

**November, 1935**  
**Studies in the Scripture**  
**The Spirit Leading.**

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). This verse presents to us another aspect of the varied work of the blessed Holy Spirit. In addition to all His other functions, He performs the office of Guide unto the godly. Nor is this peculiar to the present dispensation: He so ministered during the Old Testament times. This is brought out clearly in Isaiah 63, “Where is He that brought them up out of the Sea with the shepherd of His flock? where is He that put His holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, *the Spirit of the LORD* caused him to rest: *so* didst Thou *lead* Thy people, to make Thyself a glorious name” (vv. 11-14). Moses was no more able, by his own power, to induce the Hebrews to pass between the divided waters of the Red Sea and to cross the trackless desert, than by the mere extending of the rod he could divide those waters. Moses was simply the human instrument: the Holy Spirit was the efficient Agent.

In the above passage we have more than a hint of *how* the Holy Spirit “leads”: it is by means of an inward impulse, as well as by external directions. Among his comments upon Romans 8:14 Matthew Henry says, “Led by the Spirit as a scholar in his learning is led by his tutor, as a traveler in his journey is led by his guide, as a soldier in his engagements is led by his captain.” But such analogies are inadequate, for they present only the *external* side, leaving out of account the internal operations of the Spirit, which are even more essential. “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). By nature we are not only ignorant of God’s way, but reluctant to walk therein even when it is shown us, and therefore we find the Church praying “*Draw* me, we will run after Thee” (Song. 1:4). Ah, we never seek unto God, still less “run after Him,” till we are Divinely drawn.

This humbling truth was well understood by David of old. First, he prayed, “Teach me, O LORD, the way of Thy statutes . . . Give me understanding” (Psa. 119:33, 34). But second, he realised that something more than Divine illumination was needed by him: therefore did he add, “*Make me to go* in the path of Thy commandments . . . *Incline my heart unto* Thy testimonies,” (vv. 35, 36). By nature our hearts are averse from God and holiness. We can be worldly of ourselves, but we cannot be heavenly of ourselves. The power of sin lies in the love of it, and it is only as our affections are Divinely drawn unto things above that we are delivered from sin’s dominion. Moreover, our *wills* are perverse, and only as supernatural grace is brought to bear upon them are they “inclined” Godwards. Thus, to be “led by the Spirit of God” is to be *governed* by Him from within, to be subject unto His secret but real impulses or strivings.

Not only are our hearts inclined *by nature* unto temporal, material, worldly, and evil things, rather than unto eternal, spiritual, heavenly and holy things, but they are by inveterate *custom* too. As soon as we are born we follow the bent of our natural appetites, and the first few years of our life is governed merely by sense; and the pleasures begotten by gratifying our senses become deeply ingrained in us. Moreover, by constant living in the world and long contact with material things, the tendency increases upon us and we become more strongly settled in a worldly frame. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the

leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are *accustomed* to do evil” (Jer. 13:23). Custom becomes a “second nature” to us: the more we follow a certain course of life, the more we delight in it, and we are only weaned from it with very great difficulty.

Natural lusts and appetites being born and bred in us from infancy, continue to cry out for indulgence and satisfaction. The will has become bent to a carnal course and the heart craves material pleasures. Hence, when the claims of *God* are presented to us, when the interests of our *souls* and the things of *eternity* are brought before us, when the “beauty of *holiness*” is presented to our view, they find our wills already biased in the contrary direction and our heart prepossessed with other inclinations, which by reason of long indulgence bind us to them. The heart being deeply engaged with and delighting in temporal and worldly things, is quite unable to respond to the dictates of reason and set itself upon that which is heavenly and Divine; and even the voice of conscience is unheeded by the soul, which prefers the insidious lullaby of Satan. Naught but the Almighty power of the Holy Spirit can turn (“lead”) the heart in a contrary direction.

Now the heart is *inclined* toward God when the habitual bent of our affections is more to holiness than to worldly things. As the power of sin lies in the love of it, so it is with indwelling grace. Grace prevails over us when we so love the things of God that the bent of the will and the strength of our affections is carried after them. When the course of our desires and endeavours, and the strength and stream of our souls runs out after holiness, then the heart is “inclined” Godwards. And how is this brought to pass, how does God reduce our rebellious hearts and mould them to the obedience of His will? The answer is, by His Word and by His Spirit; or putting it another way, by moral persuasion and by gracious power.

“And I will put My Spirit within you, and *cause* you to walk in My statutes” (Ezek. 36:27). This God does by combining together the invincible might and gentle inducements. God works upon us morally, not physically, because He will preserve our nature and the principles thereof. He does not force us against our wills, but sweetly draws us. He presents weighty reasons, casting into the mind one after another, till the scales be turned and then all is made efficacious by His Spirit. Yet this is not a work which He does in the soul once for all, but is often renewed and repeated; and that because the “flesh” or sinful nature remains in us, unchanged, even after regeneration. Therefore do we need to ask God to *continue* inclining our hearts toward Himself.

This brings us to notice the intimate connection which exists between our present text and the verse immediately preceding it. “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:13):—“if we yield ourselves to the Spirit’s impulses to restrain our evil propensities and our proneness to indulge them, then Heaven will be our portion, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (v. 14). Thus Romans 8:14 is said in confirmation and amplification of verse 13: only those who are *ruled by* the Spirit give evidence that they are the “sons of God.” To be “led by the Spirit,” then, means, as the whole context clearly shows, to “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (v. 4), to “mind the things of the Spirit” (v. 5), to “through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body” (v. 13). Suitably did Calvin remark on Romans 8:14, “Thus the empty boasting of hypocrites is taken away, who without any reason assume the title of sons of God.”

