars! Surely, surely the world cannot last long” (Vol. 3, p. 470).

In the same piece, Perkins went on to quote the following, as something which deeply stirred many in his early days:

“When after Christ’s birth there be expired,
Of hundreds fifteen, years eighty and eight,
Then comes the time of dangers to be feared,
And all mankind with terrors it shall freight:
For if the world in that year do not fall,
If sea and land then perish nor decay:
Yet empires all, and kingdoms alter shall,
And man to ease himself shall have no way.”

Again we say, such silly doggerel may now raise a smile (but for many years, thousands were terrified by it), yet we well recall that in our early boyhood many in this country were rendered uneasy by the prophecies of “Mother Shipton (1488-1561),” two of which were: “Carriages without horses shall go, and accidents fill the world with woe,” and “The world to an end shall come, in eighteen hundred and ninety one.”

“If any age had cause to think Christ would come, certainly we have. It was not far off in the apostles’ days—they were called ‘the last days,’ but ours are the very dregs of time. When we see an old man weak and feeble, aches and diseases of the present life increasing upon him, we say, Certainly he cannot live long. So if we look upon the temper of the world, surely it cannot endure long. Christ will come to set all things at rights” (Thomas Manton (1620-1677), Vol. 16, p. 215). Yet almost three hundred years have passed since that able expositor drew his conclusion, and for all we know another three *thousand* years may yet run their course before human history expires.

After referring to a number of different ones who had prophesied the exact year in which Popery was to be totally destroyed, Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) went on to say, “I find also Mr. Joseph Mede (1586-1638) in his *Clavis*, to pitch upon 1656, though tacitly and implicitly, yet clearly enough, as the time he is most inclined unto for the expiration of Antichrist’s kingdom. For in his ‘Synchronisms,’ he makes the first trumpet and the Pope’s 1260 days to begin together. And in his ‘comment’ he makes the beginning of the first trumpet to be in the year 395. So that if the reign of Antichrist begins at the year 395 A.D., then his 1260 days or years will end in 1655. And thus there will be so many years from Christ unto the beginning of the new world, as there was from the beginning of the world until the days of Noah, unto which Christ compares His coming, even 1656 years” (Vol. 3, p. 196).

In 1655, the church of France thus addressed itself to brethren abroad, “Inasmuch as by these overturnings of the world, ’tis visible that its last end *cannot be far off*, and that our long-looked and long-hoped for redemption, and the coming of the eternal kingdom of the Son of God draweth nigh” (J. G. Lorimer, “Protestant church of France,” 1842, p. 199). In a letter to General Fleetwood, Oliver Cromwell said (August 22, 1653), “If the day of the Lord be so near, as some say, how should our moderation appear!” (from J. H. Merle D’Aubigne’s (1794-1872), “Vindication of the Protector,” p. 159).

Well did John Owen (v. 17, p. 552) warn people of his day, “But in the meantime what things may come, I know not. Those who pretend to a clearer inspection into future things may not do amiss to strictly examine the grounds whereon they proceed. For many have been ashamed of their predictions, that within such or such a time the yoke of Babylon (Rome) should be broken.” The only difference in our day is that modern prophets (?) are devoid of shame, for when the flight of time refutes their fancies, instead of acknowledging they were wrong, they manipulate

their premises and draw new conclusions, always fixing their dates just a few years in the future, thus keeping their dupes continually on the tiptoe of expectation.

“But this same revelation informs us that it shall not always be s—the time is coming, and *is now just at hand*, when God will destroy the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations, by causing the Gospel to be preached to them all, in giving them a heart to discern and understand the truth. Then ‘the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days.’ And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear, shall hearken. The heart also of the rash or foolish shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly, and the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Samuel Hopkins, 1772, a contemporary and intimate friend of Jonathan Edwards in New England, Vol. 1, p. 56).

“There are certain very memorable events, the dates of which are peremptorily fixed: as the treading of the Holy City forty-two months, the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth and under discouragements a thousand two hundred and three-score days; during which term of days also the church is to be nourished in the wilderness even for a time, and times, and half a time; and power is given to the beast, or Antichrist, to continue forty and two months (Rev 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5). All which began, and will end together, for these dates are exactly the same. And could we be certain when these dates begin, we should have no difficulty about the expiration of them, or how long it is to be. Good men have been mistaken in their calculations for want of this. However, though we can come at no certainty as to the precise time these things shall be, yet some degree of understanding of these times may be come at. And from the circumstances of things it may be concluded that these dates cannot reach beyond an hundred and fifty years more, and it may be they may expire much sooner” (John Gill’s sermon on Isa 21:11-12, preached December, 1750).

“Why cannot you pray along with the faithful for Christ’s *speedy* coming? Surely you do not doubt of the fact that He will come to judge the world is as certain as that He did come at the first time to judge the Jewish nation, ‘For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.’ The matter of fact upon Scriptural principles is undeniably clear and certain. Why then are you not so prepared for it as to make it the subject of your prayers? Is it because you put it at a great distance, and therefore think yourselves safe? Consider attentively what the Scripture says upon this point. Our Lord has given us several marks or *signs* of His coming, by which we might know *as certainly* when it was at hand, as we could know when the fig-tree puts forth her green figs that summer is nigh. There were to be wars and rumours of wars, pestilences, earthquakes in divers places, very little true faith left upon the earth, and yet as great security among careless sinners as there was in the days of Noah, when the flood came and swept them all away.

“Do you think these cannot be the forerunners of our Lord’s *speedy coming* because there always have been such things in the world? But when all these signs are at once upon the earth, and in a manner they never were before, then they become loud calls to an immediate preparation. Were there ever greater wars or more rumours of war? Has not an uncommon pestilence raged among the cattle for several years, in this and in other countries? Were there ever such earthquakes, so universal, and of so long continuance, as have been for some years past? And does not the present state of the world as to religion greatly resemble our Lord’s description of the men upon whom that day shall come unawares as a thief in the night? And when could the account which St. Paul gives us in several of his epistles, of the men of the latter times be more true, than it is at present? Have they not the name and form of Christianity without the power of

it? Are they not worldly-minded, sunk into carnal security, and so entirely influenced by the love of pleasure, that the love of God and of the things of God is not only waxed cold, but quite frozen up?

“Was there ever any age wherein our Lord’s words could be more strictly fulfilled, ‘When the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?’ By these signs our Lord is alarming a sinful world with notices of His *speedy* coming, and if sinners are not at all alarmed, but continue still secure in their sins, this is a Scripture proof that He will *soon* come as a thief in the night and surprise them. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them, and they shall not escape” (William Romaine (1714-1795), Discourses on Solomon’s Song, 1771, p. 368 to 370). Note well, dear reader, that this most godly man spoke repeatedly of the “speedy coming of Christ” a hundred and fifty years ago!

At the end of his “Notes on the New Testament” (about 1780), John Wesley fixed the following dates for the fulfillment of prophecies in the Revelation, “1614: an everlasting Gospel promulgated (Rev 14:6). 1810: the end of the forty-two months of the Beast; after which and the pouring out of the vials, he is not, and Babylon reigns queen (Rev 15 and 16). 1832: the Beast ascends from the bottomless pit (Rev 17 and 18). 1836: the end of the non-chronos, and of the many kings; the fulfilling of the Word and of the mystery of God; the repentance of the survivors in this great city; the end of the ‘little time’ and of the three times and a half; the destruction of the Beast; the imprisonment of Satan (Rev 19 and 20).”

There seems no need for us to make citations from those who have lived nearer our own times and give quotations from such men as Edward Irving (1792-1834), Richard Baxter (1615-1691), Henry Gratton Guinness (1835-1910), and others, who set dates for the destruction of the Papacy, the end of the age, and the appearing of Christ. We could quote from the early writings of the Plymouth Brethren and show that eighty and ninety years ago they were just as convinced that Christ would return in their *own* lifetimes, as many of their followers are today. Nor will we burden the reader by exposing the date-fixing fallacies of the “Seventh Day Adventists,” Russellites, and Christadelphians. Sufficient has been advanced to indicate that throughout the centuries one and another has arisen posing as prophets by forecasting coming events, only for the passage of time to make evident their folly, and to exemplify the fact that “thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Pro 27:1).

And what is the moral to be drawn from all of this? What is the practical lesson—for it is a *practical end* we have had in view, and not the amusing of the curious or the entertaining of those who have an idle hour to pass away. Surely it is this, “For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass’s colt” (Job 11:12). Yes, wise in his own conceits, wise above that which God has revealed, wise in the esteem of his fellows. He would pose before others as possessing a spiritual light and discernment which lifts him above the rank and file. He pretends unto light received from the Word which is denied those who walk not so closely with God as *he* does. The Spirit has shown *him* “things to come,” only for the passing of time to demonstrate it was some other spirit than the Spirit of God.

When the disciples asked Christ, “Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Act 1:6), He did not say whether He would or would not, neither did He tell them that they entertained an erroneous conception of “the kingdom.” No, He struck more deeply, and made answer which applies to *all* His followers till the end of time, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power” (Act 1:7). That is definite and it is final. Shun, then, my reader, those who controvert the Son of God by seeking to persuade that you *may*, “know the times and the seasons,” that if you will accept their interpretations (?) of

prophecy you will be granted a spiritual insight into those things of which the world is ignorant. “The coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (Jam 3:8). It is ever drawing nearer, but for any man to affirm that the coming of the Lord is *now* at the very doors, is to affirm what Scripture nowhere warrants, and is a piece of bombastic impertinence.

Our pressing duty is to set bounds to an unholy curiosity, and rest content with the blessed fact that the future is entirely in the hands of the Most High. It is the present which limits the boundaries of our responsibility. God is working all things after the counsel of His own will, so that there is no cause for alarm or fear. Not only cannot the forces of evil go one inch farther than what has been divinely ordained, but even now, God is making them to subserve His own wise and holy purpose. Nothing we do, or fail to do, will either hasten or retard by a single hour the consummation of God’s counsels. “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28) provides a sure resting-place for the renewed heart.

Speculations about future history are not only futile, but impious. An itching mind that craves information about coming events is a hindrance and not a help to present godliness. Leave the future with God, and seek grace to discharge your *present* duty. Part of our present duty, as well as our precious privilege, is to be “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Ti 2:13), but that is a vastly different thing from occupying our minds with the *evil* that is at work in the world. To be “looking for that blessed hope” is entirely an attitude of *the heart*—the soul being engaged with the person of Christ Himself, anticipating that glad moment when He will perfectly conform us to His image. But as to *when* He will appear, the angels in heaven know not, much less can we on earth ascertain it. To be *prepared for* His coming is the great thing, and not to be curiously prying into the how and when of it.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

5. Its Justice—Part 2

In last month’s article, we pointed out, first, that divine justice is of an entirely different order and character than human justice. Second, that divine justice is grounded upon God’s sovereign dominion over all the works of His hands, being the exercise of His own imperial will. Third, that nothing whatever is due the creature from the Creator, not even what He is pleased to give, and that so far from God’s being under any obligation to it, it is under lasting obligations to Him. Fourth, that whatever God wills and works is right and must be reverently submitted to, yea, adored by us. Fifth, that it is impossible to charge God with injustice in His electing certain ones to be the objects of His amazing grace, since that apart from it, *all* had eternally perished. Let us now descend to a lower and simpler level, and contemplate God’s election in connection with the human race fallen in Adam.

If there were no injustice in God’s making a choice of some unto special favour and eternal blessing as He viewed His creatures in the glass of His purpose to *create*, then certainly there could be no injustice in His determining to show them mercy as He foreviewed them among the mass of Adam’s *ruined* race. For if a single creature has no claim whatever upon its Maker, being entirely dependent upon His charity, then most assuredly a fallen creature is entitled to nothing

good at the hands of its offended Judge. And this is the angle from which we must now view our subject. Fallen man is a criminal, an outlaw, and if bare justice is to be meted out to him, then he must be left to receive the due reward of his iniquities, and *that* can mean nothing less than eternal punishment, for his transgressions have incurred infinite guilt.

Before enlarging upon what has just been said, it also needs to be pointed out that if the only hope for a *holy* creature lies in God's electing grace, then doubly is this the case with one that is *unholy*, totally depraved. If a holy angel was in constant danger, incapable of maintaining his purity, because of the mutability of his nature and the fickleness of his will, what shall be said of an *unholy* creature? Why, nothing less than this—fallen man has a nature that is confirmed in evil, and therefore his will no longer has any power to turn unto that which is spiritual, yea, it is inveterately steeled against God. Hence, his case is utterly and eternally hopeless unless God, in His sovereign grace, is pleased to save him from *himself*.

Preachers may prate all they please about man's inherent powers, the freedom of his will, and his capacity for good, yet it is useless and madness to ignore the solemn fact of the fall. The difference and disadvantage between our case and that of unfallen Adam's can scarcely be conceived. Instead of a perfect holiness possessing and inclining our minds and wills, as it did his, there is no such vital principle left in our hearts. Instead, there is a thorough disability unto what is spiritual and holy, yea, contrary enmity and opposition thereto. "Men err, not knowing the power of original sin, nor the depth of corruption that is in their own hearts. The will of man now is the prime and proper seat of sin—the throne thereof is seated therein" (Thomas Goodwin). Outward helps and aids are of no account, for nothing short of a new creation is of any avail.

No matter what instruction fallen men receive, what inducements be offered them, the Ethiopian cannot change his skin. Neither light, conviction, nor the general operations of the Holy Spirit, are of any avail, unless God over and above them imparts a new principle of holiness to the heart. This has been clearly and fully demonstrated under both law and Gospel. Read Exodus 19 and Deuteronomy 5 and see the wondrous and awe-inspiring manifestation of Himself which God granted unto Israel at Sinai—did *that* change their hearts and incline their wills to obey Him? Then read through the four Gospels and behold the incarnate Son of God dwelling in the midst of men, not as a judge, but as a Benefactor—going about doing good, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, proclaiming the Gospel—did *that* melt their hearts and win them to God? No, they hated and crucified Him.

Behold, then, the case of fallen mankind—alienated from the life of God, dead in trespasses and sins, with no heart, no will for spiritual things. In themselves their case is desperate, irretrievable, hopeless. Apart from divine election none would, none could, ever be saved. Election means that God was pleased to reserve a remnant, so that the entire race of Adam should not eternally perish. And *what thanks* does He receive for this? None at all, save from those who have their sin-blinded eyes opened to perceive the inexpressible blessedness of such a fact. Thanks, no—instead, the vast majority even of those in professing Christendom, when they hear of this truth, ignorant of their own interests and of the ways of God, quarrel at His election, revile Him for the same, charge Him with gross injustice, and accuse Him of being a merciless Tyrant.

Now the great God stands in no need of any defense from us. In due time He will effectually close the mouth of every rebel. But we must address a few more remarks to those believers who are disturbed by such as insist so loudly that God is guilty of injustice if He has made a sovereign election. First, then, we ask these slanderers of JEHOVAH to *make good* their charge. The burden of proof falls upon them to do so. They affirm that an electing God is unjust, then let them demonstrate *how* such be the case. They cannot. In order to do so they must show that

lawbreakers merit something good at the hands of the Lawgiver. They must show that the King of kings is morally obliged to smile upon those who have blasphemed His name, desecrated His Sabbaths, slighted His Word, reviled His servants, and above all, despised and rejected His Son.

“Is there one man in the whole world who would have the impertinence to say that he merits anything of his Maker? If so, be it known unto you that He shall have all the merits, and *your* reward will be the flames of hell forever, for *that* is the utmost that any man ever *merited* of God. God is in debt to no man, and at the last great day every man shall have as much love, as much pity, and as much goodness, as he deserves. Even the lost in hell shall have all they deserve—ay, and woe be the day for them when they shall have the wrath of God, which will be the summit of their deserving. If God gives to every man as much as he merits, is He therefore to be accused of injustice because He gives to some infinitely more than they merit?” (Charles H. Spurgeon). How many who now speak of him, and refer to him as “beloved Spurgeon,” would gnash their teeth and execrate him were they to hear his faithful and plain-spoken preaching.

Second, we would inform these detractors of God that His *salvation* is not a matter of justice, but of *pure grace*, and grace is something that can be claimed by none. Where is the injustice if anyone does as he wills with his own? If I am free to disburse my charity as I see fit, shall God be conceded less freedom to bestow His gifts upon whom He pleases?! God is indebted to none, and therefore if He grants His favours in a sovereign way who can complain? If God passes you by, He has not injured you. But if He enriches you, then are you a debtor to His grace, and then will you cease prating about His justice and injustice, and gladly join with those who astonishingly exclaim, “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psa 103:10)? Salvation is God’s free gift and therefore He bestows it on whom He pleases.

Third, we would ask these haughty creatures, to whom has God ever *refused* His mercy when it was sincerely and penitently sought? Does He not freely proclaim the Gospel to every creature? Does not His Word bid *all* men to throw down the weapons of their warfare against Him and come to Christ for pardon? Does He not promise to blot out your iniquities if you will turn unto Him in the way of His appointing? If you refuse to do so you are so thoroughly in love with sin, so wedded to your lusts, that you are determined to destroy your own soul, then who is to blame? Most certainly God is not. His Gospel promises are reliable and anyone is at liberty to prove them for himself. If he does so, if he renounces sin and puts his trust in Christ, then he will discover for himself that he is one of God’s chosen ones. On the other hand, if he deliberately spurns the Gospel and rejects the Saviour, then his blood is on his own head.

This leads us to ask, fourth, You say it is unjust that some should be lost while others are saved, but *who* makes them to be lost that are lost. Whom has God ever caused to sin—rather does He warn and exhort against it. Whom has the Holy Spirit ever prompted to a wrong action?—rather does He uniformly incline against evil. Where do the Scriptures bolster up any in his wickedness?—rather do they constantly condemn it in all its forms. Then is God unjust if He condemns those who willfully disobey Him? Is He unrighteous if He punishes those who defiantly disregard His danger signals and expostulations? Assuredly not. To each such one God will yet say, “Thou hast destroyed thyself” (Hos 13:9). It is the creature who commits moral suicide. It is the creature who breaks through every restraint and hurls himself into the precipice of eternal woe. In the last great day, it will appear that God is *justified* when he speaks, and *clear* when he judges (Psa 51:4).

Election is the taking of one and the leaving of another, and implies freedom on the part of the elector to choose or refuse. Hence the choosing of one does no injury to the other which is not chosen. If I select one out of a hundred men to a position of honour and profit, I do no injury to

the ninety and nine not elected. If I take two from a score of ragged and hungry children, and adopt them as my son and daughter, feed and clothe, house and educate them, I do them an immense benefit, but while disbursing my bounty as I choose and making two happy, I do no injury to the eighteen who are left. True, they remain ragged, ill-fed, and uneducated, yet they are in no worse condition for my having shown favour to their late companions—they only continue precisely in the situation in which they were.

Again—if among ten convicts justly sentenced to death, the king of England was pleased to choose five to be the recipients of his sovereign mercy, pardoned and released them, they would owe their very lives to his royal favour. Nevertheless, by extending kindness to them, no injury is done to the other five—they are left to suffer the righteous penalty of the law, due to them for their transgressions. They only suffer what they *would* have suffered if the king's mercy had *not* been extended toward their fellows. Who, then, can fail to see that it would be a misuse of terms, a grievous slander of the king—to charge him with injustice, because he was pleased to exercise his royal prerogative and evidence his favour in this discriminating manner.

Our Saviour definitely expressed *this* idea of election when He said, “Then shall two be in the field: the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Mat 24:40). If both had been “left,” then both had perished—hence the “taking” of the one did no injury to his fellow. “Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Mat 24:41). The taking of the one was a great favour to her, but the leaving of her companion did her no wrong. Divine election, then, is a choice to favour from among those who have *no claims* upon God. It therefore does no injustice to them that are passed by, for they only continue as and where they were, and as and where they would have been if none had been taken from among them. In the exercise of His electing grace, God has mercy upon whom He will have mercy and in the bestowment of His favour He does what He wills with His own.

It is not difficult to perceive the ground upon which the false reasoning of God's detractors rests—behind all the murmurings of objectors against the divine justice lies the concept that God is under *obligation* to provide salvation for all His fallen creatures. But such reasoning (?) fails to see that if such a contention were valid, then no *thanks* could be returned to God. How could we praise Him for redeeming those whom He was bound to redeem? If salvation be a debt which God owes man for allowing him to fall, then salvation cannot be a matter of *mercy*. But we must not expect that those whose eyes are blinded by pride should understand anything of the infinite demerits of sin, of their own utter unworthiness and vileness, and therefore it is impossible that they should form any true concept of divine grace, and perceive that when *grace* is exercised it is necessarily exercised in a *sovereign* manner.

But after all that has been pointed out above, some will be ready to sneeringly ask, Does not the Bible declare that God is “no respecter of persons,” how, then, can He make a selection from among men? The calumniators of divine predestination suppose that either the Scriptures are inconsistent with themselves, or that in His election, God has regard to merits. Let us first quote from John Calvin (1509-1564), “The Scripture denies that God is a respecter of persons, in a different sense from that in which *they* understand it. For by the word *person* it signifies not a man, but those things in a man which, being conspicuous to the eyes, usually conciliate favour, honour, and dignity, or attract hatred, contempt, and disgrace. Such are riches, power, nobility, magistracy, country, elegance of form, on the one hand, and on the other hand, poverty, necessity, ignoble birth, slovenliness, contempt, and the like. Thus Peter and Paul declare that God is not a respecter of persons because He makes no difference between the Jew and Greek, to reject one

and receive the other, merely on account of his nation (Act 10:34; Rom 2:11). So James uses the same language when he asserts that God in His judgment pays no regard to riches (Jam 2:5).

“There will, therefore, be no contradiction in our affirming, that according to the good pleasure of His will, God chooses whom He will as His children, irrespective of all merit, while He rejects and reprobates others. Yet, for the sake of further satisfaction, the matter may be explained in the following manner. They ask how it happens, that of two persons distinguished from each other by no merit, God, in His election, leaves one and takes another. I, on the other hand, ask them, whether they suppose him that is taken to possess anything that can *attract* the favour of God? If they confess that he has not, as indeed they must, it will follow that God looks not at man, but derives His motive to favour him from His own goodness. God’s election of one man, therefore, while He rejects another, proceeds not from any respect of man, but solely from His own mercy, which may freely display and exert itself wherever and whenever it pleases.”

To have “respect of persons” is to regard and treat them differently on account of some supposed or real difference in them or their circumstances, which is no warrantable ground or reason for such preferential regard and treatment. This character of a respecter of persons belongs rather to one who examines and rewards others according to their characters and works. For example, for a judge to justify and reward one rather than another, because he is rich and the other poor, or because he has given him a bribe, or is a near relative or an intimate friend, while the character and conduct of the other is more upright and his cause more just. But such a denomination is inapplicable to a disburser of charity, who is granting his favours and bestowing freely undeserved gifts to one rather than to another, doing so without any consideration of personal merit. The benefactor has a perfect right to do what he will with his own and those who are neglected by him have no valid ground for complaint.

Even if this expression be taken in its more popular acceptance, nothing so strikingly evidences that God *is* “no respecter of persons” than *the character* of the ones He has chosen. When the angels sinned and fell, God provided no Saviour for them, yet when the human race sinned and fell, a Saviour was provided for many of them. Let the unfriendly critic carefully weigh this fact—had God been a “respecter of persons” would He not have selected the angels and passed by men? The fact that He did the very reverse clears Him of this calumny. Take again that nation which God chose to be the recipients of earthly and temporal favours above all others during the last two thousand years of Old Testament history. What sort of characters were they? Why, an unappreciative and murmuring, stiff-necked and hard-hearted, rebellious and impenitent people, from the beginning of their history until the end. Had God been a respecter of persons He surely had never singled out *the Jews* for such favour and blessing!

The very character, then, of those whom God chooses refutes this silly objection. The same is equally apparent in the New Testament. “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world” (Jam 2:5). Blessed be His name, that it is so, for had He chosen the wealthy it had fared ill with many of us, had it not? God did not pick out magnates and millionaires, financiers and bankers, to be objects of His grace. Nor are those of royal blood or the peers of the realm, the wise, the gifted, the influential of this world, for few among *them* have their names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. No, it is the despised, the weak, the base, the non-entities of this world, whom God has chosen (1Co 1:26-29), and this, in order that, “no flesh should glory in his presence.” Pharisees passed by and publicans and harlots brought in! “Jacob have I loved”—and what was there in him *to love*!—and echo still asks, “What?” Had God been “a respecter of persons” He certainly had never chosen worthless me!

A FOURFOLD SALVATION

If on the one hand, the unbeliever hotly denies that he is in love with sin, many a believer is often hard put to it to persuade himself that he *has been* saved from the love thereof. With an understanding that has been in part enlightened by the Holy Spirit, he is the better able to discern things in their true colours. With a heart that has been made honest by grace, he refuses to call sweet bitter. With a conscience that has been sensitized by the new birth, he the more quickly feels the workings of sin and the hankering of his affections for that which is forbidden. Moreover, the flesh remains in him, unchanged, and as the raven constantly craves carrion, so this corrupt principle in which our mothers conceived us lusts after and delights in that which is the opposite of holiness. These things are they which occasion and give rise to the disturbing questions that clamour for answers within the genuine believer.

The sincere Christian is often made to seriously doubt if he *has been* delivered from the love of sin. Such questions as these painfully agitate his mind—Why do I so readily yield to temptation? Why do some of the vanities and pleasures of the world still possess so much attraction for me? Why do I chafe so much against any restraints being placed upon my lusts? Why do I find the work of mortification so difficult and distasteful? Could such things as these be if I were a new creature in Christ? Could such horrible experiences as these happen if God had saved me from taking pleasure in sin? Well do we know that we are here giving expression to the very doubts which exercise the minds of many of our readers, and those who are strangers thereto are to be pitied. But what shall we say in reply? How is this distressing problem to be resolved?

How may one be assured that he has been saved from the love of sin? Let us point out first that the presence of that within us which still lusts after and takes delight in some evil things is *not incompatible* with our having been saved from the love of sin, paradoxical as that may sound. It is part of the mystery of the Gospel that those who are saved are yet *sinners* in themselves. The point we are here dealing with is similar to and parallel with faith. The divine principle of faith in the heart does *not cast out unbelief*. Faith and doubts exist side by side within a quickened soul, which is evident from those words, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24). In like manner, the Christian may exclaim and pray, “Lord, I long after holiness, help Thou my lustings after sin.” And why is this? Because of the existence of two separate natures, the one at complete variance with the other within the Christian.

How, then, is the presence of faith to be ascertained? Not by the ceasing of unbelief, but by discovering *its own* fruits and works. Fruit may grow amid thorns—as flowers among weeds—yet it is fruit, nevertheless. Faith exists amid many doubts and fears. Notwithstanding opposing forces from within as well as from without us, faith still reaches out after God. Notwithstanding innumerable discouragements and defeats, faith continues to fight. Notwithstanding many refusals from God, it yet clings to Him, and says, “Except thou bless me I will not let thee go.” Faith may be fearfully weak and fitful, often eclipsed by the clouds of unbelief, nevertheless the devil himself cannot persuade its possessor to repudiate God’s Word, despise His Son, or abandon all hope. The presence of faith, then, may be ascertained in that it causes its possessor to come before God as an empty-handed beggar beseeching Him for mercy and blessing.

Now just as the presence of faith may be known amid all the workings of unbelief, so our salvation from the love of sin may be ascertained notwithstanding all the lustings of the flesh after that which is evil. But in what way? How is this initial aspect of salvation to be identified? We have already anticipated this question in an earlier paragraph, wherein we stated that God saved us from delighting in sin by imparting a nature that hates evil and loves holiness which takes place at the new birth. Consequently, the real question to be settled is how may the Christian positively determine whether that new and holy nature has been imparted to him? The answer is by observing its activities, particularly the opposition it makes (under the energizing of the Holy Spirit) unto indwelling sin. Not only does the flesh (the principle of sin) lust against the spirit, but the spirit (the principle of holiness) lusts and wars against the flesh.

First, our salvation from the pleasure or love of sin may be recognized by sin's becoming a *burden* to us. This is truly a spiritual experience. Many souls are loaded with worldly anxieties who know nothing of what it means to be bowed down with a sense of guilt. But when God takes us in hand, the iniquities and transgressions of our past life are made to lie as an intolerable load upon the conscience. When we are given a sight of ourselves as we appear before the eyes of the thrice holy God, we will exclaim with the psalmist, "For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me" (Psa 40:12). So far from sin being pleasant, it is now felt as a cruel incubus, a crushing weight, an unendurable load. The soul is "heavy laden" (Mat 11:28) and bowed down. A sense of guilt oppresses and the conscience cannot bear the weight upon it. Nor is this experience restricted to our first conviction—it continues with more or less acuteness throughout the Christian's life.

Second, our salvation from the pleasure of sin may be recognized by sin's becoming *bitter* to us. True, there are millions of the unregenerate who are filled with remorse over the harvest reaped from their sowing of wild oats. Yet that is not hatred of *sin*, but dislike of its *consequences*—ruined health, squandered opportunities, financial straitness, or social disgrace. No, what we have reference to is that anguish of heart which ever marks the one the Spirit takes in hand. When the veil of delusion is removed and we see sin in the light of God's countenance, when we are given a discovery of the depravity of our very nature, then we perceive that we are sunk in carnality and death. When sin is opened to us in all its secret workings, we are made to feel the vileness of our hypocrisy, self-righteousness, unbelief, impatience, and the utter filthiness of our hearts. And when the penitent soul views the sufferings of Christ, he can say with Job, "God maketh my heart soft" (Job 23:16).

Ah, my reader, it is *this* experience which prepares the heart to go out after Christ—those that are whole need not a physician, but they that are quickened and convicted by the Spirit are anxious to be relieved by the great Physician. "The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up" (1Sa 2:6-7). It is in this way that God slays our self-righteousness, makes poor, and brings low—by making sin to be an intolerable burden and as bitter as wormwood to us. There can be no saving faith till the soul is filled with evangelical repentance, and repentance is a godly sorrow for sin, a holy detestation of sin, a sincere purpose to forsake it. The Gospel calls upon men to repent of their sins, forsake their idols, and mortify their lusts, and thus it is utterly impossible for the Gospel to be a message of glad tidings to those who are in love with sin and madly determined to perish rather than part with their idols.

Nor is this experience of sin's becoming bitter to us limited unto our first awakening—it continues, in varying degrees, to the end of our earthly pilgrimage. The Christian suffers under

temptations, is pained by Satan's fiery assaults, and bleeds from the wounds inflicted by the evils he commits. It grieves him deeply that he makes such a wretched return unto God for His goodness, that he requites Christ so evilly for His dying love, that he responds so fitfully to the promptings of the Spirit. The wanderings of his mind when he desires to meditate upon the Word, the dullness of his heart when he seeks to pray, the worldly thoughts which invade his mind on the holy Sabbath, the coldness of his affections toward the Redeemer, cause him to groan daily. All of which goes to evidence that sin has been made bitter to him. He no longer welcomes those intruding thoughts which take his mind off God, rather does he sorrow over them. But "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Mat 5:4).

Third, our salvation from the pleasure of sin may be recognized by the felt *bondage* which sin produces. As it is not until a divine faith is planted in the heart that we become aware of our native and inveterate unbelief, so it is not until God saves us from the love of sin that we are conscious of the fetters it has placed around us. Then it is that we discover we are "without strength," unable to do anything pleasing to God, incapable of running the race set before us. A divinely-drawn picture of the saved soul's felt bondage is to be found in Romans 7, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do...For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin" (Rom 7:18-19, 22-23). And what is the sequel? This, the agonizing cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death." If *that* be the sincere lamentation of your heart, then God has saved *you* from the pleasure of sin.

Let it be pointed out, though, that salvation from the love of sin is felt and evidenced in varying degrees by different Christians, and at different periods in the life of the same Christian, according to the measure of grace which God bestows, and according as that grace is active and operative. Some seem to have a more intense hatred of sin in all its forms than do others, yet the principle of hating sin is found in all real Christians. Some Christians rarely, if ever commit any deliberate and premeditated sins. More often they are tripped up, suddenly tempted (to be angry or to tell a lie) and are overcome. But with others the case is quite otherwise. They—fearful to say—actually plan evil acts. If anyone indignantly denies that such a thing is possible in a saint, and insists that such a character is a stranger to saving grace, we would remind him of David—was not the murder of Uriah definitely planned? This second class of Christians find it doubly hard to believe they have been saved from the love of sin.

II. Salvation from the Penalty of Sin.

This follows upon our regeneration which is evidenced by evangelical repentance and unfeigned faith. Every soul that truly puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ is then and there saved from the penalty—the guilt, the wages, the punishment—of sin. When the apostles said to the penitent jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," they signified that all his sins would be remitted by God. Just as when the Lord said to the poor woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Luk 7:50). He meant that all her sins were now forgiven her, for forgiveness has to do with the criminality and punishment of sin. To the same effect, when we read, "By grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph 2:8), it is to be understood that the Lord has actually "delivered us from the wrath to come" (1Th 1:10).

This aspect of our salvation is to be contemplated from two separate viewpoints—the divine and the human. The divine side of it is found in the mediatorial office and work of Christ, who as the Sponsor and Surety of His people met the requirements of the law on their behalf, working out for them a perfect righteousness, and enduring Himself the curse and condemnation which was due them, consummated at the cross. It was there that He was, “wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities” (Isa 53:5). It was there that He, judicially, “His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24). It was there that He was, “smitten of God and afflicted,” while He was making atonement for the offenses of His people. Because Christ suffered in my place, I go free. Because He died, I live. Because He was forsaken of God, I am reconciled to Him. This is the great marvel of grace, which will evoke ceaseless praise from the redeemed throughout eternity!

The human side of our salvation from the penalty of sin respects our repentance and faith. Though these possess no merits whatever, and though they in no sense purchase our pardon, yet according to the order which God has appointed, they are (instrumentally) essential, for salvation does not become ours experimentally until they are exercised. Repentance is the hand releasing those filthy objects it had previously clung to so tenaciously—faith is extending an *empty hand* to God to receive the *gift* of His grace. Repentance is a godly sorrow for sin. Faith is accepting God’s pardon thereof. Repentance is a crying, “God be merciful to me the sinner.” Faith is receiving the sinner’s Saviour. Repentance is a revulsion of the filth and pollution of sin. Faith is a seeking of cleansing therefrom. Repentance is the sinner covering his mouth and crying, “Unclean, unclean!” Faith is the leper coming to Christ and saying, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”

So far from repentance and faith being meritorious graces, they are self-emptying ones. The one who truly repents takes his place as a lost sinner before God, confessing himself to be a guilty wretch deserving nothing but unsparing judgment at the hands of divine justice. Faith looks away from corrupt and ruined self, and views the amazing provision which God has made for such a hell-deserving creature. Faith lays hold of the Son of God’s love, as a drowning man clutches at a passing oar. Faith surrenders to the Lordship of Christ and gladly owns His rights to reign over him. Faith rests upon the promises of God, setting to its seal that He is true. The moment the soul surrenders itself to the Lordship of Christ, and rests upon the merits and efficacy of His sacrifice, his sins are removed from God’s sight “as far as the east is from the west.” He is now eternally saved from the wrath to come.

We cannot do better here than quote those sublime lines of Augustus Toplady (1740-1778):

“From whence this fear and unbelief?
Hast Thou, O Father, put to grief
Thy spotless Son for me?
And will the righteous Judge of men
Condemn me for that debt of sin
Which, Lord, was laid on Thee?

“If Thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my place endured
The whole of wrath divine;
Payment God cannot twice demand,

First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine.

“Complete atonement Thou hast made,
And to the utmost farthing paid,
Whate'er Thy people owed;
How then can wrath on me take place,
If sheltered in Thy righteousness,
And sprinkled with Thy blood?

“Turn, then, my soul, unto thy rest,
The merits of thy great High Priest
Speak peace and liberty:
Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee.”

While deliverance from the love of sin has to do entirely with the experimental side of our salvation, remission of the penalty of sin concerns the legal aspect only, or in other words, the believer's *justification*. Justification is a forensic term and has to do with the law-courts, for it is the decision or verdict of the judge. Justification is the opposite of condemnation. Condemnation means that a man has been charged with a crime, his guilt is established, and accordingly the law pronounces upon him sentence of punishment. On the contrary, justification means that the accused is found to be guiltless, the law has nothing against him, and therefore he is acquitted and exonerated, leaving the court without a stain upon his character. When we read in Scripture that believers are “justified from all things” (Act 13:39), it signifies that their case has been tried in the high court of heaven and that God, the Judge of all the earth, has acquitted them, “There is therefore now *no* condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1).

But to be without condemnation is only the negative side. Justification means to declare or pronounce righteous, up to the law's requirements. Justification implies that the law has been fulfilled, obeyed, magnified, for nothing short of this would meet the just demands of God. Hence, as His people, fallen in Adam, were unable to measure up to the divine standard, God appointed that His own Son should become incarnate, be the Surety of His people, and answer the demands of the law in their stead. Here, then, is the sufficient answer which may be made to the two objections which unbelief is ready to raise—how can God acquit the guilty? how can He declare righteous one who is devoid of righteousness? Bring in the Lord Jesus and all difficulty disappears! The guilt of our sins was imputed or legally transferred to *Him*, so that He suffered the full penalty of what was due them. The merits of His obedience is imputed or legally transferred to *us*, so that we stand before God in all the acceptableness of our Sponsor, Romans 5:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:21, etc. Not only has the law nothing against us, but we are entitled to its *reward*.

HOLINESS

“Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness” (Psa 119:40). Desires set upon holiness are an affection properly exercised and upon its due object. Desire is an earnest reaching forth of the soul after good absent and not yet attained. The object of it is something good, and the more truly good it is the more is our desire justified. There are certain bastard goods of a base and transitory nature, as pleasure, profit—we may easily overlash and exceed in these things. But on *holiness*, which is more high and noble, and is truly good, and of great vicinity and nearness to our chiefest good than those others things are, we cannot exceed—there the faculty is rightly placed.

When we are hasty and passionate for those other things, the heart is corrupted, it is hard to escape sin, “He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent” (Pro 28:20), and he that loves pleasure is in danger of not loving God (2Ti 3:4). But now in *holiness* there is no such snare—a man cannot be holy enough, nor like enough to God. And therefore here we may freely let out our affections to the full. When our desires are freely let out to other things, they are like a member out of joint, as when the arms hang backward, but here they are in their proper place—this is that which cannot be loved beyond what it doth deserve.

A Christian should set no manner of bounds to himself in holiness for he is to “be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1Pe 1:15), and to be “perfect, even as your heavenly Father” (Mat 5:48). And then desire is not only after that which is good, but after a good *absent*. Desire ariseth from a sense of vacuity and emptiness. Emptiness is the cause of appetite and therefore is compared to hunger and thirst, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Mat 5:6). So it is in desiring holiness, we have not yet attained (Phi 3:13). There is an indigence and emptiness. We are not already perfect—we want more than we have, and our enjoyments are little in comparison of our expectations, and therefore we should make a swifter progress towards the mark, and with more earnestness of soul should press after that sinless estate we expect.

That little we have doth but quicken us to inquire after more, not cloy but provide the appetite. As a man hath a better stomach sometimes when he doth begin to eat, so when we begin with God, and have tasted of holiness, and tasted of comfort, being brought into a sense of obedience and subjection to God, we should desire more, or certainly he is not good that doth not desire to be better. So that David might well say, “I have longed after thy precepts.”—Thomas Manton.



September

THE LORD'S PRAYER—PART 7

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Mat 6:12). Let it be duly noted that “Hallowed be thy name” is *not* followed by, “*And thy kingdom come,*” nor is that followed by, “*And thy will be done,*” for though intimately related, those three petitions are quite distinct. But “Give us this day our daily bread” *is* followed by “AND forgive us,” denoting that there is a close connection between them. Thereby we are taught, first, that without pardon, all the good things of this life will benefit us nothing. A man in the condemned cell is fed and clothed, but what is the daintiest diet and the costliest apparel worth while he remains under sentence of death! “Our daily bread doth but fatten us as lambs for the slaughter if our sins be not pardoned” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Second, to inform us that our sins are so many and so grievous that we deserve not one mouthful of food. Each day the Christian is guilty of offences which forfeit even the common blessings of life, so that he should ever acknowledge, “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies” (Gen 32:10). Third, to remind us that our sins are the great obstacle to the favours we might receive from God, Isaiah 59:2; Jeremiah 5:25. Our sins choke the channel of blessing, and therefore as often as we pray, “Give us,” we must add, “and forgive us.” Fourth, to encourage faith to go on from strength to strength. If we trust God’s providence to provide for our bodies, should we not trust Him for the salvation of our souls?!

“Forgive us our debts” (Mat 6:12). Our sins (Luk 11:4) are here viewed under the notion of “debts”—undischarged obligations, failure to render our dues. We owe unto God sincere and perfect worship, earnest and perpetual obedience. “We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh” (Rom 8:12). This states the negative side—positively we are debtors to God to live unto Him. By the law of creation we were made not to *gratify* the flesh, but to glorify God, “When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was *our duty* to do” (Luk 17:10). Failure to discharge our debt of the duties of worship and obedience has entailed guilt, bringing us in debt to divine justice. Now when we pray, “Forgive us our *debts*,” we do not ask to be discharged from the duties we owe God, but to be acquitted from our guilt, to have the punishment due us remitted.

“There was a certain creditor which had two debtors” (Luk 7:41). Here God is set forth under the figure of “creditor” partly in view of His being our Creator, and partly as being our Lawgiver and Judge. God has not only endowed us with talents obliging us to serve and glorify our Benefactor, but He has placed us under law so that we are condemned for our defaults, and as Judge He will yet call upon each of us to render a full account of his stewardship (Rom 14:12). There is to be a day of reckoning (Luk 19:15, etc.), and those who did not repent of and bewail their debts and take refuge in Christ will be eternally punished in the conscious realization of that solemn assize.

Not only does this metaphor of creditor and debtors apply to our ruin, but thank God, it holds good equally of the *remedy* or recovery. As insolvent debtors we are completely undone, and must forever lie under the righteous judgment of God, unless full compensation be made to Him. But that compensation *we* are powerless to pay Him, for morally and spiritually speaking we are undischarged bankrupts. Deliverance, then, must come from outside ourselves. Here is where the Gospel speaks relief to the sin-burdened soul. Another, even the Lord Jesus, took upon Him the office of Sponsor, and rendered full satisfaction to divine justice on behalf of His people, making complete compensation to God for them. Hence, in this connection, Christ is called, the “surety of a better testament” (Heb 7:22). As He affirmed, “I restored that which I took not away” (Psa 69:4), and so God declares, “Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a *ransom*” (Job 33:24).

“And forgive us our debts.” Strange to say, some experience a difficulty here—seeing that God has already forgiven the Christian “all trespasses” (Col 2:13), is it not needless, they ask, for him to beg God *for* forgiveness? This difficulty is self-created through failure to distinguish between the purchase of our pardon by Christ and its actual application to us. True, full atonement for all our sins was made by Him, and at the cross our guilt was cancelled. True, all our “*old sins*” are purged at our conversion (2Pe 1:9), nevertheless, there is a very real sense in which our present and future sins are *not* remitted until we repent and confess them to God, and therefore it is both necessary and meet that we should seek their pardon, 1 John 1:9. Even *after* David was assured “the LORD also hath put away thy sins” (2Sa 12:13), he begged God’s forgiveness (Psa 51:1).

What do we ask for in this petition? First, that God will not lay to our charge the sins we daily commit, Psalm 143:2. Second, that God would accept the satisfaction for our sins and look upon us as righteous in Him. “But if we be real Christians, He has *already* done so.” True, yet He requires us to sue out our pardon, just as He said to Christ, “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance” (Psa 2:8). God is ready to forgive, but He requires us to call upon Him. Why? That His saving mercy may be acknowledged and that our faith may be exercised. Third, for the *continuance* of pardon. Though we be justified, yet “forgive us” we must ask—as in our daily bread, though we have a goodly store on hand, yet we beg for the continuance of it. Fourth, for the *manifestation* or assurance of it—that sins may be blotted out of our conscience, as well as from God’s book of remembrance—the effects of forgiveness are peace and access to God (Rom 5:1-2).

Forgiveness is not demanded as a due, but requested as a mercy. “To the very end of life, the best Christian must come for forgiveness just as he did at first, not as a claimant of a right, but as a suppliant of a favour” (John Brown, 1784-1858). Nor is this in anywise inconsistent with nor a reflection upon our complete justification (Act 13:39). It is certain that the believer “shall not come into condemnation” (Joh 5:24), yet instead of that leading to the conclusion, “Therefore I need not pray for the remission of my sins,” it supplies the strongest possible encouragement to present such a petition—just as the divine assurance that a genuine Christian shall persevere to the end, instead of laying a foundation for carelessness, is a most powerful motive to watchfulness and faithfulness. This petition implies a felt sense of sin, a penitent acknowledgement thereof, a seeking of God’s mercy for Christ’s sake, the realization He can righteously pardon us. Its presentation should ever be preceded by self-examination and humiliation.

This petition is confirmed by an argument—“as we forgive our debtors” (Mat 6:12). It may be resolved thus—first, a reason from a like disposition in us. Whatever good there be in us must

first be in God, for He is the sum of all excellence. If, then, a kindly disposition has been planted in our hearts, the same must be found in Him. Second, from the lesser to the greater. If we who have but a drop of mercy can forgive the offences done unto us, surely God—the ocean of mercy—will forgive us. Third, from the condition of those who may expect pardon. They are such as out of a sense of God’s mercy to them are disposed to show mercy to others, hence they are morally qualified for more, seeing they do not abuse it. They who would rightly pray to God for pardon must pardon those who wrong them. Joseph (Gen 50:17) and Stephen (Act 7:60) are conspicuous examples. We need to pray much for God to remove all bitterness and malice from our hearts against those who wrong us. But to forgive our debtors does not exclude our rebuking them, and where public interests are involved, suing them. It would be my duty to hand over a burglar to a policeman, or to go to law against one who was able, but who refused to pay me.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

2. The Beatitudes—Matthew 5:3-11

Last month, we pointed out that Christ’s public ministry had first a special application to the afflicted people of God. Second, a peculiar reference to His immediate disciples, considered as His apostles or ministers. Third, to the people at large. Such is clearly the case with His sermon on the mount, as will be made evident (D.V.) in the course of our exposition of it. Herein Christ is seen discharging His prophetic office, speaking as never (uninspired) man ever spake. A careful study of the sermon reveals that it has twelve divisions—the number of divine *government*—varying considerably in length. It is the first of them which is now to engage our attention. In it our Lord makes known wherein true happiness or blessedness consists, disclosing to us a secret which is hidden from the unregenerate, who suppose that outward comforts and luxuries are absolutely indispensable to contentment of mind and felicity of life. Herein too He strikes at the root of the carnal conceit of the Jews, who vainly imagined that *external* peace and prosperity was to result from a receiving of the Gospel.

It is indeed blessed to observe how this sermon opens. Christ began not by pronouncing maledictions on the wicked, but benedictions on His people. How like Him was this, to whom “judgment” is a “strange work” (Isa 28:21)! Nevertheless, later, we also hear Him pronouncing “woe” after woe upon the enemies of God, Matthew 23. It was not to the multitude at large that the Redeemer first spoke, but to the elect, who had a special claim upon Him, as given by the Father’s love to Him (Joh 17:9-10). Nor was it to the favoured apostles He addressed His opening remarks, but rather to the poor of the flock, the afflicted in soul, those who were conscious of their deep need. Therein He has left an example for all His undershepherds, “Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.” “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God” (Isa 35:3; 40:1).

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:3). In these words, Christ began to draw a picture of those characters upon whom the divine benediction rests. It is a composite picture, each line in it accentuating some distinct spiritual feature, and with the whole we should honestly and carefully *compare ourselves*. At what complete variance is this declaration of Christ’s from the popular view among men! The idea which commonly obtains, the

world over, is, Blessed are the rich for theirs is the kingdom of the world. But Christ says the flat contrary, “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:3). which is infinitely better than all the kingdoms of the earth, and herein we may see that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God (1Co 3:19). Who before Christ ever regarded the poor in spirit as the blessed or happy ones of the earth? And who, except genuine Christians, do so today? How this opening word struck the keynote of all the subsequent teaching of Him who was Himself born in a manger—not what a man does, but what he *is* in the sight of God.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Mat 5:3). There is a vast difference between this and being hard up in our circumstances. There is no virtue (and often no disgrace) in financial poverty as such, nor does it, of itself, produce humility of heart, for anyone who has any real acquaintance with both classes, soon discovers there is just as much pride in the indigent as there is in the opulent. This poverty of spirit is a fruit that grows on no merely natural tree. It is a spiritual grace wrought by the Holy Spirit in those whom He renews. By nature we are well pleased with ourselves, and mad enough to think that we deserve something good at the hands of God. Let men but conduct themselves decently in a civil way, keeping themselves from grosser sins, and they are rich in spirit, pride filling their hearts, and they are self-righteous. And nothing short of a miracle of grace can change the course of this stream.

Nor is real poverty of spirit to be found among the great majority of religionists of the day—very much the reverse. How often we see advertised a conference for “promoting the higher life,” but who ever heard of one for furthering the *lowly* life! Many books are printed telling us how to be “filled with the Spirit,” but where can we find one setting forth what it means to be spiritually emptied—emptied of self-confidence, self-importance, and self-righteousness? Alas, if it be true that, “That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luk 16:15), it is equally true that what is of great price in His sight is despised by men—by none more so than by the modern Pharisees, who now hold nearly all the positions of prominence in Christendom. Almost all of the so-called “ministry” of this generation feeds pride, instead of starving the flesh, puffs up, rather than abases, and anything which is calculated to search and strip, is frowned upon by the pulpit and is unpopular with the pew.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Mat 5:3). And *what* is poverty of spirit? It is the opposite of that haughty, self-assertive, and self-sufficient disposition which the world so much admires and praises. It is the very reverse of that independent and defiant attitude which refuses to bow to God, which determines to brave things out, which says with Pharaoh, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?” (Exo 5:2). To be “poor in spirit” is to realize that I have nothing, am nothing, and can do nothing, and have need of all things. Poverty of spirit is a consciousness of my emptiness, the result of the Spirit’s work within. It issues from the painful discovery that all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags. It follows the awakening that my best performances are unacceptable, yea, an abomination to the thrice Holy One. Poverty of spirit evidences itself by its bringing the individual into the dust before God, acknowledging his utter helplessness and deservingness of hell. It corresponds to the initial awakening of the prodigal in the far country, when he began to be “*in want*” (Luk 15:14).

God’s great salvation is free—“without money and without price (Isa 55:1).” This is a most merciful provision of divine grace, for were God to offer salvation for sale, no sinner could secure it, seeing that he has nothing with which he could possibly purchase it. But the vast majority are insensible of this, yea, all of us are until the Holy Spirit opens our sin-blinded eyes. It is only those who have passed from death unto life that become conscious of their poverty, take the place of beggars, are glad to receive divine charity, and begin to seek the true riches. Thus, “the *poor*

have the gospel preached to them” (Mat 11:5)—preached not only to their ears, but to their hearts!

Poverty of spirit may be termed the negative side of faith. It is that realization of my utter worthlessness which precedes the laying hold of Christ, the eating of His flesh and drinking His blood. It is the Spirit emptying the heart of self that Christ may fill it. It is a sense of need and destitution. This first Beatitude, then, is foundational, describing a fundamental trait which is found in every regenerated soul. The one who is poor in spirit is nothing in his own eyes and feels that his proper place is in the dust before God. He may, through false teaching or worldliness, leave this place, but God knows how to bring him back, and in His faithfulness and love He will do so, for it is the place of blessing for His children. How to cultivate this God-honouring spirit is revealed in Matthew 11:29.

He who is in possession of this poverty of spirit is pronounced “blessed.” He is so because he now has a disposition the very opposite of what was his by nature, because he has in himself the first sure evidence that a divine work of grace has been wrought in his heart, because such a spirit causes him to look outside of himself for true enrichment, because he is an heir of the “kingdom of heaven”—the kingdom of grace here, the kingdom of glory hereafter. Many are the gracious promises addressed to the poor in spirit. “I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer” (Psa 40:17), “The LORD heareth the poor” (Psa 69:33), “He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy” (Psa 72:13). “Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction” (Psa 107:41), “I will satisfy her poor with bread” (Psa 132:15), “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isa 66:2). Let such favours as these stir us up to pray earnestly for more of this poverty of spirit.

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Mat 5:4). Mourning is hateful and irksome to poor human nature—from suffering and sadness our spirits instinctively shrink. It is natural for us to seek the society of the cheerful and joyous. The verse now before us presents an anomaly to the unregenerate, yet is it sweet music to the ears of God’s elect—if “blessed,” why do they “mourn?” If they mourn, how can they be blessed? Only the child of God has the key to this paradox, for “happy are they who sorrow” is at complete variance with the world’s logic. Men have, in all places and in all ages, deemed the prosperous and the cheery to be the happy ones, but Christ pronounces blessed, those who are poor in spirit and who mourn.

Now it is obvious that it is not every species of mourning which is here referred to. There are thousands of mourners in the world today who do not come within the scope of our text—those mourning over blighted hopes, over financial reverses, over the loss of loved ones. But alas, so far from many of *them* coming beneath this divine benediction, they are under God’s condemnation, nor is there any promise that such shall ever be divinely “comforted.” There are three kinds of “mourning” referred to in the Scriptures—a *natural*, such as we have just referred to above; a *sinful*, which is a disconsolate and inordinate grief, refusing to be comforted, or a hopeless remorse like that of Judas; and a *gracious* one, a “godly sorrow” (2Co 7:10), of which the Holy Spirit is the Author.

The “mourning” of our text is a spiritual one. The previous verse indicates clearly the line of thought here, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:3). Yes, “blessed are the poor,” not the poor in purse, but the poor in heart—those who realize themselves to be spiritual bankrupts in themselves, paupers before God. That felt poverty of spirit is the very opposite of the Laodiceanism which is so rife today, that self-complacency which says, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” In like manner, it is *spiritual*

mourning which is in view here. Further proof of this is found in the fact that Christ pronounces these mourners “blessed.” They are so because the Spirit of God has wrought a work of grace within them, and hence they have been awakened to see and feel their lost condition. They are “blessed” because God does not leave them at that point, “They shall be comforted.”

“Blessed are they that mourn” (Mat 5:4). The first reference is to that initial mourning, which ever precedes a genuine conversion, for there must be a real sense of sin before the remedy for it will even be desired. Thousands acknowledge they are sinners, who have never *mourned over* the fact. Take the woman of Luke 7, who washed the Saviour’s feet with her tears—have you ever shed any over *your* sins? Take the prodigal in Luke 15. Before he left the far country he said, “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son” (Luk 15:18-19)—where shall we find those today with this sense of their sinnership? Take the publican of Luke 18. Why did he “smote upon his breast” and say, “God be merciful to me a sinner?” (Luk 18:12-13). Because he felt the plague of his own heart. So of the three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost. They were “pricked in their heart, and *cried out*” (see Act 2:37).

This “mourning” springs from a sense of sin, from a tender conscience, from a broken heart. It is a godly sorrow over rebellion against God and hostility to His will. In some cases it is grief over the very morality in which the heart has trusted, over the self-righteousness which has caused such complacency. This “mourning” is the agonizing realization that it was *my* sins which nailed to the cross the Lord of Glory. When Israel shall, by faith, see Christ, “They shall mourn for him” (Zec 12:10). It is such tears and groans which prepare the heart to truly welcome and receive the “balm of Gilead,” the comfort of the Gospel. It is, then, a mourning over the felt destitution of our spiritual state, and over the iniquities that have separated between us and God. Such mourning always goes side by side with conscious poverty of spirit.

But this “mourning” is by no means to be confined unto the initial experience of conviction and contrition, for observe the tense of the verb. It is not “have mourned,” but “mourn”—a present and continuous experience. The Christian himself has much to mourn over. The sins which he now commits—both of omission and commission—are a sense of daily grief to him, or should be so, and *will* be, if his conscience is kept tender. An ever-deepening discovery of the depravity of his nature, the plague of his heart, the sea of corruption within—ever polluting all that he does—deeply exercises him. Consciousness of the surgings of unbelief, the swellings of pride, the coldness of his love, and his paucity of fruit, make him cry, “O wretched man that I am” (Rom 7:24). An humbling recollection of past offenses, “Wherefore remember that ye being in *time past*” (Eph 2:11).

Yes, “Ourselves also, which have received the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves *groan* within ourselves” (Rom 8:23). Does not the Christian groan under the disciplining rod of the Father, “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous” (Heb 12:11). And is he not deeply grieved by the awful dishonour which is now done to the Lord Jesus on every hand? The fact is that the closer the Christian lives to God, the more will he mourn over all that dishonours Him. With the psalmist he will say, “Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law” (Psa 119:53), and with Jeremiah, “My soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD’s flock is carried away captive” (Jer 13:17). But blessed be God, it is written, “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (Eze 9:4). So

too there is a sympathetic mourning over the sufferings of others, “Weep with them that weep” (Rom 12:15).

But let us return to the primary thought of our verse, “Blessed are they that mourn” (Mat 5:4), has immediate reference to the convicted soul sorrowing over his sins. And here it is most important to note that Christ does not pronounce them “blessed” simply because they are mourners, but because they are such mourners as “shall be *comforted*.” There are not a few in Christendom today who glory in their grief and attempt to find comfort in their own inward wretchedness—as well seek health from our sicknesses. True comfort is not to be found in anything in self—no, not in perceiving our own vileness, but in *Christ* alone. Distress of soul is by no means always the same thing as evangelical repentance, as is clear from the case of Cain (Gen 4:13). But where the Spirit produces in the heart a godly sorrow for sin, He does not leave him there, but brings him to look away from sin to the Lamb of God, and then he is “comforted.” The Gospel promises no mercy except to those who forsake sin and close with Christ.

“They shall be comforted” (Mat 5:4). This gracious promise receives its fulfillment, first, in that divine consolation which immediately follows a sound conversion (i.e., one that is preceded by conviction and contrition), namely, the removal of that conscious load of guilt which lies as an intolerable burden on the conscience. It finds its accomplishment in the Spirit’s application of the Gospel of God’s grace to the one whom He has convicted of his dire need of a Saviour. Then it is that Christ speaks the Word of power, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mat 11:28)—observe His language clearly presupposes the feeling of sin to be a “burden” as that which impels to Him for relief. It is to the *sin-sick* heart Christ gives rest. This “comfort” issues in a sense of a free and full forgiveness through the merits of the atoning blood of Christ. This divine comfort is the peace of God which passeth all understanding—filling the heart of one who is now assured that he is “accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:6). First God wounds, and then heals.

Second, there is a *continual* “comforting” of the mourning saint by the Holy Spirit, who is the Comforter. The one who sorrows over his departures from Christ is comforted by the assurance that, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jo 1:9). The one who mourns under the chastening rod of God is comforted by the promise, “Afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb 12:11). The one who grieves over the awful dishonour done to his Lord in the religious world, is comforted by the fact that Satan’s time is short, and soon Christ will bruise him beneath His feet. Third, the *final* “comfort” is when we leave this world and are done with sin forever. Then shall “sorrow and sighing flee away” (see Isaiah 51:11). To the rich man in hell, Abraham said of the one who had begged at his gate, “Now he is *comforted*” (Luk 16:25). The best wine is reserved for the last. The “comfort” of heaven will more than compensate for all the “mourning” of earth.

From all that has been before us, learn, first, the folly of looking to the wounds which sin has made in order to find consolation—view rather the purging and healing blood of Christ. Second, see the error of attempting to measure the helpfulness of the books we read or the preaching we hear by the degree of peace and joy which it brings to our hearts. Yet how many there are who say, We have quite enough in the world, or in the home, to make us miserable, and we go to church for comfort. It is to be feared that few of them are in any condition of soul to receive comfort from the Gospel—rather do they need the law to search and convict them. Ah, the truth is, dear friend, that very often the sermon or the article which is of most benefit is the one which causes us to get alone with God and *weep* before Him. When we have flirted with the world or

indulged the lusts of the flesh, the Holy Spirit gives us a rebuke or admonition. Third, mark then, the inseparable connection between godly sorrow and godly joy, compare Psalm 30:5; 126:5; Proverbs 14:10; Isaiah 61:3; 2 Corinthians 6:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:6, and James 2:13.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

81. His Sacred Song

As pointed out last month, the main divisions of David's sacred song in 2 Samuel 22 are more or less clearly marked. In the first, (2Sa 22:1-4), he is occupied with extolling JEHOVAH's perfections. This section we have already considered. In the second, (2Sa 22:5-20), which is now to be before us, he magnifies the Lord for His delivering mercies. This section of the song is couched in highly figurative and poetic language, which indicates how deeply stirred were the emotions of its inspired composer. Its contents may be regarded in a threefold way. First, as depicting the physical dangers to which David was exposed from his human foes. Second, the deep soul distress which he experienced from his spiritual enemies. Third, the fearful sufferings through which Christ passed while acting as the Substitute of His people, and the awe-inspiring deliverance which God wrought for His servant. We will endeavour to consider our passage from each of these viewpoints.

“When the waves [pangs] of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid, the sorrows [cord] of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented [anticipated] me” (2Sa 22:5-6). Thus opens this second division—that which it so vividly portrayed is the large number and ferocity of his enemies, and the desperate danger to which David was exposed by them. First, he employed the figure of an angry sea, whose raging waves menaced him from every side, until his frail craft was in immediate prospect of being swamped by them. Next, he likened his lot to one who was marooned on some piece of low-lying ground, and the floods rapidly rising higher and higher, till his destruction seemed certain. The multitude of the wicked pressed him sorely on every side. Then he resembled his plight to one who had already been taken captive and bound, so that the very cords of death seemed to be upon him. Finally, he pictures his case as a bird that had been caught in the fowler's snare, unable to fly away.

The above references were to the attempts made by Saul, Abner, and Absalom to capture and slay David. So fierce were their attacks, so powerful the forces they employed against him, so determined and relentless were his foes, that David here acknowledged they “made me afraid” (2Sa 22:5). “The most sea-worthy bark is sometimes hard put to it when the storm flood is abroad. The most courageous man, who as a rule hopes for the best, may sometimes fear the worst” (Charles H Spurgeon, 1834-1892). Strong as his faith generally was, yet on one occasion unbelief prevailed to such an extent that David said, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul” (1Sa 27:1). When terrors from without awaken fears within, our case is indeed a miserable one—yet so it was with Moses when he fled from Egypt, with Elijah when he ran away from Jezebel, with Peter when he denied his Lord.

But these lamentations of David are also to be construed *spiritually*—they are to be regarded as those harrowing exercises of soul through which he passed in his later years, Psalms 32 and 51 cast light upon them. “The sorrows [cords] of hell compassed me about; the snares of death anticipated me.” Such was the anguish of his soul under the lashings of a guilty conscience. “The

temptations of Satan and the consciousness of his sins filled him with fears of wrath and dreadful apprehensions of future consequences. He felt like a malefactor bound for execution, whose fetters prevent him from attempting an escape, for whose body the grave hath certainly opened her mouth, and who is horribly alarmed lest the pit of hell should swallow up his soul “(Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). Fearful beyond words is the suffering through which many a backslider has to pass ere he is restored to fellowship with God—one who has experienced it will not deem the language of these verses any too strong.

But there is something deeper here than the trials David encountered either from without or within. In their ultimate sense, these verses articulate the groanings of the Man of Sorrows as He took upon Him the obligations and suffered in the stead of His people. As we pointed out last month, two of the verses of this song are quoted in the New Testament as being the very words of Christ Himself, “In him will I trust” (2Sa 22:3) is found in Hebrews 2:13, and, “I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen [Gentiles], and I will sing praises unto thy name” (2Sa 22:50), is found in Romans 15:9. “The Messiah our Saviour is evidently, over and beyond David or any other believer, the main and chief subject of this song. And while studying it we have grown more and more sure that every line has its deeper and profounder fulfillment in Him” (Charles H. Spurgeon). Let this be kept before us as we pass from section to section, and from verse to verse.

“When the waves [pangs] of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid; the sorrows [cords] of hell compassed me about; the snares of death anticipated me” (2Sa 22:5-6). Here was the Spirit of Christ speaking prophetically through the psalmist, expressing the fierce conflict through which the Redeemer passed. Behold Him in Gethsemane, in the judgment-halls of Herod and Pilate, and then behold Him on the cross itself, suffering horrible torments of body and anguish of soul, when He was delivered into the hands of wicked men, encountered the fierce assaults of Satan, and endured the wrath of God against Him for our sins. It was then that He was surrounded by the insulting priests and people. His “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Mat 26:38) was but an echo of these words of David’s song.

“In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears” (2Sa 22:7). Here we behold God’s suffering servant making earnest supplication to heaven. The one so sorely pressed by his enemies that the eye of sense could perceive not a single avenue of escape, yea, when death itself immediately threatened him, seeks relief from above, and so it should be with us, “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray” (Jam 5:13). Ah, it is then he is most likely to really pray—cold and formal petitions do not suit one who is in deep trouble—alas that so often nothing short of painful trial will force fervent supplications from us. An old writer expressed it, “Prayer is not eloquence, but earnestness, not the definition of earnestness, but the feeling of it. It is the cry of faith in the ear of mercy.” Yet either pangs of body or of soul are usually needed before we will cry out in reality.

“In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears” (2Sa 22:7). So many neglect prayer when they are quiet and at ease, but as the Lord declares, “In their affliction they will seek me early” (Hos 5:15). Yet it is well if we *do* seek unto God in our affliction, instead of sulking in rebellion, which is to forsake our own mercy. The Lord is a very present help in trouble and it is our holy privilege to prove this for ourselves. The Hebrew word for “cried” here is a very expressive one, signifying such a cry as issues from one in a violent tempest of emotion, in the extremity of grief and anxiety. In fact Alexander Maclaren (1826-1929) renders it “shriek.” David was all but sinking and could only give vent to an agonized call for help.

“Prayer is that postern gate which is left open even when the city is straitly besieged by the enemy. It is that way upward from the pit of despair to which the spiritual miner flies at once, when the floods from beneath break forth upon him. Observe that he ‘calls’ and then ‘cries.’ Prayer grows in vehemence as it proceeds. Note also that he first invokes his God under the name of JEHOVAH, and then advances to a more familiar name, ‘my God.’ Thus faith increases by exercise and He, whom we at first viewed as Lord, is soon seen to be our God in covenant. It is never an ill time to pray. No distress should prevent us from using the divine remedy of supplication” (Charles H. Spurgeon).

“In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God” (2Sa 22:5-6). The fulfillment of these prophetic words in the case of our suffering Redeemer is well-known to all who are acquainted with the four Gospels. Blessed indeed is it to behold that One who was supremely the Man after God’s own heart, betaking Himself to prayer while His enemies were thirsting for His blood. The deeper His distress, the more earnestly did He call upon God, both in Gethsemane and at Calvary, and as Hebrews 5:7 tells us, “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.” Let us not hesitate, then, to follow the example which He has left us, and no matter how hard we are pressed, how desperate be our situation, nor how acute our grief, let us unburden ourselves to God.

“And he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears” (2Sa 22:5-6). This is in explanation of all that follows—the gracious interpositions of the Lord on David’s behalf and the wondrous deliverances He wrought for him, were *in answer to prayer*. God’s lending a willing ear to the cry of His distressed child is recorded for our encouragement. It is indeed deplorable that we are often so prayerless until pressure of circumstances force supplication out of us—yet it is blessed to be assured that God does not then (as well He might) turn a deaf ear unto our calls. Nay, such calls have the greater prevalency, because of their sincerity and because they make a more powerful appeal unto the divine pity. Let the fearing and despondent believer read through the 107th Psalm and mark how frequently it is recorded that the redeemed, “Cry unto the LORD in their trouble,” and how that in each instance we are told, “He delivered them.” Then do you cry unto him, and be of good courage.

“Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because he was wroth” (2Sa 22:8). David’s prayer was answered in a most effectual manner by the providential interpositions which JEHOVAH made on his behalf. In a most singular and extraordinary way the Lord appeared for his relief, fighting for him against his enemies. Here again David adorned his poem with lively images as he records God’s gracious intervention. The mighty power of God was now exercised for him—such language being employed as to intimate that nothing can resist or impede Him when He acts for His own. God was now showing Himself to be strong on behalf of His oppressed but supplicating servant. See here, dear reader, the response of heaven to the cry of faith. “Then the earth shook and trembled.” Let these words be pondered in the light of, “And at midnight Paul and Silas *prayed*....and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were *shaken*: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed” (Act 16:25-26)!

Again we would remind the reader that a greater than David is to be kept before us as we pass from verse to verse of this Psalm. “Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because he was wroth” (2Sa 22:8). Who can fail to be reminded of the supernatural phenomena which attended the death and resurrection of David’s Son and Lord? He, too, had called upon JEHOVAH in His deep distress, “And was heard” (Heb 5:7). Unmistakable

was heaven's response, "From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour....Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened" (Mat 27:45, 50-52). Yes, the earth literally "shook and trembled"! As another has rightly said, "Tremendous was the scene! Never before and never since was such a battle fought, or such a victory gained, whether we look at the contending powers or the consequences resulting. Heaven on the one side, and hell on the other—such were the contending powers. And as to the consequences resulting, who shall recount them?"

"There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness was under his feet" (2Sa 22:9-10). These expressions are borrowed from the awe-inspiring phenomena which attended the appearing JEHOVAH upon mount Sinai, compare Exodus 19:16-18. It was JEHOVAH the Avenger appearing to vindicate His servant and vanquish his enemies. David considered that in his case the Lord God manifested the same divine perfections which He had displayed of old at the giving of the law. We cannot do better here than quote from Matthew Henry's comments on the spiritual significance of the vivid imagery which was here employed by the psalmist.

"These lofty metaphors are used, first, to set forth the glory of God, which was manifested in his deliverance. His wisdom and power, His goodness and faithfulness, His justice and holiness, and His sovereign dominion over all the creatures and all the counsels of men, which appeared in favour of David, were as clear and bright a discovery of God's glory to an eye of faith, as those would have been to an eye of sense. Second, to set forth God's displeasure against David's enemies. God so espoused his cause, that He showed Himself an enemy to all David's enemies. His anger is set forth by a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth. Who knows the power and terror of His wrath?! Third, to set forth the vast confusion which David's enemies were put into and the consternation that seized them—as if the earth had trembled and the foundations of the world had been discovered. Who can stand before God, when He is angry? Fourth, to show how ready God was to help David, He 'rode upon a cherub, and did fly' (2Sa 22:11). God hastened to his succour, and came to him with seasonable relief."

"And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind" (2Sa 22:11). Though the Lord "*wait*, that he may be gracious" (Isa 30:18), and sometimes sorely tries faith and patience, yet when His appointed time comes, He acts *swiftly*. "And he made darkness pavilions round about him, dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies" (2Sa 22:12)—just as that pillar of fire which gave light to Israel was "a cloud and darkness" to the Egyptians (Exo 14:20), so were the providential dealings of the Lord unto the enemies of David. The One who is pleased to reveal Himself unto His own, conceals Himself from the wicked, and hence the fearful portion of those who shall be everlastingly banished from the presence of the Lord is represented as "the blackness of darkness forever."

"Through the brightness before him were coals of fire kindled. The LORD thundered from heaven, and the most High uttered his voice. And he sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and discomfited them. And the channels of the sea appeared, the foundations of the world were discovered, at the rebuking of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils" (2Sa 22:13-16). All of this is an amplification of "because he was wroth" (2Sa 22: 8). Nothing so arouses JEHOVAH's indignation as injuries done to His people. He who attacks them, touches the apple of His eye. True, God is not subject to those passions which govern His creatures, yet because He hates sin with a perfect hatred and sorely punishes it, He is often represented under such poetic imagery as is suited to human understanding. God is a God to be feared, as those who

now trifle with Him shall yet discover. How shall puny men be able to face it out with the Almighty, when the very mountains tremble at His presence?! Satan-deluded souls may now defy Him, but their false confidence will not support or shelter them in the dread day of His wrath.

“He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters; he delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me” (2Sa 22:17-18). Here is the happy issue to David’s prayer and the Lord’s response. Observe, first, that David gives God the glory by unreservedly ascribing his deliverance unto Him. He looked far above his own skill in slinging the stone which downed Goliath and his cleverness in eluding Saul, “*He sent...He took me, He drew me...He delivered me*” gives all the honour unto Him to whom it was truly due. Note, second, the particular reason mentioned by David as to why the Lord had intervened on his behalf: “*for they were too strong for me*”—it was his confessed weakness and the strength of his foes that made such a powerful appeal to God’s pity. Compare the effectual plea of Jehoshaphat, “O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us” (2Chr 20:12). Finally, while the “strong enemy” of verse 18 is an allusion to either Goliath or Saul, yet David’s deliverance from them but prefigured *Christ’s* victory over death and Satan, and here He ascribed that victory unto His God.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

7. *The Messianic*

We continue our consideration of the *contents* of the Christian covenant. The substance thereof, is, broadly speaking, divine *promises* which pledged the sanctification of God’s people and their effectual preservation in a state and course of holiness to their final salvation. Those promises are summarized in Hebrews 8:10-12, and are four in number. First is the declaration that the Lord would write His laws in the hearts of those for whom Christ died, which signifies such a change being wrought in them that the divine statutes are cordially received in their affections. Second is the assurance that the Lord will be the *God* of His people, giving Himself to them in all His perfections and relationships, so that the supply of their every need is absolutely guaranteed, “They shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God” (Zec 13:9). He is the God of His people in a spiritual and everlasting sense, through the meritorious mediation of Christ.

“And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all *shall* know me, from the least to the greatest” (Heb 8:11). This is the third promise, and like the two preceding it, points a marked and blessed contrast from that which obtained under the *regime* of the old covenant, and that in connection with the knowledge of God. During the Mosaic dispensation, God granted many revelations of Himself, discovering various aspects of His character, and these were augmented by frequent descriptions of His perfections and dealings through the prophets, all of which placed the Jews in a condition of privilege immeasurably superior to the rest of the nations. Nevertheless, there were difficulties connected with those divine discoveries which even the most spiritual of Israel could not remove, while the great majority of them knew not God in the real sense of the word. The truth about God was apprehended but dimly and feebly by most, and by the great mass of them it was not rightly apprehended at all.

So far as the nation at large was concerned, the revelation God granted them of Himself was wholly external, and for the most part given through symbols and shadows. Many of them trusted in the letter of the Scriptures and rested in human teaching—often partial and imperfect at the best. They had no idea of their need of anything higher. Complaints of their ignorance are common throughout the Old Testament, “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth *not* know” (Isa 1:3); “They know not the way of the LORD, nor the judgment of their God....They proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD” (Jer 5:4; 9:3). Ignorance of God, notwithstanding all their advantages, was their sin and their ruin. Ultimately, their teachers became divided into schools and sects—Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, etc., until the last of their prophets declared, “The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob” (Mal 2:12).

“For all shall know me, from the least to the greatest” (Heb 8:11), that is, all who belong to the true Israel of God. God has now given not only a fuller, yea, a perfect revelation of Himself—in the person of His incarnate Son (Joh 1:18; Heb 1:2), but the Holy Spirit is given to guide us into all truth, and it is at this point, the vast superiority of the new covenant again appears. Those for whom Christ is the Mediator receive something more than an external revelation from God, namely, an internal, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our *hearts*, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). They have something far better than human teachers to explain the law to them, even the Holy Spirit to effectually apply it unto their consciences and wills. It was to this Christ referred when He said, “They shall be all taught of God” (Joh 6:45), “taught” so that they know Him truly and savingly.

It is to this individual, inward, and saving knowledge of God that the apostle referred, “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things....the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (1Jo 2:20, 27). That “unction” operates on their souls with an ever-quickenning power. Nor is this some special blessing reserved for a select few of the redeemed—all interested in the covenant are given a sanctifying knowledge of God. It is far more than a correct intellectual conception of God which was promised, namely, such a transforming revelation of Him that they will fear, love, and serve Him. It is an *obedient* knowledge of God which is here in view. It was the absence of that kind of “knowledge” in Israel of old that God complained, “The LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no *truth*, nor *mercy*, nor knowledge of God” (Hos 4:1). The external method of teaching under the old economy was ineffectual, for the Spirit taught not the nation inwardly as He does the church.

“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 8:12). This promise embraces in its blessed arms the pardon of all their sins, the forgiveness of all their iniquities, and declares that these shall be so completely blotted out that their very remembrance, so to speak, shall be removed from the mind of God. Once more we would ask the reader to pay careful attention to *the order* of these promises, for it is almost universally disregarded, nay, contradicted, in modern preaching. Three times over in this verse occurs the pronoun “their,” emphasizing the particularity of those persons whose sins alone are pardoned, namely, those who have been regenerated, reconciled, and given a sanctifying knowledge of God. God forgives none save those who are in covenant relation with Him.

Nothing could be more plain than what has been just pointed out, for the coherence of our passage is unmistakable. “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness”—to *whose*

unrighteousness? Why, to those with whom God makes this new covenant, namely, the members of the spiritual house of Israel (Heb 8:10). And of what does this covenant consist? First, God declares, “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts” (Heb 8:10) which is accomplished at their regeneration, and that lays a necessary foundation for what follows. Second, God affirms, “and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people” (Heb 8:10) which denotes a mutual reconciliation, after a mutual alienation. Third, He promises, “All shall know me, from the least to the greatest” (Heb 8:11), which signifies their sanctification, for it is *such* a knowledge that produces love, trust, submission. Finally, “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness” etc. (Heb 8:12), which at once disposes of the figment of a general atonement and universal forgiveness—as the Mediator of the covenant (Heb 8:6), Christ acts only for the covenantees.

“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 8:12). Once again we may perceive how greatly the new covenant excels the old. Under the Levitical economy, there was forgiveness, but with limitations, and with a degree of obscurity resting upon it which testified to the defectiveness of the existing order of things. For certain sins no atonement was provided—though on sincere repentance, such sins were forgiven, as the case of David shows. At no point was the imperfections of the Mosaic economy more evident than in this vital matter of remission, as the epistle of Hebrews reminds us, “But in those sacrifices there *is a remembrance* again made of sins every year” (Heb 10:3). Thus were the Jews impressively taught that they had to do with “the shadow” of good things to come, which could not make the comers thereunto perfect as pertaining to the conscience (Heb 10:1). In blessed contrast therefrom, the forgiveness bestowed under the new covenant is free, full, perfect, and everlasting.

“For I will be merciful unto their unrighteousness” (Heb 8:12). The word which is here rendered “merciful” is propitious, emphasizing the fact that it is not absolute mercy without any satisfaction having been made to justice, but rather grace exercised on the ground of propitiation, Romans 3:24-25; 5:21. Christ died to render God propitious toward sinners (Heb 2:17), and in and through Him alone is God merciful toward the sins of His people—so long as Christ is rejected is the sinner under the curse. Therein the *glory* of the covenant shines forth, for the unsearchable wisdom of God is displayed and the perfect harmony of His attributes evidenced. No finite intelligence had ever found a solution to the problem—how can justice be inexorably enforced and yet mercy shown to the guilty? How can sinners be freely pardoned without the claims of righteousness being flouted? Christ is the solution, for He is “the surety” of the covenant (Heb 7:22).

It is to be duly noted that no less than three terms are used in verse 12 to describe the fearful evils of which the sinner is guilty, thus emphasizing his obnoxiousness to the holy God, and magnifying the amazing grace which saves him. First, “unrighteousness”—as God is the supreme Lord and Governor of all, as He is our Benefactor and Rewarder, and as all His laws are just and good, the first notion of righteousness in us is the rendering to God that which is His due, namely, universal obedience to all His commands—hence, *unrighteousness* signifies a *wrong* done unto God. Second, “sin” is a missing of the mark, an erring from that end at which it is ever our duty to aim, namely, the glory of God. Third, “iniquity” has the force of lawlessness, a setting up of my will against that of the Almighty’s, a determination to please myself and go my own way. How marvellous, then, is the propitious favour of God toward those who are guilty of such multiplied enormities. How great and how grand the contrast between the covenants—under the Siniatic, a

regime of justice was supreme—under the Christian economy, grace reigns through righteousness.

Such, then, are the particulars of the remarkable prophecy made through Jeremiah, anticipating, in fact, *giving* a grand description of the Gospel. They disclose beyond the possibility of mistake the *spiritual character* of this covenant. The Messianic covenant, unlike the Siniatic, effectually accomplished the eternal salvation of all who are interested in it. The blessings conferred upon them, as here enumerated, are the “things that accompany salvation” (Heb 6:9), yea, they are the constituent elements of salvation itself. It therefore has respect to the antitypical Israel, the spiritual seed, and to them alone. The mere possession of external privileges, however valuable they may be in themselves, and the correct observance of religious worship, however consistently maintained, avails nothing in proof of being within the bounds of this covenant. Nothing can afford sure evidence that this covenant has been made *with us*, save a living faith uniting the soul to Christ, and producing conformity to Him in this life.

What has been last said ought never to be overlooked, for it is one main feature distinguishing this covenant from the Siniatic. The new covenant actually does for those who are in it what the old one failed to do for the Jewish people. To them God gave a revelation, but it came to them in letter only, to the New Testament saints His revelation comes in power also (1Co 4:20; 1Th 1:5). To them God gave the law as written upon tables of stone. To the New Testament saints, God also gives the law, but writes it upon their hearts. Consequently, they chafed at the law, whereas we (after the inward man) delight in it (Rom 7:22). Hence, too, they walked not in God’s statutes, but continually transgressed them. Whereas of His New Testament people it is written, “Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Rom 6:17). That which makes all the difference is that the Holy Spirit is given to indwell and energize the latter, which He was not in those who were in the Siniatic covenant as such—we say “as such,” for there was ever a godly remnant who *were* indwelt by the Spirit on the ground of the everlasting covenant.

Again, we may observe that this covenant is a display of rich and unmerited *grace*—such are all its arrangements and provisions. The very circumstances under which the Christian covenant was formally introduced furnishes clear proof of this—succeeding, as it did, an economy set aside on account of its unprofitableness—an economy inherently weak for spiritual ends and perverted by the people who enjoyed its privileges. The abuse of the Siniatic covenant deserved not higher favours, but merited summary judgment—yet it was among the Jews that God’s Son tabernacled and performed His works of mercy. The application of the blessings of the Messianic covenant does, in every instance, also bear witness to those blessings no man can lay claim—if conferred at all, they come as free gifts of undeserved grace. Its blessings are the bestowment of sovereign goodness. They who are brought within the covenant are the objects of God’s electing love. To grace alone they owe all they become, the service they are enabled to perform, and all the blessedness they shall enjoy in heaven hereafter.

The *stability* and *perpetuity* of the new covenant are plainly involved in the statement made by Jeremiah (31:31-35). The very nature of its blessings is a proof of this. They effectually secured the great end which God has in view in His dealings with men, namely, the formation of a holy people, for His everlasting praise. This end once attained, there is no room for any improvement. But that could not be said of the Siniatic covenant—as it regarded this result, it failed, and that almost continuously throughout the long history of the Jews. But so far from being unexpected, that failure was distinctly foreseen. From the first, the Levitical economy partook of the nature of a preparation for something better. Its perceptible unprofitableness for those higher ends should have taught the people that it could not have been intended to be permanent. Ultimately, they

were plainly informed (Jer 31) that their economy was to be superseded by another covenant, the blessings of which, in their very nature, securing what the existing arrangement had never attained unto. Here, too, its surpassing excellency appears. Other points of difference between the two covenants must be left for next month.

SAMSON'S RIDDLE

“Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness” (Jdg 14:14). It does, at first sight, seem strange, after an announcement from heaven of his birth, after the coming of an angel to give directions as to his rearing, after being told that the Lord blessed him, and that, “the Spirit of the Lord moved him,” and that he was a true believer, to find that it was muscular power that was Samson’s great endowment, and that his passions were so unsubdued. But great strength was just what was needed then, “For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel,” and even Samson’s strong passions were overruled for the discomfiture of the enemies of his country.

When one thinks of how great, in the view of God, was His scheme of redemption, and of how important to the church the revelation of it was, we cannot wonder if there should be frequent promises given of Messiah and predictions of His incarnation, death, and kingdom—many typical objects and rites to represent Him, not a few whose lives were emblematical of that of the promised One, and even epochs of history so arranged as to furnish an allegory of the “better things to come.” Anyone who is duly impressed with the greatness of redemption, and who thinks at all according to the mind of God regarding it, cannot wonder if things and men and epochs manifold should be shadowing forth in past ages the fulfillment of the promise of the Redeemer. God could not have been silent regarding Him who, as His only begotten Son, was the object of His infinite love, and who, as Messiah, was the gift of His love to the church. And He was not silent, for He spoke regarding Him to the Old Testament church through promises, prophecies, typical rites, and typical men, and through the dealings of His providence with a nation, as well as with individuals.

One of the typical men was Samson. He was well-fitted to represent the Messiah as the “Saviour” whom “God raised unto Israel.” Samson’s name means “distinguished” or “strong,” and we may well-apply it to him with both these meanings. The Lord made him distinguished, and He made him strong, and He did both that He might exhibit through him His Messiah to His people. In course of his going down for a wife to Timnath, “a young lion roared against him.” “The spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him,” and “he rent him as he would have rent a kid” (Jdg 14:6). Returning “after a time...he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion; and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion” (Jdg 14:8). He himself having partaken of the honey first, gave some of it also to his parents, but how he had procured it he kept as a secret. This secret furnished him with a riddle at the marriage-feast. As no one could taste the sweet meat but those to whom he gave it, so none could solve the riddle to whom he did not unfold its meaning. So far he most fitly typifies Him who came down from heaven “to seek and to save” (Luk 19:10) the objects of His love, and who encountered “him that had the power of death” (Heb 2:14), and by death destroyed him, thus securing to His church both meat and sweetness, for which none shall partake except such as receive these from Him, and the mode of obtaining which none can understand except such as are His disciples. Looking at this riddle as no longer Samson’s, but Christ’s, let us consider—

(1) This riddle presents to us *the mystery of the cross*. “God raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus” (Act 13:23). He was “manifested to destroy the works of the devil” (1Jo 3:8), and to procure redemption for a people who were both prisoners and slaves. These two designs could only be accomplished together, and only *by death*. As no meat could come out of the eater unless the eater had been slain, so there could be no redemption to Israel unless Christ, by His death, had destroyed “him that had the power of death” (Heb 2:14). But the meat was not produced by “the eater,” though it came out of him. The lion was dead, and could not be an “eater,” and only in his dead carcass could the honey be stored by the “swarm of bees” whose work it was to gather it. All that is “meat” and “sweetness” as the result of the “death of death in the death of Christ” is due to the grace of God, which found in Him who died and rose again a place in which the blessings of the everlasting covenant might be stored, and a way by which the Holy Spirit might come forth to dispense them.

Let it be no difficulty to your mind to think of a living Samson while looking on the dead lion. Samson only risked his life, while Christ actually laid His down. Yet do not think that you have in this what utterly unfits the one for being an emblem of the other. The actual death of Christ *only secured redemption by destroying* “him that had the power of death” (Heb 2:14). But I see a living High Priest beside the slain sacrifice, who can present Himself as “the lamb that was slain” before God. And I have before me, Him who was dead, alive again, and “alive forevermore,” to dispense to the objects of His love the blessings of the covenant which He sealed by His blood. What was awaiting in his encounter with the lion, to complete Samson’s representation of Christ in His actual dying “for the ungodly,” was made up by the mode in which he willingly sacrificed his life at the last that enemies of Israel might perish through his death.

Think of all the “meat” and “sweetness” secured by the death of Christ to redeemed Israel—the infinite fullness of God’s covenant grace brought nigh by the Gospel in which Christ crucified is preached. What a honeycomb that is which is near us in the Gospel, each one of the “exceeding great and precious promises” a cell full—fraught with the rich grace of God! All this is brought near to you, and may be claimed by you if you reach Christ crucified in faith, and take your stand as a sinner on His precious blood. But you require a living Christ to secure to you any benefit from His death. Samson’s parents tasted the honey only when their son gave it to them. And what he procured by risking his life he gave ungrudgingly. Is not Christ’s love worthy of more trust than Samson’s? Count it no hardship that you must owe to the gracious power of the living, the enjoyment of what was secured by the atonement of the slain Lamb.

To partake of the grace of the blood-sealed covenant would secure to you both “meat” and “sweetness”—both what would strengthen and what would gladden you. Entering through the death of Christ amidst the riches of the grace of God, you would attain to a child’s confidence towards the grace of God, and you would be no coward in the conflict to which the soldiers of Jesus Christ are called. As a child, as a servant, and as a soldier, you need both “meat” and “sweetness,” and “the eater” and “the strong” would yield both to you, if through “the blood” you reached the grace “of the everlasting covenant.”

(2) This riddle may be viewed as referring to *the blessed results of affliction to the Lord’s children*. These encounter “eaters” and are called to combat with “the strong.” This is their frequent experience as they bear the various trials of providence, as they endure persecution from the world, as they are engaged in conflict with the strong corruption of their old hearts, and as they are assaulted by the power of “the wicked one.” All these are painfully felt to be “eaters” and “strong.”

But all these trials have in them *no destroying power*. The entire removal of the curse has made the children of God indestructible. The death of Christ effected the removal of the curse from them when that death was, in the day of their justification, placed to their account by God. Trouble is no longer armed with the curse to them. It may smite them so as to pain them, but it cannot smite them so as to slay them. I could easily conceive a very nervous person trembling at the sight of a dead lion. It could do him no harm, for it was utterly dead, and it was utterly unreasonable to be afraid because near it. Just as little reason has the child of God to be afraid of all the troubles which he may have to encounter, but how often does he tremble when he comes near to them. Friend, you will never get rid of that cowardice but at the cross of Christ, on which the curse was utterly exhausted in the death of your Surety. As you appropriate Him, and redemption through His blood, all troubles will appear as thoroughly powerless to harm you as was the carcass of the slain lion in the vineyard of Timnath.

The afflictions of the righteous are not only powerless to harm, *but they are made profitable*. Thus they cannot be without the grace of God. If there were no honey in the carcass of the lion, there could not come “meat” and “sweetness” out of it. But through the death of Christ, grace comes to the believer in his time of trial, and it is because of this that “tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.” Because of this, instead of being scared by tribulation on account of the pain it causes, he glories in it on account of the good fruit it produces. It yields to him “meat” and “sweetness” to which, without affliction, he would have been an utter stranger.

(3) The riddle points to *the death of the saints*. How often, when looking forward to it, does it seem to be an “eater” ready to devour, and a “strong” one before whom all shall be laid low? An “eater,” verily, is death if armed with sin as its “sting”—and “strong” is the “eater,” for its power shall bring all the Christless down into the depths of an eternal hell. Ah, friend, if you are away from the cross of Christ you have no right to be aught else than afraid before it. But if you, with the eye of faith, see death deprived of its sting by the death of the cross, and can grasp Him who “died and rose again” with the hand of faith, then you may expect to taste ineffable sweetness in the result of your dying. For what does death yield to the believer?

1. *An end to all the troubles of this life*. These often were felt to be downing floods, as they went down into them, and seemed to be a sea without a further shore. To their eyes there seemed to be a haze on the horizon, towards which their gaze was directed, which made it impossible for them to discern aught but sea. They often feared that the time would never come, in which to them there shall be “no more sea.” But passing through death, the believer passes beyond the reach of all the trials of this life. Nothing does he carry with him that can disturb, and none to trouble him shall either accompany or follow him.

2. In death there shall be *a final end of all sin*. It is not by his own death that sin shall be annihilated in the soul of the believer, but in his dying, the Lord’s sanctifying power shall pass through all his being, consuming into utter extinction all sin, till the soul, perfectly conformed to the image of Christ, shall pass into a region in which there shall be no temptation, and where God, in the unchangeableness of His love, in the glory of His holiness, and in the omnipotence of His power, shall compass him to preserve him in the beauty of His own likeness, and in the bliss of His own fellowship for evermore. You need not shrink, believer, from parting with the body of dust that is on you, for you shall, at the same moment, part with the body of death that is *in* you. O what shall it be to emerge out of the wearying and wearied body with an *understanding* in which there shall no more be darkness, a *will* that never shall for a moment, or in the least degree, decline from the will of God, a *conscience* which shall be for evermore under the full sunshine of

God's manifested favour, a *memory* that shall recall aught that it shall not be joy to remember, and a *heart* in which perfect love to God shall sway every spring of action, and whose every desire shall be filled with the expressed love and with the outshining glory of JEHOVAH! Let the living body become a carcass if this sweetness is to follow the dying.

3. To pass through death *is to enjoy all the sweetness of the home-rest*, of the temple-worship, and of the palace-glory of heaven. What home-rest it shall be to be near to the Man Christ Jesus, the Lamb who was slain, the good Shepherd who graciously tended His flock throughout all the wilderness way, and to have nothing within or near that can mar the joy of this fellowship! How perfected love will then go forth, fervently and adoringly, in a service in which there can be no shortcoming, as it is attracted by the glory that shall shine on it forever from "the throne of God and of the Lamb"! And what eternal wonder shall fill thy soul, believer, as thou find thyself at home amidst the glory of the Father's house—a palace adapted to the presence of JEHOVAH on His eternal throne.

Application 1. Let all remember that death has to be encountered, either as it meets those who are in the Lord, or as armed with the sting of sin, and clothed with all the terrors of the curse. If you are not in Christ, death will be as the living lion roaring for his prey to you. How fearful a meeting that of a weak, guilty, filthy sinner with an accursed death, whose work is utter destruction, and through an experience of which the Christless pass "into everlasting punishment." Right before you is such a death if you are without true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not more surely did the roaring lion meet Samson than what is unspeakably more awful shall be met by you, if you still continue to move as you have been moving in the past, for, "He that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Application 2. Look through Samson's conflict with the lion to Christ's conflict with death. Like Samson, He is all alone. It was well for Samson's friends that he was all alone when the "young lion roared against him," for it was his being alone which secured benefit to them. He went before them, and he went aside from them, and won the victory all alone. And therefore he went before them and with them, and carried to them the fruits of his triumph. Thus acts Christ in relation to His friends. All alone as their Substitute, He met and "destroyed him that had the power of death," that "out of the slain eater might come meat" to them, and out of the conquered "strong" might come "sweetness" to them. He has left only a slain lion to look at when in faith you forecast the death that awaits you in Him. And because of His having triumphed over "the strong man," there are both "meat" and "sweetness" to be found, as well as rest before you. But you will attain to this only as He is with you, and as He, by His Spirit, applies to you the word of His grace. His parents needed the presence of a living Samson, as well as the triumph of a Samson who had risked his life. You need the power of a living Christ to apply to you what the slain Christ secured for you. O is He not "all in all"!

Application 3. Do not expect to know the mystery of the cross without the teaching of the Spirit of Christ. None could solve his riddle but Samson himself. None can open your understanding to understand the doctrine of the cross but the Holy One, who has the unction which enables one to "know all things." Let your cry be to Him for the opening of your eyes. Beware of a Delilah's deceit, but learn a lesson of importunity from her, as she persistently urged Samson to disclose to her his secret. Christ has no reason for hiding the truth from any who desire to know it, and surely He has encouraged you to ask the saving knowledge of the truth when He says, "Turn ye at my reproof; I will pour out my Spirit on you, I will make known my words unto you."—John Kennedy (1813-1900), preached about 1880. He was one of the spiritual giants of the Highlands of Scotland, in whose pulpit C. H. Spurgeon preached.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

6. *Its Nature*

It has been well-said that, “The reason why anyone believes in election is that he finds it in the Bible. No man could ever imagine such a doctrine—for it is, in itself, contrary to the thinking and the wishes of the human heart. Everyone, at first, opposes the doctrine, and it is only after many struggles, under the working of the Spirit of God, that we are made to receive it. A perfect acquiescence in this doctrine—an absolute lying still, in adoring wonder, at the footstool of God’s sovereignty, is the last attainment of the sanctified soul in this life, as it is the beginning of heaven. The reason why anyone believes in election is just this, and *only* this, that *God* has made it known. Had the Bible been a counterfeit, it never could have contained the doctrine of election, for men are too averse to such a thought to give it expression, much more to give it prominence” (George Sayles Bishop, 1836-1914).

Thus far, in our exposition of this blessed truth, we have shown that the *source* of election is the will of God, for nothing exists or can exist apart from that. Next, we have seen, that the *Grand Original* of election is the man Christ Jesus, who was ordained unto union with the second person in the Godhead. Then, in order to clear the way for a more detailed examination of this truth as it bears upon us, we demonstrated the *verity* and then the *justice* of it, seeking to remove from the minds of Christian readers the defiling and disturbing effects of the principal objection which is made against divine election by its enemies. And now we shall endeavour to point out the principal elements which enter into election.

First, it is *an act by God*. True it is that there comes a day when each of the elect chooses God for his absolute Lord and supreme Good, but this is the effect and in no sense the cause of the former. Our choosing of Him is in time—His choosing of us was *before* time began—and certain it is that unless He had first chosen us, we would never choose Him at all. God, who is a sovereign Being, does whatsoever He pleases both in heaven and in earth, having an absolute right to do as He wills with His own creatures, and therefore did He choose a certain number of human beings to be His people, His children, His peculiar treasure. Having done this, it is called “election of God” (1Th 1:4), for He is the efficient cause of it, and the persons chosen are denominated “God’s own elect” (Luk 18:7; Rom 8:33).