Thus we are “led by the Spirit” both actively and passively: actively, with respect to His prompting; passively on our part, as we submit to those promptings; actively, by His

pressing upon us the holy requirements of the Scriptures; passively, as we yield ourselves unto those requirements. The Spirit is our Guide, but we must obey His motions. In the immediate context it is His *restraining* motives which are in view, moving us to the mortifying of sin. But His “leading” is not to be restricted to that: He exercises *inviting* motives, encouraging us unto the perfecting of holiness. And this being guided and governed by the Holy Spirit is an infallible proof that we are living members of God’s family.—  
”A.W.P.

### The Epistle to the Hebrews.

#### 95. *A Call to Examination*—"12:15.

We had first thought of giving a brief exposition of this verse at the close of last month's article. But we felt this would scarcely satisfy some of our more critical readers. Nor is it our custom to dodge difficulties, and this presents a real difficulty unto not a few. Those Arminians who are ready to grasp at a straw have appealed to it in support of their favourite tenet "falling from grace." On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that the replies given by Calvinists thereon have often been unsatisfactory. It seems therefore that a more careful consideration and fuller elucidation of its contents are called for. Following, then, our usual practice, we shall endeavour, as God assists, to bring out the meaning of its several terms and apply them to our consciences and lives.

The following are the points upon which our attention needs to be concentrated. First, the connection between our present verse and its context. Second the duty enjoined: "looking diligently." Third, the danger to be avoided: "lest any man fail of the grace of God." Fourth, the evil warned against: "lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you." Fifth, the resultant consequence if the evil be tolerated: "and thereby many be defiled." In considering these points it will have to be carefully ascertained what it is about which we are here exhorted to be "looking diligently." What is signified by "lest any man fail of the grace of God," and if that be the correct translation, or whether the Greek requires us to accept the marginal alternative of "falling from the grace of God." And finally, what is denoted by the "root of bitterness springing up." May wisdom be granted us from on High.

First, then, *the connection* between our present verse and its context. We will first consider its more general and remote relation, and then its more specific and immediate. The link between Hebrews 12:15 and that which precedes may be thus exhibited: if the afflictions which fidelity to Christ occasion and the chastenings of the Father are not duly improved by professing Christians they are almost certain to become a serious stumbling-block in the way of personal piety, yea, a temptation to apostasy itself. This, we believe, is the first reference in the "looking diligently." Unless professing Christians are duly "exercised" (v. 11) over God's disciplinary dealings with them, they are very apt to misconstrue them, chafe against them, call into question the Divine goodness, and sink into a state of despair, with its accompanying inertia.

What has just been pointed out above receives confirmation from the verses which immediately follow, for verses 16 and 17 are obviously a continuation of our present text. There we find a solemn exhortation against apostasy itself, pointed by the awful case and example of Esau. Here we are warned against that, which if neglected, has a fearful tendency unto apostasy. Most of us know from painful experience how easily we become discouraged when things do not go as we want, how ready we are to "faint" (v. 5) when the rod of adversity is laid upon us, how real is the temptation to compromise or forsake the path of duty altogether when trials multiply or opposition and persecution is all that our best efforts meet with. Real, then, is our need for heeding this exhortation "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God."

It is unspeakably solemn to note that in the case of Esau his temptation to sell his birthright—"apostatize"—was occasioned by his *faintness*, for we are told that he said to Jacob, "Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint" (Gen. 25:30). And is it not when we are faint in our minds, cast down by the difficulties of the way,

disheartened by the lack of appreciation our efforts meet with, and crushed by one trial on top of another, that Satan bids us give up the fight of faith and “get what pleasure we can out of life” by indulging the lusts of the flesh? Looked at thus our text points out the *spring* of apostasy—“failing of the grace of God”; the *nature* of apostasy—a “root of bitterness springing up”; and the *result* of apostasy—“many be defiled.”

Considering now the more specific and immediate connection of our verse with its context. First, unless the hands which hang down be lifted up and the feeble knees strengthened (v. 12), there will be a “failing of the grace of God”; and unless straight paths are made for our feet and that which is “lame” be prevented from being “turned out of the way” (v. 13), then a “root of bitterness” (an apostate) will spring up, and in consequence, “many will be defiled.” Second, in verse 14 we are exhorted to “follow” two things, namely, “peace” and “holiness”; while in verse 15 we are warned to avoid two things, namely, “failing of the grace of God” and suffering “a root of bitterness to spring up.” The opening “Looking diligently” clearly denotes that our avoidance of the two evils of verse 15 turns or is dependent upon our earnest pursuit of the spiritual graces inculcated in verse 14.

We are now ready to contemplate the duty which is here enjoined: “looking diligently.” This is a call to examination: first, to self-examination. Its immediate force is derived from the closing words of the preceding verse, where the solemn and searching statement is made that “without which (namely ‘holiness’) no man shall see the Lord.” No matter though I am in fellowship with the people of God, a member of a Scriptural church, a regular attendee upon the means of grace, a firm believer in all the doctrines of the Word; yet, if I have never been sanctified by the Spirit of God, if I am not diligently and earnestly cultivating practical holiness, both of heart and life, then I shall never enter Heaven, and enjoy the beatific vision. Hence the pertinency and urgency of this exhortation, “*Looking diligently* lest any man fail of the grace of God.” There is far too much at stake to remain in uncertainty upon such a vital matter, and only the religious trifler will disregard this imperative summons.

The call to careful self-examination receives its urgency from the very great danger there is of *self-deception*. Sin darkens the understanding, so that man is unable to perceive his real state before God. Satan “hath blinded the minds of them which believe not” (2 Cor. 4:4). The deep-rooted pride of our hearts makes us think the best of ourselves, so that if a question is raised in our hearts, we are ever prone to give ourselves the benefit of the doubt. A spirit of sloth possesses us by nature, so that we are unwilling to go to the trouble which real self-examination calls for. Hence the vast majority of religious professors remain satisfied with a head knowledge of the Truth, with outward attention to forms and ceremonies, or resting on a mere consent to the letter of some verse like John 3:16, refusing to “make their calling and election *sure*.”