This choice of God’s is an *absolute* one, being entirely gratuitous, depending on nothing whatever outside of Himself. God elected the ones He did simply because He chose to do so—from no good, merit, or attraction in the creature, and from no foreseen merit or attraction *to be* in the creature. God is absolutely self-sufficient, and therefore He never goes outside of Himself to find a reason for anything that He does. He cannot be swayed by the works of His own hand. No, He is the One who sways them, as He alone is the One who gave them existence. “In him we live, and are moved [Greek], and have our being” (Act 17:28). It was, then, simply out of the spontaneous goodness of His own volition that God singled out from the mass of those He purposed to create a people who should show forth His praises for all eternity, to the glory of His sovereign grace forever and ever.

This choice of God's is an *unchangeable* one. Necessarily so, for it is not founded upon anything in the creature or grounded upon anything outside of Himself. It is before everything, even before His "foreknowledge." God does not decree because He foreknows, but He foreknows because He has infallibly and irrevocably decreed it—otherwise He would merely guess it. But since He foreknows it, then He does not guess—it is certain. And if certain, then He must have fixed it. Election being the act of God, it is *forever*, for whatever He does in a way of special grace, is irreversible and unalterable. Men may choose some to be their favourites and friends for a while, and then change their minds and choose others in their room. But God does not act such a part—He is of one mind and none can turn Him. His purpose according to election stands firm, sure, unalterable (Rom 9:11; 2Ti 2:19).

Second, God's act of election is *made in Christ*, "According as he hath chosen us in him" (Eph 1:4). Election does not find men in Christ, but *puts* them there. It gives them a being in Christ and union to Him, which is the foundation of their manifestative being in Him at conversion. In the infinite mind of God, He willed to love a company of Adam's posterity with an immutable love, and out of the love wherewith He loves them, He chose them in Christ. By this act in His infinite mind, God gave them being and blessedness in Christ from everlasting. Though, while all fell in Adam, yet all did not fall alike. The non-elect fell so as to be damned, they being left to perish in their sins, because they had no relation to Christ—He was not related to them as the Mediator of union with God.

The non-elect had their all in Adam, their natural head. But the elect had all spiritual blessing bestowed upon them in Christ, their gracious and glorious Head (Eph 1:3). They could not lose these, because they were secured for them in Christ. God had chosen them as His own. He their God, they His people. He their Father, they His children. He gave them to Christ to be His brethren, His companions, His bride, His partners in all His communicable grace and glory. On the foresight of their fall in Adam, and what would be the effects thereof, the Father proposed to raise them up from the ruins of the fall, upon the consideration of His Son's undertaking to perform all righteousness for them, and as their Surety, bear all their sins in His own body on the tree, making His soul an offering for sin. To carry all of this into execution, the beloved Son became incarnate.

It was to this that the Lord Jesus referred in His high priestly prayer, when He said to the Father, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me" (Joh 17:6). He was alluding to the whole election of grace. They were the objects of the Father's delight—His jewels, His portion, and in Christ's eyes they were what the Father beheld them to be. How highly, then, did the Father esteem the Mediator, or He would never have bestowed His elect on Him and committed them all to His care and management! And how highly did Christ value this love-gift of the Father's, or He would not have undertaken their salvation at such tremendous cost to Himself! Now the giving of the elect to Christ was a different act, a distinct act from that of their election. The elect were first the Father's by election, who singled out the persons, and then He bestowed them upon Christ as His love-gift, "Thine they were [by election] and thou gavest them me" (Joh 17:6)—in the same way that grace is said to be given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2Ti 1:9).

Third, this act of God was irrespective of and *anterior to any foresight of the entrance of sin*. We have somewhat anticipated this branch of our subject, yet as it is one upon which very few today are clear, and one we deem of considerable importance, we propose to give it separate consideration. The particular point which we are now to ponder is as to whether His people were viewed by God, in His act of election, as fallen or unfallen—as in the corrupt mass through their

defection in Adam, or in the pure mass of creature-hood, as to be created. Those who took the former view are known as Sublapsarians. Those who took the latter as Supralapsarians, and in the past this question was debated considerably between high and low Calvinists. This writer unhesitatingly (after prolonged study) takes the Supralapsarian position, though he is well-aware that few indeed will be ready to follow him.

Sin, having drawn a veil over the greatest of all the divine mysteries of grace—that of the divine incarnation alone excepted—renders our present task the more difficult. It is much easier for us to apprehend our misery, and our redemption from it—by the incarnation, obedience, and sacrifice of the Son of God, than it is for us to conceive of the *original* glory, excellency, purity, and dignity of the church of Christ, as the eternal object of God’s thoughts, counsels, and purpose. Nevertheless, if we adhere closely to the Holy Scriptures, it is evident (to the writer, at least) that God’s people had a super-creation and spiritual union with Christ before ever they had a creature and natural union with Adam—that they were blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ (Eph 1:3), before they fell in Adam and became subject to all the evils of the curse. First we will summarize the reasons given by John Gill (1697-1771) in support of this.

God’s decree of election is to be divided into *two* parts or degrees, namely, His purpose concerning the end and His purpose concerning the means. The first part has to do with the purpose of God in Himself, in which He determined to have an elect people and that for His own glory. The second part has to do with the actual *execution* of the first, by fixing upon the means whereby the end shall be accomplished. These two parts in the divine decree are neither to be severed nor confounded, but considered distinctly. God’s purpose concerning the end means that He ordained a certain people to be the recipients of His special favour, for the glorifying of His sovereign goodness and grace. His purpose concerning the means signifies that He determined to create that people, permit them to fall, and to recover them out of it by Christ’s redemption and the Spirit’s sanctification. These are not to be regarded as separate decrees, but as component parts and degrees of one purpose. There is an *order* in the divine counsels as real and definite as Genesis 1 shows as there was in connection with creation.

As the purpose of the *end* is first in view (in the order of nature) before the determination of the *means*, therefore what is first in intention is last in execution. Now as the glory of God is the last in execution, it necessarily follows that it was first in intention. Wherefore men must be considered in the divine purpose concerning the end as neither yet created nor fallen, since both their creation and the permission of sin belong to God’s counsel concerning the *means*. Is it not obvious that if God first decreed to create men and suffer them to fall, and then out of the fallen mass choose some to grace and glory, that He purposed to create men *without* any end in view? And is not that charging God with what a wise man would never do, for when man determines to do a thing he proposes an end (say the building of an house), and then fixes on ways and means to bring about that end. Can it be thought for a moment that the Omniscient One should act otherwise?

The above distinction between the divine purpose concerning the end and God’s appointing of means to secure that end is clearly borne out by Scripture. For example, “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb 2:10). Here is first the decree concerning the *end*—God ordained His many sons “unto glory.” In His purpose of the *means*, God ordained that the Captain of their salvation should be made perfect “through sufferings.” In like manner was it in connection with Christ Himself. “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand” (Psa 110:1). God decreed that the Mediator should have this high honour

conferred upon Him, yet in order thereto it was ordained that, “He shall drink of the brook in the way” (Psa 110:7). God, then, decreed that the Redeemer should drink of the fullness of those pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore (Psa 16:11), but before that He must drain the bitter cup of anguish. So it is with His people. Canaan is their destined portion, but the wilderness is appointed as that through which they shall pass on their way thereto.

God’s foreordination of His people unto holiness and glory anterior to His foreview of their fall in Adam, comports far better with the instances given of Jacob and Esau in Romans 9:11-12, than does the Sublapsarian view that His decree contemplated them as sinful creatures. There we read, “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.” The apostle is showing that the preference was given to Jacob independent of all of merit, because it was made before the children were born. If it be kept in mind that what God does in time is only a making manifest of what He secretly decreed in eternity, the point we are here pressing will be the more conclusive. God’s acts both of election and preterition—choosing and passing by—were entirely *irrespective* of any foreseen “good or evil.” Note, too, how this compound expression, “the *purpose* of God according to *election*,” supports the contention of there being *two* parts to God’s decree.

It should also be pointed out that God’s foreordination of His people unto everlasting bliss before He contemplated them as sinful creatures, agrees far better than does the Sublapsarian idea, with the *unformed* clay of the potter, “Hath not the potter power [the right] over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?” (Rom 9:21). Upon this Theodore Beza (1519-1605) (co-pastor with John Calvin [1509-1564] of the church at Geneva) remarked that, “If the apostle had considered mankind as corrupted, he would *not* have said that some vessels were made unto honour and some unto dishonour, but rather that seeing all the vessels were fit for dishonour, some were *left in* that dishonour, and others *translated from* dishonour to honour.”

But leaving inferences and deductions, let us turn now to something more express and definite. In Ephesians 1:11, we are told, “Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,” or to state it another way, the spiritual blessings which God bestows upon His people are divided into *two* distinct classes, according as He contemplated them first in an unfallen state and then in a fallen. The first and highest class of blessings are enumerated in Ephesians 1:4-6, and have to do with God’s decree concerning the *end*. The second and subordinate class of blessings are described and have to do with God’s decree concerning the *means* which He has appointed for the accomplishment of that end.

These two parts in the mystery of God’s will towards His people from everlasting are clearly marked by the change of tense which is used—the past tense of, “He *hath* chosen us” (Eph 1:4), “*having predestinated* us unto the adoption of children” (Eph 1:5), and “*hath* made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:6), becomes the present tense in verse 7, “in whom we *have* redemption through his blood.” The benefits spoken of in verses 4-6 are such as in no way depended upon a consideration of the fall, but follow from our being chosen in Christ, being given upon grounds higher and distinct from that of His being our Redeemer. God’s choice of us in Christ our Head, that we should be “holy,” signifies not that imperfect holiness which we have in this life, but a perfect and immutable one such as even the unfallen angels had not by nature, and our predestination to adoption denotes an immediate communion with God Himself—blessings which had been ours had sin never entered.

As Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) pointed out in his unrivalled exposition of Ephesians 1, “The first source of blessings—perfect holiness, adoption, etc.—were ordained us *without* consideration of the fall, though not *before* the consideration of the fall; for all the things which God decrees are at once in His mind—they were all, both one another, ordained to our persons. But God in the decrees about these first sort of blessings viewed us as *creatures* which He could and would make so and so glorious...But the second sort of blessings were ordained us merely upon consideration of the fall, and to our persons considered as *sinners* and unbelievers. The first sort were to the ‘praise of God’s grace,’ taking grace for the freeness of love, whereas the latter sort are to ‘the praise of the glory of his grace,’ taking grace for free mercy.”

The first and higher blessings are to have their full accomplishment in heaven, being suited to that state into which we shall then be installed, and as in God’s primary intention, they are before the other and are said to have been, “before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4), so they are to be realized *after* this world is ended—the “adoption” to which we are predestinated (Eph 1:5) we still await (Rom 8:23). Whereas the second blessings are bestowed upon us in this lower world, for it is here and now we receive “forgiveness of sins” through the blood of Christ. Again—the first blessings are founded solely upon our relation to the *person* of Christ, as is evident from “chosen in him...accepted in the beloved.” But the second sort are grounded upon His *work*, redemption issuing from Christ’s sacrifice. Thus the latter blessings are but the removing of those obstacles which by reason of sin stand in our way of that intended glory.

Again—this distinction of blessings which we receive in Christ as creatures, and through Christ as sinners, is confirmed by the *twofold office* which He sustains toward us. This is clearly expressed in, “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph 5:23). Notice carefully the *order* of those titles. Christ is first an Head and Husband to us, which lays the foundation of that relation to God of being His adopted children—as by marriage with His Son. Second, He is our “Saviour,” which necessarily respects sin. With Ephesians 5:23 should be compared Colossians 1:18-20, where the same order is set forth. In verses 18 and 19, we learn of what Christ is absolutely ordained to and His church with Him, by which He is the Founder of that state we shall enter after the resurrection. And then in verse 20, we see Him as Redeemer and Reconciler—first the “Head” of His church, and then its “Saviour”! From this twofold relation of Christ to the elect arises a *double glory* which He is ordained unto—the one intrinsic, due to Him as the Son of God dwelling in human nature and being therein the Head of a glorious church (see Joh 17:5), and the other more extrinsic, as acquired by His work of redemption and purchased with the agony of His soul (see Phi 2:8-10)!

A FOURFOLD SALVATION

3. *Salvation from the Power of Sin*

This is a present and protracted process, and is as yet incomplete. It is the most difficult part of our subject, and upon it the greatest confusion of thought prevails, especially among young Christians. Many there are who, having learned that the Lord Jesus is the Saviour of sinners, have jumped to the erroneous conclusion that if they but exercise faith in Him, surrender to His Lordship, commit their souls into His keeping, He will remove their corrupt nature and destroy their evil propensities. But after they have really trusted in Him, they discover that evil is still

present with them, that their hearts are still deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and that no matter how they strive to resist temptation, pray for overcoming grace and use the means of God's appointing, they seem to grow worse and worse instead of better, until they seriously doubt if they are saved at all. They are now *being sanctified*!

Even when a person has been regenerated and justified, the flesh or corrupt nature remains within him, and ceaselessly harasses him. Yet this ought not to perplex him. To the saints at Rome, Paul said, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body" (Rom 6:12), which would be entirely meaningless had sin been eradicated from them. Writing to the Corinthian saints he said, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Co 7:1). Obviously such an exhortation is needless if sin has been purged from our beings. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1Pe 5:6)—what need have Christians for such a word as this—except pride still lurks and works within them? But all room for controversy on this point is excluded if we bow to that inspired declaration, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1Jo 1:8).

The old carnal nature remains in the believer. He is still a *sinner*, though a *saved* one. What, then, is the young Christian to do? Is he powerless? Must he resort to stoicism, and make up his mind that there is nothing but a life of defeat before him? Certainly not! The first thing for him to do is to learn thoroughly the humiliating truth that in *himself* he is "without strength." It was here that Israel failed. When Moses made known to them the law, they boastfully declared, "All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Exo 24:7). Ah! how little did they realize that "in the flesh there dwelleth no good thing." It was here, too, that Peter failed. He was self-confident and boasted that, "though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended....though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee" (Mat 26:33, 35)—how little he knew his own heart! This complacent spirit lurks within each of us. While we cherish the belief we can "do better next time," it is evident that we still have confidence in our own powers. Not until we heed the Saviour's word, "Without me ye can do *nothing*" (Joh 15:5), do we take the first step toward victory. Only when we are weak (in ourselves) are we strong.

The believer still has the carnal nature within him, and he has no strength in himself to check its evil propensities, nor to overcome its sinful solicitations. But the believer in Christ also has another nature within him, which is received at the new birth, "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (Joh 3:6). The believer, then, has two natures within him—one which is sinful, the other spiritual. These two natures, being totally different in character, are antagonistic to each other. To this antagonism, or conflict, the apostle referred when he said, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal 5:17). Now *which* of these two natures is to regulate the believer's life? It is manifest that both cannot, for they are contrary to each other. It is equally evident that the stronger of the two will exert the more controlling power. It is also clear that in the young Christian the carnal nature is the stronger, because he was born with it, and hence it has many years head start over the spiritual nature—which he did not receive until he was born again.

Further, it is unnecessary to argue at length that the only way by which we can strengthen and develop the new nature is by *feeding* it. In every realm, growth is dependent upon food, suitable food, daily food. The nourishment which God has provided for our spiritual nature is found in His own Word, for "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Mat 4:4). It is to this that Peter has reference when he says, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere [pure] milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1Pe 2:2). In proportion as we feed upon the heavenly manna, such will be our spiritual growth. Of course, there are other

things beside food needful to growth—we must breathe and live in a pure atmosphere. This, translated into spiritual terms, signifies *prayer*. It is when we approach the throne of grace and meet our Lord face to face that our spiritual lungs are filled with the ozone of heaven. *Exercise* is another essential to growth and this finds its accomplishment in walking with the Lord. If, then, we heed these primary laws of spiritual health, the new nature will flourish.

But not only must the new nature be fed. It is equally necessary for our spiritual well-being that the old nature should be starved. This is what the apostle had in mind when he said, “Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom 13:14). To starve the old nature, to make not provision for the flesh, means that we abstain from everything that would stimulate our carnality—that we avoid, as we would a plague, all that is calculated to prove injurious to our spiritual welfare. Not only must we deny ourselves the “pleasures of sin,” shun such things as the saloon, theatre, dance, card-table, etc., but we must separate ourselves from worldly companions, cease to read worldly literature, abstain from everything upon which we cannot ask God’s blessing. Our affections are to be set upon things *above*, and not upon things on the earth (Col 3:2). Does this seem a high standard and sound impracticable? Holiness in all things is that at which we are to aim and failure so to do explains the *leanness* of so many Christians. Let the young believer realize that whatever does not help his spiritual life *hinders* it.

Here then, in brief, is the answer to our question, What is the young Christian to do in order for deliverance from indwelling sin? It is true that we are still in this world, but we are not “of” it (Joh 17:14). It is true that we are forced to associate with godless people, but this is ordained of God in order that we may “Let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven” (see Mat 5:16). There is a wide difference between associating with sinners as we go about our daily tasks, and making them our intimate companions and friends. Only as we feed upon the Word can we “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 3:18). Only as we starve the old nature can we expect deliverance from its power and pollution. Then let us earnestly heed that exhortation, “Ye put off concerning the former conversation [behaviour] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:22-24).

Above, we have dealt only with the *human* side of the problem as to how to obtain deliverance from the dominion of sin. Necessarily there is a *divine* side, too. It is only by God’s grace that we are enabled to use the means which He has provided for us, as it is only by the power of His Spirit who dwells within us that we can “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1). These two aspects (the divine and human) are brought together in a number of Scriptures. We are bid to, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” but the apostle immediately added, “for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:12-13). Thus, we are to work out that which God has wrought within us—in other words, if we walk in the Spirit we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. (Gal 5:16). It has now been shown that salvation from the power of sin is a *process* which goes on throughout the believer’s life. It is to this Solomon referred when he said, “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth *more and more* unto the perfect day” (Pro 4:18).

As our salvation from the pleasure of sin is the consequence of our regeneration, and as salvation from the penalty of sin respects our justification, so salvation from the power of sin has to do with the practical side of our *sanctification*. The word “sanctification” signifies “separation”—separation from sin. We need hardly say that the word “holiness” is strictly

synonymous with “sanctification,” being an alternative rendering of the same Greek word. As the practical side of sanctification has to do with our separation from sin, we are told, “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1). That practical sanctification or holiness is a process, a progressive experience, is clear from this, “Follow...holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). The fact that we are exhorted to “follow” holiness clearly intimates that we have not yet attained unto the divine standard which God requires of us. This is further seen in the passage just quoted above, “perfecting holiness” or completing it.

We must now enter into a little fuller detail upon *the divine side* of our salvation from the power and pollution of sin. When a sinner truly receives Christ as his Lord and Saviour, God does not then and there take him to heaven—on the contrary, he is likely to be left down here for many years, and this world is a place of *danger*, for it lies in the wicked one (1Jo 5:19) and all pertaining to it is opposed to the Father (1Jo 2:16). Therefore the believer needs daily salvation from this hostile system. Accordingly we read that Christ, “Gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father” (Gal 1:4). Not only is the sinner not taken to heaven when he first savingly believes, but as we have seen, the evil nature is not taken out of him—nevertheless, God does not leave him completely under its dominion, but graciously delivers him from its regal power. He uses a great variety of means in accomplishing this.

First, *by granting us a clearer view of our inward depravity* so that we are made to abhor ourselves. By nature we are thoroughly in love with ourselves, but as the divine work of grace is carried forward in our souls we come to loathe ourselves, and that, my reader, is a very distressing experience—one which is conveniently shelved by most of our modern preachers. The concept which many young Christians form from preachers is that the experience of a genuine believer is a smooth, peaceful, and joyous one, but he soon discovers that this is not verified in his personal experience, but rather is it completely false. And this staggers him—supposing the preacher to know more about such matters than himself, he is now filled with disturbing doubts about his very salvation, and the devil promptly tells him he is only a hypocrite and never was saved at all.

Only those who have actually passed through or are passing through this painful experience have any real conception thereof. There is as much difference between an actual acquaintance with it and the mere reading a description of the same as there is between personally visiting a country and simply studying a map of it. But how are we to account for one who has been saved from the pleasure and penalty of sin, now being made increasingly conscious not only of its polluting presence but of its tyrannizing power? How can we explain the fact that the Christian now finds himself growing worse and worse, and the more closely he endeavours to walk with God, the more he finds the flesh bringing forth its horrible works in ways it had not done previously? The answer is, because of increased light from God, by which he now discovers filth of which he was previously unaware. The sun shining into a neglected room does not create the dust and cobwebs, but simply reveals them.

Thus it is with the Christian. The more the light of the Spirit is turned upon him inwardly, the more he discovers the horrible plague of his heart (1Ki 8:38) and the more he realizes what a wretched failure he is. The fact is, dear discouraged soul, that the more you are growing *out* of love with yourself, the more you are being saved from the power of sin. Wherein lies its fearful potency? Why, in its power to *deceive* us. It *lies* to us. It did so to Adam and Eve. It gives us false estimates of values so that we mistake the tinsel for real gold. To be saved from the power of sin is to have our eyes opened so that we see things in God’s light—it is to know the *truth* about

things all around us and the truth about ourselves. Satan has blinded the minds of them that believe not, but the Holy Spirit “hath shined in our hearts...the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6).

But further—sin not only deceives, it *puffs up*, causing its infatuated victims to think highly of themselves. As 1 Timothy 3:6 tells us, to be “Lifted up with pride” is to “fall into the condemnation of the devil.” Ah, it was insane egotism which caused Lucifer to say, “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: I will be like the most High” (Isa 14:13-14). Is there any wonder, then, that those in whom he works are filled with pride and complacency! Sin ever produces self-love and self-righteousness—the most abandoned of characters will tell you, “I know that I am weak, yet I have a good heart.” But when God takes us in hand, it is the very opposite—the workings of the Spirit subdue our pride. How? By giving increasing discoveries of self and of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, so that each one cries with Job, “Behold, I am vile” (Job 40:4). Such a one is being saved from the power of sin—its power to deceive and to inflate.

Second, *by sore chastenings*. This is another means which God uses in delivering His people from sin’s dominion. “We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness” (Heb 12:9-10). Those chastenings assume varied forms—sometimes they are external, sometimes internal, but whatever be their nature they are painful to flesh and blood. Sometimes these divine chastisements are of long duration, and then the soul is apt to ask, “Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? why hidest thyself in times of trouble?” (Psa 10:1), for it seems as though God has deserted us. Earnest prayer is made for a mitigation of suffering, but no relief is granted. Grace is earnestly sought for, meekly bowing to the rod, but unbelief, impatience, rebellion seem to wax stronger and stronger—and the soul is hard put to believe in God’s love—but as Hebrews 12:11 tells us, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceful fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

This life is a schooling and chastenings are one of the chief methods God employs in the training of His children. Sometimes they are sent for the *correcting* of our faults, and therefore we must pray, “Cause me to understand wherein I have erred” (Job 6:24). Let us steadily bear in mind that it is the “rod” and *not the sword* which is smiting us, held in the hand of our loving Father and not the avenging Judge. Sometimes they are sent for the *prevention* of sin, as Paul was given a thorn in the flesh, lest he “should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations” given him. Sometimes they are sent for our spiritual *education*, that by them we may be brought to a deeper experimental acquaintance with God, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes” (Psa 119:71). Sometimes they are sent for the testing and strengthening of our *graces*, “We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope,” (Rom 5:3-4). “Count it all joy when ye fall into varied temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (Jam 1:2-3).

Chastening is God’s *sin-purging medicine*, sent to wither our fleshly aspirations, to detach our hearts from carnal objects, to deliver us from our idols, to wean us more thoroughly from the world. God has bidden us, “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers...come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2Co 6:14, 17). We are slow to respond and therefore does He

take measures to *drive us out*. He has bidden us “love not the world,” and if we disobey we must not be surprised if He causes some of our worldly friends to hate and persecute us. God has bidden us, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth” (Col 3:5). If we refuse to comply with this unpleasant task, then we may expect God Himself to use the pruning knife upon us. God has bidden us, “Cease ye from man” (Isa 2:22), and if we will trust our fellows, we are made to suffer for it.

“Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him” (Heb 12:5). This is a salutary warning. So far from despising it, we should be grateful for the same—that God cares so much and takes such trouble with us, and that His bitter medicine produces such healthful effects. “In their affliction they will seek me early” (Hos 5:15). While everything is running smoothly for us, we are apt to be self-sufficient, but when trouble comes, we promptly turn unto the Lord. Own, then, with the psalmist, “In faithfulness hast afflicted me” (Psa 119:75). Not only do God’s chastisements, when sanctified to us, subdue the workings of pride and wean us more from the world, but they make the divine promises more precious to the heart—such a one as this takes on a new meaning, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee...when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned” (Isa 43:2). Moreover, they break down selfishness and make us more sympathetic to our fellow-sufferers, “Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble” (2Co 1:4).



October

THE LORD'S PRAYER

“And lead us not into temptation” (Mat 6:13). This petition also begins with the word “And,” requiring us to mark closely its relation to the one preceding. The connection between them may be set forth thus—first, the previous petition concerns the negative side of our justification, while this one has to do with our practical sanctification, for the two blessings must never be severed, thus we see the *balance* of truth is again perfectly preserved. Second, past sins being pardoned, we should pray fervently for grace to prevent us from repeating them. We cannot rightly desire God to forgive us our sins, unless we sincerely long for grace to abstain from the like for the time to come, and therefore we should make conscience of begging earnestly for strength to avoid a repetition of them. Third, in the fifth petition, we pray for the remission of the guilt of sin, here we ask for deliverance from its power. God’s granting of the former request is to encourage faith to ask Him to mortify the flesh and vivify the spirit.

Ere proceeding further, it may be best to clear the way by disposing of what is a real difficulty to many. “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (Jam 1:13). There is no more conflict between, “Lead us not into temptation,” and “neither tempteth he any man,” than there is the slightest opposition between, “God cannot be tempted with evil,” and “They turned back and tempted God” (Psa 78:41). God tempts no man means that He infuses evil into none, nor is in anywise a partner with us in our guilt. The criminality of sin is wholly upon ourselves, as James 1:14-15 makes clear. But men *deny* that it is from their own corrupt natures such and such evils proceed, blaming their temptations—and if they are unable to fix the evil on those temptations, then they seek to excuse themselves by throwing the blame upon God, as Adam did.

It should be pointed out that the word “tempt” has a twofold significance in Scripture, though it is not always easy to determine which of them applies to some particular passages—to try, test, put to the proof, and to solicit to evil. When it is said, “God did tempt Abraham” (Gen 22:1), it means that He tested him, putting to the proof his faith and fidelity. But when we read that Satan tempted Christ, it signifies that he sought to encompass His downfall—morally impossible though it were. To “tempt” is to make trial of a thing or person—what he is, and what he will do. We may tempt God or put Him to the proof in a way of duty, as when we await the fulfillment of His promise, Malachi 3:10. In Psalm 78:41, Israel tempted God in a way of *sin*—acting in such a manner as to provoke His displeasure.

“And lead us not into temptation” (Mat 6:13). Note what is clearly *implied* by these words. First, God’s universal providence is owned. All creatures are at the sovereign disposal of their Maker. He has the same absolute control over evil as over good. In this petition, an

acknowledgment is made that God has the *ordering* of all temptations. Second, His justice and our ill-desert are tacitly avowed. Our wickedness is such that God would be but righteous were He to now allow us to be completely swallowed up in sin and destroyed by Satan. Third, His mercy is recognized. Though we have so grievously provoked Him, yet He has for Christ's sake remitted our debts, and therefore a plea is made that He will henceforth preserve us. Fourth, our weakness is acknowledged. Because we realize that we are unable to stand against them in our own strength, we pray, "lead us not into temptation."

How does God lead us into temptation? First, objectively—when His providences, though good in themselves, offer occasions (because of our depravity) for sin. If we be self-righteous, He may lead us into circumstances something like Job experienced. If we be self-confident, He may suffer us to be tempted as Peter was. If we be self-complacent, He may bring us into a similar situation to the one Hezekiah encountered (2Chr 32). God leads many into poverty, which though a sore trial, is yet, under His blessing, often enriching to the soul. God leads some into prosperity, which is a great snare to many, yet if sanctified by Him enlarges capacity for usefulness. Second, God tempts *permissively*—when He does not restrain the evil one (which He is under no obligation to do), but suffers him to sift us as wheat—just as a strong wind snaps off dead boughs from living trees. Third, God tempts *judicially*—punishing sins by allowing the devil to lead men into further sin.

And *why* does God tempt His people, either objectively by His providences, or subjectively and permissively by Satan? For various reasons. First, to discover to us our weakness and our deep need of His grace. God withdraws His sustaining arm from Hezekiah in order, "That he might know all that was in his heart" (2Chr 32:31). When God leaves us to ourselves, it is a most painful and humiliating discovery that we make, yet is it needful if we are to pray from the heart, "Hold *thou* me up, and I shall be safe" (Psa 119:117). Second, to teach us the need of watchfulness and prayer. Most of us are so stupid and unbelieving that we learn only in the hard school of experience, and even there its lessons have to be *knocked* into us. Little by little we discover how dearly we have to pay for rashness, carelessness, and presumption. Third, to cure our slothfulness. God calls, "Awake thou that sleepest" (Eph 5:14), but we heed Him not, and therefore He often employs rough servants to rudely arouse us. Fourth, to reveal to us the importance and value of the armour He has appointed. If we *will* go forth to battle without our spiritual panoply, then we must not be surprised at the wounds we receive, but they may make us more careful for the future!

From all that has been said above it should be clear that we are not to pray simply and absolutely against all temptations. Christ Himself was tempted by the devil, and was definitely led into the wilderness by the Spirit for that very end. All temptations are not evil, either in their nature, design, or outcome. It is from the *evil* of temptations that we pray to be spared (as the next clause in the prayer indicates), yet even that submissively and with qualification. We are to pray that we may not be led into temptation, or if God sees fit that we should be tempted, that we may not yield thereto—or if we yield, that we be not totally overcome. Nor may we pray for a total exemption from trials, but only for a removal of the *judgment* of them. God often permits Satan to assault and harass us in order to humble us, to drive us to Himself, and to glorify Himself by manifesting more fully to us His preserving power. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (Jam 1:2-3).

In conclusion, a few remarks upon *our responsibility* in connection with temptation. First, it is our bounden duty to avoid those persons and places which would solicit us to evil, as we should also be on the alert for the first signs of Satan's approach, Psalm 19:13; Proverbs 4:14, etc. As an

unknown writer has said, “He who carries about with him so much inflammable material, would do well to keep the greatest possible distance from the fire.” Second, we must steadfastly resist the devil, 1 Peter 5:8-9. And that resistance is to be thorough and total, “Take us the foxes, the *little* foxes, that spoil the vines” (Song 2:15)—we must not yield a single inch to our enemy. Third, we are to go to God submissively for grace—the measure He grants us is according to His good pleasure, Philippians 2:13. “We are to endeavour indeed to pray, and use all good means to come out of temptation, but submissively—if the Lord be pleased to continue His exercising of you. Nay, though God should continue the temptation, and for the present not give thee those measures of grace necessary for you, yet you must not murmur, but lie at His feet, for God is *the Lord* of His grace” (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677). Thus, this petition is to be presented in subserviency to God’s sovereign will.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

3. *The Beatitudes—Matthew 5:1-11*

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Mat 5:5). There has been considerable difference of opinion as to exactly what meekness consists of. When we wrote upon this verse some twelve years ago, we defined it as *humility*, but it now appears to us that that is inadequate, for there is no single term which is capable of fully expressing all that is included in this virtue. A study of its usage in Scripture reveals, first, that it is linked with and cannot be separated from *lowliness*, “Learn of me; for I am meek and *lowly* in heart” (Mat 11:29). “Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness” (Eph 4:1-2). Second, it is associated with and cannot be divorced from *gentleness*, “I...beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2Co 10:1). “To speak evil of no man, to be not brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men” (Ti 3:2). Third, “Receive with meekness the engrafted word,” as opposed to, “The *wrath* of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (Jam 1:20-21). Fourth, the divine promise is, “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way” (Psa 25:9), intimating that this grace consists of a *pliant* heart and will.

Additional help in determining for us the meaning and scope of the word “meek” is to be obtained from duly noting our present verse in the light of the two preceding ones. It is to be kept steadily in mind that in these beatitudes our Lord is describing the orderly development of God’s work of grace as it is experimentally realized in the soul. First, there is a poverty of spirit—a sense of our insufficiency and nothingness, a realization of our unworthiness and unprofitableness. Next, there is a mourning over our lost condition, sorrowing for the awfulness of our sins against God. And now we have meekness as a bi-product of self-emptying and self-humiliation, or in other words, there is a broken will and a receptive heart before God. Meekness is not only the antithesis of pride, but of stubbornness, fierceness, vengefulness. It is the taming of the lion, the making of the wolf to lie down as a kid.

Thomas Scott (1747-1821) rightly points out that, “There is a *natural* meekness of spirit, springing from love of ease, defect in sensibility and firmness, and the pre-dominance of other passions, which should be carefully distinguished from evangelical meekness. It is timid and pliant, easily deterred from good, and persuaded to evil. It leads to criminality in one extreme, as

impetuosity of spirit does in another. It is often found in ungodly men, and it sometimes forms the grand defect in the character of pious persons, as in the case of Eli, and of Jehoshaphat. Divine grace operates in rendering such men more firm, resolute, and vigorous, as it doth in rendering men of an opposite temper, more yielding and quiet. The meekness to which the blessing is annexed, is not constitutional, but *gracious*, and men of the most vehement, impetuous, irascible, and implacable dispositions, by looking to Jesus through the grace of God, learn to curb their temper, to cease from resentment, to avoid giving offense by injurious words and actions, to make concessions, and forgive injuries.”

Meekness is the opposite of *self-will* toward God and of *ill-will* toward men. “The meek are those who quietly submit themselves before God, to His Word, to His rod, who follow His directions, and comply with His designs, and are gentle toward men” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). As pointed out above, this is not constitutional, but gracious—a precious fruit of the Spirit’s working. Godly sorrow softens the heart, so that it is made receptive to the entrance of the Word. Meekness consists in the spirit being made pliant, tractable, submissive, teachable. Speaking prophetically through Isaiah, the Saviour said, “The LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto *the meek*” (Isa 61:1), for *they* have bowed to the authority of the law. And again it is written, “For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation” (Psa 149:4).

A word or two on the *fruits* of meekness. First, *Godwards*. Where this grace is in the ascendant, the enmity of the carnal mind is subdued, and its possessor bears God’s chastenings with quietness and patience. Illustrations thereof are seen in the cases of Aaron (Lev 10:3), Eli (1Sa 3:18), and David (Psa 39:9). Supremely it was exemplified by Christ, who declared, “I am a worm, and no man” (Ps. 22:6), which had reference not only to His being humbled into the dust, but also to the fact that there was nothing in Him which resisted the judgments of God, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (Joh 18:11). He was “led [not dragged], as a lamb to the slaughter,” when He was reviled, He reviled not again, when He was buffeted, He threatened not. He was the very King of meekness.

Second, *manwards*. Inasmuch as meekness is that spirit which has been schooled to mildness by discipline and suffering, and brought into sweet resignation to the will of God, it causes the believer to bear patiently those insults and injuries which he receives at the hands of his fellows, and makes him ready to accept instruction or admonition from the least of the saints, moving him to think more highly of others than of himself. Meekness enables the Christian to endure provocations without being inflamed by them—he remains cool when others get heated. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness: considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal 6:1). This means, not with a lordly and domineering attitude, not with a harsh and censorious temper, not with a love of finding fault and desire for inflicting the discipline of the church, but with gentleness, humility, and patience.

But meekness must not be confused with weakness. True meekness is ever manifested by yielding to God’s will, yet it will not yield a principle of righteousness or compromise with evil. God-given meekness can also stand up for God-given rights—when God’s glory is impeached, we must have a zeal which is as hot as fire. Moses was “very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num 12:3), yet when he saw the Israelites dancing before the golden calf, in zeal for JEHOVAH’s honour, he broke the two tables of stone, and put to the sword those who had transgressed. Note how firmly and boldly the apostles stood their ground in Acts 16:35-37. Above all, remember how Christ Himself, in concern for His Father’s glory, made a

whip of cords and drove the desecraters out of the temple. Meekness restrains from private revenge, but it in nowise conflicts with the requirements of fidelity to God, His cause, and His people.

“For they shall inherit the earth” or “land” (Mat 5:5), for both the Hebrew and Greek words possess this double meaning. This promise is taken from Psalm 37:11 and may be understood in a threefold way. First, *spiritually*, as the second half of that verse intimates, “The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of *peace*.” The spirit of meekness is what enables its possessor to get so much enjoyment out of his earthly portion, be it small or large. Delivered from a greedy and grasping disposition, he is satisfied with such things as he has, “A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked” (Psa 37:16). Contentment of mind is one of the fruits of meekness. The haughty and covetous do not “inherit the earth,” though they may own many acres of it. The humble Christian is far happier in a cottage than the wicked in a palace, “Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith” (Pro 15:16).

Second, *literally*. The meek inherit the earth in regard of *right*, being the members of Christ, who is Lord of all. Hence, writing to the saints, Paul said, “For all things are yours; whether...*the world*, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours” (1Co 3:21-22). Right or title to the earth is twofold—civil and spiritual. The former is that which holds good—according to their laws and customs—before *men*, and in regard thereof they are called lords of such lands they have a right unto. The latter is that which is approved before *God*. Adam had this spiritual right to the earth before he fell, but by his sin he forfeited it both for himself and his posterity. But Christ has regained it for all the elect, hence the apostle said, “As having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2Co 6:10). Third, *mystically*—Psalm 37:11 is an Old Testament promise with a New Testament meaning—the land of Canaan was a figure of heaven, of which meekness proves the possessor to be an heir, and for which it is an essential qualification.

From what has been before us let us learn, first, the value of this grace and the need of praying for an increase of the same, “Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment: seek righteousness, seek *meekness*” (Zep 2:3). As a further inducement to this end, mark these precious promises, “The meek shall eat and be satisfied” (Psa 22:26), “The LORD lifteth up the meek” (Psa 147:6), “The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD” (Isa 29:19). Second, see the folly of those who are so diligent in seeking earthly possessions without any regard to Christ. Since all right to the earth was lost by Adam and is only recovered by the Redeemer—until they have part in Him none can with the comfort of a good conscience either purchase or possess any mundane inheritance. Third, let the fact that the meek, through Christ, inherit the earth, serve for a bridle against all inordinate care for the world—since we are members of Christ the supply of every need is certain, and an infinitely better portion is ours than the perishing things of time and sense.

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Mat 5:6). In the first three beatitudes, we are called upon to witness the heart exercises of those who have been awakened by the Spirit God. First, there is a sense of need, a realization of their nothingness and emptiness. Second, there is a judging of self, a consciousness of their guilt, and sorrowing over their lost condition. Third, there is an end of seeking to justify themselves before God, an abandonment of all pretences to personal merit, a taking of their place in the dust before God. And here, in the fourth, the eye of the soul is turned away from self to Another. There is a longing after that which they know they have not got and which they are conscious they urgently need. There has been much needless quibbling as to the precise import of the word,

“righteousness,” in this verse, and it seems to us that most of the commentators have failed to grasp its fullness.

In many Old Testament passages, “righteousness” is synonymous with “salvation,” as will appear from the following, “Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down *righteousness*: let the earth open, and let them bring forth *salvation*, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it” (Isa 45:8). “Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near *my righteousness*; it shall not be far off, and *my salvation* shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion” (Isa 46:12-13). “My righteousness is near; my salvation is set forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust” (Isa 51:5). “Thus saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed” (Isa 56:1). “He hath clothed me with the garments of *salvation*, he hath covered me with the robe of *righteousness*” (Isa 61:10). Yet after all, this does not bring us much nearer, in that “salvation” is one of the most comprehensive terms to be found in the Scriptures. Let us, then, seek to define its meaning a little more closely.

Taking it in its widest latitude, to “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Mat 5:6) means to yearn after God’s favour, image, and felicity. “Righteousness” is a term denoting all spiritual blessings, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Mat 6:33). But more specifically, “righteousness” in our text has reference, first, to the righteousness of faith whereby a sinner is justified freely by divine grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. As the result of his Surety’s obedience being imputed to him, the believer stands *legally righteous* before God. As sinners who have constantly broken the law in thought, word, and deed, we are utterly destitute of righteousness, for “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom 3:10). But God has provided a perfect righteousness in Christ for all who believe—it is the best “robe” put upon each returning prodigal. The merits of Christ’s perfect keeping of the law is reckoned to the account of every sinner who shelters in Him.

Second, this “righteousness” for which the awakened sinner longs is to be understood of *inward and sanctifying* righteousness, for as we so often point out, justification and sanctification are never to be severed. The one in whom the Spirit graciously works desires not only an *imputed* righteousness, but an *imparted* one too. He not only longs for a restoration to God’s favour, but to have God’s image renewed in him. For this twofold “righteousness,” the convicted “hunger and thirst,” expressive of vehement desire, of which the soul is acutely conscious, for as in bodily hunger and thirst there are sharp pangs and an intense longing for their appeasement, so it is with the soul. First, the Spirit brings before the conscience the holy and inexorable requirements of God. Next, He convicts the soul of its destitution and guilt, so that he realizes his abject poverty and lost condition, seeing there is no hope in and from himself. And then He creates a deep hunger and thirst which causes him to look unto and seek relief from Christ, “The Lord our righteousness.”

Like the previous ones, this fourth beatitude describes a *dual* experience—an initial and a continuous, that which begins in the unconverted, but is perpetuated in the saved sinner. There is a repeated exercise of this grace, felt at varying intervals. The one who longed to be saved by Christ, now yearns to be made *like Him*. Looked at in its widest aspect, this hungering and thirsting refers to that panting of the renewed heart after God (Psa 42:1), that yearning for a closer walk with Him, that longing for more perfect conformity to the image of His Son. It tells of those aspirations of the new nature for divine blessings which alone can strengthen, sustain, and satisfy it. Our text presents such a paradox that it is evident no carnal mind ever invented it. Can one who

has been brought into vital union with Him who is the Bread of life and in whom all fullness dwells, be found *still* hungering and thirsting? Yes, such is the experience of the renewed heart. Mark carefully the tense of the verb—it is not, “Blessed are they which have,” but “Blessed are they *which do* hunger and thirst” (Mat 5:5). This has ever been the experience of God’s saints, Psalm 82:4; Philippians 3:8, 14.

“They shall be filled” (Mat 5:6). Like the first part of our text, this also has a double fulfillment, an initial and a continuous. When God creates a hunger and thirst in the soul, it is that He may satisfy it. When the poor sinner is made to feel his need of Christ, it is that he may be drawn to and led to embrace Him. Like the prodigal who came to the Father as a penitent, the believing sinner now feeds on the One figured by the “fatted calf.” He is made to exclaim, “Surely...in the LORD have I righteousness” (Isa 45:24). “They shall be filled” (Mat 5:6) with the peace of God which passeth all understanding. “Filled” with that divine blessing to which no sorrow is added. “Filled” with praise and thanksgiving unto Him who has wrought all our works in us. “Filled” with that which this poor world can neither give nor take away. “Filled” by the goodness and mercy of God, till their cup runneth over. And yet, all that is enjoyed now is but a little foretaste of what God has prepared for them that love Him. In the Day to come we shall be “filled” with divine holiness, for we shall be made “like him” (1Jo 3:2). Then shall we be done with sin forever, then shall we “hunger *no more*, neither thirst *any more*” (Rev 7:16).

As this fourth beatitude has been such a storehouse of comfort to many a tried and troubled believer, let us point out the use which may be made of it by Satan-harassed believers. First, by those whose faith is little and weak. There are not a few in God’s family who sincerely long to please Him in all things and to live in no sin against their conscience, and yet they find in themselves so much distrust and despair of God’s mercy that they are conscious of much more doubting than faith—so that they are brought to seriously question their election and state before God. Here, then, is divine consolation for them—if they genuinely hunger and thirst after righteousness, Christ Himself pronounces them *blessed*. Those who are displeased with their unbelief, who truly desire to be purged from distrust, who long and pray for increased faith and assurance—evidencing their sincerity by diligently using all proper means—are the subjects of God’s approbation.

Second, by those whose sanctification is so imperfect. Many there be who are most anxious to please God and make conscience of all known sins, yet find in themselves so much darkness of mind, activity of rebellious corruption, forwardness in their affections, perverseness in their wills, yea, a constant proneness to all manner of sins. They can perceive so little of the fruits of sanctification, so little evidence of spiritual life, so few signs of divine grace at work within, that they often seriously doubt if they have received any grace at all. This is a fearfully heavy burden and greatly casts down the soul. But here is divine consolation. Christ pronounces, “Blessed,” *not* those who *are full* of righteousness, but those who “hunger and thirst” *after* it. Those who mourn over their depravity, who grieve over the plague of their hearts, who yearn for conformity to Christ—using the means constantly—are accepted of God in Christ.

Third, by the more extreme case of one who has grievously departed from God and long been a backslider, and now conscious of his wickedness, is in despair. Satan will tell him that his case is hopeless, that he is an apostate, that hell is prepared for him, and he must surely be damned. And the poor soul is ready to believe that such must really be the case. He is destitute of peace, all his evidences are eclipsed, he cannot perceive a ray of hope. Nevertheless, here is divine comfort. If he truly mourns over his departure from God, hates himself for his backsliding, sorrows over his sins, truly desires to repent of them, and longs to be reconciled to God and restored to

communion with Him, then he too is among the blessed, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Mat 5:6).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

82. *His Sacred Song*

The second section of David’s song glides so smoothly into the third that there is scarcely a perceptible break between them. In the one he recounts the Lord’s gracious deliverances of him from his numerous and relentless enemies—in the other he states the reasons why He had intervened on his behalf. A few more words now on the closing verses of the former, “He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters; he delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me” (2Sa 22:17-18). Here he freely ascribes unto God the glory of his deliverances—extolling His goodness, power, faithfulness, and sufficiency. If God be for us, it matters not who be against us. Torrents of evil shall not drown the one whose God sits upon the floods to restrain their fury. He has but to speak and the winds are calmed, the downpour ceases, and the floods subside—true alike physically and morally.

“They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay” (2Sa 22:19). This is a parenthetical statement between verses 18 and 20, wherein the writer refers to the determined efforts of his foes to prevent his escape and ensure his destruction. “When David had framed any plan for secreting or securing himself in the day of his calamity, his enemies employed every method of treachery and malice to prevent his success. Thus the men of Keilah were ready to deliver him to Saul (1Sa 23:7-12) and the Ziphites repeatedly informed on him (1Sa 26:1). And therefore, notwithstanding his own prudence and activity, he would have been cut off if the Lord Himself had not protected him by His own immediate and extraordinary interpositions” (Thomas Scott). “But” (blessed “but!”), “the LORD was my stay” (2Sa 22:19)—his support, the One on whom he rested—nor was his confidence disappointed. When the enemy rages most fiercely against us, then is the time to lean most heavily upon the everlasting arms.

“He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me” (2Sa 22:20). It is here that the third division of this inspired song really begins, the main purpose of which is to vindicate David, by showing that he had done nothing to provoke or deserve the fierce attacks which had been made upon him, and to affirm that God had acted in righteousness in favouring him with deliverance. But before taking up this leading thought, let us observe and admire the ways of the Lord. God does not leave His work half done, for after He has defeated the foe, He leads the captive out into liberty. After pining for years in the prison, Joseph was advanced to the palace. From the cave of Adullam, David was elevated to the throne. This illustrates and exemplifies a most important and blessed principle in the dealings of God with His people, and when laid hold of by faith and hope, it affords unspeakable comfort to the oppressed and despondent.

The prison ever precedes the palace in true spiritual experience, not only at our first awakening, but repeatedly throughout the Christian life. The soul is shut up in confinement, before it is brought forth “into a large place” (2Sa 22:20). The spirit of bondage is experienced before we receive the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15). Our frail

craft is made to battle long against the angry waves, before the Lord appears for our relief (Mat 14:22-33). Bear this steadily in mind, dear reader, while you are passing through the day of calamity—"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will *complete it*" (see Phi 1:6). Enlargement of spirit will be the more appreciated after a season of sorrowful confinement. Remember, then, that Joseph did not die in prison, nor did David *end* his days in the cave of Adullam—"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psa 30:5). Sometimes we are granted a foretaste of that joy even in this vale of tears, but even if we are not, all weeping shall end when the night is over.

Once again, we would remind ourselves that the *antitypical David* must be kept before us as we pass from verse to verse of this song, for the experiences of the members are identical with those which were endured by the Head of the mystical body. Christ, too, could say, "They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay" (2Sa 22:19). Never forget that the Redeemer Himself passed through a day of calamity. Why, then, should the redeemed think it a strange thing if they, too, encounter the same? *He* was beset by merciless foes. His liberty was taken away when they arrested Him. He was buffeted and scourged—sufficient, then, for the disciple to be as his Master. O that we also may be able to say with Him, "but the LORD was my stay." Yet, He, too, could say, "He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me" (2Sa 22:20). Yes, He was delivered from the grave, removed from this earth, and given the position of honour and glory at God's right hand, and this, because God delighted in Him, Isaiah 42:1.

Nevertheless, it is a great mistake to confine our attention, as some have done, to the antitypical David in this passage. For example, in his comments upon this portion of David's song, Charles H. Macintosh (1820-1896) said, "These verses (2Sa 22:21-25) prove that in this entire song, we have a greater than David. David could not say, 'The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands did he recompense me.' How different is this language from that of the 51st Psalm. There it is, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies.' This was suitable language for a fallen sinner, as David felt himself to be. He dare not speak of his righteousness, which was as filthy rags; and as to his recompense, he felt that the Lake of Fire was all that he could in justice claim upon the ground of what he was. Hence, therefore, the language of our chapter is the language of Christ, who *alone* could use it" (The Life and Times of David, King of Israel).

Such confusion of thought is really inexcusable in one who posed as a teacher of preachers, and who was so fond of criticizing and condemning the expositions of servants of God which issued from pulpits in what he dubbed the "sects" and "systems" of Christendom. One might just as well affirm that, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2Ti 4:7) is "the language of Christ, who alone could use it." And then add, "How different is the language of Paul in Philippians 3, 'What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ' (Phi 3:7-9)." The simple fact is that the apostle was speaking from two radically different viewpoints in those respective passages—in Philippians 3, he defines the ground of his acceptance before God, whereas in 2 Timothy 4, he refers to his ministerial fidelity. It was thus with David—in Psalm 51, he states the basis on which he sought

God's forgiveness—in 2 Samuel 22:21-25, he relates his innocence in connection with his enemies.

We hardly expect one who belonged to the religious school that Mr. Mackintosh did, to be capable of drawing theological distinctions, but we *are* surprised to find such an able exegete as Alexander Maclaren (1826-1929) erring on this same point. He, too, failed to grasp the psalmist's scope or object in the passage which we are now considering, as is clear from his remarks thereon in his otherwise helpful work on "The life of David as reflected in his Psalms." It was his mistaking of the purport of these verses (2Sa 22:20-25—repeated in substance in Psa 18:19-24) which caused him to argue that this song (and Psalm) must have been written before his awful sin in connection with Uriah. "The marked assertion of his own purity, as well as the triumphant tone of the whole, neither of which characteristics correspond to the sad and shaded years after his fall, point in the same direction" (p. 154).

"He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me" (2Sa 22:20). The "large place" is in designed contrast from the cramped confinement of the caves in which David had been obliged to dwell when his enemies were so hotly pursuing him. It may also refer to the vast extent of his dominions and the great riches he was blest with. God not only preserved, but prospered him, granting him liberty and enlargement. The Lord not only displayed His power on behalf of His servant, but also manifested His particular favour toward him. This is intimated in, "He delivered me, because he delighted in me," which signifies that God acted not from His general providence, but from His covenant love. Should it be asked, How would David know this? The answer is, by the communications of divine grace and comfort in his soul which accompanied the deliverances, and by the communion he had with God in them.

"The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me" (2Sa 22:21). It seems strange that these words have perplexed anyone with a spiritual mind, for if they be not strained beyond their original and obvious intention, there is nothing in them to occasion any difficulty. Let them be read in the light of their context, and they are plain and simple. David was alluding to God's delivering of him from Goliath and Saul, and from others of his foes. What had been his conduct toward *them*? Had he committed any serious crimes which warranted their hostility? Had he grievously wronged any of them? Had they justly or unjustly sought his life? His own brother preferred a charge against him (1Sa 17:28) just before he engaged Goliath, and from several of the Psalms there seems to be good ground for concluding that Saul accused him of pride, covetousness, and treachery. But what real basis was there for such? Read the record of David's life, and where is there a hint that he coveted the throne or hated Saul?

No, the fact of the matter is that David was entirely innocent of any evil designs against any of those who persecuted him. Further proof of this is found in one of his prayers to God, "Let not them that are mine enemies *wrongfully* rejoice over me: neither let them wink with the eye that hate me *without* a cause" (Psa 35:19). It was because he had neither given his enemies just cause for their persecution, and because so far from retaliating, he had borne them no malice, that he enjoyed the testimony of a good conscience. David's character had been grievously aspersed and many hideous things laid to his charge—but his conduct had been upright and conscientious to an uncommon degree. "In all his persecutions by Saul, he would not injure him or his party. Nay, he employed every opportunity to serve the cause of Israel, though rewarded by envy, treachery, and ingratitude" (Thomas Scott). When maligned and oppressed by men, it is an inestimable consolation to have the assurance of our own hearts of our innocence and integrity, and therefore

we should spare no pains in exercising ourselves “to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men” (Act 24:16).

In saying, “The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness” (2Sa 22:21) David enunciated one of the principles operative in the divine government of this world. “Albeit that the dispensations of divine grace are to the fullest degree sovereign and irrespective of human merit, yet in the dealings of Providence there is often discernible a rule of justice by which the injured are at length avenged and the righteous ultimately delivered” (Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892). That statement manifests an intelligent grasp of the viewpoint from which David was writing, namely, the *governmental ways of God* in time, and not the ground upon which He saves eternally. These declarations of the psalmist had nothing whatever to do with his justification in the high court of heaven, but concerned the innocence and integrity of his conduct toward his enemies on earth, because of which God delivered him from them.

“For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God” (2Sa 22:22). We regard David as continuing to refer unto how he had conducted himself during the time that his life had been in danger. Certainly his language here is not to be taken absolutely, nor even as a relative declaration upon his life as a whole. Notwithstanding the provocations he received from Saul, and later from Absalom—and notwithstanding the efforts which we doubt not Satan made at such seasons to make him question God’s goodness and faithfulness, tempting him to cast off allegiance to Him—David persevered in the paths of righteousness and refused to apostatise. The Psalms written by him at these trying periods of his life make it unmistakably clear that David’s piety waned not, despite the most aggravating circumstances.

“For all his judgments were before me: and as for his statutes, I did not depart from them” (2Sa 22:23). “His conscience witnessed to him that he had ever made the Word of God his rule, and had kept to it. Wherever he was, God’s judgments were before him, and his guide; whithersoever he went, he took his religion along with him; and though he was forced to depart from his country, and sent, as it were, to serve other gods, yet, as for God’s statutes, he did not depart from them, but kept the way of the Lord and walked in it” (Matthew Henry). This was sure evidence of the genuineness of his piety. It is comparatively easy to discharge the external duties of religion while we are at home, surrounded by those like-minded, but the real test of our sincerity comes when we go abroad and sojourn among a people who make no profession. David not only worshipped God while he abode at Jerusalem, but also while he tarried in the land of the Philistines.

“I was *also* upright before *him*, and have kept myself from mine iniquity” (2Sa 22:24). This declaration manifestly clinches the interpretation we have made of the preceding verses. In them he had referred solely to his conduct unto his *enemies*, which conduct has been strictly regulated by the divine statutes—particularly had he heeded, “Thou shalt not kill” (Exo 20:13), when Saul was entirely at his mercy. Now he appeals to God Himself, and declares that in *His* sight, *too*, he had acted blamelessly toward his foes. “Sincerity is here claimed—sincerity, such as would be accounted genuine before the bar of God. Whatever evil men might think of him, David felt that he had the good opinion of God” (Charles H. Spurgeon). Various explanations have been given of “mine iniquity,” but in the light of the context, we regard the reference as being to David’s refusal to slay Saul when in his power.

“Therefore the LORD hath recompensed me according to my righteousness; according to my cleanness in his eye sight” (2Sa 22:25). They greatly err who suppose that David here gave vent to a boastful spirit. He was pleading his innocence before the bar of *human* equity. A man is not guilty of pride in knowing that he is truthful, honest, merciful. No, nor when he believes that God

rewards him in providence because of these virtues, for such is a most evident matter of fact. Yea, so patent is this, that many of the ungodly recognize that honesty is the best policy for this life. It *would be* self-righteousness to transfer such thoughts from the realm of providential government into the spiritual and everlasting kingdom, for *there* grace reigns not only supreme, but alone, in the distribution of divine favours. A godly man with a clear conscience, who knows himself to be upright, is not required to deny his consciousness and hypocritically make himself out to be worse than he is.

Having shown how the above verses may be understood, relatively, of David himself, let us very briefly point out how they applied to Christ without any qualification. “I have kept the ways of the LORD” (Psa 18:21). When tempted to forsake them, He indignantly cried, “Get thee hence, Satan” (Mat 4:10). “And have not wickedly departed from my God” (Psa 18:21). “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” (Joh 8:46), was His challenge to His enemies. “For all his judgments were before me” (Psa 18:22). “I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me” (Joh 17:8), He affirmed. “I was also upright before him” (Psa 18:23). “I do always those things that please him” (Joh 8:29), was His declaration. “And I kept myself from mine iniquity” (Psa 18:23). So far from slaying those who came to arrest, He healed one of them (Luk 22:51). “Therefore hath the LORD hath recompensed me according to my righteousness” (Psa 18:24). “Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Psa 45:7) is the Spirit’s confirmation.

“With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright...But thine eyes are upon the haughty, that thou mayest bring them down” (2Sa 22:26, 28). These verses announced a general principle in God’s government of this world. We say “general,” for God exercises His sovereign discretion in the actual application of it. On the one hand, we are told that some of the Old Testament heroes of faith, “Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword,” etc., yet we also read, “others had trial of cruel mockings...were stoned,” etc. (Heb 11:34, 36-37). The Baptist was beheaded and Stephen stoned, yet Peter and Paul were miraculously delivered from their enemies.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

7. *The Messianic*

“Jesus the mediator of the new covenant” (Heb 12:24). From the contents or blessings of the covenant, we turn now to consider the *measures and means* which were to give effect unto their actual communication. First and foremost among these is *the Mediator*—a word denoting one who goes between two parties to arrange any matters of importance in which they may have a common interest or to settle any differences with a view to their permanent reconciliation. It is in the latter sense the term is used in such connections as the present. What the precise work of the Mediator is, what He does in order to the efficiency of His intervention, depends, of course, on the relation of the parties towards each other and the matters of disagreement which have separated them. Now the character of that covenant of which Christ is the Mediator enables us to form a definite conception of the nature and extent of His mediation.

The Messianic covenant is a dispensation of free promises of grace and mercy to guilty and condemned sinners. Should it be asked, Wherein lay the *need for a Mediator* in connection with

such gracious promises? Might they not have been given and fulfilled without requiring the intervention of a middle party? It would be sufficient answer to say that this question relates to the realm of fact and not of supposition. It is not at all a matter of what God might or might not, could or could not do, but what He *has* done—it has pleased Him to appoint a Mediator. It has seemed most meet unto God, out of a regard to what is due unto Himself, to determine that His blessings shall be dispensed under certain definite conditions, and therefore it is for us to humbly acquiesce and gratefully accept what is graciously offered us, on the terms on which that offer is made. Nevertheless, it has pleased God to intimate sufficiently as to demonstrate unto us His matchless wisdom in such a constitution of things as the Mediatorship of Christ discloses.

First, *sin is an evil* so offensive and malignant, and attended with consequences so sweeping and disastrous, as to necessitate (under the *regime* divinely appointed) a separation between God and those who commit it—a separation which can only be removed by means which shall leave the character and government of God uncompromised and shall effectually stay the ravages of so fearful a plague. To represent the Most High as simply a loving Father to His creatures is not only extremely partial, but altogether an erroneous view of His relations to us. His love is indeed the originating impulse of all the blessings of the covenant. But God is also a moral Governor, a righteous King, whose character is reflected in the government which He exercises, and therefore does He manifest His holy hatred of sin and justly punishes it. Hence it is that when He seeks the return of sinners unto Himself it is by a system of mediation which vindicates His perfections and magnifies His law.

Second, *sinner themselves need* a Mediator. They are *enemies*—not such as those who have indeed wandered from God, but are still influenced by some lingering affection for Him and would be glad to return if they only knew how. They are sinners not through inadvertence, but transgressors of settled purpose and from the heart. The holiness of God, just in proportion as they obtain glimpses of it, is hated by them. They choose the evil and loathe the good. They love darkness rather than light. They do not like to retain the knowledge of God in their minds, but do all they can to dismiss Him from their thoughts. It is neither carelessness nor involuntary ignorance which occasions this feeling, but positive hostility—the carnal mind is enmity against God. When confronted with the truth and made to feel they are under the divine condemnation, they regard God as their worst enemy, committed to their punishment, and are conscious of feelings of aversion, which nothing can allay but such views of God as mediation unfolds.

Nor is this all. We require someone to undertake for us who shall not only have power to bring us to a state of subjection and obedience, but to take care of our interests—to tend us and bear with us under our manifold infirmities. Our very consciousness testifies to the need of this. Our helplessness is painfully felt from the moment we are awakened to perceive the reality of our awful condition. And even though provision has been made for our access to God, and we are freely invited to avail ourselves of the same, yet so awe-inspiring are the views we must have of the divine character that we instinctively shrink from His ineffable purity, and confidence fails us. We are unmistakably aware that even in our sincerest approach to the thrice holy God we have need of someone to intervene between us—some “Daysman” (as Job expressed it) who can lay His hand upon us both.

Third, *Christ Himself* is thereby greatly glorified. This is the supreme end in the divine administration, for *He* is the Alpha and the Omega in all the counsels of God. It is entirely useless to speculate as to what might have been the particular status of Christ or what office He had filled, if sin had never defiled the universe. Evil *has* entered, entered by the permission of God, and that for His own wise reasons. That the entrance of sin into our world has provided

opportunity for God to display His incomparable wisdom, and that it has been overruled to the magnifying of His dear Son, needs no laboured effort of ours to show. The perfect love of Christ to the Father, evidenced by His voluntary self-abasement and obedience unto death, shines forth in meridian splendour. The grand reward He has received for His stupendous undertaking, and the revenue of praise which He receives from those on whose behalf He suffered, affords full compensation. On His head are “many crowns” (Rev 19:12)—in virtue of His mediatorial office.

No formal mention of mediation was contained in the earliest covenants, though by implication they involved the idea of it. The covenants made during the infancy of our race were but partial disclosures of the scheme of mercy, bringing to light particular features of God’s gracious purposes, adapted to the times when they were respectively given. Yet the germ of the truth respecting mediation was in both the Noahic and Abrahamic covenants, for the sacrifices which accompanied them bespoke a special intervention as the appointed means of ratifying the promises they contained. The promise (to Abraham) of a seed in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed, and (to David) of a righteous King under whose government the people of God should dwell in safety, only needed that expansion of meaning which was subsequently given, to realize all that the most effective mediation comprehends.

In the Siniatic covenant, though, this grand truth came out much more distinctly. When on the Mount, God drew near to the people and spake to them out of the thick cloud, they said to Moses, “Behold, the LORD our God hath showed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth. Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, then shall we die. For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? Go *thou* near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto *thee*; and we will hear it, and do it” (Deu 5:24-27). Thus, at the request of the people, Moses became their *mediator*—an arrangement which the Lord approved of as wise and beneficial (Deu 5:28).

It is quite apparent that the visible manifestation of God amidst the fire of Sinai and the awful utterances which struck upon their ears were the things which influenced the great majority of the people in preferring their request. They were too destitute of spiritual apprehension to be capable of looking beyond what met their physical senses. Yet who can doubt that there were some, at least, of the people, sufficiently enlightened to feel most painfully their unfitness for any direct intercourse with God, and to whom the intervention of a mediator was a matter of felt necessity in order to the creation of confidence in their worship. To elicit that very feeling on the part of the godly remnant, was one end of the divine manifestation at Horeb, for the divine statement in reply to their request involved the assurance that they were right in entertaining this conviction, and accordingly God promised to raise up a Prophet from amongst them like unto Moses, through whom all future intercourse with God should be conducted (Deu 18:15-18).

It is apparent, then, that the appointment of a Mediator is indispensable to the existence of any spiritual intercourse between a holy God and sinful men. The true reason for this springs from the nature of sin, viewed in connection with the relation which the Most High sustains to our guilty race. Accurate conceptions of what that relation involves, and of what sin is in itself and in its effects, will go far to determine the character of the Mediator’s work as made known in Scripture, on the complete accomplishment of which the success of His mediation depends. Mistakes on these points vitiate our entire views of the Gospel. The *terms on which divine* intercourse with sinners is possible is a matter of vital importance. That awful breach could not be healed by

anything done by the offenders. The righteousness of God's character and government must be vindicated and the law honoured before grace is conferred and true fellowship with God established—to effect this was the object of the work committed to Christ.

When Scripture refers to Christ as *the Mediator*, that term is comprehensive of the entire work of mediation in all its departments, which, as the spiritual Deliverer of His people, He voluntarily undertook. We may dwell upon the different offices He sustains, we may delineate and illustrate the character and results of His actings in those offices separately, but His mediation embraces them *all*. Mediation is not something additional to what He does in the several capacities in which He is held forth in Scripture, but rather is it a term which, in the fullness of its meaning, includes them all. His prophetic, priestly, and regal offices are all essential to His mediation. Thus, in giving a brief exposition of His mediation, all that is necessary to our present design is to present a mere outline of the particulars. We cannot continue indefinitely this already lengthy series of articles, so must now content ourselves with a succinct statement, which will afford a comprehensive view of the true state of the case.

First, Christ, as Mediator, is the supreme *Prophet*. Although in one aspect, His priestly work is the foundation of all His other dealings as Mediator, yet since it is with His prophetic office that we first come into contact, we begin here. As Prophet, Christ is the great Revealer of the character and will of God. In His earliest instruction—the Sermon on the Mount—He explained and vindicated the revelation previously given, but which through the errors of blind guides had been perverted. In addition, He furnished in His own mission the supreme manifestation of God's love and grace. He revealed, too, the true nature of that salvation which fallen men needed, the character of that change which the Holy Spirit must effect in them, the certainty of a future life of bliss or woe, according to present character, and the solemnities of that judgment with which the present order of things shall close. To His apostles He assigned the duty, under His own superintendence, of amplifying what He had in substance taught.

Christ, too, is the source of *all inward illumination*, whereby the truth is, in any case, practically apprehended and savingly believed, “No man knoweth...who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him” (Luk 10:22), is His own statement. A clear and Scriptural knowledge of the truth is obtained only by divine teaching. Nor does this arise from any deficiency in the truth itself—the hindrance lies in the mind and heart of the sinner. There is a moral blindness, an aversion to holy truth, which no means—be they perfectly adapted to the object in view—can ever remove. The fallen sinner is so utterly depraved, so opposed to the divine requirements, that he has neither will nor desire to apprehend what is holy, and none but the Spirit of Christ can effect a cure. It is the province of Christ, as the great Prophet of the church, to heal this diseased state. *He* enables the mind to understand and the heart to receive the truth.

Second, Christ, as Mediator, is the great *High Priest*, an office which involved the making of expiation and intercession. To these two particulars the Levitical dispensation bore a continuous and ample testimony. The numerous sacrifices, and the annual intervention of the high priest under the law, were types—dim figures of what was to be realized in Him who was to come. The true meaning of those sacrifices may be gathered from the distinct explanations which accompanied them. They were substitutionary satisfactions for the soul that sinned, for it is “The blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” They were designed to teach the people the idea of the necessity for expiation for sin, and the intercession for them before God, founded on these sacrifices, completed the truth intended to be taught. They clearly intimated the arrangement by

which alone their sins could be remitted, and the blessings which they need obtain. And Christ, by His life and death, provided the substance or reality.

The views of the priestly work of Christ, supplied by the types under the old economy, receive full confirmation in the testimony of the apostles. In their teaching there is no uncertain sound on this subject. As samples we cite the following, “A merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” “But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 2:17; 7:24-25 and cf. Rev 1:5-6). As the personally sinless One, Christ was (legally) made sin for His people, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Such is the very essence of the Gospel, and they who deny it, place themselves outside the pale of divine mercy.

Third, Christ, as Mediator, is *the King* of Zion. Under the Davidic covenant not only was this prefigured in the sovereignty conferred upon the man after God’s own heart, but definite promises were given of the raising up of a righteous King, under whose government truth and peace should abound, and it is in Christ that they receive their perfect fulfillment. The New Testament represents His exaltation and the authority with which He is now invested as the designed recompense of the work which He accomplished, see Ephesians 1:19-23; Philippians 2:8-11.

It was part of the divine arrangement that the administration of the economy of grace should be committed to Him by whose sufferings and death the foundation has been laid for a true intercourse between God and sinful men. The supreme object for conferring the regal dignity upon the Messiah was His own vindication and glory, but the subordinate design was that He should give practical effect to the divine purpose in the actual saving of all God’s elect. The very nature of that purpose serves to determine the character and extent of the work committed to Him. That purpose respects the spiritual deliverance of God’s people, scattered throughout the world, and therefore is it a work effected against every conceivable opposition. The rule of the Messiah is supreme and universal, for nothing short of that is adequate to the occasion. “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1Pe 3:22). It is by the discharge of these three offices Christ effectually performs His work of mediation.

THE UNBELIEF OF THOMAS

It is remarkable that one of the disciples should have been absent from the assembly on such an interesting occasion as the appearing of Christ in its midst after His resurrection (Joh 20). What was the cause of his absence would be worse than useless to conjecture. But the intention of Providence in it is obvious. It was to display the natural unbelief, as to the things of God, that is in the heart of man, as to teach us the kind of evidence that God accounts sufficient for His saving truth. Why was one of the disciples absent? Why was this disciple, Thomas? The narrative itself affords an answer to both questions. God’s providence intended to give us a specimen unbelief even in His own people. Thomas was peculiarly incredulous, therefore he was the person fitted to act the part designed for him on this occasion. If *Thomas* was afterwards convinced, there is no room left for captiousness to allege that the fact of Christ’s resurrection was received by the disciples on slight grounds, without sufficient evidence and caution.

The unbelief of Thomas was unreasonable and sinful in a degree beyond expression. Why did he not believe the united testimony of the other apostles? He should have received the testimony of any one of them. Unbelief justly exposed him to eternal condemnation. Has Thomas a license for unbelief, more than any other of the human race? Must he not be liable to condemnation on the same ground with the rest of mankind? Must he be satisfied in his own whims with respect to the evidence of this fact? Can he say with innocence, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (Joh 20:25)? Did ever any infidel express a more unreasonable demand for the evidence of Christ's resurrection and the truth of the Christian religion? The demands of skeptics are moderate and sober, compared to this intemperance of unbelief. The most unreasonable of them demand only that a particular revelation of the Gospel should be made to every man. This falls far short of the extravagance and unreasonableness of the unbelief of Thomas.

But there is wisdom in this madness. If Thomas is unreasonable, God uses his unreasonableness to effect a great purpose. By this means, in the satisfaction given to Thomas, we have the fact of the resurrection established on evidence beyond all suspicion. The possibility of delusion is removed, and the reality that it *was* Jesus whom the apostles saw, rests not merely on the testimony of their eyes, but of the hands of the most unreasonable unbeliever that ever was in the world. Of all the infidels that ever existed, Thomas was the most extravagant. Voltaire and Hume are men of moderation, compared to this prince of infidels. Nothing will satisfy this philosopher, but the handling of the prints of the nails in his Master. Was it not possible that the risen body of Jesus should have had *no scars*? Was not *this* the most likely thing to be expected? That Almighty power which could raise Him, could raise Him without a mark of His crucifixion. But Thomas was in all respects unreasonable, that through this, Jesus might exhibit Himself with evidence of His resurrection, that the most extravagant incredulity could presume to demand.

By this providential fact, the Lord teaches us that His own disciples believe in Him, *not* because they are naturally more teachable, or less incredulous than others. It is God only who overcomes their unbelief. They are not only by nature the children of wrath, even as others, but after they are brought to faith and life, the only security of their perseverance is the favour and love of God in Christ. They are kept by faith, and that faith is not of themselves, but is the gift of God. The strongest of all the disciples of Christ would not abide in the faith for a single day, if, like Peter, or like Thomas, they were to be given up to their own natural unbelief. But if the strongest would not stand in their strength, the feeblest will not be plucked from the hand of the heavenly Father. After the fearful example of Peter and of Thomas, let no disciple of Christ trust in his own steadfastness. We are strong only when, seeing our own weakness, we have our strength in the Rock of our salvation. The world in general, and philosophers in particular, look upon Christians as a weak-minded people, who are prone to believe without sufficient evidence. The man of science, even when he can find no fault with the man of God, still thinks himself justifiable in considering him as utterly below himself in mental powers. He thinks there must be a soft place in his head somewhere. The best thing that he can find to say is that he is "an amiable enthusiast." The truth, however, is far otherwise. Whether the believer is a man of strength of intellect, or feeble in mind, he would be equally an unbeliever with the most talented of his enemies, were he left to himself. Yea, the weakest would likely be the most presumptuous, and rash, and blasphemous, in the extravagance of their complaints against the Gospel. Thomas would not be behind Paine in the rashness of his demands and assertions. The Christian is made a little child by the Word and Spirit of God, but by nature he receives not the things of the Spirit, for they are to him, as well as to others, foolishness, until his eyes are opened to discover them.

It is a matter of fact, worthy of particular attention, that the simplest of the men of God make a more correct and a more scientific estimate of the philosopher, than the philosopher can make of him. The philosopher, with all his knowledge, knows not *God* by his philosophy. He knows not, then, the correct and enlightened views of the man of God on the highest of all sciences. The philosopher, not appreciating the value of the soul, nor the amount of the unspeakable glory of the heavenly inheritance, as well as of the danger of overlooking condemnation, sees not the wisdom of the conduct of the man of God. He has no way to judge of him but by himself, and therefore, as he himself is wise, the other must be a fool. The pleasure of knowledge, and the glory of fame are, with the philosopher, the very essence of the happiness of the third heaven. In all this, the man of God, even the weakest of them, can enter into the feelings and sentiments of the men of science, for, by nature, he is such a one himself. And he still finds, in his very best moments, that should he lose sight of heaven and be left of God, he would make his paradise with the philosophers, or at least, according to his taste with some group of those who are, in different ways, in pursuit of earthly joys.

The Christian is not amazed that men seek the praise of men more than that of God, and that they pursue the things of this world rather than the things of God. He is rather amazed that God has turned *himself* out of this course and enables him to resist the temptations which he daily meets in the world. To him there is no mystery in the character and choice of the philosopher, of the sensualist, of the men of the world. In them he sees himself as he is by nature. It is with new eyes that he sees spiritual things in a correct manner. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man" (1Co 2:14-15). The Christian is the true philosopher. He not only has knowledge of the most sublime of all the sciences, of which the wise men of this world are as destitute as the wild ass of the wilderness, but he has that discernment of human views and character which human wisdom never has attained. The Christian knows the philosopher better than the philosopher knows himself. Of all the sciences, the science of mind is the most sublime. Christians have a knowledge of the mind of man which no mere philosopher can obtain by his art. The philosopher gives an account of himself and of others, and of his own notions and views, which every Christian can detect as delusive and unreal.

In this providential fact, we see the forbearance and condescension of Christ to His people, even when they are unreasonable. He graciously removes the doubts of Thomas, though He might justly have left him to perish in his presumptuous unbelief. From this we may be assured, that, in one way or other, the Lord will remove the doubts of His people with respect to the evidence of the Gospel. If He will not give them that evidence which extravagance may rashly demand, He will keep them from such extravagance or remove their doubts by opening their eyes to understand the proper evidence. This will be the same thing with presenting to their view and to their touch His hands and His side. He will assuredly overcome the unbelief and hardness of heart of the most obstinate of His chosen ones. If He were not provoked to give up on Thomas, His patience cannot meet with a more extravagant case of incredulity. He could call a Saul of Tarsus in the midst of his furious enmity to Him, and He did overcome the unbelief of the incredulous and obstinate Thomas. What a consolation is this to the believer! What thoughts of unbelief arise in the heart!

And how Satan could perplex the mind of the highest saint on earth—none but the believer can have any conception. If we were for a few minutes, from a state of the most assured faith, to be given into the hands of Satan to sift us as wheat, how would our faith fail us! Who knows what

effect the fiery darts of the wicked one would have upon our minds, if they were not quenched? And quenched they cannot be but on the shield of faith, and in the case supposed, God permits that faith to fail. What, then, will support us? How shall we without dismay look into an eternal world? But though God may for a moment suffer us to be tried by the tempter, He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it. Our constant prayer to God ought to be that He would not give us into the hands of Satan or that He will continue to give us the shield of faith. In matters of so great moment, the mind, particularly at death, naturally looks for and wishes every evidence of the truth, and sometimes demands unreasonable evidence. Nothing but the blood of Christ should be before our eyes, and we should always remember that we glorify God, not by doubting, but by believing His Word.

Were not the Lord Jesus present with His people in the time of their trial, and especially at the time of their death, nothing could deliver them from horror. That they are not only saved from fear, but enabled to rejoice and triumph in death, is the surest evidence that the Gospel is true. It is not surprising that persons ignorant of the character of God, or their own character, and of the consequences of sin, should be stupidly unconcerned at death. But the Christian knows too much to be kept from the very agonies of hell, if he has not the life of heaven when he passes through the valley and shadow of death. In the removal of the doubts of reason, let us gain confidence that the Lord will not forsake us in the time of our need. To a Christian, who is deeply acquainted with his own weakness, hell itself is not a greater object of horror than to be given up without assistance from God—to wrestle and combat with the prince of this world at the hour of death.

It is remarkable that the Lord, though He complied with the unreasonable demand for evidence in the case of Thomas, yet He would not listen to the request of the rich man in hell, for the conviction of his relatives on earth, “Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment” (Luk 16:27-28). Did Abraham yield to the proposal and admire the plan? No. “Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luk 16:28-31). Our skeptics are still calling for more or better evidence. If the Gospel is true, they allege, it should have evidence against which no man could find objection. Let them alone. Press on them the evidence that God has given of the truth of His Gospel. If they believe not this, it will be found in the day of judgment that they have not rejected it from its insufficiency, but from their own enmity to the truth. Testimony is a sufficient ground of evidence, and if they reject the testimony of God by His apostles, they will justly perish.

And the same thing will hold true with respect to the denial of the testimony of God with regard to any particular doctrine, and any particular part. The enemies of the doctrine, or fact recorded, will allege a want of proof, and on the authority of philosophical doctrines, will take on them to modify the testimony of God. They make the dogmas of human science an authority paramount to the testimony of God in the Scriptures. This is the boldness, the blasphemy of infidelity. If God has given His testimony on any part, it is evidence paramount in authority to every other. To prove the truth alleged on such authority, nothing is necessary but to show that it is the result of the fair exposition of the laws of language. Let God be true and let all men be liars. Against the testimony of God, the philosopher is not to be heard more than a convicted perjurer. Our Lord, even though, for His own wise purposes, indulged Thomas, yet did not approve of his

unbelief, nor of his demand. He did not ascribe his incredulity to greater talents, or greater caution, or greater concern about the truth, than were discovered by his brethren. On the contrary, He shows that they rather are blessed who will believe *without* such evidence as Thomas demanded. There are two extremes, equally to be avoided, into which men are prone to fall. Some believe without evidence, believe against all evidence, believe what all evidence, capable of being submitted to the mind of man, shows to be absurd and impossible. On the other hand, there are some who unreasonably refuse evidence that is sufficient, evidence which God has pronounced sufficient, and look on themselves as manifesting greater intellect or wisdom, in demanding evidence of another kind, which God has not appointed. “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (Joh 20:29)—Alexander Carson, 1776-1844.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

6. Its Nature

We began this article last month by calling attention to the fact that the only reason why any God-fearing soul believes in the doctrine of election is because he finds it clearly and prominently revealed in His Word, and hence it follows that our only source of information thereon is the Word itself. Yet, what has just been said is much too general to be of specific help to the earnest inquirer. In turning to the Scriptures for light upon the mystery of election, it is most essential that we should bear in mind that Christ is the key to every part of them, “In the volume of the book it is written of me” (Heb 10:7), He declares, and therefore if we attempt to study this subject apart from Him, we are certain to err. In preceding months, we have shown evidence that Christ is the Grand Original of election and it is from that starting point we must proceed if we are to make any right advance.

What has just been pointed out holds good not only in the general, but in the particular. For instance, in connection with that special branch of our subject which was principally before us in last month’s issue, we will now follow up from this particular viewpoint. If we go right back to the beginning itself then it will appear that God was pleased, and so resolved, to go forth into creature communion, which is to say that He determined to bring into existence creatures who should enjoy fellowship with Himself. His own glory was alone the supreme end in this determination, for, “the LORD hath made all things for himself” (Pro 16:4). We repeat that His own glory was the sole and sufficient motive which induced God to create at all, “Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom 11:35-36).

The principal glory which God designed to Himself in election was the manifestation of *the glory of His grace*. This is irrefutably established by, “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children through [Greek] Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace” (Eph 1:5-6). Grace is one of those illustrious perfections in the divine character, which is glorious in itself, and had ever remained so though no creature had been formed. But God has so displayed this attribute in election that His people will praise and render glory to it throughout the endless ages yet to be. God showed His holiness in the giving of the law, His power in the making of the world, His justice in casting the wicked into hell—but

His grace shines forth especially in predestination and what His elect are predestinated unto. So, too, when it is said of God, “That he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory” (Rom 9:3), the prime reference is to His *grace* as Ephesians 1:7 shows.

The second person in the Trinity was predestinated to be God-man, being first decreed, for we are “chosen...in him” (Eph 1:4), which presupposes Him to be chosen first, as the soil in which we are set. We are predestinated unto the adoption of children, yet it is “through Jesus Christ” (see Eph 1:5). So we read, “Who verily was foreordained [*as* “Christ”—see previous verse] before the foundation of the world” (1Pe 1:20). As we shall show in a later article (D.V.), that expression, “before the foundation of the world” is not merely a note of time, but chiefly one of eminence or preference, that God had *Christ* in His view before His intention to create the world for Him and His people. Now we have shown in a previous article that Christ was ordained to be God-man for much higher ends than our salvation, namely, for God’s own self to delight in, to behold the perfect image of Himself in a creature, by that union to communicate Himself to that Man in a manner and degree not possible to any mere creature as such.

Together with the Son’s being predestinated to be God-man, there falls unto His glorious person, as His inheritance, to be the sovereign end of all things else which God should make and the end of whatever of His intelligent creatures He should be pleased to choose unto glory. This is clear from, “For all things are yours...and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (1Co 3:21, 23), which is spoken of in reference of endship. As you, the saints, are the end for which all things were ordained, so Christ is the end of you, and Christ is God’s *end or design* in acting. We say that Christ is “the sovereign end,” and not the supreme end, for God Himself is above and over all, but Christ is the sovereign end unto all creation, having joint-authority with God, under God. So it is declared that, “by him, and for him,” were all things created (Col 1:16), as it is said of God in Romans 11:36. Thus this sovereign end in creation fell to Him as the inheritance of the Mediator, “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand” (Joh 3:35).

In the predestination of the Son of man unto union with the Son of God, the constituting of Him through that union to be the sovereign end of all things, there was conferred upon the man Christ Jesus thus exalted the highest possible favour, immeasurably transcending all the grace shown unto the elect any way considered, so that if the election of *us* be to the praise of the glory of God’s grace, *His* much more so. More honour has been conferred upon “that holy thing” (Luk 1:35) born of the virgin than upon all the members of His mystical body put together—and it was *grace* pure and simple, sovereign grace, which bestowed it. What was therein His humanity, simply considered, which entitled it to such an exaltation? Nor could there be any desert foreseen which required it, for it must be said of the man Christ Jesus, as of every other creature, “for who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1Co 4:7).

Let it not be forgotten that in decreeing the Son of man into union with the second person of the Trinity, with all the honour and glory involved therein, that God was perfectly *free*, as in everything else, to have decreed Him or not decreed Him, as He would. Yea, had He pleased, He could have appointed the arch-angel rather than the seed of the woman, to that inestimable privilege. It was, therefore, *free grace* in God which made that decree, and by how much loftier was the dignity conferred upon Christ above His fellows, so much greater was the grace. The predestination of the man Jesus, then, is the highest example of grace, and thus God’s greatest end in predestination *to manifest His grace* (from whence election hath its title to be styled “the election of grace,” Rom 11:5) was accomplished in Him above His brethren, that He should be to the praise of the glory of God’s grace, far above what we are.

Since in the case of Christ we have both the pattern and example of election—the Grand Original—it is quite evident that grace is *not* to be limited or understood only of the divine favour toward creatures that are *fallen* and are delivered out of ruin and misery. Grace does not necessarily presuppose sin in the objects it is shown unto, for the highest instance of all, that of the grace bestowed upon the man Christ Jesus, was conferred upon One who had no sin and was incapable of it. Grace is favour shown to the *undeserving*, for the human nature in the God-man merited not the distinction conferred upon it. When extended to fallen creatures, it *is* favour shown to the *ill-deserving* and hell-deserving, yet this is not implied in the term itself, as may further be seen in the case of divine grace being extended to the unfallen angels. Thus, as Christ is the Pattern to whom God has predestinated His people to be conformed, His election of them to everlasting glory was under His view of them as *unfallen* and not as corrupt creatures.

God having thus absolutely chosen the Son of man and therewith endowed Him with such royalty as to be the sovereign end of all whom He should create or elect to glory, it therefore follows that those who were chosen of us men were intended by the very ordination of God in our choice *to be for Christ's glory* as the end of our election, as well as for God's own glory. We were not absolutely ordained—as Christ in His unique predestination was in the first design of it—but from the first of ours the intention of God concerning us was that we should *be Christ's* and have our glory from Him who is “the Lord of glory” (1Co 2:8). Here, as everywhere, Christ has the pre-eminence, for the person of Christ, God-man, was predestinated for the dignity of Himself, but *we* for the glory of God and of Christ. God the Father, first and alone, designed who the favoured ones should be, yet that there should be an election of any was for Christ's sake, as well as His own.

In our election God had His Son in view as God-man, and in His design of Him as our end, He chose us for His sake, that we might be His “fellows” or companions (Psa 45:7), that as He was God's delight (Isa 42:1), so we might be His delight (Pro 8:31). Thus we were given to Christ first, not as sinners to be saved by Him, but as sinless members to a sinless Head, as a gift to His person, for His honour and pleasure, and to be partakers of a supernatural glory with Him and from Him. “And the glory which thou gavest me [as the God-man] I have given them,” as concurring with election of them and Thy giving of them to Me to be Mine. Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me, (i.e. with an everlasting love in election), yea, Thou gavest them to Me for My glory as their end, and for which chiefly Thou lovest them (see Joh 17:22-23).

And what immediately follows in John 17? This, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (Joh 17:24). Christ was loved in His election from everlasting, and out of God's love for Him His people were given to Him—with what intent? Even to behold, admire, and adore Him in His person and glory, as being that very thing they were ordained for, more than for their own glory, for *their* glory arises from beholding *His* (2Co 3:18). And what is this glory which Christ was ordained unto? The glory of His *person* first absolutely decreed Him, which is the height of His glory in heaven, where it is we are ordained to behold it. And observe how He here (Joh 17:24) reveals the main motive to God in this, “*for* thou lovedst *me*”—Christ's being chosen first in the intention of God, the members were chosen and given to Him so that they should redound to His glory.

We being chosen for Christ's glory as our end, and for His sake, as well as to the glory of God's grace towards us, God did ordain a *double relation* of Christ unto us for His glory, in addition unto that absolute glory of His person. First the relation of an “Head,” wherein we were given to Him as members of His body, and as a Spouse unto her Husband to be her Head. Second,

the relation of a “Saviour” and Redeemer, which is in addition to His headship, and both of these for the further glory of Christ, and also for the demonstration of God’s grace towards us. These two relations are quite distinct and must not be confused. “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body” (Eph 5:23)—each of those offices were appointed Him by the good pleasure of God’s will. This same twofold relation of Christ to His people is set forth again in Colossians 1:18-20. This double *official* honour conferred upon Him is further and above the absolute royalties of His *person* as the God-man.

Now, that twofold relation of Christ to His people has, answerably, a double and distinct aspect and consideration upon us and of us in our election by God, which was not absolute as Christ’s was, but *relative unto* His two principal offices. The first concerns our persons without the consideration of our fall in Adam, whereby we were contemplated in the pure lump of creature-ship as to be created, and in that consideration God ordained us unto ultimate glory, under relation to Christ as an “Head”—whether as members of His body or as His bride, or rather both as He is the Head of the church—of either or of both which our persons were fully capable of before or *without* any consideration of our fall. Second, of our persons viewed as fallen, as corrupt and sinful, and therefore as objects to be saved and redeemed from the thralldom thereof, under our relation to Him as a “Saviour.”

Each of these relations was for the glory of God’s *grace*. First, in His design to advance us, considered purely as creatures, to an higher glory by His Christ than was attainable by the law of creation. To ordain us unto this glory was pure grace, no less so than to redeem us from sin and misery when fallen—for it was wholly independent of works or merit, even as Christ’s election (which is the pattern of ours) was apart from the consideration of works of any kind, as He declared, “My goodness extendeth not to thee” (Psa 16:2). “Although the life-work and death-agony of the Son did reflect unparalleled lustre upon every attribute of God, yet the Most Blessed and Infinitely Happy God stood in no need of the obedience and death of His Son. It was for our sakes that the work of redemption was undertaken” (Charles H. Spurgeon). It is to this *original grace* that 2 Timothy 1:9 refers. Grace alone moving God to redeem and call us, apart from works, “according to” that mother grace whereby we were ordained to glory from the beginning.

In that original grace lay God’s grand and ultimate design, for it will have its accomplishment last of all and as the perfection of all. God might immediately, upon our first creation, have taken us up into that glory. But second, for the further magnifying of Christ and the ampler demonstration of His grace—to extend it to its utmost reach, as the word in the Hebrew is “draw out at length thy lovingkindness” (see Psa 36:10)—He was not pleased to bring us unto the full possession of our inheritance in beholding the personal glory of Christ our Head, but permissively ordained that we should fall into sin, and therefore decreed to create us in a mutable condition (as the law of creation required), which made way for the abounding of His grace (Rom 5:15). This is confirmed by, “But God, who is rich in mercy [a term which denotes our *ill-desert*], for his great love wherewith he loved us” (Eph 2:4). First God loved us, viewed as sinless creatures, and this became the foundation of “mercy” to us considered as sinners.

It was upon this divine determination that the elect should not immediately upon their creation enter into the glory unto which they were ordained, but should first be suffered to fall into sin and wretchedness, and then be delivered out of the same, that Christ had for His great and further glory the office of Redeemer and Saviour superadded to His election of Headship. It is our being sinful and miserable which occupies our present and immediate concern, as that which we are

most solicitous about while left in this world, and therefore it is that the Scriptures do principally set forth Christ as Redeemer and *Saviour*. We say “principally,” for as we have seen they are by no means silent upon the higher glory of His *Headship*. Yea, sufficient is said thereon to draw out our thoughts, affections, and hopes unto the beholding Him in His grandest glory.

In bringing to a close this outline of the divine order of Christ’s election, and of ours, as it is represented in Scripture, let it be pointed out that we are not to suppose an interval of time between God’s foreordination of Christ as Head and of Him as Saviour, for all was simultaneous in the mind of God. The distinction is in the order of nature, and for our better understanding thereof. Christ could not be the “Head” without the correlate of His mystical “body,” as He could not be our “Saviour” except we had fallen. “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth” (Isa 42:1): Christ was first God’s Elect and Delight and then His Servant—upheld by Him in the work of redeeming. Absolutely and primarily Christ as God-man was ordained for Himself, for His own glory. Relatively and secondarily, He was chosen for us and our salvation.

The glory of the person of the God-man, absolutely considered, was the primo-primitive design of God—that upon which He set His heart. Next unto this was His ordination of Christ to be an Head unto us and we a body to Him, that by our union to Him as our Head, He was the sufficient and efficient Author of such blessings as our becoming immutably holy, of sonship from His Sonship, and the gracious acceptance of our persons in Him as the chief Beloved, and heirs of the same glory with Him—all of which we were capable of in God’s considering us as pure creatures through our union with Christ, and needed not His death to have purchased them for us, being quite distinct from the blessing of redemption as Ephesians 1:7 (following Eph 1:3-6) clearly enough shows. As this was the first in God’s design, so it is the last in execution, being greater than all “salvation” blessings, the crown of all, when we shall be “for ever with the Lord” (see 1Th 4:17).

Descending to a much lower level, let it be pointed out that most certainly the holy angels could not be regarded in the corrupt mass when they were chosen, since they never fell. Therefore it is most reasonable to suppose we were regarded by God as in the same pure mass of creature-ship, when He elected us. Thus it was with the human nature of Christ, which is the object of election, for it never fell in Adam, nor ever came into a corrupt state, it was “chosen out of the people” (Psa 89:19), and consequently the people out of which it was chosen must be considered as yet *unfallen*. This alone agrees with the type of Eve (the church) being given to Adam (Christ) *before* sin entered. So God’s double ordination of the elect to glory and then to salvation (in view of the fall) agrees with the double ordination of the non-elect—preterition as creatures and condemnation as sinners.

N.B. For most of the above we are indebted to Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680). In some places, we have purposely repeated ourselves in the two parts of this article, as much of the ground gone over is entirely new to most of our readers.

A FOURFOLD SALVATION

Third, *by bitter disappointments*. God has plainly warned us that, “All was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun” (Ecc 2:11), and that by one who was permitted to gratify the physical senses as none other ever has been. Yet we do not take this warning to heart, for we do not really believe it. On the contrary, we persuade ourselves that satisfaction *is to be found* in things under the sun, that the creature *can* give contentment to our hearts. As well attempt to fill a circle with a square! The heart was made *for God* and He alone can meet its needs. But by nature we are idolaters, putting *things* in His place. Those things we invest with qualities they possess not, and sooner or later our delusions are rudely exposed to us, and we discover that the images in our minds are only dreams—that golden idol is but clay after all.

God may order His providences that our earthly nest is destroyed. The winds of adversity compel us to leave the downy bed of carnal ease and luxuriation. Grievous losses are experienced in some form or other. Trusted friends prove fickle and in the hour of need fail us. The family circle, which had so long sheltered us, and where peace and happiness were found, is broken up by the grim hand of death. Health fails and weary nights are our portion. These trying experiences, these bitter disappointments, are another of the means which our gracious God employs to save us from the pleasure and pollution of sin. By them He discovers to us the vanity and vexation of the creature. By them He weans us more completely from the world. By them He teaches us that the objects in which we sought refreshment are but “broken cisterns,” and this that we may turn to *Christ* and draw from Him who is the living water, the One who alone can supply true satisfaction of soul.

It is in this way we are experimentally taught to look off from the present to the future, for our rest is not here. “For we are *saved by hope*: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Rom 8:24). Let it be duly noted that this comes immediately after, “We ourselves groan within ourselves.” Thus to be “saved by hope” respects our present salvation from the power of sin. Complete salvation is now the Christian’s only in title and expectation. It is not here said that we, “*shall* be saved by hope,” but we *are* saved by hope—that hope which looks for the fulfilling of God’s promises. Hope has to do with a future good, with something which as yet “is seen not.” We “hope” not for something which is already enjoyed. Herein hope differs from faith. Faith, as it is an assent, is in the mind, but hope is seated in the affections, stirred by the desirability of the things promised.

And my reader, the bitter disappointments of life are nothing but a dark background upon which hope may shine forth the more brightly. Christ does not immediately take to heaven the one who puts his trust in Him. No, He keeps him here upon earth for a while to be exercised and tried. While he is awaiting his complete blessedness, there is such a difference between him and it, and he encounters many difficulties and trials. Not having yet received his inheritance, there is need and occasion of hope, for only by its exercise can things future be sought after. The stronger our hope, the more earnestly shall we be engaged in the pursuit of it. We have to be weaned from present things in order for the heart to be fixed upon a future good.

Fourth, *by the gift of the Spirit* and His operations within us. God’s great gift of Christ for us is matched by the gift of the Spirit in us, for we owe as much to the One as we do to the Other. The new nature in the Christian is powerless apart from the Spirit’s daily renewing. It is by His gracious operations that we have made known to us the nature and extent of sin, are made to strive against it, are brought to grieve over it. It is by the Spirit that faith, hope, and prayer are kept alive within the soul. It is by the Spirit we are moved to use the means of grace which God

has appointed for our spiritual preservation and growth. It is by the Spirit that sin is prevented from having complete dominion over us, for as the result of His indwelling us there is something else besides sin in the believer's heart and life, namely, the fruits of holiness and righteousness.