God has warned us plainly in His Word that, “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness” (Prov. 30:12). He has set before us those who say “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” and who know not that they are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17). And let it be duly noted that *those* were in church association, and that at a time before the last of the Apostles had left the earth. Christ has told us that “*Many* will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?” Yea, that

they will affirm “we have eaten and drunk in Thy presence” (Luke 13:26); yet will He answer them “I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:23). How such words as those should make *each of us* tremble! How it behooves us to be “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God.” Alas that such words—”written first to those who had been addressed as “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb. 3:1)—”should, for the most part, fall upon unheeding ears.

The fact is that our diligence and honesty in self-examination will largely be determined by the value which we set upon our soul and its eternal interests. Alas, the vast majority of professing Christians today are far, far more concerned about their bodies than their souls, about carnal pleasures than spiritual riches, about earthly comforts than heavenly consolations, about the good opinion of their fellows rather than the approbation of God. But a few—”and O *how few*—”are made serious, become in deadly earnest to examine well their foundations and test every inch of the ground they stand on. With them religion is not something to be taken up and laid down according to their fitful moods. *Where will they spend ETERNITY* is their all-absorbing concern. Every other interest in life sinks into utter insignificance before the vital consideration of seeking to make sure that they have “the root of the matter” in them.

O my reader, can you be satisfied with the cheap, easy-going religion of the day, which utterly ignores the claimant call of the Son of God “Agonize to enter in at the strait gate” (Luke 13:24)? Can you rest content with the “smooth things” now being proclaimed from well-nigh every pulpit, which assures those who are at enmity with God they can become Christians more easily than a youth can join the army, or a man become a “free mason” or “odd fellow”? Can you follow the great crowd who claim to have “received Christ as their personal Saviour” when no miracle of grace has been wrought in their hearts, while the Lord Himself declares “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto Life, and *few* there be that find it” (Matt. 7:14)? Dare you rest upon some “decision” made when you were deeply stirred by some anecdotes addressed to your emotions? Have you nothing more than some change in your religious views or some reformation in your outward ways to show that you are “a new creature in Christ Jesus?” Slight not, we beseech you, this pressing word, “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God.”

But the word “Looking diligently” has a wider signification than self-examination: it also points out our duty toward each other. The Greek term means “overseeing,” exercising a jealous care for one another. This seems to have misled Owen and several others who confined the exhortation unto “the body of the church or society of the faithful” in their mutual relation. But as Spurgeon pointed out on the text, “In the church of God each one should be on his watchtower for himself and for others. The first person who is likely to fail in the church is *myself*. Each one ought to feel that: the beginning of the watch should therefore be at home.” Our text is very similar to the exhortation found in Hebrews 3:12, 13, which is first unto the individual and then to the assembly—”“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily.”

Earnestly endeavouring to look well unto my own going, it is then both my duty and privilege to exercise watchfulness over others. “How many persons might be saved from backsliding by a little oversight! If we would speak to the brother kindly and considerately, when we think he is growing a little cold, we might restore him. We need not al-

ways speak directly to him by way of rebuke, but we may place a suggestive book in his way, or speak generally upon the subject. Love can invent many ways of warning a friend without making him angry, and a holy example will also prove a great rebuke to sin. In the church we ought to bear one another's burden, and so fulfill the law of Christ, exercising the office of bishops over one another, and watching lest any man fail of the grace of God" (C.H. Spurgeon).

How little of this loving solicitude for the spiritual wellbeing of our fellow-pilgrims is in evidence today! How little earnest and diligent praying for one another! How little faithfulness in counseling, warning, exhorting! Probably one principle reason for this is the hyper-touchiness of so many professing Christians in this generation. No matter how tactfully the counsel be tendered, how faithfully the warning be given, or how lovingly the rebuke be administered; no matter though it be given by an experienced senior to one he is on familiar terms with, yet in nine cases out of ten his efforts are resented, and he is told—"by attitude if not in words—"to "mind his own business." Never mind, even if a single ear be gained and a single soul helped, it is worth the disappointments of being repulsed by the others. Only one leper out of the ten appreciated Christ's kindness!

"Lest any man fail of the grace of God." This is the clause which has occasioned controversy: though really it affords no warrant for it, nor will the Greek permit of the marginal rendering. The root word which is here rendered "fail" occurs many times in the New Testament, but never once has it the force of "fall from." It means "to lack" or "be deficient of." In Romans 3:23 it is rendered "come short of," in Mark 11:44 to "want," in 2 Corinthians 12:11 "come behind," in Philippians 2:20 "lack," in Philippians 4:12 "suffer need," in Hebrews 11:37 to be "destitute." Thus there is no room for uncertainty as to the meaning of this exhortation: "Looking diligently lest any man fail—"come short of, be deficient in, lack—"the grace of God."

But to what does "the grace of God" here refer? That is not quite so easy to answer, for sometimes "grace" is to be regarded objectively, sometimes subjectively; in some passages it refers to the free favour of God, in others to His benevolent operation within the heart, in still others to the effects produced thereby. In our present passage, it seems to the writer to be used more abstractly, having a comprehensive scope as it is applicable to widely different cases. We feel it safest to regard the clause thus, for God's commandment is "exceeding broad" (Psa. 119:96), and very often a single word has a two-fold or threefold reference, and therefore we need to be constantly on our guard against *limiting* the meaning or restricting the application of any utterance of Holy Writ. According to our light we will endeavour to show some of the different cases to which this exhortation belongs.

"By 'the grace of God,' God's gracious favour and acceptance in Christ, as it is proposed and declared by the Gospel, is intended. Herein all spiritual mercies and privileges, in adoption, justification, sanctification and consolation, do consist. For these things, proceeding from the love, grace, and goodness of God in Christ, and being effects thereof, are called the grace of God. The attaining and participation of these things is that which in the faith and profession of the Gospel, men aim at and design; without which, both the one and the other are in vain. This grace, under all their profession of the Gospel, men may fail of, and this is the evil cautioned against" (J. Owen).