To sum up this aspect of our subject—salvation from the power of indwelling sin is not the taking of the evil nature out of the believer in this life, nor by effecting any improvement in it, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (Joh 3:6), and it remains so, unchanged to the end. Nor is it by the Spirit so subduing indwelling sin that it is rendered less active, for the flesh not merely lusts, but “lusteth [ceaselessly] against the spirit”—it never sleeps, not even when our bodies do, as our dreams evidence. No, and in some form or other, the flesh is constantly producing its evil works. It may not be in external acts, seen by the eyes of our fellows, but certainly so internally, in things seen by God—such as covetousness, discontent, pride, unbelief, self-will, ill-will towards others, and a hundred other evils. No, none is saved from *sinning* in this life.

Present salvation from the power of sin consists in, first, delivering us from the love of it, which though begun at our regeneration is continued throughout our practical sanctification. Second, from its *blinding delusiveness*, so that it can no more deceive as once it did. Third, from our *excusing* it, “That which I do, I allow *not*” (Rom 7:15). This is one of the surest marks of regeneration. In the fullest sense of the word, the believer “allows” it *not* before he sins, for every real Christian, when in his right mind, desires to be wholly kept from sinning. He “allows” it *not* fully *when doing it*, for in the actual committing thereof there is an inward reserve—the new nature consents not. He “allows” it *not* afterwards, as Psalm 51 evidences so plainly of the case of David.

The force of this word “allow” in Romans 7:15 may be seen from “Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, [the prophets] and ye build their sepulchres” (Luk 11:48). So far from those Jews being ashamed of their fathers and abhorring their wicked conduct, they erected a monument to their honour. Thus, to “allow” is the opposite of to be ashamed of and sorrow over—it is to condone and vindicate. Therefore, when it is said that the believer “allows *not*” the evil of which he is guilty, it means that he seeks not to justify himself or throw the blame on someone else, as both Adam and Eve did. That the Christian allows *not* sin is evident by his shame over it, his sorrow for it, his confession of it, his loathing himself because of it, his renewed resolution to forsake it.

IV. *Salvation from the Presence of Sin.*

We now turn to that aspect of our subject which has to do solely with the future. Sin is yet to be completely eradicated from the believer's being so that he shall appear before God without any spot or blemish. True, this is his legal status even now, yet it has not become so in his state or experience. As God views the believer in Christ, he appears before Him in all the excellency of his Sponsor, but as God views him as he yet is in *himself* (and that He *does* do so is proved by His chastenings), He beholds all the ruin which the fall has wrought in him. But this will not always be the case—no, blessed be His name, the Lord is reserving the best wine for the last. And even now we have tasted that He is gracious, but the fullness of His grace will only be entered into and enjoyed by us after this world is left behind.

Those Scriptures which present our salvation as a *future prospect* are all concerned with our final deliverance from the very presence of sin. To this Paul referred when he said, “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed” (Rom 13:11)—not our salvation from the pleasure, the penalty, or the power of sin, but from its very presence. “For our conversation is in heaven: from

whence we also look for *the Saviour*, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phi 3:20). Yes, it is the “Saviour” we await, for it is at His return that the whole election of grace shall enter into their full salvation, as it is written, “Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto *salvation*” (Heb 9:28). In like manner, when another apostle declares, We “are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1Pe 1:5), he had reference to this grand consummation of the believer’s salvation, when we shall be forever rid of the very presence of sin.

Our salvation from the pleasure of sin is effected by Christ’s taking up His abode in our hearts, “Christ liveth in me” (Gal 2:20). Our salvation from the penalty of sin was secured by Christ’s sufferings on the cross where He endured the punishment due our iniquities. Our salvation from the power of sin is obtained by the gracious operations of the Spirit which Christ sends to His people—therefore is He designated “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8:9 and cf. Gal 4:6). Our salvation from the presence of sin will be accomplished at Christ’s second advent, “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phi 3:20-21). And again we are told, “We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1Jo 3:2). It is all of *Christ* from beginning to end.

Man was originally created in the image and likeness of God, reflecting the moral perfections of his Maker. But sin came in and he fell from his pristine glory, and by that fall God’s image in him was broken and His likeness marred. But in the redeemed that image is to be restored, yea, they are to be granted a far higher honour than what was bestowed upon the first Adam—they are to be made like the *last* Adam. It is written, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29). This blessed purpose of God in our predestination will not be fully realized until the second coming of our Lord. Then it will be that His people shall be completely emancipated from the thralldom and corruption of sin. Then shall Christ “present it to himself a *glorious* church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27).

Salvation from the pleasure or love of sin takes place at our regeneration; salvation from the penalty or punishment of sin occurs at our *justification*; salvation from the power or dominion of sin is accomplished during our practical *sanctification*; salvation from the presence or inbeing of sin is consummated at our *glorification*, “Whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom 8:30). Not so much is revealed in Scripture on this fourth aspect of our subject, for God’s Word was not given us to gratify curiosity. Yet sufficient light is made known to feed faith, strengthen hope, draw out love, and make us “run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1). In our present state, we are incapable of forming any real conception of the bliss awaiting us. Yet as Israel’s spies brought back the bunch of “the grapes of Eschol” (Num 13:23) as a sample of the good things to be found in the land of Canaan, so the Christian is granted a foretaste and earnest of his inheritance on high.

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). It is to the image of a *glorified* Christ that we are predestinated to be conformed. Behold Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, when a foreview of His glory was granted the favoured disciples. Such is the dazzling splendour of His person that Saul of Tarsus was temporarily blinded by a glimpse of it, and the beloved John in the isle of Patmos “fell at his feet as dead” (Rev 1:17), when he beheld

Him. That which awaits us can best be estimated as it is contemplated in the light of God's wondrous *love*. The portion which Christ Himself has received is the expression of God's love for Him, and as the Saviour has assured His people concerning His Father's love unto them, "and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (Joh 17:23), and therefore, as He promised, "where I am, there ye may be also" (Joh 14:3).

But is not the believer forever done with sin at *death*? Yes, thank God, such is the case. Yet that is not his *glorification* for his body goes to corruption, and that is the effect of sin. It is written of the believer's body, "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body" (1Co 15:42-44). Nevertheless, at death itself the Christian's soul is entirely freed from the presence of sin. This is clear from, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Rev 14:13). What is signified by "that they may rest from their labours?" Why, something more blessed than ceasing from earning their daily bread by the sweat of their brows, for that will be true of the unsaved also. Those who die in the Lord rest from their "labours" *with sin*—their painful conflicts with indwelling corruption, Satan, and the world. The fight which faith now wages is then ended and full relief from sin is theirs forever.

The fourfold salvation from sin of the Christian was strikingly typified in God's dealings with the nation of Israel of old. First we have a vivid portrayal of their deliverance from the *pleasure* or love of sin, "And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning" (Exo 2:23-24). What a contrast does that present from what we read of in the closing chapters of Genesis! There we hear the king of Egypt saying to Joseph, "The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen" (Gen 47:6). Accordingly we are told, "And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly" (Gen 47:27). Now Egypt is the Old Testament symbol of the world, as a system opposed to God. And it was there, in the "best part" of it, the descendants of Abraham had settled. But the Lord had designs of mercy and something far better for them. Yet before they could appreciate Canaan they had to be weaned from Egypt. Hence we find them in cruel bondage there, smarting under the lash of the taskmasters. In this way they were made to loathe Egypt and long for deliverance therefrom. The theme of Exodus is *redemption*—how striking, then, to see that God *begins* His work of redemption by making His people to groan and cry out under their bondage! The portion Christ bestows is not welcome till we are made sick of this world.

Second, in Exodus 12, we have a picture of God's people being delivered from the *penalty* of sin. On the Passover night, the angel of death came and slew all the firstborn of the Egyptians. But why spare the firstborn of the Israelites? Not because they were guiltless before God, for all had sinned and come short of His glory. The Israelites, equally with the Egyptians, were guilty in His sight and deserving of unsparing judgment. It was at this very point that the grace of God came in and met their need. Another was slain in their place and died in their stead. An innocent victim was killed and its blood shed, pointing to the coming of "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Joh 1:29). The head of each Israelite household sprinkled the lamb's blood on the lintel and posts of his door, and hence the firstborn in it was spared from the avenging angel. God promised, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exo 12:13). Thus Israel was saved from the penalty of sin by means of the lamb dying in their stead.

Third, Israel's wilderness journey adumbrated the believer's salvation from the *power* of sin. Israel did not enter Canaan immediately upon their exodus from Egypt. They had to face the temptations and trials of the desert, where they spent not less than forty years. But what a gracious and full provision did God make for His people! Manna was given them daily from heaven—a figure of that food which God's Word now supplies for our spiritual nourishment. Water was given from the smitten rock—emblematic of the Holy Spirit sent by the smitten Christ to dwell within us, John 7:38-39. A cloud and a pillar of fire guided them by day and guarded them by night, reminding us of how God directs our steps and shields us from our foes. Best of all, Moses, their great leader, was with them, counseling, admonishing, and interceding for them—figure of the Captain of our salvation, “Lo, I am with you always” (Mat 28:20).

Fourth, the actual entrance of Israel into the promised land foreshadowed the believer's *glorification*, when he enters into the full enjoyment of that possession which Christ has purchased for him. The experiences Israel met with in Canaan have a double typical significance. From one viewpoint, they presaged the conflict which faith encounters while the believer is left upon earth, for as the Hebrews had to overcome the original inhabitants of Canaan before they could enjoy their portion, so faith has to surmount many obstacles if it is to “possess its possessions” (Oba 1:17). The land of milk and honey into which Israel entered after the bondage of Egypt and the hardships of the wilderness which were left behind—were manifestly a figure of the Christian's portion in heaven after he is forever done with sin in this world.

“Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mat 1:21). First, save them from the pleasure or love of sin by bestowing a nature which hates it—this is the great *miracle* of grace. Second, save them from the penalty or punishment of sin, by remitting all its guilt—this is the grand *marvel* of grace. Third, save them from the power or dominion of sin, by the workings of His Spirit—this reveals the wondrous *might* of grace. Fourth, save them from the presence or inbeing of sin—this will demonstrate the glorious *magnitude* of grace. May it please the Lord to bless these elementary, but most important articles, to many of His little ones, and make their “big” brothers and sisters smaller in their own esteem.



November

THE LORD'S PRAYER—PART 9

“But deliver us from evil” (Mat 6:13). This brings us to the end of the petitionary part of this prayer. The four requests which are for the supply of our own needs are for *providing* grace—“give us” (v. 11), *pardoning* grace—“forgive us” (v. 12), *preventing* grace—“lead us not into temptation” (v. 13), and *preserving* grace, “deliver us” (v. 13). It is to be carefully noted that in each case the pronoun is in the plural number and not the singular—“us” not “me,” for we are to supplicate not for ourselves only, but for all the members of the household of faith. How beautifully this emphasizes the *family* character of this prayer. It is addressed to “our Father” and it embraces all His children. On the high priest’s breastplate were inscribed the names of all the tribes of Israel—emblematic of Christ’s intercession on high. So, too, the apostle enjoins “supplication” for *all* saints” (Eph 6:18). Self-love shuts up the bowels of compassion, confining us to our own interests, but the love of God shed abroad in the heart makes us solicitous about our brethren.

“But deliver us from evil” (Mat 6:13). We cannot agree with those who restrict “evil” here as referring alone to Satan, though doubtless he is principally intended. The Greek may, with equal propriety, be rendered either “the evil one” or “evil things”—in fact it is translated both ways. “We are taught to pray for deliverance from all kinds, degrees, and occasions of evil; from the malice, power, subtlety, of the powers of darkness; from this evil world and all its allurements, snares, tempers, deceits; from the evil of our own hearts, that it may be restrained, subdued, and, finally extirpated; and from the evil of suffering,” etc. (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). This petition, then, expresses a desire to be delivered from all that is really prejudicial to us, and especially from sin, which has no good in it.

It is true that, in contradistinction from God, who is “the Holy One,” Satan is designated “the evil one” (Mat 5:37), “the wicked One” (Eph 6:16; 1Jo 5:18-19), yet it is also true that sin is evil (Rom 12:9), the world is evil (Gal 1:4), and our corrupt nature is evil (Mat 12:35). Moreover, the advantages which the devil gains over us are by means of the flesh and the world—*they* are his agents. Thus, this is a prayer for deliverance from all our spiritual enemies. It is true that we *have been* delivered from “the power of darkness” and translated into the kingdom of Christ (Col 1:13), and therefore Satan has no lawful authority over us, nevertheless he wields a tyrannical power. Though he cannot rule us, he is permitted to molest and harass. He stirs up enemies to persecute (Rev 12, 13, etc.), he inflames our lusts (1Ch 21:1; 1Co 7:5), he disturbs our peace (1Pe 5:8). Hence our deep need to pray for deliverance from him.

Satan’s favourite device is to make us live in some one sin to which we are particularly inclined, and therefore we need to be in constant prayer that our natural corruptions may be

mortified. When he cannot make some gross lust reign over a child of God, he labours to get him to commit some evil deed whereby the name of God will be dishonoured and His people offended, as he did in the case of David. When a believer has fallen into sin, the devil seeks to make him easy therein, so that he has no remorse for it. When God chastens us for our faults, Satan strives to make us fret against it or else drive us to despair. When he fails in these methods of attack, then he stirs up our friends and relatives to oppose, as in the case of Job. But whatever be his line of assault, prayer for deliverance must be our recourse.

Christ Himself has left us an example that we should pray this petition, for in His intercession on our behalf, we find Him saying, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (Joh 17:15). Observe how this intimates to us *the connection* between the clause we are now considering and the one which precedes it. Christ did not pray absolutely that we should be exempted from temptation, for He knew that His people must expect assaults, both from within and from without, and therefore He asked not that we should be taken out of this world, but delivered from the evil one. To be kept from the evil of sin is a far greater mercy than to be kept from the trouble of temptation. But how far, it may be asked, has God undertaken to deliver us from evil? First, so far as it would be hurtful to our highest interests. It was for Peter’s ultimate good that he was suffered to temporarily fall. Second, from its having full dominion over us, so that we shall not totally and finally apostatise. Third, by an ultimate deliverance when He removes us to heaven.

“But deliver us from evil” (Mat 6:13). First, then, this is a prayer for divine illumination, so that we may be able to detect Satan’s wiles. He who can transform himself into an angel of light is far too subtle for human wisdom to cope with. Only as the Spirit graciously enlightens can we discern his snares. Second, it is a prayer for strength to resist his attacks, for he is much too powerful for us to withstand in our own might—only as we are energized by the Spirit shall we be kept from willfully yielding to temptation or taking pleasure in the sins we commit. Third, it is a prayer for grace to mortify our lusts, for only in proportion as we deny our internal corruptions shall we refuse the external solicitations to sin. We cannot justly throw the blame on Satan while we give license to the evil of our hearts—salvation from the love of sin ever precedes deliverance from its dominion.

Fourth, this is a prayer for repentance when we do succumb. Sin has a fatal tendency to deaden our sensibilities and harden our hearts, and naught but divine grace can free us from unabashed indifference and work in us a godly sorrow for our transgressions. The very word “deliver us” in this connection implies that we are as deeply plunged into sin as a beast in the mire, which must be forcibly dragged out. Fifth, it is a prayer for the removal of guilt from the conscience. When true repentance has been communicated, the soul is bowed down with shame before God, and there is no relief till the Spirit sprinkles the conscience afresh with the cleansing blood of Christ. Sixth, it is a prayer that we may be so delivered that our souls are restored again to communion with God. Seventh, it is a prayer that He will overrule our falls to His glory and our lasting good. To have a sincere desire for these things is a signal favour from God.

What we *pray* for we must endeavour to *practice*. We do but mock God if we ask Him to deliver us from evil and then trifle with sin or recklessly rush into the place of temptation. Prayer and watchfulness must never be severed. We must make it our special care to mortify our lusts, to make no provision for the flesh, to avoid every appearance of evil, to resist the devil steadfastly in the faith, to love not the world, nor the things that are in it. The more our character be formed and our conduct regulated by the Holy Word of God, the more shall we be enabled to overcome evil with good. Let us labour diligently to maintain a good conscience. Let us seek to live each day as

though we knew it were our last one on earth. Let us set our affections on things above, and then may we sincerely pray, “Deliver us from evil.”

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

4. *The Beatitudes—Matthew 5:1-11*

In these Beatitudes, the Lord Jesus delineates the distinguishing characteristics and privileges of those who are “his disciples indeed” (Joh 8:31), or the birthmarks by which the true subjects of His kingdom may be identified. This is only another way of saying that His design was to make known the character of those upon whom the divine benediction rests, or that He here revealed who are the truly happy. Looking at these Beatitudes from another angle, we may regard them as furnishing a description of the nature of true happiness, and as propounding sundry rules by which it is attained. Very different, indeed, is Christ’s teaching here from the thoughts and the theories which obtain in the carnal mind. Instead of attributing genuine felicity unto the possession of outward things, He affirmed that it consists in the possession and cultivation of spiritual graces. It was God incarnate pouring contempt on the wisdom of this world and showing how radically opposed are its concepts to the truth.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Mat 5:7). Grossly have these words been perverted by merit-mongers. Those who insist that the Bible teaches salvation by works appeal to this verse, among others, in support of their pernicious error. But nothing could be less to their purpose, for there is not a word in it which affords the slightest support to their fatal delusion. Our Lord was not here describing the foundation on which rests the sinner’s hope of receiving mercy from God, but was tracing the spiritual features of His own people, among which mercifulness is a prominent one. His evident meaning was—mercy is an indispensable trait in that holy character which God has inseparably connected with the enjoyment of that happiness—both here and hereafter—which is the product of His own sovereign kindness.

The place occupied by this particular Beatitude in the series furnishes a sure key to its interpretation. The first four may be regarded as describing the *initial* exercises of heart in one who has been awakened by the Spirit, whereas the next four treat of the *subsequent* fruits. In the preceding verse, the soul is seen hungering and thirsting after Christ, and then filled by Him—whereas here, we are shown the first effect and evidence of this. Having received mercy from the Lord, the saved sinner now exercises mercy unto others. It is not that God requires us to be merciful in order to obtain His mercy—that would be to overthrow the whole scheme of grace—but having been made the recipient of His wondrous grace, I cannot now but act graciously toward others. That which is signified by, “they shall obtain mercy,” will come before us in the sequel.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Mat 5:7). First, let us endeavour to define the nature of this mercy. This mercifulness upon which the divine approbation rests is a holy compassion of soul, whereby one is moved to pity and go to the relief of another in misery. In saying that it is a compassion of soul, we mean that it causes its possessor to make the case of another his own, so that he is grieved by it, for when our heart is really touched by the state of another, we are stirred within. “It is an aversion to everything harsh, cruel, oppressive or

injurious; a propensity to pity, alleviate or remove the miseries of mankind; an unwillingness to increase personal emolument or indulgence by rendering others uneasy; a willingness to forego personal ease, interest, or gratification; to make others easy and happy” (Thomas Scott).

Mercifulness, then, is a gracious disposition toward our fellow-creatures and fellow-Christians. It is a spirit of kindness and benevolence which sympathizes with the sufferings of the afflicted, so that we weep with those that weep. It ennobles its possessor so that he tempers justice with mercy and scorns the taking of revenge. But it is a *holy* disposition in contrast from that foolish sentimentality which flouts the requirements of justice and which inclines many to sympathize with those in deserved misery. That is a false and unholy mercy which petitions the powers that be to cancel or modify a just and fully-merited sentence which has been passed upon some flagrant offender. Therefore are we told, “And of some have compassion, making a difference” (Jude 1:22)—King Saul defied this principle when he spared Agag. It is also a holy compassion as opposed to that partiality which is generous to some and harsh to others.

This mercifulness has not its roots in anything in the natural man. True, there are some who make no profession of being Christians in whom we often find not a little kindness of disposition, sympathy for the suffering, and a readiness to forgive those who have wronged them—yet is it merely instinctive, and though amiable, there is nothing spiritual in it—instead of being subject to divine authority, it is often opposed to God’s law. That which Christ here inculcated and commended is very different from and vastly superior to natural amiability. It is such compassion as *God* approves of, which is a fruit of His Holy Spirit, and is commanded in His Word. It is the result of Christ living in us. Was He moved with compassion? Did He weep with the mourner? Was He patient with the dull-witted? Then if He indwells me, that same disposition, however imperfectly manifested, must be reproduced.

This mercy is something more than a feeling. It is *an operative principle*. It not only stirs the heart, but it moves the hand to render help unto those in need, for the one cannot be severed from the other. So far from it being a well shut up or a fountain sealed, this mercy is a copious source of acts of beneficence, from which issue streams of blessing. It does not exhaust itself in profitless words, but is accompanied by helpful deeds. “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1Jo 3:17). This verse makes it clear that no work of mercy is shown to those in misery except it proceeds from inward compassion. Thus we see what is the “mercy” which is here mentioned—it is that which exerts itself in doing good, being a fruit of the love of God shed abroad in the heart.

This mercy may, through walking after the flesh, for a time be checked and choked, but taking the general tenor of a Christian’s character and the main trend in his life, it is seen to be an unmistakable trait of the new man. “The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth” (Psa 37:21). It was “mercy” in Abraham, after he had been wronged by his nephew, which caused him to go after and secure the deliverance of Lot. It was “mercy” on the part of Joseph, after his brethren had so grievously mistreated him, which moved him to freely forgive them. It was “mercy” in Moses, after Miriam had rebelled against him and the Lord had smitten her with leprosy, which moved him to cry, “Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee” (Num 12:13). It was “mercy” in David, which caused him to spare the life of his arch-enemy when the wicked Saul was in his hands. In solemn contrast, of Judas, we read “He remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man” (Psa 109:16).

Were we sermonizing Matthew 5:7, our next division would be *the duties* of mercy, which are answerable to the miseries of those we should relieve, as the form and degree of its manifestation

is regulated by our own station and circumstances. This mercy regards not merely the bodies of men but also their *souls*, and here again it is sharply distinguished from that natural and instinctive kind which pities and ministers to the temporal needs of sufferers, but has no concern for their eternal prospects. The preacher needs to carefully heed this fifth Beatitude, so, too, the employer and the tradesman. But we must dismiss this branch of our subject by calling attention to, “He that sheweth mercy, with *cheerfulness*” (Rom 12:8), which is what gives chief value to the service rendered. If God loves a cheerful giver, it is equally true that He takes notice of the spirit in which we respond to His precepts.

A word now on *the reward*, “for they shall obtain mercy” (Mat 5:7), which as the older theologians pointed out is not the reward of condignity (wholly deserved), but of congruity. This gives not the least countenance to the horrible error of Rome, that by almsdeeds we can make satisfaction to God for our sins. Our acts of mercy are not meritorious in the sight of God—had that been the case, Christ had said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain *justice*,” for what is meritorious is due reward by right. Our text has nothing to do with salvation matters, but enunciates a principle pertaining to the governmental ways of God, by which we reap what we sow and have measured again to us according as we have meted out to others (Mat 7:2). “He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour” (Pro 21:21).

“For they shall obtain mercy” (Mat 5:7). First, there is an *inward benefit*. The one who shows mercy to others gains thereby, “The merciful man doeth good to his own soul” (Pro 11:17). There is a personal satisfaction in the exercise of pity and benevolence, which the fullest gratification of the selfish man is not to be compared with, “He that hath mercy on the poor, *happy* is he” (Pro 14:21). Second, he reaps mercy at the hands of his fellows. The overruling providence of God causes him to be dealt with mercifully by others. Third, he receives mercy from *God*, “With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful” (Psa 18:25)—contrast, “He shall have judgment without mercy that hath shewed no mercy” (Jam 2:13). Mercy will be shown to the merciful in the day to come, see 2 Timothy 1:16, 18; Jude 1:21. They let us prayerfully heed the exhortations of Romans 12:10; Galatians 6:2; Colossians 3:12.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Mat 5:8). This is another of the Beatitudes which has been grossly perverted by the enemies of the Lord—those who have, like their predecessors the Pharisees, posed as the champions of the truth and boasted of a superior sanctity to that confessed by the true people of God. All through this Christian era, there have been poor deluded souls who have claimed an entire purification of the old man, or have insisted that God has so completely renewed them that the carnal nature has been eradicated, and in consequence, they not only commit no sins, but have no sinful desires or thoughts. But God tells us, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1Jo 1:8). Of course such people appeal to the Scriptures in support of their vain delusion, applying to experience verses which describe the legal benefits of the atonement or by wresting such a one as is now before us.

That purity of heart does *not* mean sinlessness of life is clear from the inspired record of the history of all God’s saints. Noah got drunk, Abraham equivocated, Moses disobeyed God, Job cursed the day of his birth, Elijah fled in terror from Jezebel, Peter denied Christ. Yes, perhaps someone will exclaim, but all these were before Christianity was established. True, but it has also been the same since then. Where shall we go to find a Christian of superior attainments to those of the apostle Paul? And what was *his* experience? Read Romans 7 and see. When he would do good, evil was present with him (Rom 7:21). There was a law in his members warring against the law of his mind and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin (Rom 7:23). He did, with the

mind, serve the law of God, nevertheless with the flesh he served the law of sin (Rom 7:25). Ah, Christian reader, one of the most conclusive evidences that we *do* possess a pure heart is to be conscious of, and burdened with, the impurity which *still indwells us*.

“Blessed are the pure in heart” (Mat 5:8). Here again we see the Lord exposing the thoughts of the natural man, who errs greatly in his ideas of what constitutes real blessedness. Therein He refuted the Pharisees, who contented themselves with a species of external ceremonialism or mere outward holiness, failing to realize that God requires “truth in the *inward* parts” (Psa 51:6). Very solemn and searching is this sixth Beatitude, for it equally condemns most of that which now passes for genuine religion in Christendom. How many today rest satisfied with a *head* religion, supposing that all is well if their creed be sound. And how many more have nothing better than a *hand* religion—busily engaged in what they term “Christian service”? “But the LORD looketh on the *heart*” (1Sa 16:7), which includes the mind, conscience, affections, and will.

How is purity of heart effected? for by nature the heart of fallen man is totally depraved and corrupt, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer 17:9). How can it be otherwise when each of us must make the humiliating confession, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psa 51:5). This purity of heart is by no means to be restricted to inward chastity or simplicity—being without guile and deceit, but has a far more comprehensive meaning and scope. The heart of the Christian is made pure by a fourfold operation of the Holy Spirit. First, by imparting a holy nature at the new birth. Second, by bestowing a saving faith which unites its possessor to a holy Christ. Third, by sprinkling him with the precious blood of Christ, which purges his conscience. Fourth, by a protracted process of sanctification so we, through His aid, mortify the flesh and live unto God. In consequence thereof, the believer has a sincere desire and resolution not to sin against God in thought or word or deed, but to please Him in all things.

In what measure is the heart of the Christian now made pure? Only in part during this life, relatively and not absolutely. “The believer’s understanding is *in part* purified from darkness, his judgment from error, his will from rebellion, his affections from enmity, avarice, pride, sensuality” (Thomas Scott). The work of divine grace in the soul is begun here, but it is only completed hereafter (Phi 1:6). We are not wholly perfected, having received only “the *firstfruits* of the Spirit” (Rom 8:23). Observe carefully the tense of the verb in Acts 15:9, it is not “purified their hearts by faith,” but “purifying their hearts by faith”—a continuous experience. So again—“He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and [not “renewal” but] *renewing* of the Holy Ghost” (Ti 3:5). Consequently it is written, “In many things we all stumble” (Jam 3:2 R.V.). Yet it is our bounden duty to use every legitimate means of purification—the daily denying of self, sincere confession of our sins, walking in the paths of righteousness.

What is this “purity of heart”? A question which requires a somewhat more definite answer than has been given above, where we have intimated that this sixth Beatitude contemplates both the new heart or nature received at regeneration and the transformation of character which is the effect a divine work of grace in the soul. Spiritual purity may be defined as undivided affections, sincerity and genuineness, godly simplicity. It is the opposite of subtlety and duplicity, for genuine piety lays aside not only hatred and malice, but guile and hypocrisy. It is not sufficient to be pure in words and outward deportment—purity of desires, motives, intents, are what should, and in the main, do characterize the child of God. Here, then, is a most important test for each professing Christian to apply to himself—have I been freed from the dominion of hypocrisy? Are my motives pure and intentions genuine? Are my affections set upon things above? Do I meet with the Lord’s people to commune with Him or to be seen of men?

A “pure heart” is one which has a pure object before it, being attracted by “the beauty of holiness.” It is one in which the fear of the Lord has been implanted and the love of God shed abroad, and therefore it hates what He hates and loves what He loves. The purer the heart be, the more conscious it becomes of and the more it grieves over indwelling filth. A pure heart is one which makes conscience of foul thoughts, vile imaginations, and evil desires. It is one that mourns over pride and discontent, unbelief and coldness of affection, and weeps in secret over unholiness. Alas, how little is this *inward* purity esteemed today. The great majority of professors content themselves with a mere form of godliness, a shadow of the reality. The heaviest burden of a pure heart is the discovery that such an ocean of unclean waters still indwells him, constantly casting up mire and dirt, fouling all he does.

Consider now the attendant blessing, “The pure in heart...shall *see God*.” Once again we would remind our readers that the promises attached to these Beatitudes have both a present and a future fulfillment, notably is this the case with the one now before us. Corresponding to the fact that the Christian’s purity of heart is only in part in this life, but perfected in the life to come, is the experience that, “Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1Co 13:12). To “see God” is to be brought nigh to Him (for we cannot see an object which is a vast distance from us), to be introduced into intimate intercourse with Him, which is the consequence of having the thick cloud of our transgressions blotted out, for it was our iniquities which separated us from Him (Isa 59:2). We need scarcely say that it is a spiritual sight and not a corporeal one, an heart-knowledge of and communion with God.

The pure in heart possess spiritual discernment and with the eyes of their understanding they obtain clear views of the divine character and perceive the excellency of His attributes. When the eye is single, the whole body is full of light. It is by faith God is beheld. To “see God” also has the force of *enjoy* Him, and for that, a pure heart is indispensable. That which pollutes the heart and beclouds the vision of a Christian is unjudged evil, for when any sin is “allowed,” communion with God is broken, and can only be restored by genuine repentance and unsparing confession. Since, then, the privilege of seeing God is dependent upon the maintenance of heart purity, how essential it is that we give earnest heed to the exhortations of Isaiah 1:16; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Peter 3:15. O to be able to say, “I have set the LORD always before me” (Psa 16:8)!

“In the truth, the faith of which purifies the heart, they ‘see God,’ for what is that truth but a manifestation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—an illustrious display of the combined radiance of divine holiness and divine benignity!....They who are pure in heart ‘see God’ in this way, even in the present world, and in the future state their knowledge of God will become far more extensive and their fellowship with Him far more intimate. To borrow the words of the Psalmist, we shall, ‘Behold his face in righteousness: and shall be satisfied when we awake in his likeness’ (see Psa 17:15). Then, and not till then, will the full meaning of these words be understood ‘the pure in heart shall see God’ ” (John Brown, 1784-1858).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

83. *His Sacred Song*

In this song, David is celebrating the wondrous deliverances from his many enemies which he had experienced by the goodness and power of JEHOVAH. But unless we carefully bear in mind his particular viewpoint therein, we shall utterly fail to contemplate those experiences in their proper perspective. David was not here furnishing an outline of his entire history, but instead, confines himself to one particular phase thereof. Because they lay *outside* his present scope, he says nothing about his own sad failures and falls, rather does he restrict himself to what the Lord had wrought for and by him. There *are* passages, many of them, both in the historical books, and in the Psalms, wherein we hear him confessing his sins, and bewailing his transgressions, but in this song, he recounts his victories over and vanquishing of his foes, not by his own prowess, but by divine enablement.

In what has just been pointed out, there is a most important lesson for the believer to take to heart. If there be times (as there certainly are) when the Christian may feelingly appropriate to his own use the mournful language of Psalm 38 and the abasing confessions of Psalm 51, it is equally true that there are times when he should employ the triumphant tones of Psalm 18, which is almost identical with 2 Samuel 22. In other words, if there be occasions when the saint can only sigh and groan, there are also seasons when he should sing and celebrate his triumphs, for David has left us an example of the one as truly as he has of the other. Nor should such singing be limited to the days of our “first love,” the joy of our espousal. This song was composed by David in his declining years—as he reviewed his checkered career, despite his own failings and falls, he perceived how, after all, he was “more than conqueror through him that loved him” (Rom 8:37).

If on the one hand, there be a large class of Satan-deceived professors who are fond of trumpeting forth their own achievements and of advertising their fancied victories over sin, there is on the other hand, a considerable proportion of the Lord’s people who are so occupied with their downfalls and defeats, that they are sadly remiss in recounting the Lord’s triumphs in them and by them. This ought not to be—it is robbing the Lord of that which is His due. It is a morbidity which causes us to lose all sense of proportion. It conveys to others an erroneous conception of the Christian life. It is a false humility which shuts our eyes to the workings of divine grace within us. It is the presence and exercise of a true humility that takes notice of our successes and conquests so long as it is careful to lay all the trophies of them at the Lord’s feet, and ascribe to Him alone the honour and glory of the same.

Let those who are engaged in fighting the good fight of faith remember that this is not the work of a day, but the task of a *lifetime*. Now in a protracted war success does not uniformly attend the efforts of that side which is ultimately victorious. Far from it. It usually falls out that many a minor skirmish is lost—yea, and sometimes a major one too, before the issue is finally determined. At times, even the main army may have to fall back before the fierce onslaughts of the enemy. There are severe losses, sad disappointments, heavy sacrifices—the receiving of many wounds—before success is ultimately achieved. Why do we forget these well-known facts when it comes to our spiritual warfare? They apply with equal force thereto. Even under the inspired leadership of Joshua, Israel did not conquer and capture Canaan in a day, nor in a year, nor without drinking the bitters of defeat as well as tasting the sweets of victory.

We are well-aware that one of the principal hindrances against our rendering to God the praise which is His due, for the victories He has given us over our enemies, is a sense of *present* defeat.

But if we are to wait till that be removed, we shall have to wait till we reach heaven before we sing this song, and obviously that is wrong, for it is recorded for us to use here on earth. Ah, says the desponding reader—others may use it, but it is not suitable to such a sorry failure as I am. It would be a mockery for me to praise God for my triumphs over the enemy. Not so fast, dear friend. Ponder these questions. Are you not still out of hell?—many of your former companions are not! Though perhaps tempted to do so, has Satan succeeded in causing you to totally apostatise from God?—he has many others! Have you been deceived and carried away by fatal errors?—millions have! Then what cause have you to thank God for such deliverances!

As the believer carefully reviews the whole of his career, while on the one hand, he finds much to be humbled at in *himself*, yet on the other hand, he discerns not a little to be elated over in the *Lord*. Thus it was with David. Though there had been tragic failures, there were also blessed successes, and it was these he celebrated in this song. After affirming that God had acted righteously in favouring him as He had (2Sa 22:20-28), the purely personal tone is again resumed and he bursts forth into joyful strains of praise. The leading difference between the second half of this song from its first is easily ascertained by attention to its details. In the former, David dwells on God's delivering him *from* his enemies (see 2Sa 22:3, 17). In the latter half, David recounts his victories *over* his enemies. In each, the glory is ascribed alone to JEHOVAH. In the first, David was passive—God's arm alone was his deliverance. In the second, he is active, the conquering king, whose arm is strengthened for victory by God.

“For thou art my lamp, O LORD: and the LORD will lighten my darkness” (2Sa 22:29). This is the verse which links together the two halves of the song. At first sight, the force of its connection is not very apparent, yet a little reflection will ascertain its general bearing. David's path had been both a difficult and a dangerous one. At times it was so intricate and perplexing, he had been quite unable to see whither it was leading. More than once the shadows had been so dark that he had been quite at a loss to discern what lay ahead. Once and again there had been much which tended to cast a heavy gloom upon David's soul, but the Lord had graciously relieved the tension, supplying cheer in the blackest hour. It is to be remembered that with the Orientals, the “lamp” is used for *comfort* as much as for illumination—many of them will deprive themselves of food in order to buy oil, which helps us to understand the figure here used.

“For thou art my lamp, O LORD” (2Sa 22:29), This is the grand recourse of the believer in seasons of trial—he can turn unto One to whom the poor worldling is a total stranger. Nor will he turn to Him in vain, for God is “a very present help in trouble” (Psa 46:1). It is then that the oppressed and depressed saint proves Him to be “the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort” (2Co 1:3). Though his night be not turned into day, yet the welcome radiance of God's countenance affords such cheer as to sustain the trembling heart in the loneliest and saddest hour. In the cave of Adullam, in the hold of Rephaim, in the vastness of Mahanaim, the Lord had been his solace and support. And now that old age drew near, David could bear witness, “Thou art my lamp, O LORD” (2Sa 22:29). And is not this the testimony of both writer and reader? Have we not abundant cause to witness to the same glorious fact!

“And the LORD *will* lighten my darkness” (2Sa 22:29). This was the language of faith and hope. He who had so often done this for David in the past, would not fail him in the future. No matter how dense the gloom would be, there should be a break in the clouds. That which is incomprehensible to the natural man is often made intelligible to the spiritual. Loss of health, financial disaster, or family bereavement—yes, but “the secret of the LORD is with them that fear him” (Psa 25:14). Divine providence is often a mysterious deep, but God is His own interpreter, and He will make plain what before was obscure. Particularly is this the case with the believer's

being plagued so fiercely and so frequently by his enemies. Why should his peace be so rudely disturbed, his joy dampened, his hopes shattered? Why should the conflict so often go against him and humiliating defeat be his portion? Here too we can confidently affirm, “The LORD will lighten my darkness” (2Sa 22:29)—if not now, in the hereafter.

“For by thee I have run through a troop: by my God have I leaped over a wall” (2Sa 22:30). Occurring as they do in the second half of this Psalm, we do not (as some) regard these words as referring to David’s escapes from his enemies, but to his vanquishing of them. It was not that he was almost surrounded by hostile forces and then managed to find a loophole, or that he was driven into some stockade and then climbed over it. Rather that he successfully attacked them. Instead of picturing the difficulties from which David extricated himself, we consider this verse portrays his foes as occupying two different positions—in the open field and sheltering behind some battlement—and his prevailing over them in each case. The leading thought seems to be that the Christian warrior must expect to have a taste of *every form* of fighting, for at times he is required to take the offensive, as well as the defensive. A “troop” of difficulties may impede his progress, a “wall” of opposition obstruct his success, by divine enablement he is to master both.

“As for God, his way is perfect” (2Sa 22:31). What a glorious testimony was this from one who had been so severely tried by His adverse providences! Severely as he had been buffeted, rough as was the path he often had to tread, David had not a word of criticism to make against God for the way He had dealt with him. So far from it, he vindicated and magnified Him. What a resting-place it is for the heart to be assured that all the divine actions are regulated by unerring wisdom and righteousness, infinite goodness and patience, inflexible justice and tender mercy. “The word of the LORD is tried” (2Sa 22:31), like silver refined in the furnace. Tens of thousands of His people have, in all ages and circumstances, tested and proved the sufficiency of God’s Word for themselves. They have found its doctrine satisfying to the soul, its precepts to be in their best interests to follow, its promises absolutely reliable. “He is a buckler to all them that trust in him” (2Sa 22:31). The covenant-keeping JEHOVAH is a sure shield of protection to His warring people.

“For who is God, save the LORD? and who is a rock, save our God?” (2Sa 22:32). There is none to be compared with Him, for there is none like unto Him—all others worshipped as deities are but counterfeits and pretenders. “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Exo 15:11). Who else, save the living and true God, creates, sustains, and governs all creatures? He is perfect in every attribute, excellent in every action. The opening “for” may be connected both with verse 30 and verse 31, “By my God have I leaped over a wall,” for there is none else enables like Him. “He is a buckler to all that trust in him,” for He, and He alone, is reliable. Where can lasting hopes be fixed? where is real strength to be found? where is refuge to be obtained? In the Rock of Ages, for He is immovable and immutable, steadfast and strong.

“God is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect” (2Sa 22:33). By Him David had been energized and enabled, upheld and preserved, both as a pilgrim and as a warrior. How often the Christian soldier has grown weary and faint—then fresh vigour was imparted—“strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” How often the task before us seemed impossible, the difficulties insurmountable, when such might was ours that we mounted up with wings as eagles and ran and were not weary. Nor can we take any credit for this to ourselves—God Himself is our strength and power, both physically and spiritually. “He maketh my way perfect,” by which we understand David to mean that his course had been successful. There is a

real sense in which each believer may make these words his own, because his steps are ordered by the Lord and because his path shines more and more unto “the perfect day.”

“He maketh my feet like hinds’ feet: and setteth me upon my high places” (2Sa 22:34). “As hinds climb the craggy rocks and stand firm upon the slippery summit of the precipice, so David had been upheld in the most slippery paths and advanced to his present elevated station by the providence and grace of God” (Thomas Scott). The feet of certain animals are specially designed and adapted to tricky and treacherous ground. A threefold line of thought is suggested by the figure of this verse. First, God fits the believer for the position which He has appointed him to occupy, no matter how honourable and hazardous. Second, God furnishes him with alacrity and agility when the King’s business requires haste, for speed as well as sureness of foot characterizes the hind. Third, God protects and secures him in the most dangerous places, “He will keep the feet of his saints” (1Sa 2:9).

“He teacheth my hands to war: so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms” (2Sa 22:35). Whatever skill he possessed in the use of weapons, David, gratefully ascribed it unto divine instruction. The general principle here is of wide application—the artisan, the musician, the housewife, should thankfully acknowledge that it is God who has imparted dexterity to his or her fingers. In its higher significance, this verse has reference to divine wisdom being imparted to the Christian warrior in the *use* of the armour which grace has provided for him. As it is in the natural, so it is in the spiritual. Weapons, whether the offensive or defensive ones, are of little avail to us till we know how to employ them to advantage. “Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day” (Eph 6:13), not only means appropriate to yourself the panoply which God furnished, but also look to Him for guidance and help in the use of the same. The second half of our verse seems to indicate that David, like Samson, was at times endued with more than ordinary strength.

“Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation” (2Sa 22:36). Here we find David looking higher than the material and temporal blessings which God had so freely granted him, to those special favours reserved for His own elect. There are common gifts of Providence bestowed upon the wicked and the righteous alike, but there are riches of grace communicated only to the high favourites of heaven, that infinitely surpass the former. What are bodily deliverances worth if the soul be left to perish! What does protection from human foes amount to, if the devil be permitted to bring about our eternal destruction! David was not only granted the former, but the latter also. Here is a plain hint that we should seek after the higher meaning throughout this song and interpret spiritually. Let it be noted that this is not the only place in it where God’s “salvation” is referred to, see verses 47, 51.

“And thy gentleness hath made me great” (2Sa 22:36). The Hebrew word which is here rendered “gentleness,” is one of considerable latitude and has been variously translated. The Septuagint has “thy discipline,” or Fatherly chastening; another gives “thy goodness,” referring to the benevolence of God’s actions; still another, and more literally, “thy condescension.” They all amount to much the same thing. This acknowledgment of David’s is very blessed—so far was he from complaining at the divine providences and accusing God of having dealt with him harshly, he extols God’s perfections for the pains that had been taken with him. David owns that God had acted toward him like a tender parent, tempering the rod with infinite patience. He affirmed that God had graciously sanctified his afflictions to him. Though he had been raised from the sheepcote to the throne and had become great in prosperity and power, a successful conqueror and ruler, he fails not to give God all the glory for it.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

7. *The Messianic*

We continue our contemplation of the measures and means ordained by God for the actual communication of the blessings of the covenant. First and foremost among these was the appointing of His Son to the mediatorial office, involving, of course, His becoming man. The covenant itself is a dispensation of free promises of grace to guilty and condemned sinners, the measures to give effect unto these promises are the *terms* on which the divine intercourse with sinners is alone possible, and the *means* are that by which true fellowship with God is established and maintained. As we have said, first among these measures and means was the ordination of Christ to the mediatorial office, and to equip Him for the discharge thereof during the days of His humiliation. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit (Luk 4:18; Act 10:38). Thus was He furnished for all the exigencies of the stupendous undertaking upon which He entered, an undertaking that is executed by the exercise of His prophetic, priestly, and royal functions.

By the successful conclusion of His earthly mission and work, Christ laid a sure foundation for the recovery of God's fallen people and for their true fellowship with Him, yet more was still needed for the actualizing of the divine purpose of grace. As it is through Christ all its blessings are conveyed, so it is by Him the covenant is *administered*. Consequently, upon His exaltation to the right hand of God, He received a further and higher anointing, obtaining the promise of the Father in the gift of the Spirit, to be by Him dispensed to His church at His will, see Acts 2:33; Hebrews 1:9; Revelation 3:1. Thus is He effectually equipped to secure the salvation of all His people. He has been exalted to be "a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Act 5:31). He is endowed with "all power...in heaven and in earth" (Mat 28:18). He "must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1Co 15:25). God has assured Him that "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa 53:11).

The administration of the covenant in the actual application of its blessings, and in securing, beyond the possibility of the slightest failure, its ordained results, is an essential part of the mediatorial work of Christ. In order to this, His exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty on high, in the exercise of sovereign power, has immediate respect. His cross was but the prelude to His crown. The latter was not only the appointed and appropriate reward of the former, but having begun the work of salvation by His death, to Him was reserved the honour of completing it by His reigning power. God "raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand...and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body" (Eph 1:20-23). The salvation of the church, and the unlimited power and authority with which the Redeemer is now entrusted, are indispensable to its successful attainment.

The administration of the covenant by the Mediator, as bearing on the salvation of sinners, is a subject of vast importance. Christ now reigns, and nothing is more consoling and stabilizing than a deep conviction of this fact. His rule is not an imaginary one, but a reality. His reign is not figurative, but personal. He is now on the throne, and is exercising the power and authority committed to Him as the Messiah, in the complex constitution of His person, for the accomplishment of His people's salvation. But not only is this now denied by those who imagine that Christ's personal reign is as yet entirely future, it is most feebly grasped by many of those who profess to believe that the Saviour is already on the mediatorial throne. It is one thing to admit it in words, and another to act thereon and enjoy the living power of it. It is the holy privilege of the Christian to have personal dealings with One who is invested with supreme sovereignty, and yet at the same time ever has his best interests at heart.

From the period of His ascension, the royal supremacy of Christ was distinctly recognized and frankly owned by all the apostles. They steadfastly believed in Him as their King and their God—ever accessible, ever near to them. They sought His direction in duty and under His authority they acted. They relied upon His grace for the performance of their work and to Him they ascribed their success. The assurance of His presence was a vital consideration with them. It strengthened their faith, energized their service, sustained them in their afflictions, and gave them victory over their enemies. Of this, their writings afford abundant evidence. It is impossible to peruse them attentively without perceiving that a living, ever-present Saviour, invested with mediatorial power and glory, was their life and strength and joy. And with this, all healthy Christian experience, ever since the day of the apostles, thoroughly coincides.

The government of Christ is administered by a wisely-adapted system of means, appointed and directed by Himself. Chief among these means, in the matter of salvation, are His Word and His *Spirit*, the former containing all that it is necessary for us to know in order to our spiritual deliverance. It reveals the character of the Lord God, the nature of the relation He sustains to us, the things He requires of us, and the principles on which He will deliver us. It depicts what we are as fallen creatures, what sin is, and what are its wages. It unfolds the divine method of salvation through the sacrifice and mediation of the Son, His all-sufficiency for the work assigned Him, the way in which we become interested in its blessings, and the character of that obedience which, as the subjects of His grace, we must render to Him.

As a means, *the Word* is perfect for its purpose—it is fully and admirably fitted to produce the most practical effect on all who are brought to understand it. But the Scripture declares, and innumerable facts echo its testimony, that this body of truth meets with such resistance from sinful men that no mere means can ever remove—that plain as its statements are, and satisfactory and conclusive its evidence, sinners naturally have not eyes to see nor hearts to receive. Fallen men are so utterly depraved, there is such an aversion in their hearts to all that is holy, that had they been left to themselves, revelation with all its merciful disclosures, must have been given in vain. It is here that the work of *the Spirit* comes in—a gracious provision of Christ's to meet man's otherwise hopeless malady. By His power, the Spirit of Christ dispels the darkness of the understanding and subdues the enmity of the heart. This He does by regenerating us, which imparts a capacity for receiving and loving the truth.

When a sinner, after a career of heedless insensibility to the claims of God, is awakened to a consciousness of his guilt and danger, brought under deep and painful conviction, and after exercise of heart more or less protracted, is led to accept the mercy of the Gospel and to find peace in Christ, it is in every instance a work of divine grace, the fruit of the Spirit's operation. True, every conviction is not the proof of a saving work, for some proceed from natural conscience or are aroused by some special providence. It is the *result* and not the degree of suffering attending them, which is the only sure criterion of their saving nature. Those convictions alone are gracious which truly *humble* the sinner, leading to the renunciation of all self-righteous dependence, inducing him to justify God in his condemnation and take the blame of his sins upon himself, and leave him a conscious suppliant for undeserved mercy. This is a state of heart which the Spirit of God alone can produce.