Man may "fail of the grace of God," then, by *not submitting* themselves to the terms of the Gospel. Those terms are repugnant to the natural man: they are distasteful to his car-

nal lusts, they are humbling to his pride. But it is at the former of these two points that the majority “fail.” The Gospel calls upon sinners to repent, and they cannot do that with sincerity unless they throw down the weapons of their rebellion against God. The thrice holy God will pardon no man so long as he is determined to please himself and continue in a course of sinning. Again; the Gospel calls on sinners to receive Christ Jesus as *Lord*: to give Him the throne of their hearts, to bow to His sceptre. The holy Redeemer will save no man who is unwilling for Him to “rule over” him (Luke 19:14).

Second, to “fail of the grace of God” is to be satisfied with *something short of* Divine grace communicated to and ruling in the heart. It is to be contented with a religious substitute for it. How many are deceived by “a form of godliness” who know nothing of its “power” (2 Tim. 3:5). How many mistake a head-knowledge of the Truth for a miracle of grace wrought in the heart. How many substitute outward forms and ceremonies for an experimental acquaintance with the substance of them. How many confuse an external reformation of life with the Divine regeneration and transformation of the soul. Alas, of how very many does it have to be said, “He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul” (Isa. 44:20). O how few there are who know “the grace of God *in truth*” (Col. 1:6). Do *you*, my reader? Do *you*?

“Some have maintained an admirable character to all appearance all their lives, and yet have failed of the grace of God because of some secret sin. They persuaded even themselves that they were believers, and yet they were not truly so; they had no *inward* holiness, they allowed one sin to get the mastery, they indulged in an unsanctified passion, and so, though they were laid in the grave like sheep, they died with a false hope, and missed eternal life. This is a most dreadful state to be in, and perhaps some of us are in it. Let the prayer be breathed, ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.’ Are ye earnest in secret prayer? Do ye love the reading of the Bible? Have ye the fear of God before your eyes? Do you really commune with God? Do you truly love Christ? Ask yourselves these questions *often*, for though we preach the free Gospel of Jesus Christ, I hope as plainly as any, we feel it to be just as needful to set you on self-examination and to excite in you a holy anxiety. It ought to be often a question with you ‘Have I the grace of God, or do I fall short of it? Am I a piece of rock crystal which is very like the diamond, but yet is not diamond?’” (C.H. Spurgeon).

Third, multitudes “fail of the grace of God” by *not persevering* in the use of the outward means. They are very earnest and zealous at first, but become careless and slothful. “There are some persons who for a time appear to possess the grace of God, and for a while exhibit many outward evidences of being Christians, but at last *the* temptation comes most suitable to their depraved tastes, and they are carried away with it. They fail of the grace of God. They appear to have attained it, but they fail at last; like a man in business who makes money for a time, but fails in the end. They fail of the grace of God—”like an arrow shot from the bow, which goes straight towards the target for a time, but having too little impetus, fails to reach the mark. There are some who did run well, what doth hinder them that they should not obey the truth?” (C.H. Spurgeon).

Finally, genuine Christians themselves “fail of the grace of God” by *not improving* that which God has already bestowed upon them. Faith has been imparted to them, but how little they exercise it. There is an infinite fullness in Christ for them, but how little do they draw upon it. Wondrous privileges are theirs, but how little do they use them.



Light has been communicated to them, but how little do they walk in it. They fail to watch and pray lest they enter into temptation (Mark 14:38). They fail to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1). They fail to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus (2 Peter 3:18). They fail to keep themselves from idols (1 John 5:21). They fail to keep themselves in the love of God (Jude 21). And by so failing, their peace is disturbed, their joy is diminished, their testimony is marred, and frequent chastenings are brought upon them.

“Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you,” (Heb. 12:15). This is the evil warned against. Observe how abstractly this also is worded: it is not “lest any root of bitterness spring up *in* you,” or “*among* you,” but simply “spring up.” The reference, we believe, is again a double one: first to the individual himself, and then to the corporate company. This second “lest” is obviously related intimately to the first: if we “fail of the grace of God” then “a root of bitterness springing up” is to be surely expected. Nor can there be any doubt as to what is signified by this figure of a “root of bitterness springing up”—the uprisings of evil is evidently that which is in view. This is what we are here to guard against: failure to do so will bring “trouble” upon us and occasion a stumbling block to others.

The first thing to be noted here is the expression “root of bitterness.” Now the root of a tree is that part of it which is underground, hence the reference is to that which is *unseen*. It points to *indwelling sin*, which continues in a man even after he is regenerated. That is why the Christian is exhorted, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Rom. 6:12). And if *that* is to be obeyed, then it is imperative we heed the word “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). Every stirring of sin within is to be resisted, every defiling effect of it confessed to God. If the weeds be not kept down, the flowers and vegetables will be choked. If the Christian fails in the work of *mortification* then the cultivation of his graces will be arrested.

“Lest any root of bitterness spring up.” The “springing up” is the appearance of its stalk above the ground. It is the open manifestation of sin in the life, issuing from an *unmortified* lust in the soul, which is here in view. What is unjudged before God in secret usually ends in becoming open before men. “Be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23) is a solemn word for each of us on this point. “Lest *any* root” emphasises the need of constant watchfulness against *every* sin, for many branches and sprigs are ready to issue from the main trunk of indwelling corruption. Our safeguards are to yield ourselves *wholly* to God without reserve at any point, to be well instructed in practical godliness, to preserve a tender conscience, to be more distrustful about ourselves, to cultivate closer daily communion with God, to fix our affections upon things above.

“Lest any root *of bitterness* spring up.” By nature, sin is pleasant and delightful to us, but in the end it “biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder” (Prov. 23:32). Particularly is this the case with the Christian. God will not long suffer him to indulge his lusts, without making him taste the bitter consequences of the same. The lashings of his conscience, the convictions of the Spirit, the wretchedness of his soul, will cause him to say, “He hath filled me with bitterness, He hath made me drunken with wormwood” (Lam. 3:15). As our text says, “lest any root of bitterness spring up *trouble*.” That which is contrary to God’s holiness and offends His majesty, He makes a source of trouble to us, either in our minds, bodies, estates, or families. “And many be defiled”: sin is like leaven—

"its influence spreads: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33).