The actual reception of Christ, in order that salvation may be a conscious possession and enjoyment, is by faith, and that faith is obviously the consequence of the spiritual and radical change which has passed on the heart. We say, "obvious," for a proud and impenitent heart cannot savingly believe (Mat 21:32), any more than one who is yet a rebel can surrender to the Lordship of Christ and take His yoke upon him. There can be no communion between light and

darkness, no fellowship between Christ and Belial. While the heart remains hard and unbroken, the Word obtains no entrance therein, as our Lord's parable of the sower makes unmistakably plain. The faith which saves is one that receives Christ as He is presented in the Word, namely, as One who abhors self-righteousness, hates sin, yet is full of compassion to those who are sick of sin and long to be healed by Him. Of such faith the Holy Spirit is the Author in every instance.

In His administration of the covenant, then, Christ fulfills its promises by means of the ministry of the Word, under the agency of the Spirit. God's people are effectually called by His grace—by faith they accept His mercy and surrender to His will. The effectual call concerns their salvation, for it is a call to His kingdom and glory, this being its specific design. From the moment that spiritual principles and gracious affections exist in the heart, in however feeble a form, salvation commences—and we may rest fully assured that everyone in whom this good work is begun by the Spirit will continue and persevere in the course on which they have entered, until their salvation is completed, and present grace passes into future glory. Between the first incipient manifestation of grace in the heart and finished redemption in the everlasting blessedness of heaven, there is an intimate, and by divine appointment, a necessary and sure connection. The very nature of the covenant insures this, for its blessings are entirely spiritual, providing for permanent relations with God.

Between the condition of Adam in a state of innocence, and renewed and believing saints, there is a vast difference. The former stood in his own righteousness and there was no guarantee against his defection. He did fall, even when placed in the most favourable circumstance, from continued obedience. If, then, believers, now, with indwelling sin and all the infirmities which still cleave to them, amidst the manifold forms of temptation surrounding them—things which Adam in his purity never knew—have no higher security than he had, what could prevent their inevitable apostasy and destruction? The effects of divine grace and the faithfulness of the Redeemer are pledged for their safety. He who pitied them when they were dead in trespasses and sins, and brought them to know and love Himself, will never leave nor forsake them. The grace which first blessed them will continue to bless them unto the end. To render their salvation certain is the immediate purpose of the Mediator's government.

“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Rom 11:29). Of this the covenant itself supplies an express assurance, not only by its general statements, from which an inference to this effect might be fairly drawn, but in distinct terms. In one remarkable passage we find it thus stated, “They shall be my people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me” (Jer 32:38-40). The covenant does not provide a pardon for sinners and then leave them in their sins. It is no licenser of ungodliness or shelterer of the libertine. There is nothing in it which to the least degree encourages those embraced by it to sin that grace may abound.

The “fear” which God puts into the hearts of renewed souls is the divine antidote against indwelling sin, for as Proverbs 8:13 tells us, “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil,” and as we again read, “By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil” (Pro 16:6). Therefore, until the sinner has by grace been brought to hate evil and depart from it, he is a stranger to the covenants of promise. Mark well, dear reader, God does not promise to place His doctrine in our heads—many have that and nothing more—but His *fear* in our *hearts*. A merely intellectual knowledge of doctrine puffs up with pride and presumption, but His fear in the heart humbles and produces a godly walk. “I will not turn away from them to do them good.” True, says the Arminian, but *they*

may turn from *Him* to do evil. Not wholly, constantly, and finally so, as we are here positively assured, “I will put my fear in their hearts that *they shall not depart* from me.”

Thus far we have dwelt exclusively on the divine side of this aspect of our subject—the measures God has taken and the means He has appointed for fulfilling His purpose of grace in the covenant. Now we must turn to the human side and consider what God requires from us before the blessings of the covenant can be bestowed upon us. Alas that in the few pulpits where the divine side is clearly enunciated, most of them are silent on the human, or vehemently assert there is *no* human side to it. It is another example of the woeful lack of balance which now obtains so widely in Christendom. Those to whom we are alluding are very, very fond of quoting, “He *hath* made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure” (2Sa 23:5), but one never, never hears them cite, still less expound, “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; *and I will make* an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David” (Isa 55:3).

In the passage last quoted, we learn just who are the characters with whom God proposes to make this covenant, and the terms with which they must comply if He is to do so. First, it is with those who had hitherto closed their ears against Him, refusing to heed His requirements, and stealing themselves against His warnings and admonitions. To “incline your ear” (Isa 55:3) signifies cease your rebellious attitude, submit yourselves to My righteous demands. Second, it is with those who are separated and alienated, at a guilty distance from Him. “Come unto me” (Isa 55:3) means throw down the weapons of your warfare and cast yourselves on My mercy. Third, it is with those who are destitute of spiritual life, as the “hear and your souls shall live” clearly enough denotes. It is human *responsibility* which is here being enforced. Comply with these terms, says God, and I will make this covenant with you.

This enforcing of our responsibility is most meet for the honour of God, and as the honour of His Father lies nearer to the heart of Christ than anything else, He will not dispense the blessings of His grace except in that way which is most becoming to God’s perfections. There is a perfect consonance between the impetration of God’s favour and the application of it. As the justice of God deemed it meet that His wrath should be appeased and His law vindicated by the satisfaction made by His Son, so His wisdom determined that the sinner must be converted before pardon is bestowed upon him (Act 3:19). We must be on our guard here, as everywhere, against extolling one of God’s perfections above another. True, the covenant is entirely of grace—pure, free, sovereign grace—nevertheless, here, too, grace reigns through righteousness and not at the expense of it.

God will not disgrace His grace by entering into covenant with those who are impenitent and openly defy Him. It is not that the sinner must do something to earn the grand blessings of the covenant. No, no, *he* contributes not a mite toward the procuring of them. That price, and infinitely costly it was, was fully paid by Christ Himself. But though God requires naught from us in the way of purchasing or *meriting* these blessings, He does in the matter of our actual *receiving* of them. “The honour of God would fall to the ground if we should be pardoned without submission, without confession of past sin, or resolution of future obedience, For till then we neither know our true misery, nor are we willing to come out of it. For they that securely continue in their sins, they despise both the curse of the law and the grace of the Gospel” (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677).

2 CORINTHIANS 3

We have long desired to offer a detailed exposition of this section of the Scriptures, but though the time for this be not fully ripe, we feel that some comments upon its contents are called for in connection with the closing articles of our series on the divine covenants. This is one of the principal chapters dealing with the new testament or Messianic covenant, and therefore our treatment thereof would lack completeness were we to entirely ignore it. The main reason why we have for years past wished to open up this passage was because the “dispensationalists” have so grievously wrested it. But their perversion of it is not to be wondered at, for there is not another portion in all God’s Word which more clearly and expressly refutes their pet theory that this present age is to be followed by another which will witness the restoration and glorification of Judaism.

The outstanding error of the dispensationalists is that the Gentiles in general and Christians in particular are not in any sense under the Ten Commandments, that the divine Decalogue is not binding upon them as their rule of life, that the moral law was abolished at the cross. In order to bolster up their error they have appealed to the terms of 2 Corinthians 3, insisting that such clauses as, “that which is done away” (2Co 3:11), and “that which is abolished” (2Co 3:13), have reference to that which was written by the finger of the Lord God upon the two tables of stone. Before turning to the positive purport of our chapter, let us point out that such expressions as those just quoted cannot possibly be understood absolutely (without qualification) of the moral law, as is clear from the following considerations.

First, because if the moral law has been abolished, nothing remains to convict us of our guilt, “By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:20). Second, because if the moral law be abolished the conduct of the Christless would be unproveable, “Where no law is, there is no transgression” (Rom 4:15). Third, because if it be abolished it were needless to inquire, “Do we then make void the law through faith?” (Rom 3:31)—the inspired answer to which is “God forbid.” Fourth, because Christians could not then “delight in the law of God,” nor “serve” it (Rom 7:22, 25). Fifth, because if the law were abolished at Calvary, Paul could never have affirmed in his day there were those, “that are under the law” (1Co 9:20). Sixth, nor would he have quoted the law and pressed it on Christians (Gal 5:13-15). Seventh, nor assured obedient children that its promise of long life on earth held good for them (Eph 6:1-3).

In order to understand 2 Corinthians 3, it is necessary to have before us something of the circumstances which occasioned the writing of the Corinthian epistles, for a grasp of these is essential to an insight of many of their details. Soon after Paul’s departure from Corinth (Act 18), false teachers assailed the Corinthian saints, seeking to undermine the apostle’s influence and discredit his ministry. The result was that the believers there became divided into opposing factions, engaged in disputes, and seduced into carnal walking (1Co 1:11-12)—those who said, “I am of Pa; and I of Apollos” (1Co 1:12). were probably the *Gentile* converts, whereas they who boasted, “I of Cephas; and I of Christ” (1Co 1:12), (claiming a fleshly relation to Him which they denied to the Gentile converts) were most likely converted Jews. These false teachers had come to Corinth with “letters of commendation” (2Co 3:1), probably from the temple at Jerusalem. They were “Hebrews” (2Co 11:22), professing to be “ministers of Christ” (2Co 11:23), and yet they were “false apostles” (2Co 11:13). They had denied that Paul was a true apostle of Christ, arguing (seemingly on the basis of Acts 1:21-22) that he could not be such, seeing he had not accompanied with Christ during the days of His flesh. This had obliged Paul to write the Corinthians, vindicating the divine authority of his apostleship (1Co 9:1-3).

His first epistle to the Corinthians had produced a salutary effect upon them as is clear from 2 Corinthians 1 and 2, yet it did not silence the “false apostles” (the Judaizing teachers), nor completely establish the believers there—hence the need for his second epistle to them. His enemies were still working there against him, even charging him with not being a man of his word (see 1Co 16:5 and compare 2Co 1:15-24)! 2 Corinthians 5:12 shows plainly that Paul was furnishing his friends with materials for closing the mouths of those who maligned him—cf. also 2 Corinthians 10:2, 7. In 2 Corinthians 11 and 12, Paul, with great reluctance, fully vindicated himself and his ministry by comparing and contrasting his gifts, labours, sufferings, and conduct with the pretenses of the false teachers, and shows himself to be not one whit behind any of the apostles.

How serious the whole situation was is clear from 2 Corinthians 13:3—the saints there had been made to doubt whether Paul was an apostle of *Christ’s* at all! In consequence of such leaven working among them, the Corinthians had become carnal in their walk, for corrupt doctrine always produces corrupt practice. That the “false apostles” were Judaizers (i.e., seeking to convert the Corinthians to Judaism—the whole Mosaic system) is apparent from many incidental details. We trust that these few remarks, though of a somewhat technical nature, will supply that key which will enable the closer student to enter more intelligently into the contents of the two Corinthian epistles.

Bearing in mind what has been pointed out above, let us turn now to 2 Corinthians 3. The first three verses contain a part of the apostle’s vindication. “Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or...of commendation from you?” (2Co 3:1). The word “again” intimates that a charge of glorifying himself had been made against Paul by his critics, so, in view of what he had just said in the context, he pauses to refute such a false accusation. Though the closing verses of chapter 2 contained a strong affirmation of his integrity, Paul wished it to be known that they had not been written with any intention of self-commendation—there was no need for him to “blow his own horn” (see Pro 27:1-2) or to solicit the praise of dying men.

“Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men” (2Co 3:2). So far was Paul from standing in need of any formal credentials in order to now secure the confidence of the Corinthian believers—their own conversion under his ministry fully authenticated his authority, mission, and fidelity. Why, the church at Corinth was itself his “letter of commendation,” written not by man, but by the Spirit of God, thereby demonstrating that he was commissioned from heaven. They were inscribed upon his deepest affections—a fact of which he was conscious and certain—anything of which a man is sure, may be said to be “written” upon his heart (Rom 2:15; Heb 8:10).

“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart” (2Co 3:3). Not only were they inscribed upon his affections, but the miracle of grace wrought in them was obvious to others, “manifestly declared to be,” signifies publicly known as such. Their conversion had been so radical and conspicuous that thanks had been rendered to God for the same by His people far and wide, for their case was not one of a superficial and external reformation, but of a supernatural and internal regeneration. Thus, the saving efficacy of his preaching in that notorious centre of wickedness was the most convincing of all testimonials that he was a servant of Christ and faithful minister of His Gospel. The conversion of the Corinthians was the work of Christ, effected by the instrumentality of Paul. How vastly superior was *this* to

any human “letter of commendation”—any man could write with ink on an external tablet, but only Christ can write with the Spirit on the heart—through His servants.

“And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward” (2Co 3:4). The opening “And” at once intimates to what this “trust” referred—the fact that the Holy Spirit had so signally owned and blessed his labours at Corinth assured Paul’s heart through Christ that he was engaged in His cause and the kingdom of God, and therefore has he expressed himself so freely in 2Co 2:12-17. He was fully assured of the divine authority and glory of his mission. It was a confidence so strong that it did not falter in the conscious presence of God. This confidence he had “through Christ.” It was not a carnal self-confidence of personal excellency, but a conviction of the veracity of the Gospel and of the reality of that vocation he had personally received from the ascended Redeemer.

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God” (2Co 3:5). Admire here the blessed balance—strong confidence was coupled with deep humility! Paul would have them know that neither he nor his fellow-ministers possessed any sufficiency in themselves for so momentous a commission, either in natural endowment or because of their zeal and fidelity. He freely and frankly renders honour to Him. The apostles were deeply conscious that all their success was entirely of God. He was the One who had called, qualified, and used them. How strongly this sense of insufficiency is expressed, not merely unable of themselves to *do* anything, but even to “think”—their knowledge, planning, and efficiency was neither self-acquired, nor self-sustained.

“Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament” (2Co 3:6). This was affirmed in confirmation of what he had previously stated, for the Greek word here rendered “able” is the same as translated “sufficient” in the verse preceding. It was God through Christ who had qualified the apostles for their work. In referring to them as “ministers of the new testament,” he distinguishes the servants of Christ in this dispensation from those under the old economy. Herein he struck the keynote of all that follows—wherein the Christian is contrasted from the Mosaic dispensation. This “new testament” or “covenant”—as opposed to the covenant which God entered into with the nation of Israel at Sinai—is that “better testament” of which Jesus was made “surety” (Heb 7:22), the “better covenant” of which He is the Mediator (Heb 8:6).

“Not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2Co 3:6). The transition from Paul’s vindication of his apostleship to his exposition of the superiority of Christianity over Judaism was both easy and natural. The terms which he had used in verse 3, at once brought to his mind the outstanding characteristics of the two covenants or economies, where he had set the internal work of the Spirit over against “tables of stone.” The terms of that old covenant which was inaugurated at Sinai were engraved upon the two tablets which Moses received from God, whereas His promise through Jeremiah (Jer 31:31-34), was that the requirements of the new covenant should be written upon the *hearts* of its beneficiaries. This it is which supplies the key to all that follows. It is not (as some have erroneously supposed) that the apostle here pits grace against law, but rather that he contrasts the two covenants—the moral law in the one case being engraved externally, and in the other being made effectual internally.

“Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2Co 3:6). In the second half of this verse, the apostle begins a series of contrasts between the two covenants. We will not take anything for granted, but pause to give proof as we proceed. That the terms “letter” and “spirit” signify Judaism and Christianity is clear, first from the fact that *these* are what he continues to compare in the verses that follow, and second, because they are the terms he uses elsewhere in the same

sense. Thus in Romans 7:6, he speaks of “newness of spirit” and “the oldness of the letter” when contrasting the two economies—so too in Romans 2:27, he characterises the Jew as being of “the letter.” Should it be inquired what is the ground of these designations, *why* is Judaism called “letter,” and Christianity “spirit,” two answers may be given.

First, Judaism may be called the “letter” for the same reason that God’s Word is called the “Scripture” (both words come from the same root), namely, because it was something *written*. Not only were the Ten Commandments—the *foundation* of the Mosaic economy—written on stones, but the whole Mosaic economy—moral, ceremonial, and civil—was a volume known as “the writings.” Second, the law as written was something *external* and objective. It was addressed to the eye and ear. It was not an inward principle or power. Judaism presented to the Jews the divine rule of duty to which they must be conformed, but it conveyed neither disposition nor ability to obey. In antithesis thereto, Christianity has to do with the heart and is spiritual rather than ritualistic. The Gospel “is the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16), for by it the Spirit works in regenerating the soul. Thus, 2 Corinthians 3:6 expresses briefly the characteristic differences between Judaism and Christianity. “The one was external, the other spiritual; the one was an outward precept, the other an inward power. In the one case, the law was written on stone, in the other, on the heart. The one therefore was letter, the other spirit” (Charles Hodge, 1797-1878).

“But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stone, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?” (2Co 3:7-8). Paul proceeds to set forth the immeasurable superiority of the new covenant over the old. In order to ascertain the precise trend of the apostle in this passage, it is most important to note his repeated reference to Moses, for it is thereby apparent that he is not opposing the Gospel to the moral law as such (which long antedated Moses!), but to the whole Mosaic system, namely, *Judaism*. His later words, “when Moses is *read*, the vail is upon their hearts” (2Co 3:15), cannot possibly be restricted to the Ten Commandments, but obviously refers, mainly, to the ceremonial law, wherein there was so much which typified and pointed forward to Christ and His work of redemption.

The moral law, whether as revealed in the Scriptures, or as the basis of the Mosaic covenant, was designed to bring men to the knowledge of their sinfulness and helplessness, to produce a sense of guilt and wretchedness, and a longing for salvation. Yet though the ministration of the Ten Commandments was one of condemnation and death to every transgressor who lay under its curse, nevertheless, as setting forth the holiness, truth, and righteousness of God, it was “glorious.” It bore the stamp of divinity upon it, and this was emblematically manifested in the face of Moses when he came down from the mount. The brightness of his face (Exo 34:29) was in two respects a symbol of the glory of the old covenant. First, it was only an *external* one—what was even the bright cloud overshadowing the cherubim to the light of God’s presence filling the soul! Second, it was *transient*, soon “done away,” whereas the ministry of the new covenant issues in eternal glory.

“How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?” (2Co 3:8). Not only was Judaism “glorious,” because the moral law (its foundation) expressed the moral perfections of God, but also because the ceremonial law contained much that adumbrated the person and work of Christ, and too, because the whole Mosaic economy was introductory and preparatory to Christianity. Nevertheless, the Messianic covenant contains a far higher and grander “glory.” The A.V. rightly used a small “s” for “spirit” here in verse 8, for the reference is not to the third

person of the Godhead but to the new testament or covenant, which in verse 6 he had denominated “spirit” in contrast from “the letter” or old covenant. Observe, it is *not*, “the operations of the Spirit,” but “the ministration of the spirit,” which can only refer to the evangelical service of the apostles and those who have succeeded them—the “teaching-function of the Gospel” as one has defined it. The Gospel is not something external and powerless, but is inward and saving, and so is designated “spirit.”

“For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory” (2Co 3:9). “This verse is a confirmation of the preceding. The Gospel is more glorious than the law, for the ministration of righteousness is more glorious than the ministration of condemnation. The ‘ministration of condemnation’ is that ministration which brings men into a state of conscious condemnation, that is, which makes them know and feel that they are condemned. The ‘ministration of righteousness’ is that ministration which reveals a righteousness by which men are justified, and thus freed from the condemnation pronounced upon them by the law. As much better therefore as justification is than condemnation to eternal death, so much better is the Gospel than the law” (Charles Hodge).

“For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth” (2Co 3:10). “If that ministry, which in itself tended only to condemnation, contained such a display of the divine glory as rendered the exercise of it honourable, how should not that ministry, by which sinners are taught the way of righteousness by faith in Christ, and which contained so full and complete a discovery of the glory and harmony of God’s perfections, confer far greater honour on the apostles, who were employed to preach it to the world? Indeed, the glory of the law, and that of the legal dispensation, were so eclipsed by the excellent glory of the Gospel, as *in this respect* to be comparatively nothing; and after the publication of Christianity, the Mosaic dispensation had lost all its *reflected* glory and divine authority, and was become a lifeless letter and form to those who rejected Christ” (Thomas Scott).

“For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious” (2Co 3:11). In seeking to discover exactly what has been “done away,” the whole context must be taken into consideration. The apostle was rebutting those who rejected the Gospel of God’s grace and opposed Judaism to Christ. Now the central thing in Judaism, that about which the entire system revolved, was the *ceremonial law*. Most blessedly and strikingly did that shadow forth the Gospel, presaging Christ and His redemption. Yet, if emptied of its typical meaning and message, it was but a lifeless form, a shell without any kernel, for the only saving value the ceremonial law possessed was to teach Israel to look beyond the shadows to the Substance. Consequently, after the Anti-type had appeared and Christianity was established, it was discarded, “done away” by God, and was only a killing letter unto those who rejected Christ, determining to cling to it.

“For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious” (2Co 3:11). In this verse, the apostle continues to show the superiority of the new covenant to the old, the glory of Christianity surpassing that of Judaism. First, he had pointed out that the one was “the ministration of death” (cf. Heb 12:18-21), whereas the other was “the ministration of the spirit,” saving (2Co 3:7-8). Second, the former was “the ministration of condemnation,” but the latter of “righteousness” (2Co 3:9). Here (2Co 3:11) he contrasts their stability or continuance—the one was “done away,” the other “remaineth” to the end of time. The introduction of Christianity necessarily implied the abolition of Judaism, “In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (Heb 8:13).

“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: and not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished” (2Co 3:12-13). We have linked together these two verses because the latter can only be properly understood in the light of the former, as the opening “And” of verse 12 indicates. In them yet another contrast is drawn, showing how the new covenant excels the old. The “such hope” of verse 12 is the reiteration of the apostle’s “trust” or confidence in verse 4, here extending to the future as well as the present. He was fully assured that the Gospel and its ministry would prove themselves to be far more excellent than the ministry of Moses. “Plainness of speech” refers not so much to frankness of language, as to the absence of “dark sayings.”

“And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face” (2Co 3:13). This has reference to the *mode of manifestation* in connection with the revelation God made under the old covenant. In comparison with the clear and full manifestation of divine grace in the Gospel, the redemptive mercy of God was obscured under Judaism by types and shadows, mysterious rites and elaborate symbols. The grand truth concerning the person and work of Christ, “In other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed” (Eph 3:5). The truth was then hidden beneath the Levitical figures. Judaism had a divine glory as was evident by the radiance of the mediator’s face, but it was obscure, as was denoted by the veil he placed on his countenance, so that Israel could not “steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.”

The veil with which Moses covered his face was not only an apt emblem of the obscurity of that system of which he was the mediator, but it also served to prevent Israel seeing the end or fading away of the brightness of his countenance, for the glory of his face—in keeping with the transitory character of the Mosaic—was but a fleeting one. In 2 Corinthians 3:7, the “done away” had reference to the glory of the face of Moses, and in verse 11, to this ministry and the economy to which it belonged. Here in verse 13 the reference is again to the former, and “the end” signifies the termination. “Viewing this brightness as a symbol of the divine mission of Moses, the apostle ascribes to him a still further intention in the veiling of it (additional to the calming of their fears, Exo 34:35), namely that the children of Israel might not, by the perception of its transience, be led to think of the transitory nature of the service or ministration of Moses itself” (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874). For Israel to have fixed their eyes on the future glory of Christianity would have tended to weaken their regard for the preparatory system under which they were placed.

“But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which vail is done away in Christ” (2Co 3:14). Blinded by pride and prejudice, they looked no further than the outward symbols, and mistaking the shadows for the substance, rejected Christ when He appeared, thereby preventing themselves from perceiving the real intent, meaning, and glory, of the Levitical law. “The veil untaken away in reading of the Old Testament” signifies they were so satisfied with the external, they could not penetrate to what lay beneath. The Jews utterly failed to understand the ministry of Moses, and though the apostles used such plainness of speech, their hearts were calloused. The words, “which veil is done away in Christ,” fixes for us the spiritual meaning of the Old Testament types, promises and prophecies. For lack of faith in Christ, the Jews to this day are blind to the real purport of Judaism, and grasping tightly the types, despise the Antitype. The Old Testament is intelligible only when Christ is used as the key thereto.

“But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart” (2Co 3:15). This is explanatory of the preceding verse—the reason why the unbelieving Jews failed to see that the Sinaitic covenant had been “done away” in Christ, was because of the state of their hearts—had they not been blinded by prejudice and pride, when the Redeemer appeared and His glorious

Gospel was proclaimed by His servants, they would have seen that the Substance now replaced the shadows. The revelation of Christ even in the Old Testament, though obscure when compared with the plain epistles of the New Testament, was sufficiently plain to be understood by the Jew had he only been in a right state of mind, hence our Lord's upbraiding of His disciples in Luke 24:25.

"Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away" (2Co 3:16). Salvation for the Jew comes in precisely the same way as it does to the Gentile, namely, by faith in and surrender to the Lordship of Christ. When the heart of that people, whether individually or collectively, is truly converted, then shall be given a true insight into the meaning of Judaism and the spiritual import of its ceremonies and sacrifices. "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2Co 3:17). The word "spirit" should be with a small "s" as in verse 8, for the reference is obviously to "the spirit" of verse 6, the "spirit" that stands opposed to "the letter," namely, the animating principle, the truth and power under the forms and types of Judaism. "Christ is the life of the law" (John Calvin, 1509-1564)—savingly so when the heart truly turns to Him. Apart from faith in and grace from Christ, all knowledge, ordinances, and external obedience is but a dead form of godliness.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2Co 3:18). The opening "But," introduces that company of believers opposed to the blinded Jews who knew not the Lord. The "we all [Christians] with unveiled face beholding" is first in designed contrast from those who have a vail upon their hearts (2Co 3:15). Second, it looks back to the eminent case of Moses, who, unlike the people, was admitted into the immediate presence of the Lord (being unveiled before Him, though veiled before them), whence he received impressions of glory upon his countenance. So Christians, though in a far higher sense, behold and reflect the glory of the Lord, and not only so, are transformed after His image. How this, again, demonstrates the vast superiority of Christianity over Judaism.

Now to sum up 2 Corinthians 3. Paul is vindicating the divine authority and excellency of his apostleship, in the course of which he magnifies his office by showing how much grander was the mission entrusted to him than had been the ministry of Moses. In developing his demonstration, the apostle places Christianity in sharp antithesis from Judaism, the latter especially as it revolved around the ceremonial law. The contrast is between the two "testaments" or "covenants," the Mosaic and the Messianic economies (compare Heb 12:18-24), which he opposes as "letter" and "spirit" (2Co 3:6), and in what follows to the end of the chapter a series of contrasts are drawn showing wherein the latter excelled the former.

The Judaisers were insisting that the ministration of the Mosaic economy still obtained (the temple yet stood at Jerusalem), and therefore they, consistently, taught that when Gentiles believed in Christ they must be circumcised and brought into subjection to the whole ceremonial law if they were to become recipients of the peculiar blessings promised the Jews. The apostle here demolished their very foundation by affirming that the old covenant was "abolished." His argument from verse 8 onwards shows that if Christ be taken out of the old covenant—that is, if the ceremonial law were regarded as law and not as a type of Him—then it was but a dead body—lifeless and powerless. Considered abstractedly (a thing apart as it were in itself), the old covenant was but a ministration of condemnation and death. The apostle was not dealing with the law as a standard of conduct for believers, but as that which sounded the doom of unbelievers.

That which the apostle here dwelt upon particularly was the fact that the Mosaic dispensation was a *veiled* or obscure one. Not only was the Sinaitic covenant a covering cast upon the covenant

of promise made with Abraham (Gal 3:16-19), but it largely concealed the glories of Christ. Hence it was that Moses veiled his face, denoting that the blessings of redemption were hidden beneath elaborate symbols, and also adumbrating the fact that the hearts of unbelieving Israel were calloused when they read his writings. It is to be duly noted that throughout this chapter Paul studiously avoided using the words “grace” and “law” (for it is *not* a contrast between *them*), but he *does* employ the terms “new testament” (2Co 3:6) and “old testament” (2Co 3:14)! That which is “done away” is not the ten commandments as the rule of life for all God’s people, but the Mosaic economy—and since Judaism is “*abolished*” it will never be resuscitated in some future “millennium.”

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

7. *Its Design*

Last month, we sought to go right back to the very beginning of all things and trace out the *order* of God’s counsels in connection with His eternal decree in election, so far as they are revealed in Holy Writ. In the two parts of this article, we shall seek to project our thoughts forward to the future, and contemplate God’s grand design, or *what it was* He ordained His people *unto*. Here we shall be on more familiar ground to many of our readers, yet we must not overlook the fact that even this phase of our subject will be entirely new to quite a few of those who will scan these lines, and for their sakes especially it will behoove us to proceed slowly, taking nothing for granted, but furnishing clear Scriptural proof for what we advance. That which is to be before us is inexpressibly blessed, O that it may please God to so quicken the hearts of both writer and reader that we may mutually rejoice and adore.

1. God’s design in our election was that we should *be holy*, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him” (Eph 1:4). There has been much difference of opinion among the commentators as to whether this refers to that imperfect holiness of grace which we have in this world, or to that perfect holiness of glory which will be ours in the world to come. Personally, we believe that both are included, but that the latter is chiefly intended, and so we shall expound it. First, of that perfect holiness in heaven. That this is the prime reference appears from the amplifying clause, “and without blame before him.” It is *such* a holiness that God Himself can find no flaw in. Now the imperfect holiness which the saints have personally in this life, though it be a holiness before God in truth and sincerity, yet it is not one “without blame”—it is not one God can fully delight in.

Second, as God has ordained us to perfect holiness in the world to come, so He has ordained us to an evangelical holiness in this world, or else we shall never come to heaven. Unless we be made pure in heart here, we shall never see God there. Holiness is the image of God upon the soul, a likeness to Him which makes us capable of communion with Him, and therefore the apostle declares that, “without holiness no man shall see the Lord” (see Heb 12:14). As reason is the foundation of learning, no man being able to attain it unless he has reason, so we cannot reach the glory of heaven unless the principle of holiness be divinely communicated to us. Therefore as God’s first design in our election was that we should be holy before Him, let us now make this *our* paramount concern. Here, too, is solid comfort for those who find indwelling sin to be their

heaviest burden—though your holiness be most imperfect in this life, yet is it the earnest of a perfect holiness in the life to come.

Holiness must needs be the fruit of our being chosen in Christ, for it is essential to our having a being in Him. It would be a contradiction in terms to say that God chose a man to be in Christ and did not make him to be holy. If God ordains a man to be in Christ, then He ordains him to be a *member* of Christ, and there must be conformity between Head and members. The election of grace was given to Christ as His spouse, and husband and wife must be of the same kind and image. When Adam was to have a wife, she must be the same specie—none of the beasts was fit to be a partner for him. God brought them all before him, but among them all, “For Adam there was not found an help *meet for him*” (Gen 2:20), because they had not the same image and kind. So if God choose a man in Christ—the Holy One—he must necessarily be holy, and this is the reason why our holiness is annexed to our being chosen in Him (Eph 1:4).

God, then, has decreed that His people shall be perfectly holy before Him, that they shall be in His presence forever, there to enjoy Him everlastingly, and delight themselves in that enjoyment, for as the psalmist tells us, “In thy presence is fullness of *joy*” (Psa 16:11). Therein is revealed to us *of what consists* the ineffable bliss of our eternal inheritance—it is perfect holiness, perfect love to God—this is the essence of celestial glory. It all the apostles had spent the whole of their remaining lifetime in an attempt to depict and describe what heaven is, they could have done no more than enlarge upon these words—perfect holiness in God’s presence, perfect love to Him, perfect enjoyment of Him, even as we are beloved by Him. This is heaven, and this is what God has decreed to bring His people unto. This is His first design in our election—to bring us into an unblemished holiness before Him.

2. God’s design in our election was that we should be *His sons*, “Having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” (Eph 1:5 R.V.). Holiness is that which *fits* us for heaven, for an unholy person could not possibly enjoy heaven—were he to enter it, he would be altogether out of his native element. Holiness, then, is that which constitutes the saints meetness for their inheritance in light (Col 1:12). But adoption is that which gives *the right to* the glory of heaven, being bestowed upon them as a dignity or prerogative (Joh 1:12). As we have pointed out on other occasions, the last two words of Ephesians 1:4 belong properly to verse 5, “In love: having predestinated us unto the adoption.” God’s love unto His dear Son was so great that, having chosen us in Him, His heart went out toward us as one with Christ, and therefore did He ordain us unto this further honour and privilege. This agrees perfectly with, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1Jo 3:1).

God might have made us perfectly holy in Christ and added no further to it. “Ye have your fruit unto holiness” says the apostle (Rom 6:22), and precious fruit that is, but he did not stop there—“and the end everlasting life”—that is added as a further fruit and privilege. In like manner, God added adoption to holiness—as the psalmist says, “The LORD will give us grace and glory” (Psa 84:11). As our *God*, He chose us to holiness, according to that express saying, “Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy” (Lev 19:2). But as He became our *Father* in Christ, He predestinated us unto the adoption of *sons*. Here, then, is the twofold relation which the Most High sustains to His people in and through Christ, and there is the consequent twofold blessing of our persons because of Christ. Observe how minutely this corresponds with, “Blessed be the God *and Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3)!

By adoption we become God's sons *in law*, as by regeneration we are made His children *in nature*. By the new birth, we become (experimentally) members of God's family. By adoption, we have the legal status of sons, with all the high privileges that relationship involves, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts" (Gal 4:6). Adoption makes known the high prerogatives and blessings which are ours by virtue of union with Christ, the legal right which we have unto all the blessings we enjoy, both here and hereafter. As the apostle reminds us, if we are children, then we are "heirs," co-heirs with Christ—yea, heirs of God (Rom 8:17)—to possess and enjoy God as Christ does. "Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son *in law*?" exclaimed David (1Sa 18:23), when it was suggested that he marry Michal. You may haply be the king's favourite and he may make you great, but to become his son-in-law is the highest honour of all. This is why we are told immediately after 1 John 3:1, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1Jo 3:2)—like Him in our proportion—as He perfectly enjoys God, so shall we.

Let it be duly noted that it is "through Jesus Christ" we are sons and heirs of God. Christ is our Pattern in election, the One to whose image we are predestinated to be conformed. Christ is God's natural Son, and we become (by union with Christ) God's legal sons. "That he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom 8:29), signifies that God did set up Christ as the prototype and masterpiece, and made us to be so many little copies and models of Him. Every dignity we possess, every blessing we enjoy—save our election when God chose us in Him—we owe to Christ. He is the virtual cause of our adoption. Christ, as we have said, is God's natural Son—how, then, do we become His sons? Thus—God gave us to Christ to be married to Him, and He betrothed us to Him from everlasting, and so we become sons-in-law unto God, even as a woman comes to be a man's daughter-in-law by marrying his son.

We owe our adoption to our relation unto Christ's person, and not to His atoning work. Our adoption, as originally it was in predestination bestowed upon us, was not founded upon redemption or Christ's obedience, but on Christ's being God's natural Son. Our justification is indeed grounded upon Christ's obedience and sufferings, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7). But our adoption and becoming sons-in-law to God is through Christ's being His natural Son, and we His brethren in relation to *His person*. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1Co 1:9). That fellowship or communion involves our participation of His dignities and whatever else in Him we were capable of—just as a woman acquires a legal title unto all the possessions of the man she marries. As Christ being God's natural Son was the foundation of His work possessing infinite worth, so our adoption is founded on our relation to His person, and then our justification upon His meritorious work.

We must, however, add this word of caution to what has just been pointed out. When we fell in Adam we lost all our privileges, and therefore Christ was fain to purchase them anew, and hence it follows that adoption, and all other blessings, are the fruits of His merit so far as their actual *bestowment* is concerned. Thus the apostle tells us Christ became incarnate, "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal 4:5)—our sins and bondage under the law and its curse interposing an obstacle against God's actual bestowment of adoption. But mark the minute accuracy of the language used—Christ's redemption is not said to *procure* adoption for us, but only that we might *receive* it. That which procured adoption was our relation to Christ as God's sons-in-law—this being God's purpose from everlasting.

Let us duly consider now the *greatness* of this privilege. Adam was created holy, and Luke 3:38 tells us he was “the son of God,” but nowhere is it said that he was the son of God by adoption through Christ. So too in Job 38:7, the angels are called “morning stars” and “sons of God,” yet we are never told they are such by adoption through Christ. They were “sons” indeed by creation, for God made them, but not sons-in-law of God by being married unto His Son, which is a grace and dignity peculiar to *believers*. Thus we excel the angels by our special relation to the Son of God’s love. Christ nowhere calls the angels His “brethren,” as He does us! This is borne out by Hebrews 12:23, where in contrast from the angels mentioned previously, we read of “the church of the firstborn,” a title denoting superiority (Gen 49:3). We being related to God’s “firstborn” have a higher privilege of sonship than the angels have.

“A figure may perhaps help us here. A father chooses a bride for his son, as Abraham chose one of his own kin for Isaac, and gives her a goodly dowry, besides presenting her with bridal ornaments, such as Eliezer put upon Rebekah. But on becoming the spouse of his son, she becomes his daughter, and now his affections flow forth to her, not only as a suitable bride for his dear son—not only does he admire her beauty and grace, and is charmed with the sweetness of her disposition, but he is moved also with fatherly love towards her as adopted unto himself, and thus occupying a newer and nearer relationship. Figures are, of course, necessarily imperfect, and as such must not be pressed too far, but if the one which we have adduced at all helps us to a clearer understanding of the wondrous love of God in the adoption of us unto Himself, it will not be out of place. We thus see that predestination to the adoption of children, is a higher, richer, and greater blessing than being chosen unto holiness, and may thus be said to follow upon it an additional and special fruit of God’s love.

“But the love of God, in predestinating the church unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, has even a deeper root than viewing her as the Bride of His dear Son. It springs out of and is most closely and intimately connected with the true, real, and eternal Sonship of Jesus. Being chosen in Christ, the elect become the sons of God. Why? Because He is the true, real, and essential Son of the Father, and thus, as in union with Him, who is the Son of God by nature, they become the sons of God by adoption. Were He a Son merely by office, or by incarnation, this would not be the case, for He would then only be a Son by adoption Himself. But being the Son of God by eternal subsistence, He can say, ‘Behold I and the children which Thou hast given Me: I Thy Son by nature, they Thy sons by adoption.’ We see, then, that so great, so special was the love of God to His only begotten Son, that, viewing the church in union with Him, His heart embraced Her with the same love as that wherewith He loved Him” (J. C. Philpot, 1802-1869).

3. God’s design in our election was that we should be *saved*—saved from the fall and its effects—from sin and its attendant consequences. This particular ordination of God was upon His foreview of our defection in Adam, who was our natural head and representative. For as pointed out in previous articles, God decreed to permit the fall of His people in order to the greater manifestation of His own grace and the increased glory of the Mediator. Obviously the very term “salvation” implies sin, and that in turn presupposes the fall. But this determination of God to suffer His people to fall into sin and then deliver them from it, was entirely subservient to His prime design concerning the elect and the ultimate glory to which He ordained them. The subordination of this third design of God in our election to those we have already considered appears in, “who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but *according to* his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2Ti 1:9).

If the above Scripture be carefully analyzed, it will be seen, first, that God formed a “purpose” concerning His people and that “grace” was given them in Christ Jesus “before the world began” either historically or in the mind of God—the reference being to His sovereign act in singling them out from the pure mass of creatures, giving them being in Christ, and bestowing upon them the grace of sonship. Second, that God “hath saved us” (the reference being to *believers*) and “called us with a holy calling,” which refers to what takes place in time when He brings us forth from our death in sin by an effectual call unto holiness—cf. Titus 3:5. Third, that this saving and calling of us was “not according to our works” either actual or foreseen, but “according to his own purpose,” i.e., was based upon His *original intention* that we should be His sons. Neither our merits (for we have none), nor our misery, moved God to save us, but His having given us to Christ from the beginning.

As we have previously pointed out, God assigned unto Christ a *double relation* to His people, “Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph 5:23). In the same epistle, He is seen first as the Head in whom we were originally “blessed...with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3). Later, He is presented as Saviour, as the One who “loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and *cleanse* it” (Eph 5:25-26). In speaking of Him as “the saviour of the body,” it is intimated that He is the Saviour of none else, which is clearly confirmed by, “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sake, that *they* may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2Ti 2:10)—not merely, “salvation” indefinitely, but “*the* salvation” decreed by God for *His own*. Nor does, “We trust in the living God, who is the saviour of all men, specially of those that believe” (1Ti 4:10) in anywise clash with this—the “living God” has reference to the Father, and “saviour” is more correctly rendered “preserver” in Baxter’s Interlinear.

Now this “salvation” which God has decreed for His elect, viewed as fallen in Adam, may be summed up under two heads—from the guilt and penalty of sin, and from its dominion and power, these having to do, respectively, with the legal and experimental sides. They are accomplished in time by what Christ did *for* us and by what the Spirit works *in* us. Of the former it is written, “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Th 5:9)—of the latter we read, “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2Th 2:13). It is by the latter we obtain evidence and assurance of the former, “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost” (1Th 1:4-5). When our salvation from sin is consummated, we shall be delivered from the very *presence* of it.

4. God’s design in our election was that we should be *for Christ*, “All things were created by him, and for him” (Col 1:16). God not only chose us in Christ and predestinated us unto sonship through Him, but gave us to Him, so that Christ was likewise the end of God’s purpose in choosing us to perfect holiness and adoption. God having a natural Son, the second person in the Trinity, whom He designed to make visible in human nature, through a union of it to His Son, did decree for His greater glory to ordain us unto the adoption of sons to Him and as brethren unto Him, so that He should not be alone, but rather “the firstborn among many brethren.” As in Zechariah 13:7, the Man Christ Jesus is designated JEHOVAH’s “fellow,” so from Psalm 45:7, we learn that God predestinated others to be for his Son, to be His companions, “Hath anointed thee...above thy *fellows*.” How this tends to the increased glory of Christ must be left for the second part of this article.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Saul at Gilgal

Saul at Gilgal and Samuel's delay in coming to him, "And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him" (1Sa 13:8). Why did not Samuel come within the appointed time? Was it accident, was it necessity, was it negligence, which was the cause of his delay? Whatever it was, it was providential. *God* designed it to be a touchstone to try the obedience of Saul. And it was a test peculiarly adopted to try the strength of the faith and obedience of the new king to the King and God of Israel. No arguments for disobeying a divine injunction could be more plausible than those pleaded by Saul on the occasion. The people were scattered, and the piety of the king will not engage in battle without sacrifice to the God of Israel. As Samuel had disappointed him, does not *necessity* oblige him to offer a sacrifice himself?

For the sequel read 1 Samuel 13:8-14. When providence puts it out of the power of His people to observe His ordinances according to His own appointment, they are *not* guilty in *not* observing them, and they *are* guilty when they observe them, under any pretence, contrary to the divine appointment. [This principle applies most pertinently to the observing of the Lord's Supper in such a day as this—where it is impossible to do so *Scripturally*—as is now the case in many places—when the believer yearns to do so, God accepts the will for the deed, A.W.P.J. God could have given victory to Saul without sacrifice, when sacrifice could not be legally observed. And when Saul observed it *illegally*, God was not only displeased with him, but on that very account rejected him as king of Israel. And had Saul waited a little longer, he would have had sacrifice in a legal way. Samuel made his appearance as soon as Saul had ceased to offer the burnt-offering. The providence of God tests His people, even with their conviction of the utility of His ordinances.—Alexander Carson (1776-1844).

A VERY PRESENT HELP

While it is ever our desire to prepare each article in accord with the title of this magazine, yet we would point out that we write not only for the informing and instructing of the mind, but also (and chiefly) for the affecting of the heart and the practical regulation of the walk. It therefore seems fitting that we should say a word, however brief, on the crisis through which the Lord has recently brought us as a nation and empire. In connection therewith, three passages stand out in our thoughts.

First, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psa 46:1). This holds good for a nation as truly as for an individual, and for the latter as much as the former. Most manifestly was the blessed truth of this verse evidenced a few weeks ago. While regretting that there has been little or no national acknowledgment of our grievous sins as a people, and no official call to repentance and humiliation before God, yet there is much for which we ought to be profoundly thankful. First, that a national call to earnest prayer for God's intervention was made and very widely responded to. Second, that the message of our gracious sovereign, King George, was a *Scriptural* one, "Be of good cheer" (Joh 16:33). Third, that the wildly enthusiastic crowds who greeted the Prime Minister on returning to his official residence, sang, "O God our help in

ages past,” before they dispersed. Fourth, that a call was officially made for national thanksgiving to be rendered unto God for peace.

Second, “The heavens do rule” (Dan 4:26). How comforting to faith is such a divine declaration. How blessed to know that the living God is on the throne, shaping the destiny of nations as truly as He orders the life of each individual saint. How tranquilizing for the mind to be assured that neither despot nor dictator can move one step further than what the Lord permits. Nevertheless, it is our duty and privilege to supplicate God when the peace of the world is seriously imperiled, that it may please Him to hold back the hounds of war and in His righteous wrath, “remember mercy.” That the “heavens do rule” was our unfailing confidence and consolation throughout the trying days from which we have recently emerged, and the substance of this paragraph was what we sent to numbers of our readers during the crisis itself. Once more the editor would bear his humble testimony that the grand truth of God’s absolute supremacy and sovereignty supplies a sure resting-place for the heart in every trial.

Third, “Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore” (Psa 105:4). This is the verse which comes before us and which we desire shall impress our hearts now that the great emergency is behind us. It is natural for us, both as a people and individuals, to seek unto the Lord under the pressure of an unbearable strain, for even the animals cry out for relief when in distress. But more than this is required from us—far more than this is due Him who is “glorious in holiness, fearful in praises.” “Seek his face *evermore*” is our crying need, as an empire, and as individual believers. To “seek his face” in times of prosperity as well as adversity, when peace is assured as much as when it is threatened. To “seek his face” for wisdom, for the spirit of righteousness, for strength to do that which is pleasing in His sight. To “seek his face” for a fresh outpouring of His Spirit, for the strengthening and enlarging of His cause on earth, for the glorifying of His great name. Let us pray with renewed earnestness for such blessings.



December

THE LORD'S PRAYER—CONCLUSION

“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen” (Mat 6:13). This model for divine worshippers concludes with a doxology or ascription of praise to the One addressed, evidencing the *completeness* of the prayer. Christ here taught His disciples not only to ask for the things needful to them, but to ascribe unto God what is proper to Him. Thanksgiving and praise are an essential part of prayer, and particularly should this be borne in mind in all public worship, for the adoration of God is His express due. Surely if we ask God to bless us, the least we can do is to bless Him, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us” (Eph 1:3)—it is the echo and reflex of His grace toward us. Devout praise, as the expression of elevated spiritual affections, is the proper language of the soul in communion with God.

The perfections of this prayer as a whole and the wondrous fullness of each clause and word in it are not perceived by a rapid and careless glance, but only become apparent by a reverent pondering. This doxology may be considered in at least a threefold way. First, as the expression of holy and joyful praise. Second, as a plea and argument to enforce the petitions. Third, as a confirmation and declaration of confidence that the prayer will be heard. A further word upon the first. Throughout the sacred Psalter, prayer and praise are conjoined. In the New Testament we are directed, “In every thing by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God” (Phi 4:6). All the prayers of eminent saints recorded in the Bible are intermingled with the adoration of Him who inhabits the praises of Israel.

In this pattern prayer, God is made both the Alpha and the Omega. It opens by addressing Him as our Father in heaven—it ends with lauding Him as the glorious King of the universe. The more His perfections are before our hearts, the more spiritual will be our worship, and the more reverent and fervent our supplication. The more the soul be engaged with God Himself, the more spontaneous and sincere will be its praise. “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col 4:2). Ah, is it not our failure at this point which so often withholds blessing from us? “Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. *Then* shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us” (Psa 67:5-6). If we do not praise God *for* His mercies, can we expect Him to bless us *with* His mercies?!

“For thine is the kingdom” (Mat 6:13) by which is meant God’s right and authority over all things, by which He disposes of them according to His mere pleasure. God is supreme sovereign in creation, providence, and grace. He reigns over heaven and earth, all creatures and things being under His full control. “And the power,” by which is meant His infinite sufficiency to execute His sovereign right and perform His will in heaven and earth. Because He is the Almighty, He has the

ability to do whatsoever He pleases. He never slumbers nor wearies; nothing is too hard for Him; none can withstand Him. All forces opposed to Him and the church's salvation, He can, and will, overthrow. "And the glory," by which is meant His ineffable excellency, since He has absolute sovereignty over all and commensurate power to dispose of all, therefore is He all-glorious. God's "glory" is the grand end of all His works and ways, and of it He is ever jealous. To Him belongs the exclusive glory of being the Answerer of prayer.