The second half of our text also refers to the local church: in it there is, no doubt, an allusion to Deuteronomy 29:18. Great watchfulness needs to be exercised and a strict discipline maintained therein. Unregenerate professors are ever seeking to creep into the assembly of the saints. If God's servants sleep, the Enemy will sow his tares among the wheat. When the suspicion of church officers is aroused, prayer for discernment and guidance is called for. Where the one suspected breaks out in corrupt doctrine or in loose living, he is to be dealt with promptly. Delay is dangerous. The allowance of a "little leaven" will soon corrupt the whole lump. At no point does the local church fail more deplorably today than in its refusal to maintain Scriptural discipline."—A.W.P.

### **The Life of David.**

#### *47. His kindness to Mephibosheth.*

2 Samuel 9 presents to us one of the loveliest scenes in the life of David. To properly appreciate it we need to recall his earlier experiences, particularly the unkind treatment he received from the hands of Saul. We will only refer briefly now to the jealousy which was awakened in that king's heart when he heard the women celebrating in song the victory of Jesse's youthful son over Goliath. How that later he sought to kill David again and again by throwing a javelin at him. Finally, how that David had to flee for his life and how relentlessly the king pursued him, determining to kill him. But things had been completely altered. Saul and his sons were slain in battle, and David has ascended the throne of Israel. A most admirable spirit did our hero now display: instead of using his royal power tyrannically or maliciously, he put it to a most noble use: to return good for evil, to extend pity to the descendant of his foe, to befriend one who might well have feared death at his hands, was David's next act.

"And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" (2 Sam. 9:1). First of all, let us observe the pathos of such a question. 1 Chronicles 8:33 furnishes a list of Saul's sons, but now his family has been so reduced by the judgments of God that inquiry has to be made "is there yet *any* that is left of the house of Saul?" How true it is that "the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children"—"O that more parents would take this to heart. But, second, let us note the benevolent design of David: he sought any possible survivor of Saul's family, not that he might imprison or slay, but that he might show him "kindness." Let our dispensational friends note that this was under the era of Law!—"even then, wherever the Holy Spirit possessed a soul, the spirit triumphed over the flesh; blessedly did it do so in the case now before us.

It seems evident from what follows in the sacred narrative that none of the courtiers could answer their royal master's question. It is not at all likely that *they* were interested in such matters. No doubt they remembered the trouble which the opposition of Ishbosheth—"the last of Saul's sons"—had caused, and hoped that his family had now become entirely extinct. But David was not to be deterred, and continued asking. It was no passing whim which had actuated him. "Jonathan" was before his heart, and for *his* "sake" he was determined to show clemency and display his magnanimity. At length they brought to David an old retainer of Saul's family, who knew well the sad state into which it was fallen; and to him also David said, "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him?" (2 Sam. 9:3).

But beautiful as was David's conduct on this occasion, something yet more blessed was shadowed forth by it, and upon that we would particularly concentrate our attention. As other writers on this sweet incident have pointed out David as monarch over Israel suggests to us God upon His throne in Heaven: David showing kindness to the family of his arch-enemy, foreshadowed God's dealing in grace with sinners. The name of the one whom David befriended, the place he had hitherto occupied, the condition he was then in, the wondrous portion he received, all typified the case of those upon whom God bestows saving mercy. The picture here presented is perfect in its accuracy in every detail, and the more closely it be examined, the more clearly will its evangelical character appear. O that our hearts may be melted by its exquisite light and shade.

"And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him

kindness for Jonathan's sake?" Let us first observe that *David* was the one who here *took the initiative*. No overtures were made unto him by the one remaining descendant of Saul; the king himself was the one to make the advance. So it is in the antitype: it is not the sinner, but God, who makes the first move. Through the Gospel He makes overtures of mercy, and in each instance of salvation He is found of them that seek Him not. "All we *like sheep* have gone astray" (Isa. 53:6), and it is the nature of a lost sheep to wander farther and farther afield. The shepherd must do the seeking, for sheep astray never go after the shepherd—"true alike both naturally and spiritually. It was God who sought out Abraham in Ur, Jacob at Bethel, Moses in Midian, Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, and not they who sought unto Him.

Next, we may notice *the object* of David's quest. It was not one who had befriended him during the days of his own dire need. Nor was it one whom men of the world would call "a deserving case." Nor was it one from whom David could expect anything in return. Instead, it was one immediately descended from his most merciless and implacable foe; it was one who was hiding away from him; it was one who had nothing of his own, having lost his heritage. How accurate the picture! The Gospel of God's grace is not seeking those who have something of their own to commend them unto the Lord, nor does it offer salvation in return for service to be rendered afterwards. Its inestimable riches are for worthless wretches, spiritual paupers, lost and undone sinners; and those riches are freely proffered "without money and without price."

But let us pay attention to *the motive which actuated David*. Very beautiful is this line in our typical picture. "And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness *for Jonathan's sake*?" (2 Sam. 9:1). Here was what moved the king to make overtures of mercy toward the house of his sworn enemy. Though there was nothing whatever in Saul's survivor to commend him unto the royal favour, David found a reason *outside* of him, in that bond of love and friendship which existed between his own heart and Jonathan. And thus it is too in the antitype: "For we ourselves also *were* sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that *the kindness* and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, *not by works of righteousness which we have done*, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly *through Jesus Christ our Saviour*" (Titus 3:3-6). It is because of Another that God is gracious to His people: "God *for Christ's sake* hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

One more item completes this point, and a very striking one it is. When Ziba, Saul's servant, had been found and brought to David, the king asked, "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show *the kindness of God* unto him?" (v. 3). This language goes further than his words in the first verse. It takes us back to 1 Samuel 20. There we find Jonathan acted the part of a *mediator* between Saul and David (vv. 27-34). There too we read of a solemn "covenant" (vv. 16, 17, 42) between Jonathan and David, in which the latter swore to show "kindness unto the house of the former forever: Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul" (v. 17). It was to *that* incident the words of David "that I may show the kindness of God unto him" looked back: it was that kindness of which God Himself had been the witness; it was *covenant* "kindness" which he had promised to exercise.

Thus, the one who here obtained kindness at the hands of the king, received favour not

because of anything *he* had done, nor because of any personal worthiness he possessed, but wholly on account of a covenant promise which had been made *before he was born*. So it is with those toward whom God now acts in free and sovereign grace. It is not because of any personal claims they have upon Him, but because of the love He bears toward the Mediator, that He shows “kindness.” Nor is that all: long, long before they first saw the light, God entered into a covenant with Christ, promising to extend mercy unto all who belonged to His “House”: “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it *by an oath*: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb. 6:17, 18). It is “through the blood of *the everlasting covenant*” that God makes His people “perfect in every good work to do his will” (Heb. 13:20, 21).

Next, let us look more closely at this one to whom David showed “the kindness of God”—“covenant-kindness. First, his name, for no detail here is meaningless. The son of Jonathan was called “Mephibosheth” (2 Sam. 9:6), which signifies “*a shameful thing*.” How accurately does that appellation describe the natural man! “We are all as an unclean thing” (Isa. 64:6) says God’s Word—“polluted by sin. We are by birth and practice thoroughly depraved and corrupt. Our understanding is darkened so that we cannot apprehend spiritual things, our wills are opposed to God’s, our hearts are desperately wicked, our consciences are seared, our strength spent in the service of Satan; and in the sight of the Holy One our very righteousnesses are “as filthy rags.” A shameful thing, then, we truly are: “from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness” in us by nature, but instead “wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores” (Isa. 1:6). O what cause have we to cry with the leper “Unclean! unclean!” and say with Job “I am vile.”

Second, Mephibosheth was a *fugitive from David*. When news reached the survivors of his family that Saul and his sons had been slain in battle, and David had ascended the throne, Mephibosheth and his nurse fled in terror: “he was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, *and fled*” (2 Sam. 4:4). They were anxious to keep out of David’s way. So it is with the sinner. He is afraid of God, and seeks to banish Him from his thoughts. The knowledge of God’s holiness, power and omniscience fills him with dismay, and he seeks to have nothing to do with Him. “The wicked flee when no man pursueth” (Prov. 28:1). It was thus with Adam at the beginning. After his transgression, no sooner did he hear the voice of the Lord, than he hid himself among the trees of the Garden. A guilty conscience renders God an object of terror to the wicked.

Third, Mephibosheth was a *cripple*. He was “lame of his feet” (2 Sam. 4:4): as the closing words of our chapter state, he “was lame on *both* of his feet” (v. 13). How accurately that portrays the condition of those who are out of Christ! The natural man is *unable* to run in the path of God’s commandments, or tread the narrow way which leadeth unto Life. He is a spiritual cripple: “without strength” (Rom. 5:6). The utter inability of the unregenerate to meet God’s requirements and walk acceptably before Him, is a truth writ plain across the Scriptures, though it is given little place indeed in modern preaching. The greatness of man, the freedom of his will, his ability to accept Christ any time, is now the sweet opiate which is chloroforming millions. “No man *can come to Me except* the Father which hath sent me draw him” (John 6:44): how those words of Christ attest the solemn fact that the sinner is “lame of *both* his feet!”

Fourth, Mephibosheth became a cripple *through a fall*: “and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and *became lame*” (2 Sam. 4:4). What a truly marvellous book the Bible is! Yet how it needs eyes anointed by the Divine Inspirer in order to perceive its wonders and beauties! How obvious it is to those favoured with spiritual discernment that we have here far more than an historical account pertaining to a single individual: that it is rather a *typical* picture having an *universal* application. Man was not originally created in the condition he is now in. Man was very far from being “lame on both his feet” when his Maker proclaimed him “very good.” The faculties of man’s soul have become spiritually crippled as the result of *the Fall*—“our fall in Adam. In consequence of that fall, “they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:8).

Fifth, *the place where Mephibosheth resided*. It was not at Jerusalem, no indeed; none out of Christ live there. Jerusalem signifies “the foundation of peace” and as Holy Writ truly declares, “There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked” (Isa. 48:22): how can there be while they despise Him in whom alone peace is to be found? “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest” (Isa. 57:20)—“discontented, dissatisfied. No, it was not at Jerusalem that poor Mephibosheth resided. Instead, he dwelt at “Lodebar” (2 Sam. 9:4), which means “the place of *no pasture*.” What a significant line in our picture is this, so obviously drawn by more than a human artist. How aptly does it portray the world in which we live, the world which is away from God, which lieth in the Wicked one. It is a world which provides no food for the soul: it is a great “howling wilderness” so far as spiritual provisions are concerned. Yet how little is that fact realised by those who are in it and of it.

“Lodebar” is written across all the varied fields of this world, though the great masses of people realise it not. Multitudes are seeking to find something to fill that void in the heart which God should occupy. They seek satisfaction in sport, in novel reading, in an endless round of pleasure, in making money, in fame; but soul satisfaction is not to be found in such *things*—“things which perish with the using of them. Despising Him who is “the true Bread,” the “Bread of Life,” no food is to be found here but “the *husks* that the swine” feed upon. The prodigal son discovered that when he left his patrimony and went into the far country: “I perish with hunger” was his plaintive cry. Life, peace, joy, satisfaction, are to be found only in the Lord.