Let us next notice that the doxology is prefaced with "for," which here has the force of *because*. "For thine is the kingdom" (Mat 6:13), etc., is not only an acknowledgement of God's perfections, but a most powerful *plea* as to why our petitions should be heard. It is the "for" of argumentation. Thou art able to grant these requests, *for* Thine is the kingdom, etc. While undoubtedly the doxology belongs to the prayer as a whole and is brought in to enforce all its seven petitions, yet it seems to us to have a special and more immediate reference to the last one, "deliver us from evil, *for* thine is the kingdom," etc. The number and power of our enemies is indeed great, rendered the more formidable because of the treachery of our wicked hearts. Yet we are encouraged to implore Thy assistance against them, because all the attempts made by sin and Satan against us carry in them an invasion of Thy sovereignty and dominion over us and Thy glory by us.

"For thine is the kingdom" (Mat 6:13), etc.—what *encouragement* is here! Two things especially inspire confidence towards God in prayer—the realization that He is *willing* and that He is *able*, both of which are here intimated. God is "our Father" which tells of His love and assures of His care for us. God is also the King of kings, possessing infinite power, which tells of His sufficiency and guarantees His ability. As the "Father," He provides for His children, as the King, He will defend His subjects. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him" (Psa 103:13); "Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob" (Psa 44:4). It is for God's honour and glory to manifest His power, to show Himself strong on behalf of His own. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph 3:20-21).

What *instruction* is here! First, we are taught to enforce our petition with arguments drawn from the divine perfections. God's kingdom and power and glory are to be turned into so many pleas for obtaining the things required—this is doing as Job said, "I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments" (Job 23:4). Second, it directs us to unite together petition and praise. Third, it intimates we must pray with the utmost reverence. Since God is so great and powerful a King, He is to be feared, hence it follows, we are to prostrate ourselves before Him in complete submission to His sovereign will. Fourth, it inculcates full surrender and subjection to Him, for otherwise we do but mock God when we acknowledge His dominion over us. Fifth, it signifies that we make His glory our chief concern, by endeavouring so to walk that our lives show forth His praise.

"For ever"—this is in marked contrast from the fleeting dominion and evanescent glory of earthly monarchs. The glorious Being whom we address in prayer is, "from everlasting to everlasting God." Christ Jesus, in whom He is revealed and through whom prayer is offered, is the same yesterday and today and forever. When we pray aright, we look beyond time into eternity and measure present things by their connection with the future. How solemn and expressive is this word, "for ever"! Earthly kingdoms decay and disappear. Creature power is puny and but for a moment. The glory of human beings and of all mundane things vanishes like a dream. But the kingdom and power and glory of JEHOVAH are susceptible to neither change nor

diminution, and know no end. Our blessed hope is that when the first heaven and earth have passed away, the kingdom and power and glory of God will be known and adored in their wondrous reality to all eternity.

“Amen”—which intimates the two things required in prayer, namely, a fervent *desire* and the exercise of *faith*, for “Amen” signifies both “So be it” and “It shall be so.” This twofold meaning of supplication and expectation is plainly hinted at in its *double* mention in, “Blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen” (Psa 72:19). God has determined it shall be so, and the whole church expresses its desire, “So be it.” This “Amen” belongs and applies to each part and clause of the prayer, “Hallowed be thy name—Amen,” and so throughout—expressing both our desire and affirming our confidence. It is itself a condensed and emphatic petition—believing in the verity of God’s promises and resting on the stability of His government, we both cherish and acknowledge our confident hope in a gracious answer.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

5. *The Beatitudes—Matthew 5:1-11*

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Mat 5:9). “The Jews, in general, regarded the Gentile nations with bitter contempt and hatred, and they expected that, under the Messiah, there should be an uninterrupted series of warlike attacks made on those nations, till they were completely destroyed or subjugated to the chosen people of God [an idea based, no doubt, on what they read in the book of Joshua, concerning the experiences of their forefathers—A.W.P.]. In their estimation, those emphatically deserved the appellation of ‘happy’ who should be employed under Messiah the Prince to avenge on the heathen nations all the wrongs these had done to Israel. How different is the spirit of the new economy! How beautifully does it accord with the angelic anthem which celebrated the nativity of its Founder—‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men!’” (John Brown, 1784-1858).

This seventh beatitude has to do more with conduct than with character, though, of necessity, there must first be a peaceable spirit before there will be active efforts put forth to make peace. Let it be remembered that in this first section of the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus is *defining the character* of those who should be subjects and citizens in His kingdom. First, He described them according to the initial experiences of those in whom a divine work is wrought. The first four may be grouped together as setting forth the negative graces of their hearts. They are not self-sufficient, but consciously poor in spirit. They are not self-satisfied, but mourning because of their spiritual state. They are not self-willed, but meek. They are not self-righteous, but hungering and thirsting after the righteousness of Another. In the next three, the Lord names their *positive* graces—having tasted of the mercy of God, they are merciful in their dealings with others. Having received a spiritual nature, they now hate impurity and love holiness. Having entered into the peace which Christ made by the blood of His cross, they now wish to live in amity with all.

“Blessed are the peacemakers” (Mat 5:9). This takes note of the horrible contention and enmity which sin has brought into the world, for where there is no strife there is no need for peacemakers. The world is “living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another” (Ti 3:3). Though attempts are often made to conceal this by the cloak of hypocrisy, yet it soon peeps forth again in its hideous nakedness, as the history of the nations attests. And let not writer and reader forget the solemn fact that such was once our own sad case, as the opening words of Titus 3:3 declare—“for we *ourselves* also were.” But on the other hand, our text also brings into view the triumph of God over Satan—Grace has brought in that which even now in measure, and in the future completely, displaces the vile works of the flesh.

To be a lover of and worker after peace is one of the distinguishing marks of those who are followers of the Prince of Peace. That miracle of grace which has made them at peace with God causes them to regard their fellows with sincere benevolence, desiring to promote their best interests, both here and hereafter. It is their care, so much as in them lies, to live peaceably with all men, and therefore do they abstain from deliberate injury of others. In each relationship they occupy—domestic, social, ecclesiastical—it is their desire and endeavour to prevent and allay strife. They are lovers of concord, promoters of unity, healers of breaches. They delight to pour oil on troubled waters, to reconcile those who are estranged, to right wrongs, to strengthen the kindly ties of friendship. As the sons of peace, they bring into the fetid atmosphere of this world a breath from the pure and placid air of heaven. How much the world is indebted to their presence, only the day to come will show.

Let it be pointed out that this lovely Christ-like disposition is a vastly different thing from that easy-going indolence which is so often nothing but cowardice or selfishness. It is not a peace at any price which the Christian loves and aims to promote. No indeed, that is a false peace, unworthy to be called peace at all. “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (Jam 3:17). Note well the words, “first pure”—peace is not to be sought at the expense of righteousness. Hence it is important that we lose not the thread of connection between our present beatitude and the one which precedes it—as the “pure in heart” modifies the “mercy” of verse 7, so also it qualifies the “peace” of verse 9—it is *such* mercy and peace as God Himself approves of. The same qualification is seen again in, “Follow peace with all men *and* holiness” (Heb 12:14). We are to avoid all needless occasions of contention, yet not to the point of sacrificing the truth, compromising principle, or forsaking duty—Christ Himself did not so, Matthew 10:34.

“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom 12:18). The very terms of this exhortation denote that so far from compliance therewith being a simple task, it is one which calls for constant vigilance, self-discipline, and earnest prayer. Such is the state of human nature, that offenses will come, nevertheless, it is part of Christian duty to see to it that we so conduct ourselves as to give no just cause of complaint against us. It is for our own peace we do so, for it is impossible to be happy in broils and enmities. Some believers are of a naturally contentious disposition, and doubly so *they* need to beg God to hold His restraining hand and calming hand upon them. When disturbance and turmoil is aroused, we should diligently examine ourselves before the Lord as to whether the cause for it lie *in us*, and if so, confess the sin to Him, and seek to reconcile those offended. If we be innocent, we must meekly submit to it as an affliction.

If it be true that “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Mat 5:19), it necessarily follows that, Cursed are the peacebreakers. Then let us be diligently on our guard against bigotry, intemperate zeal,

and a quarrelsome spirit—the things of God are too sacred for wrangling. Highly important is it that we give earnest heed to the exhortation of, “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). Let it be carefully noted that the preceding verse specifies the chief *aids* to this. In order to the development of a peaceful disposition, we must first cultivate the grace of “lowliness,” which is the opposite of pride, for, “only by pride cometh contention” (Pro 13:10). Second, there must be the cultivation of “meekness,” which is the opposite of self-assertiveness, the determination to press my will at all costs. Remember “a soft answer turneth away wrath” (Pro 15:1). Third, the grace of “longsufferance,” which is the opposite of impatience. Finally, “Forbearing one another in love,” for the queen of the graces “endureth all things.”

See here the blessedness of that work to which the ministers of God are called—not merely to effect peace between man and man, but to reconcile men to God. What a contrast is this from the task allotted to Joshua and his officers under the Mosaic economy, of taking up the sword to slay the enemies of the Lord! In this dispensation, the servants of Christ are commissioned to seek the reconciliation of those who are at enmity with God. The heralds of the cross are the ambassadors of peace, bidding sinners throw down the weapons of their warfare, and enter into an amnesty with God. They know there is no peace for the wicked, and therefore do they exhort them to acquaint themselves with God and be at peace (Job 22:21). Of them it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom 10:15).

There is still another way in which it is the holy privilege of believers to be peacemakers, and that is by their *prayers* averting the wrath of God from a guilty nation. In the day when the Lord’s anger is kindled against a sin-laden people and the dark clouds of providence threaten an impending storm of judgment, it is both the duty and the privilege of God’s redeemed to stand in the breach and by their earnest supplication stay His hand, so making peace. Moses did so—(Exo 32:11-14), so, too, Aaron—(Num 16:47-48), and David—(2Sa 24:10). When some fearful plague visits our country or another nation threatens it with war, we are to behold God raising His rod and entreat Him to be merciful, see Jeremiah 12:11; Ezekiel 22:30-31. This is indeed a blessed work of peace—to stay the Lord from the work of destruction, as Abraham’s intercession had done for Sodom, if there were but ten righteous persons in it. Once more we say, only the day to come will show how much the wicked gained by the presence of the righteous remnant in their midst.

A word now upon the reward—“For they shall be called the children God” (Mat 5:9), which is a decisive proof that these beatitudes contemplate not the mortal virtues of the natural man, but rather the spiritual graces of the regenerate. To be *made* a child of God is to be renewed in His image and likeness—to be *called* so is to be esteemed and regarded as such. The Lord Himself is “the God of peace” (Heb 13:20), and where this holy disposition is manifested by His people, He *owns* them as His children—compare Hebrews 2:11 and 11:16 for the force of the word “called.” Furthermore holy peacemakers are recognized as children of God by their spiritual brethren. Have you received this grace of the Spirit, so that you sincerely desire and endeavour to live at peace with all men? Then that is an evidence you are a child of God, a pledge of your adoption. Labour to maintain it. Ultimately, God will make it manifest to all the universe that we are His children (Rom 8:19).

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:10). The Christian life is one that is full of strange paradoxes which are quite insoluble to human reason, but which are easily understood by the spiritual mind. God’s saints

rejoice with joy unspeakable, yet do they mourn with a lamentation to which the worldling is an utter stranger. The believer in Christ has been brought into contact with a source of vital satisfaction which is capable of meeting every longing, yet does he pant with a yearning like unto that of the thirsty hart. He sings and makes melody in his heart to the Lord, yet does he groan deeply and daily. His experience is often painful and perplexing, yet would he not part with it for all the gold in the world. These puzzling paradoxes are among the evidences which he possesses that he is indeed blest of God. But who by mere reasoning would ever conclude that the persecuted and reviled are “blessed”? Genuine felicity, then, is not only compatible with, but is actually accompanied by manifold miseries in this life.

“It is a strong proof of human depravity that men’s curses and Christ’s blessings should meet on the same persons. Who would have thought that a man could be persecuted and reviled, and have all manner of evil said of him, for righteousness’ sake? And do wicked men really hate justice and love those who defraud and wrong their neighbours? No, they do not dislike righteousness as it respects *themselves*. It is only that species of it which respects God and religion that excites their hatred. If Christians were content with doing justly and loving mercy, and would cease walking humbly with God, they might go through the world, not only in peace, but with applause. But he that will *live godly* in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2Ti 3:12). Such a life reproves the ungodliness of men and provokes their resentment” (Andrew Fuller, 1754-1815). It is the enmity of the serpent—active ever since the days of Abel (1Jo 3:12)—against the holy seed.

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake” (Mat 5:10). The connection between this and all that has been before us must not be overlooked. It is not every sufferer, nor even every sufferer for religion, who is entitled to appropriate such consolation. This antagonism is not in return for wrongdoing or in response to what has given just cause for offense. They who are morose, haughty, selfish, or evil-speaking, have no right to seek comfort from this beatitude when people retaliate against them. No, it is where Christ-likeness of character and conduct is assailed, where practical godliness condemns the worldly ways of empty professors and fires their enmity—where humble yet vital piety cannot be tolerated by those who are devoid of the same. The wicked hate God’s holy image and those who bear it, His holy truth and those who walk in it. This pronouncement of Christ’s signifies, Blessed are the spiritual which the carnal detest. Blessed are the gentle sheep, whom the dogs snap at.

How many a Christian employee who has refused to violate his conscience has suffered at the hands of an ungodly master or mistress! Yet such persecution, painful though it be, is really a blessing in disguise. First, by means of the opposition which they encounter, the Lord’s people became the better acquainted with their own infirmities and needs, for thereby they are made conscious that they cannot stand for a single hour unless divine grace upholds them. Second, by persecution they are often kept from certain sins into which they would most likely fall were the wicked at peace with them. The rough usage they receive at the hands of worldlings makes impossible that friendship with them which the flesh craves. Third, such persecution affords opportunity to glorify God by his constancy, courage, and fidelity to the truth.

This searching phrase, “for righteousness’ sake,” calls upon us to honestly examine ourselves before God when we are being opposed, “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters” (1Pe 4:15). The same qualification is made in the verse which immediately follows the last quoted, “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1Pe 4:16). This is a most necessary caution, that the believer see to it he is buffeted for *right doing* and not on account

of his own misconduct or foolish behaviour. It is to be observed that persecution is often so speciously disguised that those guilty thereof are not conscious of the same, yea, so deceitful is the human heart, they imagine they are doing God a service (Joh 16:2). But, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs *is* [not “shall be”] the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:10)—its privileges and blessings (Rom 14:17) are theirs even now—though hated by men, they are “kings and priests unto God” (Rev 1:6).

“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake” (Mat 5:11). In verse 10, the Lord enunciates the general principle—here He makes special application of it to His servants. Note carefully the change from “them,” throughout verses 5-10, to “ye,” and “your,” in verses 11-12. Opposition is the general lot of God’s people, but it is the special portion of His ministers. If faithful to their calling, they must expect to be fiercely assailed. Such has even been the experience of the Lord’s servants. Moses was reviled again and again (Exo 5:21; 14:11; 16:2; 17:2, etc.). Samuel was rejected (1Sa 8:5). Elijah was despised (1Ki 18:17) and persecuted (1Ki 19:2). Micaiah was hated (1Ki 22:8). Nehemiah was oppressed and defamed (Neh 4). The Saviour Himself, the faithful witness of God, was put to death by the people to whom He ministered. Stephen was stoned, Peter and John cast into prison, James beheaded, while the entire course of Paul was one long series of bitter and relentless persecutions.

“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Mat 5:11-12). In these words the Lord Jesus faithfully warns His servants what they may fully expect to encounter, and then defines how they are to respond thereto, how they are to conduct themselves under the fire of their enemies. That blessedness which worldly leaders value and crave is to be flattered and fêted, humoured and honoured, but the felicity and glory of the officers of Christ is to be made conformable to the Captain of their salvation, who was “despised and rejected of men.” Yet instead of being downcast over and murmuring at the hostility they meet with, ministers of the Gospel are to be thankful to God for the high honour He confers upon them in making them partakers of the sufferings of His Son. Because that is so difficult for flesh and blood to do, the Lord here advances two reasons as encouragements.

It is true that persecution of both ministers and saints is today in a much milder form than it assumed in other ages—nevertheless, it is just as real. Through the goodness of God, we have long been protected from legal persecution, but the enmity of the serpent finds other ways and means for expressing itself. The words of Christ in John 15 have never been repealed, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also” (Joh 15:19-20). Let it be carefully noted, it was the professing and not the profane “world” that Christ was alluding to—it was from religious leaders, from those making the greatest spiritual pretensions, the Redeemer Himself received the worst treatment. And so it is now—members and officers of the “churches” stoop to methods and use means of opposition which those outside would scorn to employ.

Let us carefully note the qualification made by Christ in the verses we are now considering. This benediction of His is pronounced only on them who have all manner of evil spoken against them *falsely*. They have themselves given no just occasion for the same. No, far from it, it is not for any lawful ground of accusation in themselves, but “for my sake”—for their loyalty and

fidelity to Christ—for their obedience to His commission, for their refusal to compromise His holy truth. To be “reviled” is to suffer personal abuse. Said Paul, “We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things” (1Co 4:13). “Persecution” may involve acts of ill-treatment or ostracism. To have “all manner of evil said against” us, is to suffer defamation of character. 1 Thessalonians 2:2 clearly implies that even the moral reputation of the apostle was attacked. All of these are efforts of the devil to destroy the usefulness of God’s ministers.

The Lord Jesus here pronounced blessed or happy those who, through devotion to Him, would be called upon to suffer. They are “blessed” because such are given the unspeakable privilege of having fellowship with the sufferings of the Saviour. They are “blessed” because such tribulation works patience, and patience, experience, and experience, hope, and such a hope that will not make ashamed. They are “blessed” because they shall be fully recompensed in the day to come. Here is rich comfort indeed. Let not the soldier of the cross be dismayed because the fiery darts of the wicked one are hurled against him. Remember, “The sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom 8:18).

“Rejoice, and be exceeding glad” (Mat 5:12). This, too, is spoken especially to ministers. Those afflictions which faithfulness to Christ bring upon them are not only to be endured with patience and resignation, but thanksgiving and gladness. And that, for a threefold reason. First, they come upon them for Christ’s sake. If He suffered so much for them, should they not rejoice to suffer a little for Him?! Second, they shall be richly recompensed hereafter, “Great is your reward in heaven”—not as of merit, but purely of grace, for there is no proportion between them. Third, they bring them into fellowship with a noble company of martyrs, “For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Mat 5:12)—they, too, were ill-treated by members of the outward church. What an honor to share, in our measure, the lot of those holy men! Verily there is cause to rejoice, no matter how fierce the conflict may be! O to emulate the apostles in Acts 5:41 and 16:25. May divine grace enable all the oppressed and saints of God to draw from these precious words of Christ the comfort and strength they need.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

84. His Sacred Song

If we are now to complete our exposition of this Song, we must dispense with our usual introductory remarks. We therefore proceed at once to our next verse. “Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; so that my feet did not slip” (2Sa 22:37). Here David praises the Lord because He had not only preserved, but prospered him, too, blessing him with liberty and expansion—compare verse 20. From the narrow mountain pass and the confinement of caves, he had been brought to the spacious plains, and there, too, he had been sustained, for the latter has its dangers as well as the former. “It is no small mercy to be brought into full Christian liberty and enlargement, but it is a greater favour still to be enabled to walk worthily in such liberty, not being permitted to slide with our feet” (Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1872). To stand firm in the day of adversity is the result of grace upholding, and that aid is no less needed by us in seasons of prosperity.

“I have pursued mine enemies, and destroyed them; and turned not again until I had consumed them” (2Sa 22:38). David was here alluding to occasions like that recorded in 1 Samuel 30—the Amalekites thought themselves clear away with their booty (1Sa 30:2), but when David’s God guided him in pursuit, they were soon overtaken and cut in pieces (1Sa 30:16-18). It is not sufficient that the believer stand his ground and resist the onslaught of his foes. There are times when he must assume the offensive and “pursue” his enemies. Yea, as a general principle it holds good that attack is the best means of defense. Lusts are not only to be starved, by making no provision for them, they are to be “mortified,” or put to death. God has provided the Christian warrior with a sword as well as with a shield, and each is to be used in its season. Observe that verse 38 follows verse 37—there must be an enlargement and revival before we can be the aggressors and victors.

“And I have consumed them, and wounded them, that they could not arise: yea, they are fallen under my feet” (2Sa 22:39). This calls attention to the *completeness* of the victories which the Lord enabled David to achieve. But does not this present a serious difficulty to the exercised saint? How far, far short does *his* actual experience come of this! So far from his enemies being consumed and under his feet, he daily finds them gaining over him. True—nevertheless, there is a real sense in which it is his holy privilege to make these words his own—they are the language of *faith*, and not of sense. The terms of this verse maybe legitimately applied to the judicial slaughter of our foes. We may exult over sin, death, and hell having been destroyed by our conquering Lord! Forget not His precious promise, “Because I live, ye shall live also” (Joh 14:19)—His victory in the past is the sure guarantee of our complete victory in the future.

“For thou hast girded me with strength to battle: them that rose up against me hast thou subdued under me” (2Sa 22:40). David had been both vigorous and valiant, yet he takes no credit to himself for the same. He freely acknowledges that it was God who had qualified him for his warfare, who had given him ability therein, and who had crowned his efforts with such success. Any measure of liberty from sin and Satan which we enjoy, any enlargement of heart in God’s service, our preservation in the slippery paths of this enticing world, are cause for thankfulness, and not ground for glorying in self. It is true that we have to wrestle with our spiritual antagonists, but the truth is that the victory is far more the Lord’s than ours. It has long been the conviction of this writer, both from his own experience and the close observation of many others, that the principal reason why the Lord does not grant us a much larger measure of present triumph over our spiritual foes, is because we are so prone to be self-righteous over the same. Alas, how deceitful and wicked are our hearts.

“Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me” (2Sa 22:41). There is no doubt that such will be our paeon of praise in heaven in a far fuller sense than ever it is in this world. Do we not get more than a hint of this in Revelation 15:1-3, where we are told that, “Those that had gotten the victory over the beast,” etc., sing “the song of Moses the servant of God (see Exo 15), and the song of the Lamb.” Meanwhile, it is our blessed privilege to rest upon the divine promise, “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom 16:20). Rightly did Thomas Adams (1600-1662) the Puritan, when commenting on this verse in our Song, exhort his hearers, “Though passion possess our bodies, let patience possess our souls.” In a protracted warfare, *patience* is just as essential as is valour or skill to use our weapons. The promise of ultimate salvation is made only unto those who “endure to the end.” In due season we shall reap if we faint not. The fight may be a long and arduous one, but the victor’s crown will be a grand recompense. Then look *above* the smoke and din of battle to the Prince of Peace who waits to welcome you on high.

“They looked, but there was none to save; even unto the LORD, but he answered them not” (2Sa 22:42). The Companion Bible has pointed out that there is here a play on words in the Hebrew, which may be rendered thus in English, They cried with fear, but none gave ear. They called both to earth and heaven for help, but in vain. God heeded them not for they were His enemies, and sought Him not through the Mediator—being given up by Him, they fell an easy prey to David’s righteous sword. “Prayer is so notable a weapon that even the wicked will take to it in their fits of despair. But men have appealed to God against His own servants, but all in vain. The kingdom of heaven is not divided, and God never succours His foes at the expense of His friends. There are prayers to God which are no better than blasphemy, which bring no comforting reply, but rather provoke the Lord unto greater wrath” (Charles H. Spurgeon).

“Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth, I did stamp them as the mire of the street, and did spread them abroad” (2Sa 22:43). Let not the *connection* between this and the preceding verse be missed—emphasized by its opening, “Then.” It shows us how utterly helpless are those who are abandoned by God and how fearful is their fate—compare the case of king Saul, 1 Samuel 28:6. The defeat of those nations which fought against David was so entire that they were like powders pounded in the mortar. Thomas Scott (1747-1821) saw in this verse, and we think rightly so, a reference to, “The inevitable destruction which came upon the Jews for crucifying the Lord of glory and rejecting the Gospel. They cried, and they still cry, to the Lord to save them, but refusing to obey His beloved Son, He vouchsafes them no answer.” How accurately did the figures of this verse depict the tragedy of *the Jews*—“dust”—which is scattered by the wind to all parts of the “mire” that is contemptuously trampled underfoot!

“Thou also hast delivered me from the strivings of my people, thou hast kept me to be head of the heathen: a people which I knew not shall serve me” (2Sa 22:44). In the first clause, David refers to the intensive strife which had gravely threatened and menaced his kingdom. There had been times when internal dissension had been far more serious and dangerous than anything which the surrounding nations threatened. Nevertheless, God had graciously preserved His servant from their malice and opposition. Thus it is with the Christian warrior. Though he be opposed from without by both the world and the devil, yet his greatest danger comes from *within*—his own corruptions and lusts are continually seeking to overthrow him. None but God can grant him deliverance from his inward foes, but the sure promise is, “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it” (Phi 1:6). The same principle holds true of *the minister*. His acutest problems and trials issue not from without the pale of his church, but from its own members and adherents, and it is a great mercy when God gives peace within.

“Thou hast kept me to be head of the heathen: a people which I knew not shall serve me” (2Sa 22:44). God’s signal preservation of David intimated that he was designed and reserved for an important and imposing position: to rule over the twelve tribes of Israel, notwithstanding all the opposition the Benjamites had made against him, and to be exalted over heathen nations also. The decisive defeats of the Amalekites and Philistines were regarded as the pledge of still more notorious triumphs. The practical lesson inculcated therein is one of great importance—hereby we are taught that the unchanging faithfulness of God should encourage us to view all the blessings which we have received at His hands in the past as the earnest of yet greater favours in the future. God has not preserved you thus far, my faint-hearted brethren, to let you founder at the end. He who did sustain you through six trials, “In seven there shall no evil touch thee” (Job 5:19). Say, then, with the apostle, “Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will *yet deliver us*” (2Co 1:10).

“Strangers shall submit themselves unto me: as soon as they hear, they shall be obedient unto me” (2Sa 22:45). It will be observed that in this verse, as well as in the second half of the preceding one, that our translators have made a change of tense from the present to the future. Opinions vary considerably as to where the last section of the Song really commences, in which memory passes into hope, in which the successes of the past are regarded as the guarantee of still greater triumphs in the future. God had been David’s “buckler” (2Sa 22:31), his “strength and power” (2Sa 22:33), He had given him the necks of his enemies (2Sa 22:41), from all of which David draws the conclusion that God had still grander blessings in store for him. There can be little room for doubt that in the verses we are now pondering, David was carried forward by the Spirit of prophecy unto this New Testament era, his own kingdom being the symbol and portent of the spiritual reign of his Son and Lord.

The only matter on which there is any uncertainty is the precise point in this Song where the historical merges into the prophetic, for the Hebrew verb does not, as in English, afford us any help here. As we have seen, Thomas Scott considers that verse 43, at least, should be included in this category. Alexander Maclaren (1826-1929) suggested, “It is perhaps best to follow many of the older versions, and the valuable exposition of Hermann Hupfield (1796-1866), in regarding the whole section from verse 38 of our translation, as the expression of the trust which past experience had wrought.” Personally, we consider that too radical. We are on much safer ground if we take the course followed by the A.V. and regard verse 44 as the turning point, where it is evident David was conscious that his kingdom was destined to be extended further than the confines of Palestine—strange tribes were to submit unto him and crouch before him in subjection.

Not only were the severe conflicts through which David passed and the remarkable victories granted to him prefigurations of the experiences of Christ, both in His sufferings and triumphs, but the further enlargements which David expected and his being made head over the heathen, foreshadowed the Redeemer’s exaltation and the expansion of His kingdom far beyond the bounds of Judaism. First, the antitypical David had been delivered from the strivings of his Jewish people (2Sa 22:44), not by being preserved from death, but by being brought triumphantly through it, for in all things He must have the pre-eminence. Second, He had been made Head of the church, which comprised Gentiles as well as Jews. Third, those who had been “strangers” (2Sa 22:45) to the commonwealth of Israel, submitted to the sound of His voice through the Gospel and rendered to Him the obedience of faith. Fourth, paganism received its death-wound under the labours of Paul, its pride being humbled into the dust—such we take it is the prophetic allusion in verse 46.

“As soon as they hear, they shall be obedient unto me” (2Sa 22:45). “In many cases the Gospel is speedily received by hearts apparently unprepared for it. Those who have never heard the Gospel before, have been charmed by its first message, and yielded obedience to it. While others, alas! who are accustomed to its joyful sound, are rather hardened than softened by its teachings. The grace of God sometimes runs like fire among the stubble and a nation is born in a day. ‘Love at first sight’ is no uncommon thing when Jesus is the wooer. He can write Caesar’s message without boasting, ‘Veni, vidi, vici.’ His Gospel is in some cases no sooner heard than believed. What inducements to spread abroad the doctrine of the cross” (Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892).

“Strangers shall fade away, and they shall be afraid out of their close places” (2Sa 22:46). “Out of their mountain fastness the heathen crept in fear to own allegiance to Israel’s king. And even so, from the castles of self-confidence and the dens of carnal security, poor sinners come

bending before the Saviour, Christ the Lord. Our sins which have entrenched themselves in our flesh and blood as impregnable forts, shall yet be driven forth by the sanctifying energy of the Holy Spirit and we shall serve the Lord in singleness of heart” (Charles H. Spurgeon).

“The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation” (2Sa 22:47). After offering praise for past conquests and expressing his confidence in future victories, David returned to the more direct adoration of God Himself. Some of the glorious names of Deity, which he had heaped together at the beginning of his Song, are now echoed at its close. The varied experiences through which he had passed had brought to the psalmist a deeper knowledge of his living Lord—the One who had preserved Noah and ministered to Abraham long before, was his God, too—swift to hear, active to help. One of the lesser known Puritans commented thus on this verse, “Honours die, pleasures die, the world dies, but the Lord *liveth*. My flesh is as sand, my fleshly life, strength, and glory is as a word written on sand, but blessed be my *Rock*. Those are but for a moment—this stands forever—the curse shall devour those, everlasting blessings on the head of these” (Peter Sterry, 1613-1673).

“It is God that avengeth me, and that bringeth down the people under me, and that bringeth me forth from mine enemies: Thou also hast lifted me up on high above them that rose up against me: Thou hast delivered me from the violent man” (2Sa 22:48-49). Here David recurs to the dominant sentiment running through this Song—all his help was in God and from God. To take matters into our own hands and seek personal revenge is not only utterly unbecoming in one who has received mercy from the Lord, but it is grossly wicked, for it encroaches upon a prerogative which belongs alone to Him. Moreover, it is quite unnecessary, for in due time the Lord will avenge His wronged people. Though we may join with Stephen in praying, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,” yet when divine justice takes satisfaction upon those who have flouted His law, the devout heart will return thanks. After the battle at Naseby, in a letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons, Oliver Cromwell wrote, “Sir, this is none other than the hand of God, and to Him alone belongs the glory, wherein none are to share with Him.”

“Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name” (2Sa 22:50). What an example does David here set us of a holy soul making its boast in God in the presence of ungodly men. There is a happy medium between an unseemly parading of our piety before unbelievers and a cowardly silence in their presence. We must not suffer the despisers of God to shut our mouths and stifle our praises, Especially is it our bounden duty to bow our heads and “Give thanks unto the Lord,” before partaking of a meal, even though we are “among the heathen.” Be not ashamed to acknowledge our God in the presence of His enemies. This verse is quoted by the apostle and applied to Christ in Romans 15:9, which affords clear proof that David had his Antitype before him in the second half of this Song.

“He is the tower of salvation for his king: and showeth mercy to his anointed, unto David, and to his seed for evermore” (2Sa 22:51). David contemplated God not only as “the rock of his salvation”—the One who under-girded him, the One on whom all his hopes rested—but also as “the tower of salvation”—the One in whom he found security, the One who was infinitely elevated above him. Though saved, he yet had need of being shown “mercy”! The last clause indicates that he was resting on the divine promise of 2 Samuel 7:15-16, and supplies additional evidence that he had here an eye to Christ, for He alone is his “seed for evermore.”

THE DIVINE COVENANTS

7. *The Messianic*

The assertion that there is a *human* side to our becoming the recipients of God's spiritual blessings, that there are certain *terms* which He requires us to first comply with, should occasion no difficulty. For as we have pointed out so frequently in this series, a "covenant" is a *mutual* compact, the second party agreeing to do or bestow certain things in return for what has been done or agreed upon by the first party to it. Before the sinner can enter into the actual benefits of Christ's atonement, he must consent to return to the duty of the law and live in obedience to God, for He never pardons any while they are in their rebellion and live under the full dominion of sin. This is clear from many passages, see, for example, Isaiah 1:16-18; 55:7; Acts 3:19. Therefore, until there be a genuine repentance (which is not only a sorrow for past offenses, but also a sincere purpose to live henceforth according to the will of God), we have no interest in the grace of the new covenant.

First, we are required to *enter into* solemn covenant with God, yielding ourselves unreservedly up to Him (2Co 8:5), henceforth to live for His glory, "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have *made a covenant with me* by sacrifice" (Psa 50:5). Second, we are required to *keep* this solemn covenant, to live in a course of universal holiness, "All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as *keep* his covenant and his testimonies" (Psa 25:10). Only those who endure unto the end shall be saved, and for that there must be a diligent practicing of God's precepts and a constant taking to heart of His warnings and admonitions. "Perseverance in their course is not promoted by a blind confidence and easy security, but by watchfulness, by self-jealousy, by a salutary fear of coming short of the promised rest, prompting them to earnest effort and habitual self-denial. Perseverance does not suppose the certainty of salvation however careless a Christian may be, but implies a steady continuance in holiness and conformity to the will of Christ in order to that end" (John Kelly, 1861), to whom we are indebted for much in this series).

"Though there are no conditions properly so called of the *whole grace* of the covenant, yet there are conditions *in* the covenant, taking that term in a large sense, for that which by the order of divine constitution precedes some other things, and hath an influence to their existence. For God requireth many things of them whom He actually takes into covenant, and makes partakers of the promises and benefits of it. Of this nature is that whole obedience which is prescribed unto us in the Gospel, in our walking before God in uprightness, and there being an order in the things that belong hereunto, some acts, duties and parts of our gracious obedience, being appointed to be means of the further additional supplies of the grace and mercies of the covenant, they may be called *conditions* required of us in the covenant, as well as duties prescribed unto us" (John Owen, 1616-1683).

It will be evident from this last quotation that we are not advocating any strange doctrine when we insist that the terms of the covenant must be met if its privileges are to be enjoyed. None was clearer and more definite than Owen in his magnifying of the free grace of God, yet none saw more clearly than he did that God treats with men throughout as moral agents—we can repeat the same teaching from others of the Puritans. Let it be pointed out that the *first* blessing of the covenant—regeneration, or God's putting His laws in our hearts—depends on *no* condition on our part—that is purely a sovereign and gratuitous act on the part of God. But to a full or *complete* interest in the promises of the covenant, faith on our part (with which evangelical repentance is inseparable) *is* required. Here, too, we insist that, if on the one hand, there can be no

justification without believing, yet on the other hand, that very faith is *given* to us and wrought in us.

In further corroboration of the point we are now labouring is the usage of the term “*earnest*” in the New Testament. In both 2 Corinthians 1:22 and 5:5, we read of “the earnest of the Spirit,” while in Ephesians 1:13-14 we are told that He is “the earnest of our inheritance.” Now an “earnest” is a token-payment or installment of what has been agreed upon between two or more parties, being a guaranty of the full and final discharge. This figurative expression is used because the right which the believer has to eternal life and glory is by compact or covenant. On the one side, the sinner agrees to the terms stipulated (the forsaking of sin and his serving of the Lord), and yields himself to God by repentance and faith. On the other side, God binds Himself to give the believer forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among the sanctified, and the gift of the Spirit clinches the matter. When we consent to the terms of the Gospel, God engages Himself to bestow the inestimable blessings purchased for us by Christ.

Under the new covenant, God requires the same perfect obedience from the Christian as He did from unfallen Adam. “Although God in them [His commands] requireth universal holiness of us, yet He doth not do it in that strict and rigorous way as by the law [i.e., as given to Adam], so as that if we fail in anything either as to the matter or manner of its performance, and in the substance of it or as to the degrees of its perfection, that thereon both that and all we do besides should be rejected. But He doth it with *grace* and mercy, so as that if there be a universal sincerity in respect unto all His commands, He both pardoneth many sins and accepts of what we do, though it come short of legal perfection, and both on the account of the mediation of Christ. Yet this hindereth not but that the command of the Gospel doth still require *universal holiness* of us, and a perfection therein, which we are to do our utmost endeavour to comply withal, though we have a relief provided in sincerity on the one hand and mercy on the other. For the commands of the Gospel do still declare what God approves and what He doth condemn, which is no less than all holiness on the one hand, and all sin on the other—as exactly and extensively as under the law. For this the very nature of God requireth, and the Gospel is not the ministry of sin, so as to give an allowance unto the least, although in it pardon be provided by Jesus Christ for a multitude of sins.

“The obligation on us unto holiness is equal as unto what it was under the law, though a relief be provided where unavoidably we come short of it. There is, therefore, nothing more certain than that there is no relaxation given us as unto any duty of holiness by the Gospel, nor any indulgence unto the least sin. But yet upon the supposition of the acceptance of sincerity, and a perfection of parts instead of degrees, with the mercy provided for our failings and sins; there is an argument to be taken from the command of it unto an indispensable necessity of holiness, including in it the highest encouragement to endeavour after it. For, together with the command, there is also grace administered enabling us unto that obedience which God will accept. Nothing, therefore, can avoid or evacuate the power of this command and argument from it, but a stubborn contempt of God arising from the love of sin” (John Owen).

A threefold contrast may be pointed out in connection with the obedience required by God under the Adamic and under the Messianic covenants. First, the *design* of it is entirely different. Under the covenant of works man was obliged to render obedience to the law in order for his justification, but not so under the covenant of grace, for there the believing sinner is justified on the ground of Christ’s obedience being imputed to him, and the obedience of the Christian afterwards is necessary only that God might be honoured thereby as an expression of his gratitude. Second, the *enablement* to it, for under the new covenant God works in us both to will

and to do of His good pleasure. Under the covenant of works man was left to his own natural and created strength. Under the one, God gave the bare command, under the other He furnishes His grace and Spirit, so that we are empowered unto that sincere and evangelical obedience which He accepts of us. When God bids us come to Him, He does likewise draw us to Him.

Third, in the *acceptance* of it. Under the covenant of works no provision was made for any failure, for it had neither sacrifice nor mediator. Consequently, the only obedience which God would accept under it was a perfect and perpetual one. While God requires the same flawless obedience under the new covenant, yet provision has been made for failure, and if our efforts be genuine, God accepts an imperfect obedience from us because its defects are fully compensated for by the infinite merits of Christ which are reckoned to the believer's account. This sincere obedience (called by many writers, "new obedience," and by others, "evangelical obedience"), is required from us as the means whereby we show our subjection to God, our dependence upon Him, our thankfulness unto Him, and as the only way of converse and communion with Him.

We must now consider *the time when* this covenant came into operation. This cannot be restricted to any one moment absolutely, as though all that is included in God's making of it did consist in any single act. If we revert for a moment to the original promise, it will be found that God said, "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt" (Jer 31:32). Now that was not a literal "day" of twenty-four hours, but a *season* into which much was crowded—many things happened between Israel's exodus from the house of bondage and their actual encamping before Sinai, things which were preparatory to the making and solemn establishment of the old covenant. So was it also in connection with the making and establishing of the new—it was *gradually* made and established by sundry acts both preparatory and confirmatory. In his able discussion of this point, Owen mentioned six degrees—we here condense his remarks, adding a few observations of our own.

The first entrance into the making of the new covenant was made by the mission of John the Baptist, who was sent to prepare the way of the Messiah, and therefore is his mission called "The beginning of the Gospel" (Mar 1:1-2). Until His appearing, the Jews were bound absolutely and universally by the Siniatic covenant, without alteration or addition in any ordinance of worship. But His ministry was designed to prepare them, and cause them to look unto the accomplishment of God's promise to make a new covenant. He therefore called the people off from resting in and trusting upon the privileges of the old covenant, preaching unto them the doctrine of repentance, and instituting a new ordinance of worship—baptism—whereby they might be initiated into a *new* condition and relationship with God—pointing them to the predicted Lamb. This was the beginning of the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:31-33, compare Luke 16:16.

Second, the incarnation and personal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself was an eminent advance and degree thereof. True, the dispensation of the old covenant yet continued, for He Himself, as made of a woman, was made under the law (Gal 4:4), yielded obedience to it, observing all its precepts and institutions, nevertheless, His appearing in flesh laid an axe to the root of that whole dispensation. Hence, upon His birth, the substance of the new covenant was proclaimed from heaven as that which was on the eve of taking place (Luk 2:13-14). But it was made more evident later on by His public ministry, the whole doctrine whereof was preparatory unto the immediate introduction of this covenant. The proofs He gave of His Messiahship, the fulfillment He provided of the prophecies concerning Him, were so many signs that He was the appointed Mediator of that covenant.

Third, the way for the introduction of this covenant being thus prepared, it was solemnly enacted and confirmed in and by His *death*, for therein He offered that sacrifice to God by which it was established, and hereby the promise properly became a “testament” (Heb 9:14-16). There the apostle shows how the shedding of Christ’s blood answered to those sacrifices whose blood was sprinkled on the people and the book of the law in confirmation of the first covenant. The cross, then, was the centre whence all the promises of grace did meet, and from whence they derive all their efficacy. Henceforth the old covenant and its administration, having received their full accomplishment, no longer had any binding force (Eph 2:14-16; Col 2:14-15) and only abode by the patience of God, to be taken away in His own good time and manner.

Fourth, this new covenant had the complement of its making and establishment in the resurrection of Christ. God did not make the first covenant simply that it should continue for a season, die of itself, and be arbitrarily removed. No, the Levitical economy had a special end to be accomplished, and nothing in it could be removed until God’s design was realized. That design was twofold—the perfect fulfilling of that righteousness which the law enjoined and the undergoing of its curse. The one was accomplished in the perfect obedience of Christ, the Surety of the covenant, in the stead of those with whom the covenant was made. The other was endured by Him in His sufferings, and His resurrection was the public proof that He was discharged from the claims of the law. The old covenant then expired, and the worship pertaining to it was continued for a few years longer only by the forbearance of God toward the Jews.

Fifth, the first formal promulgation of the new covenant, as made and ratified, was on the day of Pentecost, seven weeks after the resurrection of Christ. Remarkably did this answer to the promulgation of the law on Mount Sinai, for that, too, occurred the same space of time after the deliverance of the people of God out of Egypt. From the day of Pentecost onwards, the ordinances of worship and all the institutions of the new covenant became obligatory unto all believers. Then was the whole church absolved from any duty with respect to the old covenant and its worship, although it was not manifest as yet in their consciences. When Peter said to those of his hearers who were pricked in their heart, “The promise is unto you and to your children” (Act 2:39), he was announcing the new covenant unto members of the house of *Judah*, and his, “and to all that are afar off,” (compare Dan 9:7) extended it to the dispersion of *Israel*, and when he added, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Act 2:40), he intimated the old covenant had waxed old and was about to vanish away. Sixth, this was confirmed in Acts 15:23-29.

It only remains for us to say a few words on the relation between the original and final covenants. It is important that we should distinguish clearly between the everlasting covenant which God made before the foundation of the world, and the Christian covenant, which He has instituted in the last days of the world’s history. First, the one was made in a past eternity, the other is made in time. Second, the one was made with Christ alone, the other is made with all His people. Third, the one is without any conditions so far as we are concerned, the other prescribes certain terms which we must meet. Fourth, under the one Christ inherits, under the other Christians are heirs. In other words, the inheritance Christ purchased by His fulfilling the terms of the everlasting covenant is now administered by Him in the form of a “testament.”

Should a reader ask, Does my getting to heaven depend upon the everlasting covenant or the new one? The answer is, upon *both*. First upon what Christ did for me in executing the terms of the former. Second, upon my compliance with the conditions of the latter. Many are very confused at this very point. They who repudiate man’s responsibility will not allow that there are any “ifs” or “buts,” restricting their attention to God’s “wills” and “shalls.” But this is not dealing honestly with the Word. Instead of confining ourselves to favourite passages, we must impartially

compare Scripture with Scripture, and over against God's, "I will," of Hebrews 8:10-12, must be placed the, "But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, *if* we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end...are made partakers of Christ, *if* we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end," of Hebrews 3:6, 14! Does this render such a vital matter uncertain, and place my eternal interests in jeopardy? By no means—if I have turned "from transgression," God has made an everlasting covenant with me and has given to me the same Spirit which abode—without measure—on the Mediator (Isa 59:20-21). Nevertheless, I can only have Scriptural *assurance of this* so long as I tread the path of obedience.

THE COVENANT ALLEGORY

Those of our readers who are particularly interested in the divine covenants would be disappointed if we closed our lengthy series thereon and ignored the last eleven verses of Galatians 4, and therefore we felt it necessary to devote an article to their consideration. That this passage is far from being free of difficulties appears from the diverse expositions of the commentators, for scarcely any two of them agree even in substance. Nor will the limited space now at our disposal allow us to enter into as full an elucidation as could be wished, nor permit the pausing now and again to furnish collateral proofs for what is advanced, as is our usual custom. Brevity has its advantages, but it does not always make for clarity. We must, however, content ourselves now with a comparatively terse running comment on this passage, and that, according to the limited light which we have thereon.

Galatians 4:21-31 is, in several respects, very similar to the contents of 2 Corinthians 3. In each case the apostle is opposing himself to the errors which had been sedulously propagated amongst his converts by Judaizers. In each case he shows that the fundamental issue between them concerned the covenants, for any teacher who is confused thereon is certain to go astray in all his preaching. In each case the apostle appeals to well-known incidents in the Old Testament Scriptures, and with the wisdom given him from above proceeds to bring out the deep spiritual meaning thereof. In each case he establishes conclusively the immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism, and thus completely undermined the very foundations of his adversaries' position. Though of peculiar importance to those unto whom the apostle wrote immediately, this passage contains not a little of great value for us today.

"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?" (Gal 4:21). Here the apostle addresses himself to those who had been lending a ready ear to their spiritual enemies. By his, "ye that desire to be under the law," was signified those who hankered after subjection to Judaism. His, "do ye not hear the law?" means, are you willing to listen unto what is recorded in the first book of the Pentateuch and have pointed out to you the dispensational significance of the same? Paul's design was to show those who were so anxious to be circumcised and submit themselves to the whole Mosaic system, that, so far from such a course being honourable and beneficial, it would be fraught with danger and disgrace. To yield unto those who sought to seduce them spiritually, would inevitably result in "bondage" (see Gal 4:9) not "liberty" (Gal 5:1). To prevent this, he begs them to listen to what God had said.

"For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory" (Gal 4:22-24). Very remarkable indeed is this, for

we are here divinely informed that not merely did the Mosaic rites possess a typical significance, but the lives of the patriarchs themselves had a figurative meaning. Not only so, but their affairs were so controlled by providence that they were shaped to shadow forth coming events of vast magnitude. Paul was here moved by the Spirit to inform us that the domestic occurrences in Abraham's household were a parable in action, which parable he had interpreted for us. Thus we are granted an insight to passages in Genesis which no human wisdom could possibly have penetrated.

The transactions in the family of Abraham were divinely ordered to presage important dispensational epochs. The domestic affairs of the Patriarch's household were invested with a prophetic significance. The historical incidents recorded in Genesis 16 and 21 possessed a typical meaning, containing beneath their surface, spiritual truths of profound importance. The apostle here reminds his readers of the circumstances recorded of the two wives of Abraham, and of their respective offspring, and declares that the mothers adumbrated the two covenants, and their sons, the respective tendencies and results of those covenants. In other words, Sarah and Hagar are to be viewed as the representatives of the two covenants, and the sons which they bore as representatives of the kind of worshippers which those covenants were fitted to produce.

"For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman" (Gal 4:22). The apostle's design was to wean those Galatians who inclined to Judaism, from their strange infatuation for an obsolete and servile system, by unfolding to them its true nature. This he does by referring them to an emblematic representation of the two economies. Abraham had a number of other sons besides Ishmael and Isaac, but it is to them alone—the circumstances of their birth, subsequent conduct, history and fate—that Paul's discussion exclusively relates.

In her unbelief and impatience (unwilling to wait for God to make good His Word in His own time and way), Sarah gave her maid to Abraham in order that he might not be wholly without posterity. Though this caused confusion and brought trouble upon all concerned, yet it was ordained by God to presage great dispensational distinctions, nor did it in any wise thwart the accomplishment of His eternal purpose. "Abraham had two sons"—Ishmael, the son of an Egyptian, a bonds slave, Isaac the son of Sarah, a free woman, of the same rank as her husband. As we have already said, these two mothers prefigured the two covenants, and their children the worshippers which those covenants produced.

"But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise" (Gal 4:23). Great as was the disparity between the two mothers, greater still was the difference between the way in which their respective sons were born. Ishmael was born in the ordinary course of generation, for, "after the flesh," signifies to the carnal counsel which Sarah gave to Abraham, and by the mere strength of nature. In connection with the birth of Ishmael, there was not any special promise given, nor any extraordinary divine interposition. Vastly different was it in the case of Isaac, for he *was* the child of promise, and born in direct consequence of the miracle-working power of God, and was under the benefit of that promise as long as he lived. That which is here specially emphasized by the apostle is that the son of the slave was in *an inferior condition* from the very beginning.

"Which things are an allegory" (Gal 4:24). An "allegory" is a parabolic method of conveying instruction, spiritual truths being set forth under material figures. Allegories are in words what hieroglyphics are in printing, both of which abound among the Orientals—Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" is the best sustained allegory in the English language. "For these [feminine] are the two covenants" (Gal 4:24). Here the apostle proceeds to give us the occult meaning of the historical

facts alluded to in the preceding verse. He affirms that the domestic incidents in the family of Abraham constituted a divinely-ordained illustration of the basic principles in regard to the condition of spiritual slaves and of spiritual freemen, and are to be regarded as adumbrating the *bondage* which subjection to the law of Moses produced and the *liberty* which submission to the Gospel secures.

“These are the two covenants” (Gal 4:24). This cannot, of course, be understood literally, for it was neither intelligible nor true that Sarah and Hagar were actually two covenants in their own persons. The words “is” and “are” frequently have the force of *represent*. When Christ affirmed of the sacramental bread, “This is my body” (Mat 26:26), He meant, this bread represents My body. When we read of the rock smitten by Moses in the wilderness (out of which gushed the stream of living water), “that Rock was Christ” (1Co 10:4), it obviously signifies, that rock *prefigured* Christ. So, too, when we are told, “The seven stars *are* the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches” (Rev 1:20), we are to understand that the one symbolized the other.

“These are the two covenants” (Gal 4:24). There has been much difference of opinion as to exactly *which* covenants are intended. Some insist that the reference is to the everlasting covenant of grace and the Adamic or covenant of works. Others argue it is the Abrahamic or covenant of promise and the Siniatic. While others conclude it is the Siniatic and the Christian or that which is made with the people of God in the Gospel. Really, it is more a matter of terms than anything else, for whatever nomenclature we adopt, it comes to much the same thing. “The one from mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar” (Gal 4:24)—by which is meant, that order of things under which the nation of Israel was placed at Sinai, appointed for the purpose of keeping them a separate people, and which because of its legalistic nature was fitly foreshadowed by the bondslave.

“The one [covenant] from mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage” (Gal 4:24), or produces those of a servile spirit, for it made slaves of all who sought justification and salvation by their own doings. It is to be carefully borne in mind that the relation entered into between God and Israel at Sinai was entirely a *natural* one, being made with the nation as such, and consequently all their descendants, upon their being circumcised, automatically became subjects of it without any spiritual change being wrought in them. “So far as this covenant gave birth to any children, those were not true children of God, free, spiritual, with hearts of filial confidence and devoted love; but miserable bondmen, selfish, carnal, full of mistrust and fear. Of these children of the Siniatic covenant we are furnished with the most perfect exemplar in the Scribes and Pharisees of our Lord’s time” (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874).

“For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia” (Gal 4:25). Here again the word “is” signifies “represents.” Hagar prophetically anticipated and prefigured Mount Sinai—not the literal mount, but that covenant which JEHOVAH there entered into with the nation of Israel. Nor is this mode of expression by any means unusual in the Scriptures—when representing Samaria and Jerusalem by two women, the prophet said, “Samaria is Aholah and Jerusalem Aholibah” (Eze 23:4). “And answereth to Jerusalem which now is” (Gal 4:25). “Answereth to” signifies corresponds with, or as the margin gives it, “is in the same rank with”—the origin, status, and condition of Hagar supplied an exact analogy to the state of Jerusalem in the apostle’s time. Jerusalem, which was the metropolis of Palestine and the headquarters of its religion, stands for Judaism.

“And is in bondage with her children” (Gal 4:25). Judaism was subject to an endless round of ceremonial institutions, which the apostles themselves declared to be a yoke, “which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” (Act 15:10). Those under it enjoyed none of that spiritual liberty

which the Gospel bestows upon those who submit to its terms. That large part of the nation which had no interest in the covenant of promise made with Abraham (whereof *faith* was an indispensable prerequisite for entering into the good of it), was indeed outwardly a part of Abraham's family and members of the visible church (as Hagar was a member of his family), yet (like Ishmael), they were born in servitude, and all their outward obedience was of a slavish character, and their privileges (as his) but carnal and temporal.

"But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all" (Gal 4:26). Here Paul shows what was prefigured by Sarah. Three things are said in describing the covenant and constitution of which she was the appropriate emblem, each of which must be duly noted in the framing of our definition. First, "Jerusalem which is above." This word "above" (*ano*) is generally employed of *location*, and would thus signify the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 11:22), in contrast from the earthly. But here it is placed in antithesis from, "which now is" (Gal 4:25) and would thus mean the *prior* and primitive Jerusalem, of which Melchisedec was king (Heb 7:1) and to whose order of priesthood Christ's pertains. Or the "above" may have the force of excellency or *supremacy*, as in "*high calling*" (Phi 3:14). Combining the three—Sarah shadowed forth the entire election of grace, all true believers from the beginning to the end of time.

Second, which "is free": such was the status and state of Sarah in contrast from that of Hagar, the bondslave. Suitably did Sarah set forth that spiritual liberty which is to be found in Christ, for He redeems all His people from the bondage of sin and death. Believing Gentiles are freed from the curse of the moral law, and believing Jews are freed from the dominion of the ceremonial law as well. Third, "which is the mother of us all." The reference is not to the church either visible or invisible, for she cannot be the parent of herself. Rather is it the everlasting covenant of grace which is in view, in which were included all true believers. Thus the differences between the systems represented by Hagar and Sarah are—the one was earthly, carnal, slavish, temporary—the other, heavenly, spiritual, free, eternal.

"For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that barest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband" (Gal 4:27). This was obviously brought in by Paul to confirm the interpretation he had made of the covenant allegory. It is a quotation from the predictions of Isaiah. Four things call for our consideration. First, the need for this comforting promise which God then gave. Second, the precise place in Isaiah's prophecy from which this quotation is taken. Third, the particular manner in which it is here introduced. Fourth, its striking pertinency to the apostle's purpose.

The *need* for this reassuring word given by the Lord to His believing, yet sorrowing, people in the days of Isaiah is not difficult to perceive, if we bear in mind the exact terms of the promise originally given to the patriarch and his wife, and then consider the state of Israel under Judaism. The grand promise to Abraham was that he should be, "a father of *many* nations" (Gen 17:4), and that Sarah should be "a mother of nations" (Gen 17:16). But at Sinai, Sarah's natural children were placed under a covenant which erected a middle wall of partition, shutting them off from all other nations. How rigorous the restrictions of the covenant were and the exclusiveness it produced, appear plainly in the unwillingness of Peter (till supernaturally authorized by God) to enter the house of Cornelius (Act 10:28).

The Siniatic covenant consisted largely in "meats and drinks...and carnal ordinances," yet was it only imposed, "until the time of reformation" (Heb 9:10). It was well-adapted to Israel after the flesh, for it encouraged them to obedience by the promise of temporal prosperity and restrained them by fear of temporal judgments. Amid the great mass of the unregenerate Jews, there was always a remnant according to the election of grace, whose heart God had touched (1Sa 10:26), in

whose heart was His law (see Isa 51:7). But the nation as a whole had become thoroughly corrupt by the time of Isaiah, being deaf to the voice of JEHOVAH and fast-ripening for judgment (Isa 1:2-6). The godly portion had diminished to “a very small remnant” (Isa 1:9), and the outlook was fearfully dark. It was to strengthen the faith of the spiritual and comfort their hearts that Isaiah was raised up.

The quotation here made by Paul was from Isaiah 54:1, and its very *location* intimated clearly that it looked forward to Gospel times, for coming immediately after that graphic description of the Redeemer’s sufferings in the previous chapter, it at once suggests that we are then given a picture of those new-covenant conditions which followed His death. This is ever God’s way—in the darkest night He causes the stars of hope to shed forth their welcome light, bidding His people to look beyond the gloomy present to the brighter future. God had not forgotten His promise to the patriarch, and though many centuries had intervened, the coming of His Son would make good the ancient oracles, for all the divine promises are established in Christ, (2Co 1:19-20).

Let us next note the *manner* in which Paul introduces Isaiah’s prediction into his discussion, “*For it is written*” (Gal 4:27). It is clear that the apostle cites the prophet to establish what he had affirmed regarding the allegorical significance of the circumstances of Abraham’s household. This at once fixes for us the elucidation of the prophecy. Paul had pointed out that Abraham had sons by two diverse wives, that those sons represented the different type of worshippers which the two covenants produced—that Sarah (as representing the Abraham covenant), which he here likened unto “Jerusalem which is above,” is “the mother of us all” (Gal 4:26). In turn, Isaiah refers to two women, views them allegorically, calling the one “barren” and contrasting her from one “who had a husband” (see Isa 54:1), assuring the former of a far more numerous progeny.

How pertinent Isaiah’s prediction was to the apostle’s argument is evident. His design was to turn away the hearts of the Galatians from Judaism, and to accomplish this he demonstrates that that system had been superseded by something far more blessed and spiritually productive. “For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren” (Gal 4:27). *Who* was the prophet there addressing? Immediately, the godly remnant in Israel, the children of faith, those who had their standing in, and derived their blessing from, the Abrahamic covenant. Isaiah addressed them in the terms of the allegory. Just as the historical Sarah was childless for many years after she became the wife of Abraham, so the mystical Sarah (Abrahamic covenant) had for long centuries shown no sign whatever of coming to fruition. But as the literal Sarah ultimately became a mother, so the mystical one should bear a numerous seed.

Marvellous indeed are the ways of God, and remarkably is His decree wrought out through His providences. That parable in action in the household of Abraham contemplated that which took thousands of years to unfold. First, was the marriage between Abraham and Sarah, which symbolized the covenant union between God and His people. Second, for many years Sarah remained barren, foreshadowing that lengthy period during which God’s purpose in that covenant was suspended. Third, Hagar, the bondslave, took Sarah’s place in the family of Abraham, typifying his natural descendants being placed under the Siniatic covenant. Fourth, Hagar did not permanently supplant Sarah, adumbrating the fact that Judaism was of but temporary duration. Fifth, ultimately Sarah came into her own and was divinely enabled to bear a supernatural seed—emblem of the spiritual children of God under the new covenant.

“Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not” (Gal 4:27). The Abrahamic covenant is here represented as a wife who (like Sarah) had long remained childless. Comparatively few real children had been raised up to God among the Jews from Moses onwards. True, the nation was in outward covenant with Him, and thus was (like Hagar in the type) “she which hath an husband”

(Gal 4:27), but all the fruit they bore was like unto Ishmael—that which was merely natural, the product of the flesh. But the death of Christ was to alter all this—though the Jews would reject Him, there should be a great accession to the spiritual family of Abraham from among the Gentiles, so that there would be a far greater number of saints under the new covenant than had pertained under the old.

“Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise” (Gal 4:28). Here the apostle begins his application of the allegory. As Sarah prefigured the covenant of grace, so Isaac represented the true children of God. Paul was here addressing himself to his *spiritual* “brethren,” and therefore, the “we” includes all who are born from above—believing Gentiles as well as Jews. “We,” the children of the new covenant, represented in the allegory by Isaac. Our standing and state is essentially different from Ishmael’s, for he (like the great mass of those under the Siniatic covenant) belong to the ordinary course of mere nature, whereas genuine Christians are “the children of promise”—of that made to Abraham, which, in turn, made manifest what God had “promised before the world began” (Ti 1:2). The relation into which believers are brought with God originates in a miracle of grace which was the subject of divine promise.

“But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now” (Gal 4:29). Here the apostle brings in a further detail supplied by the “allegory” which was germane to his subject. He refers to the opposition made against Isaac by the son of Hagar, recorded in Genesis 21:9. This received its counterpart in the attitude of the Judaisers toward Christians. They who still adhered to the old covenant were *hostile* to those who enjoyed the freedom of the new. Probably one reason why the apostle mentioned this particular was in order to meet an objection—How can *we* be the “children of promise” (God’s high favourites) seeing we are so bitterly hated and opposed by the Jews? The answer is, No marvel, for thus it was from the beginning—the carnal have ever persecuted the spiritual.

“Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman” (Gal 4:30). Here is the final point in the “allegory” (taken from Gen 21:10, 12) and which incontestably clinched the apostle’s argument that Israel after the flesh was finally set aside by God. Hagar represented the Siniatic covenant and Ishmael its carnal worshippers, and their being “cast out”—Abraham’s household prophetically signified God’s setting aside of Judaism and the fact that the natural descendants of Abraham had no place among his spiritual children and could not share their heritage (cf. Joh 8:34-35)—the two cannot unite—pure Christianity necessarily excludes Judaism. In its wider application (for today—none who seek salvation by law-keeping shall enter heaven.

“So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free” (Gal 4:31). Here the plain and inescapable conclusion is drawn: since Christians are the children of promise, they, and not carnal Jews, are the true heirs of Abraham. Since the new covenant is superior to the old and believers in Christ are freed from all debasing servitude, it obviously follows they must conduct themselves as the Lord’s freeman. The time had now arrived when to cling to Judaism was *fatal*. The controversy turned on the question of who are the real heirs of Abraham—see Galatians 3:7, 16, 29. In chapter 4, the apostle exposes the empty pretensions of those who could claim only fleshly descent from the patriarch. *We* are the children of Abraham, said the Judaisers. Abraham had *two* sons, replies Paul, the one of free, the other of servile birth—to *which line* do you belong? whose spirit have you received?

To sum up. Paul’s design was to deliver the Galatians from the Judaisers. He showed that by submitting to Judaism they would forfeit the blessings of Christianity. This he accomplished by opening up the profound significance of the covenant “allegory,” which presented three principal

contrasts—birth by nature as opposed to grace; a state of bondage as opposed to liberty; a status of temporary tenure as opposed to permanent possession. Just as Hagar was rightfully the handmaid of Sarah, but was wrongfully accorded the position of Abraham’s wife, so the Siniatic covenant was designed to supplement the Abrahamic, but was perverted by the Jews when they sought from it salvation and fruitfulness.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

7. Its Design—Part 2

The subject of the divine decrees is so vast in its range (whether we look backward or forward) and so comprehensive in its scope (when we contemplate all that is involved and included in it), that it is far from being an easy task to present a summarized sketch (which is as high as this writer aspires) of the same. And when attempt is made to furnish an orderly outline and deal with its most essential and distinctive features, it is almost impossible to prevent a measure of overlapping—yet if such repetition renders it easier for the reader to take in the prime aspects, our object will be accomplished. Part of what we now wish to contemplate in connection with God’s design in our election was somewhat anticipated—unavoidable so—in the article on the Nature of Election, when, in showing that God’s original intention was anterior to His foreview of our fall, we touched upon the positive side of His design.

We have sought to point out the infinite distance between the creature and the Creator, the high and lofty One, and that because of the *mutability* of our first estate by nature there was a necessity of *super*-creation grace if the condition and standing of either men or angels was to be immutably fixed, which God was pleased to appoint by an election of grace. And therefore did God by that election also ordain those whom He singled out unto a super-creation union with Himself and communication of Himself, as our highest and ultimate end, which is far above that relation we had to Him by mere *creation*—*thus* being accomplished by and through *Christ*. “Yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him” (1Co 8:6, R.V.). Let us note first the discriminating language used in this verse. There is a pointed difference made here between the “us” and the “all things,” as of a select and special company, which is repeated in the second half of the verse.

We and all other things are from the Father—“of him” or by His will and power, as the originating cause. This is common to “us” and all of His creatures. But the “we” He speaks of as a severed remnant, set apart to some higher excellency and dignity, and this special company is also referred to as “we through him” (the Lord Jesus) in contrast from the “through whom are *all* things.” The A.V. gives “one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we *in* [Greek “eis”] him,” which is quite warrantable, the reference there being to God’s taking us into Himself out of a special love and by a special union with Himself—compare “the church of the Thessalonians which is *in* God the Father” (1Th 1:1). But the Greek also imports our being singled out unto His glory, “*for* him”—our being *in* Him is the foundation of our being *for* Him.

The distinction to which we have just adverted receives further illustration and confirmation in, “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in *you* all” (Eph 4:6). Here again we find the same difference used about the phrases of the *all things* and the *us*. Of the all

things God is said to be “above all,” whereby we understand the sublimity and transcendency of the divine nature and essence as being infinitely superior to that being which all creatures have by participation from Him. Yet, second, the transcendent One is also imminent, near to, piercing “through” all creatures. He is present with all, yet holding a different being from all—as the air permeates all our dwellings, be they palaces or hovels. But third, when it comes to the saints, it is “*in you* all”—This is sovereign grace making them to differ from all the rest. God is so united to them as to be made one with them, in a special manner and by a special relationship.

How amazing is that grace which has taken such creatures as we are into union with One so elevated and ineffable as God is! This is the very summit of our privilege and happiness. If we compare Isaiah 57:15 with 66:1-2, we shall see how God Himself has there emphasized both the sublimity and the transcendency of His own person and the marvel and measure of His grace toward us. In the former, God speaks of Himself as, “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 lowly spirit” (Isa 57:15). While in the other He declares, “The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool...but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit” (Isa 66:1-2). How this demonstrates the infinite condescension of His favour that picks up animated dust, indwells us, communicates Himself to us as to none others—we have a participation of Him such as the angels have not!

Before proceeding farther with our exposition of 1 Corinthians 8:6 so far as it bears upon our present subject, perhaps we should digress for a moment and make a brief remark upon the words, “But to us there is but one God, the Father,” which has been grossly perverted by those who deny a trinity of persons in the Godhead. The term “Father” here (as in Mat 5:16; Jam 3:9, etc.) is not used of the first person in contradistinction to the second and third, but refers to God as God, to the divine nature as such. If it could be shown from this verse that Christ is not God in the most absolute sense (see Ti 2:13), then by parity of reason it necessarily follows that “one Lord” would deny the Father is Lord, giving the lie to Revelation 11:15, etc. The main thought of 1 Corinthians 8:6 becomes quite intelligible when we perceive that this verse furnishes a perfect antithesis and opposition to the false devices of the heathen religion mentioned in verse 5.

Among the pagans there were many “gods” or supreme deities and many “lords” or middle persons and mediators. But Christians have only one supreme deity, the Triune God, and only one Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ—cf. John 17:3. Christ has a *double* “Lordship.” First a natural, essential, underived one, belonging to Him considered simply as the second person of the Trinity. Second, (to which 1Cor 8:6 refers), a derived, economical, and dispensatory Lordship, received by commission from God, considered as God-man. It was to this, allusion was made in last month’s article, wherein it was stated that God decreed the Man Christ Jesus should be taken into union with His Son, and so appointed Him His “sovereign end.” The administration of the universe has been placed under Him—all power is committed to Him, John 5:22, 27; Acts 2:36; Hebrews 1:2. Christ as God-man has equal authority with God (Joh 5:23), yet under Him, as 1 Corinthians 3:23, “ask of me” (Psa 2:8), Philippians 2:11 show.

The next thing in 1 Corinthians 8:6 we would dwell upon is the clause, “and we in him” (Greek) or as the margin has it, “we for him.” Such a supernatural union with God and communication of God is His ultimate design towards us in His choosing of us. Hence it is that we so often read that, “For the LORD hath chosen Jacob *unto himself*, and Israel for his peculiar treasure” (Psa 135:4). “This people have I formed *for myself*” (Isa 43:21). “I have reserved to myself seven thousand men” (Rom 11:4). This choosing of us is not merely a setting apart from all others to be His peculiar treasure (Exo 19:5), nor only that God has separated us for His

peculiar worship and service to be holy unto Himself (Jer 2:3), nor only that we should show forth His praise (Isa 43:21), for even the wicked shall do that (Pro 16:4; Phi 2:11), but we are peculiarly for Himself and His glory, wholly in a way of grace and lovingkindness.

All that which grace can do for us in communicating God Himself to us, and all that He will do for us unto the magnifying of His glory, arises wholly out of the *free favour* He shows us. In other words, God will have no more glory in us and on us, than arises out of what He bestows in grace upon us, so that our happiness as the effect will extend as far as His own glory as the end. How wondrous, how grand, how inexpressibly blessed, that God's glory in us should not be severed in anything from our good. God has so ordered things, that not only are the two things inseparable, but co-extensive. If, therefore, God has designed to have a manifestative glory unto the uttermost, He will show forth unto us grace unto the uttermost. It is not merely that God bestows gifts, showers blessings, but communicates to us *Himself* to the utmost that we as creatures are capacitated for.

This is so far above poor human reason that nothing but faith can apprehend it, that we are yet to be "filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph 3:19). In communicating Himself, God communicates *the whole* of Himself, whether of His divine perfections so far as to bless us therewith, or of all Three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for us to enjoy and have fellowship with. All in God shall as truly serve to make the elect blessed (according to a creature capacity) as serves to make Him blessed in His own immense infinity. If we have God Himself, and the whole of Himself, then are we "heirs of God" (Rom 8:17), for we are "joint heirs with Christ," and that God Himself is Christ's inheritance is proved by His own declaration, "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance" (Psa 16:5). More than this we cannot have or wish, "He that overcometh shall inherit *all* things; and I will be his *God*, and he shall be my son" (Rev 21:7).

In consequence of having chosen us for Himself, God *reserves Himself for us*, and all that is in Him. If Romans 11:4 speaks of God's having "reserved to himself" the elect (see Rom 11:5 and note the "also"), so 1 Peter 1:4 tells that God is "reserved in heaven for you" as is clear from the fact that God Himself is our "inheritance," and none shall share in this wondrous inheritance but the destined heirs. And there He waits, as it were, till such time as we are gathered to Himself. There He has waited throughout the centuries, suffering the great ones of each generation to pass by, reserving Himself (as in election He did design) for His saints—"As if a great prince in a dream or vision should see the image of a woman yet to be born, and should so fall in love with his foreview of her that he should reserve himself till she is born and grown up, and will not think of or entertain any other love" (Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680). Christian reader, if God has such love for you, what ought to be your love to Him! If He has given Himself wholly to you, how entire should be your dedication unto Him!

When God has brought us safely through all the trials and troubles of this lower world to heaven, then will He make it manifest that His first and ultimate design in electing us was for Himself, and therefore our first welcome there will be a presenting of us to Himself, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 1:24), which is here mentioned that we might praise and give Him glory beforehand. The reference here is (we believe) not to Christ (*that* we have in Eph 5:27; Heb 2:13), but to the *Father* Himself, as "the presence of His glory" intimates, that being what we are "presented" before. It is the same person who presents us to Himself whose glory it is. This is further borne out by, "To the only wise God our Saviour [note the "Father" is distinctly called "our Saviour" in Titus 3:4], be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.

Amen” (Jude 1:25), all which attributes are those of God the Father in the usual current of doxologies.

God will present us to Himself “with exceeding joy” (Jude 1:24). This “presentation” takes place at the first coming of each individual saint into heaven, though it will be more formally repeated when the entire election of grace arrives there. As we on our part—and with good reason—shall rejoice, so God on His part, too. He is pleased to present us with great joy to Himself, as making our entrance into heaven more His own concern than it is ours. This presenting us to Himself, “before the presence of his glory” (Jude 1:24), is a matter of great joy to Himself to have us so with Himself—as parents are overjoyed when children long-absent return home to them—compare the joy of the Father, in Luke 16. It is because His purpose is accomplished, His eternal design realized, His glory secured, that He rejoices. With this agrees, “He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing” (Zep 3:17). It was for Himself God first chose us as His ultimate end, and this is now perfected.

Another Scripture which teaches that God has chosen His people *for Himself is*, “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ *to himself*” (Eph 1:5). The Greek word rendered “to himself” may as indifferently (with a variation of the aspirate) be rendered “for him,” so that with equal warrant and propriety we may understand it, first, as relating to God the Father, He having predestinated us to Himself as His ultimate end in this adoption; or second, to Jesus Christ, who is also one end in God thus predestinating us unto adoption. That the preposition “eis” often signifies “for,” as denoting the end or final cause, appears from many places: for example, in the very next verse, “to [or “for”] the praise of the glory of his grace,” as His grand design, so too in Romans 11:36 “to him [or “for him”], are all things.” We shall therefore take this expression in its most comprehensive sense and give it a twofold meaning according to its context and the analogy of faith.

God’s having predestinated us “to himself” is not to be understood as referring primarily or alone to adopting us as sons to Himself, but as denoting distinctly and immediately His having elected and predestinated us to His own great and glorious Self, and for His great and blessed Son. In other words, the clause we are now considering points to another and larger end of His predestinating us than simply our adoption—although that be mentioned as a special end, yet it is but a lower and subordinate end in comparison with God’s predestinating us *to Himself*. First, He chose us in Christ unto an impeccable holiness which would satisfy His own nature. In addition, He, predestinated us unto the honour and glory of adoption. But over and above all, His grace reached to the utmost extent by predestinating us to Himself—the meaning and marvel of which we have already dwelt upon.

God’s having predestinated us “to himself” denotes a *special propriety in us*. The cattle upon a thousand hills are His, and they honour Him in their kind (Isa 43:20), but the church is His peculiar treasure and medium of glory. The elect are consecrated to Him out of the whole in a peculiar way, “Israel was holiness unto the LORD, the firstfruits of his increase” (Jer 2:3), which denotes His consecrating them to Himself, as the type in Numbers 18 explains. Christ made a great matter of this in God’s taking us to be His, “I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are *thine*” (Joh 17:9). So, too, the apostle Paul emphasized the same note in, “The Lord knoweth them that are his” (2Ti 2:19). It denotes, too, a choosing of us *to be holy* before Him, as consecrating us unto His service and worship, which is specially instanced in Romans 11:4, where the, “I have reserved to myself “ is in contrast from the rest which He left to the worshipping of Baal. But above all, it imports His taking us into the *nearest oneness* and communion with and participation of Himself.

Consider now the phrase in Ephesians 1:5 as meaning “for him,” that is, for Jesus Christ. The Greek words “autos” and “hautos” are used promiscuously, either for “him” or “himself,” so that we are not straining it at all in rendering it “for him.” It is in the prepositions which are used with reference to Christ in connection with the church’s relation to Him, that His glory is proclaimed—they are in Him, through Him, for Him. Each of these is employed here in Ephesians 1:4-5—and in that order. We were chosen *in* Him as our Head, predestinated to adoption *through* Him as the means of our sonship, and appointed *for* Him as an end—the honour of Christ as well as the glory of His own grace was made God’s aim in His predestinating of us. The same three things are attributed to Christ in connection with creation and providence, see Greek of Colossians 1:16. But it is of God the Father alone, as the fountain, we read “of him,” (the Originator), Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 5:18.

First God decreed that His own dear Son should be made visibly glorious in a human nature, through a union with it to His own person, and then for His greater glory God decreed us to be adopted sons through Him, as brethren unto Him, for God would not His Son in humanity should be alone, but have “fellows” or companions to enhance His glory. First, by His comparison with them, for He is “anointed...*above* his fellows” (see Psa 45:7), being “the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29). Second, God gave to His Son a unique honour and matchless glory by ordaining Him to be God-man, and for the enhancing of the same, He ordained that there should be those about Him who might see His glory and magnify Him for the same (Joh 17:24). Third, God ordained *us* to adoption that Christ might be the means of all the glory of our sonship, which we have through Him, for He is not only our pattern in predestination, but the virtual cause of it.

Now in God’s councils of election, the consideration of Christ’s assumption of man’s nature was not founded upon the supposition or foresight of the fall, as our being predestinated *for Him* as the end intimates. Surely, surely, this is obvious. Why, to bring Christ into the world only on account of sin and for the work of redemption were to *subject Him unto us*, making *our* interests the end of His becoming incarnate! That is indeed to get things upside down, for Christ, as God-man, is *the end of us*, and of all things else. Moreover, this were to subordinate the infinite value of His *person* to the benefits we receive from His *work*—whereas redemption is far inferior to the gift of Himself unto us and we unto Him. It might also be shown that redemption itself was designed by God first for Christ’s own glory rather than to meet our need.

N.B. For much in both parts of this article on *Its Design*, we are again indebted to the invaluable writings of Thomas Goodwin.

OUR ANNUAL LETTER

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Pro 3:6). What need there is for an unerring Guide to direct us through this trackless desert, for none of the world’s ways lead to the celestial Canaan. Never, perhaps, was there a time in human history when it was more urgent for the Christian to be divinely directed than now. How blessed, then, is the promise in Proverbs 3:6. Yet, be it carefully noted, it is a *conditional* one, and, therefore, cannot be rightfully appropriated by any who ignore that condition. During the seventeen years’ life of this magazine, we have (by grace) to acknowledge the Lord—His supremacy, holiness, and goodness, and now we beg Him to direct us in all our ways concerning it.

At the close of another volume we have abundant cause to acknowledge the Lord's wondrous grace, in His longsuffering mercy toward us, and in His unchanging faithfulness to the magazine. Once more we are permitted to record that both the editor and his wife (a frail little woman) have been preserved from all sickness and all our needs have been abundantly met. We have again been spared any financial anxiety—gifts for the "Studies" having come in so freely that every bill has been promptly paid and a goodly balance is being carried forward. Many letters of encouragement have again come to hand, and we are especially thankful for those from gracious friends whose views of prophecy differ from ours—something which ought never to alienate affections of saints.

We much regret that we have to chronicle a further small decrease in our circulation, yet seek grace to acknowledge the Lord here, too—owning His sovereignty therein and submitting to His will. The falling off in the number of readers often disheartens us, but we are thankful for those we do have. It is for the sake of the few really interested ones we continue plodding along. Many names now on our list will be dropped with this issue, for unless readers assure us they are genuinely unable to financially support this work, we are not prepared to send the "Studies" to them year after year. It would be wrong in God's sight to do so, and an injustice to those who gave to the point of sacrifice to use their money in sending to others who are merely looking for something for nothing.

After prayerful deliberation, we have decided to reduce the size of "Studies," so that next year (D. V.), we shall revert to what it was prior to 1935, namely, twenty-four pages an issue instead of thirty-two. No doubt this will be disappointing news to those cut off from oral ministry and who (under God) look principally to these pages for their spiritual food—yet half a loaf (in this case, three quarters) is better than none. Others, who have less leisure and are pressed for time to give an attentive reading unto so many articles, will welcome the curtailment. We shall endeavour to abbreviate our style and pack more into a smaller compass, while seeking to avoid mere generalizations and the superficial platitudes which characterize so much of the current religious literature.

As we have now completed the lengthy series upon "The Divine Covenants," we shall (D.V.) take up in their place the vitally-important subject of the Holy Sabbath. There is urgent need for pressing the claims of this sacred day not only upon professing Christians, but also upon the general public. God is very jealous of His Sabbath, and a proper observance of it is both a fundamental criterion of personal piety and of national well-being. There has been a fearful disregard of the fourth commandment by the present generation, and unless such wicked desecration be promptly arrested, we can look for nothing else than an outpouring of God's righteous wrath upon us. Please pray that we may be divinely guided in preparing these articles. The series on election will be continued, and when those on the life of David are completed, we hope to take up the life of Elijah.

As less space is here available we are obliged to be briefer than usual. A few—but very few—responded to our pressing appeal of a year ago—that interested ones would make a real effort to secure some new readers, and we deeply appreciate their kindly efforts—would that more emulated them. We also wish to warmly thank many of those who sent in annual gifts of seven shillings (two dollars) and upwards for allowing us to mail them two or more copies of each issue. This is a great help to us, and we sincerely trust that none of them will ask us to now send them only one copy—mail the extra one to a missionary if you know of no one locally. It is only by thus sending two or more copies to the most interested friends that we have been able to continue publishing until now.

We are most grateful to our prayer helpers, and earnestly solicit a continuation of their intercession both for us personally, and for the fruitfulness of this written ministry—unless God be glorified thereby, we had far better terminate it. We regret that it is not convenient for us to receive any visitors, and respectfully ask that readers who may visit these parts to kindly refrain from calling upon us. But please note that we are always glad to hear from Christian friends, if it be only a line or two, whether it be accompanied by a gift or no. The 1938 bound volume of the “Studies” should be ready for mailing by the middle of December. To regular readers the price is 4/- (one dollar) post paid, to others 6/-. Please note that *all* previous volumes are now out of print. As there is more likelihood of letters being lost during the holiday rush, we request that no paper money be enclosed in letters likely to reach us during the second half of December, but *only post office orders* (not crossed), but made out to us at Hove, England. With our united Christian love and best wishes to all the Lord’s people, we remain, by God’s sovereign grace, A. W. and V. E. Pink.



APPENDICES

About Studies in the Scriptures

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952) wrote and published his monthly 28 page expository digest, *Studies in the Scriptures*, from 1922 to 1953. He mailed it worldwide by paid subscription to whomever desired the deeper truths of God. Each issue contained continuing serialized articles on six to eight subjects. When one subject was “completed” to the author’s satisfaction, another subject series began in its place in the next issue. In total, the 380 issues comprise a treasure of immense proportions.

By God’s grace, Chapel Library republishes the *Studies* beginning with the year 1934, available for download worldwide, and mailing three issues each quarter by free subscription in North America. We also print many books and booklets gleaned from articles in the *Studies*. These may be ordered in print in North America, or downloaded from our website worldwide without charge:

Studies: www.chapellibrary.org/studies

Other literature: www.chapellibrary.org/literature/title-catalog

Today the various subjects are being gathered together by topic, and republished in paperbacks by several sources. *Chapel Library* offers the following at the time of this printing:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| - The Sovereignty of God | 176 pages |
| - Comfort for Christians | 79 pages |
| - Profiting from the Word | 96 pages |
| - Seven Sayings of the Savior | 94 pages |
| - Spiritual Union and Communion | 175 pages |
| - The Attributes of God | 105 pages |

- The Doctrine of Human Depravity	241 pages
- The Doctrine of Revelation	214 pages
- 1 John – An Exposition, Part 1	190 pages
- 1 John – An Exposition, Part 2	173 pages
- The Holy Spirit	196 pages

Biography of A.W. Pink

by Erroll Hulse

Concerning Calvinism¹ and Arminianism² during the first half of the Twentieth Century, a most interesting case study is the experience of Arthur W. Pink. He was a preacher and writer of outstanding talent who ministered in Britain, America, and Australia. When he died in 1952 in isolation on the Island of Lewis in north eastern Scotland, he was hardly known outside a small list of subscribers to his magazine, *Studies in the Scriptures*. Yet, by the 1970s, his books were in wide demand and his name was widely known among publishers and ministers. In fact, for that period it would be difficult to find a reformed author whose books were more widely read.

The preaching ministry of A. W. Pink had been remarkably blessed in the USA, but it was in Australia that he seemed to reach the apex of his public ministry, and there in particular that his preaching ministry reached great heights. He was then faced with accreditation by the Baptist Union and was rejected on account of his Calvinistic views. He then ministered in a Baptist church of Strict Baptist pedigree. There he came unstuck since they esteemed him an Arminian! A considerable group, however, appreciated Pink, recognised his worth, and seceded from that Strict Baptist Church to form a new church of 27 members. Then suddenly, in 1934, Pink resigned and returned to Britain. It is widely held that one rejection is enough to cripple a minister for life, but two in quick succession can destroy a pastor completely. So it proved for Arthur Pink. He never again found meaningful entrance into the ministry, though he tried his utmost. He sought openings in both the UK and the USA without success. He became increasingly isolated. He ended his days as an evangelical recluse in the Island of Stornoway off the coast of Scotland. It was rumoured that not more than ten souls attended his funeral.

There is much that we can learn from the life of A. W. Pink. Firstly, we will trace out his early life in broad outline. Secondly, we will describe his experience in Australia, and trace out the adverse effects of this on his life. Thirdly, we will the impact of his writing ministry.

1. Early Life

Arthur Pink was born in Nottingham, England, in 1886. His parents were godly. They lived by the Bible and kept the Lord's Day holy. Arthur was the first of three children brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. To the grief of their parents, all three children drifted into lives

¹ **Calvinism** – the doctrinal system developed from the teachings of the French-born Swiss Reformer John Calvin (1509-1664), holding that the Bible teaches the supreme authority of the Scriptures, the sovereignty of God, predestination, and the “doctrines of grace”; these doctrines were the response of the Synod of Dort (1618-19) to the Arminians’ remonstrance (protest) and are commonly known by the acronym TULIP.

² **Arminianism** – (from Jacobus Arminius, 1560-1609, Dutch theologian) the doctrinal system that rejects the Reformers’ understanding of predestination, teaching instead that God’s predestination of individuals was based on His foreknowledge of their accepting or rejecting Christ by their own free will.

of unbelief. Worse was to come: Arthur embraced *Theosophy*, an esoteric cult that claimed powers of the occult! “Lucifer” was the name of the leading theosophy magazine. A natural feature of Arthur’s character was wholeheartedness, and he entered theosophy with zeal. A leadership role was offered him, which meant that he would visit India. At the same time a friend who was an opera singer, noted that Arthur possessed a fine baritone voice; he urged him to study for a career in opera. Then suddenly on a night during 1908, Arthur was converted. His first action was to preach the Gospel to the theosophist group.

Simultaneous with Pink’s conversion was a call to the Christian ministry. But the colleges were in the hands of liberals bent on the destruction of the Scriptures. Arthur, however, heard of the Moody Bible Institute, which had been founded by D. L. Moody³ in 1889. In 1910, aged 24, Pink left for Chicago to begin a two-year course. His time at Moody lasted only six weeks, however. He decided that he was wasting his time, and that he should enter directly into a pastorate—and his professors agreed! He was not disgruntled, but rather frustrated, that the teaching was pitched at such a primary level that it did nothing for him.

During 1910, he began in his first pastorate in Silverton, Colorado, a mining camp in the San Juan Mountains. We possess little detail of this period, but we know that from Silverton, Pink moved to Los Angeles. He was always a hard worker, and this is illustrated by the fact that at one point in Oakland he was engaged in tent evangelism six nights a week for eighteen weeks!

From Los Angeles, he moved to Kentucky. It was here that he met and married Vera E. Russell. There could not have been a better gift from heaven. Vera was entirely committed to the Lord. She was hard working, gifted, intelligent, and persevering. She died just ten years after Arthur’s decease on the island of Stornoway.

The next move was to Spartanburg, South Carolina, from 1917 to 1920. This church building consisted of a small and frail wooden structure, while he and Vera lived in a small wooden house standing on wooden columns. Heating was inadequate, and in the freezing winter it was like an ice box.

It was during this time Pink began writing books. There were two of significance: one with the title *Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, and the second *The Sovereignty of God*, the foreword of which is dated June 1918. It was this book that was later taken up by The Banner of Truth publishers. The first edition, according to I. C. Herendeen, his first publisher at that time, was only 500 copies, and it was a struggle to sell that number. When the book came to Banner, it was edited by Iain Murray and vastly improved. It became one of the most popular of The Banner of Truth paperbacks. By 1980, 92,000 copies had sold.

After about a year at Spartanburg, Pink almost came to grief. He felt a strong conviction to give up the ministry and devote himself to writing only, and at one point was disconsolate. Vera wrote to a friend saying that her husband was even thinking of leaving the ministry and going into business, to make money for the Kingdom as a better way of serving God. In 1920, Arthur resigned the pastorate at Spartanburg. He and Vera moved and settled at Swengel, Pennsylvania, in order to be near the publisher I. C. Herendeen.

In the middle of July, 1920, he left to take a series of meetings in California. Large crowds gathered and numbers were saved. At one point 1,200 gathered to hear the Gospel. Other crusades and conferences followed; it was evident that Pink was eminently suited to this kind of ministry.

³ **D. L. Moody** (1837-1899) – American evangelist and publisher who founded the Moody Church, Northfield School and Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts (now the Northfield Mount Hermon School), the Moody Bible Institute, and Moody Publishers.

Looking back over his life, it is apparent that he experienced more blessing in the itinerant ministry than he did in a total of twelve years in pastoring churches. This had to do with his temperament; he preferred being in his study to visiting.

In 1921, Arthur and Vera were back in Pennsylvania. The monthly digest, the *Studies in the Scriptures*, first appeared in 1922. It ran continuously without interruption for 32 years, until Arthur's death in 1952. Initially, this was a 24 page magazine, with four to six articles as instalments in a series. To write expository material at a high standard at this rate every month is a tremendous testimony to his insight into the Scriptures, and to the Lord's blessing and enabling. All his articles had to be written by hand and finished for the printer at least two months before the date of publication. *Studies in the Scriptures* had about 1,000 circulation at the beginning, but for most of its existence the subscription level hovered at about 500. The financial side was always precarious, with only just enough to cover printing costs from one month to the next. Pink corresponded with some of his subscribers; eventually this formed his pastoral work. Throughout he was assisted by his very hard working wife, who acted as secretary. They never had a family, always lived very humbly, and managed always to make ends meet. This was made possible through a modest inheritance left to him by his parents and through gifts that he received from his readers.

During 1923, Arthur fell into a deep depression, which turned out to be a nervous breakdown. At this juncture a young couple that had been greatly blessed by Pink's ministry came to the rescue, and Arthur was nursed through a period of several months enforced rest, which brought him back to normal health.

In 1924, a major new direction came by way of letters of invitation from a publisher in Sydney, Australia. Before departing for Australia, no less than four months preparation had to be made for the *Studies*. On his way to Australia, Pink engaged in more Bible conference preaching in Colorado, then in Oakland, California, and also San Francisco—from where he and Vera took ship across the Pacific to Sydney.

2. *Pink's Experience in Australia*

The Pinks spent a total of three and half years in Australia. These times were for them the best, but also turned out to be the worst. Upon arrival Arthur had more invitations than he possibly fill. Initially his ministry in Australia was a great success. Crowds gathered; churches were filled; believers were revived; and souls were brought to the Saviour.

Attendance swelled in every place he preached. In the first year in Australia Arthur preached 250 times. He would often work until 2:00 in the morning to keep *Studies in the Scriptures* going. The Pinks truly must have felt that at last they had found the place of permanent fulfilment. There was an evident power in his ministry. One mature believer declared that he drew people "like a magnet," and that he preached the "whole counsel of God's Word," and was capable of preaching a sermon "from every word of the text."

This period proved to be one of great joy. Pink was now 40 years old. He was preaching almost daily for well over an hour. He would get home at 10:00 PM and then work until 2:00 AM. He wrote, "never before during our 16 years in the ministry, have we experienced such blessing and joy in our souls, such liberty of utterance, and such an encouraging response as we have done in this highly favoured portion of Christ's vineyard."⁴

⁴ *The Life of Arthur W. Pink*, by Iain H. Murray, The Banner of Truth Trust, p 49

We can be sure that a thrilling and powerful soul-saving ministry will arouse the fury of Satan. And so it proved to be in this case when that old serpent, the devil, mounted a cunning counterattack. The Baptist Union leaders were fundamentally opposed to Calvinism. These leaders invited Arthur Pink to read a paper on “Human Responsibility.” Sadly, Pink did not realise that this was a plot to demote him in the eyes of the public—and in his sincere earnestness he fell into the trap. Instead of declining this invitation, he presented the paper and then answered questions for over an hour. The result of this was that the BU of New South Wales published a statement that they agreed unanimously *not* to endorse his ministry. What they really meant (for they did not themselves clarify any doctrine) is that they did not agree with Pink’s Reformed doctrine. They were fundamentally Arminian. The effect of all this was that invitations dried up, and Pink’s wider effective ministry in Australia was drastically reduced.

It was at this juncture that one of three Strict and Particular Baptist Churches invited Pink to become its pastor. This church was known as the Belvoir Street Church. Here Pink was as busy as he had ever been in his life. He had preached 300 times in the year ending 1926. In addition to preaching three times a week at Belvoir Street, he preached in three different places in Sydney each week to an average of 200 at each meeting. He still managed to maintain *Studies in the Scriptures* by burning midnight oil.

Trouble however was in store. The early part of the Twentieth Century was a time of lack of clarity in doctrine. One of the evidences of this was confusion over Calvinism, Arminianism, and hyper-Calvinism.⁵ Many churches polarized. The Baptist Union was Arminian, and the Strict and Particular Baptists tended to be hyper-Calvinist. This proved to be the case at Belvoir Street. Until about May 1927, the Pinks believed that they had found a permanent church home.

3. *Impact of Pink’s Writing Ministry*

If history had progressed normally, Arthur Pink would have been forgotten. There are several leaders in each generation who are well known, but it is unlikely that their names will be remembered for very long. When Arthur Pink died, he was known to a small circle of readers—about 500—who read his monthly periodical *Studies in the Scriptures*, which he had faithfully produced with the help of his wife Vera for 31 years. Yet, after his decease, as his writings were collected and published as books, his name became very well known in the English-speaking evangelical world. During the 1960s and ’70s, there was a dearth of reliable expository writing; Pink’s writings filled an important need. His expositions are God-centred, theologically compelling, and reliable—as well as practical and experimental. That was precisely what was needed during a period of spiritual drought. Publishers discovered the value of his writings. The outcome was dramatic.

For instance, Baker Book House published twenty-two different titles by Pink, with a combined total sales by 1980 of 350,000. By the same date just three books (*Sovereignty of God*, *Life of Elijah*, and *Profiting from the Word*) totaled 211,000. Yet as contemporary reformed authors have multiplied, so the demand for Pink’s books has lessened.

We must remember that with the dawning of the twentieth century, the mainline denominations had already suffered extensive losses to higher criticism and modernism. Such was the advance of modernism in the late nineteenth century and through the first half of the twentieth

⁵ **hyper-Calvinism** – the doctrinal error that holds men need not evangelize, since God will save His elect children with or without the means of preaching the Word. This represents only one side of biblical truth; the other is that God is pleased to use human instruments as means to His work, and the preaching of the Word is uniquely marked out for this purpose (2Ti 4:2; 2Ti 3:16; Mat 28:19).

century, most Bible colleges and seminaries were lost to an agenda of unbelief and anti-Christianity. Instead of producing preacher/pastors for the churches, men were sent out who emptied the churches. The most striking example is Methodism. The aggregate membership in Methodism grew to be the highest of the non-conformist churches. Yet this denomination has been virtually annihilated by modernism.

The writings of Pink provided not only food for the spiritually hungry, but as Iain Murray asserts, “Pink has been immensely important in reviving and stimulating doctrinal reading at the popular level. The same can be said of few other authors of the twentieth century.”⁶

*A South African by birth, **Erroll Hulse** gave much of his life to furthering the cause of the gospel and Reformed doctrine in Africa, as well as missions around the world. Through a wide range of mission activities, conference initiatives, and editing Reformation Today magazine, Erroll served as a vital link for Chapel Library to international pastors and missionaries.*

After conversion to Christ in university, Erroll studied theology at the London Bible College and benefited from the ministry of Martyn Lloyd-Jones at Westminster. His pastorates in the UK include 23 years in Cuckfield, West Sussex, three years in Liverpool, and twenty years as Associate Pastor with a missions mandate at Leeds Reformed Baptist Church. Erroll’s life leaves a legacy of passionate prayer for the global cause of Christ, a hunger for Spirit-wrought revival, and ceaseless activity fueled by a love for Christ and the lost.

From 1970-2013, Erroll Hulse edited and wrote extensively for Reformation Today magazine, which continues today as a bi-monthly magazine featuring insightful articles relevant to the Reformed community, with news from global mission fields. Visit www.reformation-today.org for more information.

The Carey Conference is another continuing ministry of Erroll’s Reformation Today Trust. This annual conference in the United Kingdom is aimed at equipping pastors, church leaders, and their wives.

Erroll and others began the African Pastors’ Conferences in 2006 to encourage a recovery of African churches from the influx of the prosperity gospel and syncretism with traditional religions. The conferences operate as a collaborative effort of South African and Zambian Reformed Baptist churches. Reception has been enthusiastic and conferences have spread over many countries in English-speaking Africa. Churches in Africa, UK, and the USA sponsor these conferences by financially “adopting” conferences in specific locations. For more information visit www.reformation-today.org/african-pastors-conference/.

We are deeply grateful to the Lord for Erroll’s life, his fellowship in Christ, partnership in ministry, and passion for global mission endeavors.

⁶ *ibid.*

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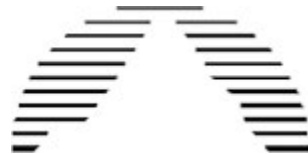
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