One other point and we must conclude this article: *the provision* David made for Mephibosheth. There was this poor creature, belonging to a family that was in rebellion against David, lame in both feet, and dwelling in the place of no pasture. And here was the king upon his throne, with purpose of heart to show him kindness for the sake of another. What, then, was the next move? Did David send a message of welcome, inviting him to come to Jerusalem? Did he notify Mephibosheth that if he “did his part” mercy should be accorded him? Did he forward the cripple a pair of crutches, bid him make use of them, and hobble to Jerusalem as best he could? No, indeed; had anything like *that* been David’s policy, our typical picture had failed completely to exhibit “the kindness of God” unto those on whom He bestows His so great salvation. God does much more than provide “means of grace.”

“Then king David sent, and *fetches* him” (v. 5). This blessed item shadows forth the efficacious work of the Holy Spirit in those whom God brings unto Himself. Had He done nothing more than give His Son to die for sinners, and then sent forth His servants

with the Gospel invitation, *none* had ever been saved. This is clear from the parable of the Great Supper: men were bade to come and assured that “all things were now ready.” And what was their response? This, “they all with one consent began to make excuse” (Luke 14:18). But God was not to be foiled, and said to the servant (the Spirit), “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, *and bring in* hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind” (v. 21). Thank God for *bringing* grace; that He does *all*, both for and in His people.

“Twas the same grace that spread the feast  
That gently forced me in;  
Else I had still refused to taste,  
And perished in my sin.”—A.W.P.

## The Divine Covenants.

### 4. *The Abrahamic.*

The first thing recorded of Abraham after he had actually entered the land of Canaan is the Lord's appearing unto him and his building an altar: "And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD" (Gen. 12:6, 7). There are several details here which claim our attention. First, Abraham did not settle down and enter into possession of the land, but "passed through it": as Acts 7:5 tells us, "And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on." Second, the presence there of "the Canaanite"—"to challenge and contest the possession of it. So it is with the believer: the flesh, the devil, and the world unite in opposing his *present* enjoyment of the Inheritance unto which he has been begotten; while hosts of wicked spirits in the heavens wrestle with those who are partakers of the heavenly calling (Eph. 6:12).

Third, "the LORD appeared unto Abram." He had done so originally as the "God of glory," when He revealed Himself to the patriarch in Chaldea. There is no intimation of Abraham receiving any further revelation from God during his delay at Haran; but now that God's call had been fully obeyed, he was favoured with a fresh manifestation of Him. And now Abraham's obedience is rewarded: at the beginning the Lord had said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will *show* thee" (Gen. 12:1); now He declared, "Unto thy seed will I *give* this land" (v 7). This brings before us a most important principle in the "ways" of God, which has often been lost sight of by men who only stress one side of the Truth. That principle is that Divine *grace* never sets aside the requirements of Divine *righteousness*. God never shows mercy at the expense of His holiness.

God is "light" as well as "love," and each of these Divine perfections is exemplified in all His dealings with His people. Moreover, in the exercise of His *sovereignty* God ever enforces the *responsibility* of the creature, and unless we keep *both* of these steadily in view, we not only become lopsided, but lapse into real error. The grace of God must not be magnified to the beclouding of His righteousness, nor His sovereignty pressed to the exclusion of human accountability. The balance can only be preserved by our faithfully adhering to the Scriptures. If we single out "favourite" verses and ignore those which are unpalatable to the flesh, we are guilty of handling the Word of God deceitfully, and fall under the condemnation of "according as ye have not kept My ways, but have been *partial* in the law" (Mal. 2:9). The principles of Law and Gospel are not contradictory, but supplementary, and neither can be dispensed with except to our irreparable loss.

What has been pointed out above supplies the keys to a right understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant, and unless those dual principles be steadily kept before us in our contemplation of the same, we are certain to err. Some writers when referring to the Abrahamic Covenant speak of it as "a covenant of pure grace," and such it truly was; for what was there about Abraham to move the God of glory to so much as notice him? Nevertheless, it would be equally correct to designate the Abrahamic Covenant "a covenant of righteousness," for it exemplified the principles of the Divine *government* as actually as it made manifest the benignity of the Divine *character*. Other writers have referred to the Abrahamic Covenant as an "unconditional one," but in this they erred, for to talk of "an unconditional *covenant*" is a flat contradiction in terms. Suffer us to quote here from



our first article on the Covenants:

“Let us point out the *nature* of a ‘covenant,’ in what it consists. ‘An absolute complete covenant is a voluntary convention, pact, or agreement between distinct persons, about the ordering and dispensing of things in their power, unto the mutual concern and advantage’ (J. Owen). Blackstone, the great commentator upon English law, speaking of the parts of a deed, says, ‘After warrants, usually follow *covenants*, or conventions, which are clauses of agreement, contained in a deed, whereby either party may stipulate for the truth of certain facts, or may bind himself to perform, or give something to the other’ (Vol. 2, p. 20); so that he includes three things: the parties, the terms, the binding agreement. Reducing it to still simpler language, we may say that a covenant is the entering into of a mutual agreement a benefit being assured on the fulfillment of certain conditions.”

We supplement by a quotation from H. Witsuis, “The covenant does, on the part of God, comprise three things in general. 1st. A *promise* of consummate happiness in eternal life. 2nd. A designation or *prescription* of the condition, by the performance of which man acquires a right to the promise. 3rd. A *penal sanction* against those who do not come up to the prescribed condition . . . . Man becomes the other party when he consents thereto: embracing the good promised by God, engaging to an exact observance of the condition required; and upon the violation thereof, voluntarily owning himself obnoxious to the threatened curse.”

Let it now be pointed out that in *this* article we are turning to another side of the subject from what we have mainly dwelt upon in the previous ones. In those we amplified what we said in the fourth and fifth paragraphs of the second article. Having dwelt so largely upon the Divine sovereignty and Divine grace aspects, we need to weigh carefully the Divine righteousness and human responsibility elements. Having shown how the various covenants which God made with men adumbrated the central features in the Everlasting Covenant which He made with Christ, we are now required to consider how that in them God maintained the claims of His righteousness by what He required from the responsible agents with whom He dealt. It was not until *after* Noah did “according to all that God commanded him” (Gen. 6:22) by preparing an ark “to the saving of his house” (Heb. 11:7), that God confirmed His “with thee *will* I establish My covenant” (Gen. 6:18) by “I establish My covenant” (9:9)—“Noah having fulfilled the Divine stipulations, God was now prepared to fulfill His promises.

The same thing is clearly seen again in connection with Abraham. There is no hint in Scripture that the Lord entered into any covenant with him while he was in Ur of Chaldaea: instead, the land of Canaan was then set before him *provisionally*: “The LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land *that I will* show thee” (Gen. 12:1). The *order* there is unmistakably plain. First, God acted in *grace*, sovereign grace, by singling out Abraham from his idolatrous neighbours, and by calling him to something far better. Second, God made known the requirements of His *righteousness* and enforced Abraham’s *responsibility* by the demand there made upon him. Third, the promised *reward* was to follow Abraham’s response to God’s call. These three things are conjoined in Hebrews 11:8: “By faith Abraham, when he was called (by Divine grace) to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance (the reward), obeyed (the discharge of his responsibility); and he went out, not knowing whither he went.”

Nor does what has just been said in anywise conflict with what was pointed out in previous articles. The above elements just as truly shadowed forth another fundamental aspect of the Everlasting Covenant as did the different features singled out from the Adamic and Noahaic. In the Everlasting Covenant, God promised a certain reward unto Christ upon His fulfilling certain conditions—"executing the appointed work. The inseparable principles of Law and Gospel, grace and reward, faith and works, were most expressly conjoined in that compact which God entered into with the Mediator before the foundation of the world. Therein we may behold the "manifold wisdom of God" in combining such apparent opposites; and instead of carping at their seeming hostility, we should admire the omniscience which has made the one the handmaid of the other. Only then are we prepared to discern and recognise the exercise of this dual principle in each of the subordinate covenants.

Not a few writers supposed they magnified the grace of God and honoured the Mediator when affirming that Christ Himself so fulfilled the conditions of the Covenant and so met every requirement of God's righteousness that His people have been entirely freed of all legal obligations, and that nothing whatever is left for them to do but express their gratitude in lives well-pleasing to Him. It is far easier to make this mistake than it is to expose it. It is true, blessedly true, gloriously true, that Christ *did* perfectly discharge His covenant-engagements, magnified the Law and made it honourable, that God received from Him a full satisfaction for all the sins of His people. Yet that does not mean that the Law has been repealed, that God rescinds His righteous claims upon the creature, or that believers are placed in a position of privilege from which obligation is excluded; nor does it involve the idea that saints are freed from covenant duties. Grace reigns, but it reigns "through righteousness" (Rom. 5:21), and not at the expense of it.

Christ's obedience has not rendered ours unnecessary: rather has it rendered ours acceptable. In that sentence lies the solution to the difficulty. The Law of God will accept nothing short of perfect and perpetual obedience, and such obedience the Surety of God's people rendered, so that He brought in an everlasting righteousness which is reckoned to their account. Yet that is only one half of the truth on this subject. The other half is not that Christ's atonement has inaugurated a regime of lawlessness or license, but rather has it placed its beneficiaries under additional obligations. But more: it has procured the needed grace to enable those beneficiaries to discharge their obligations—"not perfectly; nevertheless, acceptably to God. And how? By securing that the Holy Spirit should bring them from death unto life, impart to them a nature which delights in the Law, and work in them both to will and to do of God's good pleasure. And *what is* God's "good pleasure" for His people? The same as it was for His incarnate Son: to be perfectly conformed to the Law in thought word and deed.

God has one and the same standard for the Head and the members of His Church, and therefore we are told, "he that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6). In 1 Peter 2:21 we read, "Christ also suffered for us": with what end in view? that we might be relieved from all obligation to God? that we might pursue a course of lawlessness under the pretence of magnifying "grace"? No, indeed; but rather "leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." And what is the nature of that "example" which Christ has left us? What, but "fulfilling the law" (Matt. 5:17), loving the Lord His God with all His heart and mind and strength, and His neighbour as Himself? But in order to this there must be *a nature* in harmony with the

Law and not enmity against it. As Christ could declare, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart" (Psa. 40:8), so can each of His redeemed and regenerated people say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom. 7:22). And were there nothing else in them but the new man, they would render perfect obedience to the Law. Such *is* their honest desire, but the presence of the old man thwarts them.

The Everlasting Covenant was, in its nature and contents, a *mixed* one, for the principles of both law and grace were operative therein. It was grace pure and simple which ordained that any from Adam's fallen race should be saved, as it was amazing and infinite grace that provided the Son of God should become incarnate and serve as their Surety. But it was law pure and simple that the Surety should earn and purchase their salvation by His rendering unto God a perfect satisfaction on their behalf. Christ was "made under the law" (Gal. 4:4). His whole life was perfectly conformed to the precepts of the law, and His death was an enduring the penalty of the law; and all of this was in fulfillment of His covenant-engagements. In like manner, these two principles of grace and law are operative in connection with the *administration* of the Everlasting Covenant, that is, in the *application* of its benefits to those on whose behalf Christ transacted. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31).

The work of Christ has released the believer from the law as a procuring cause of his justification, but it has in nowise abolished it as his rule of life. Divine grace does not set aside its recipient's responsibility, nor does the believer's obedience render grace any the less necessary. God requires obedience (conformity to His Law) from the Christian as truly as He does from the non-Christian. True, we are not saved *for* (because of) our obedience, yet it is equally true that we cannot be saved *without* it. Unless Noah had heeded God and built the ark, he had perished in the Flood, yet it was by the goodness and power of God that the ark was preserved. It is through Christ, and Christ alone, that the believer's obedience is acceptable to God. But it may be asked, Will God accept an imperfect obedience from us? The answer is, Yes, if it be sincere; just as He is pleased to answer our poor prayers when presented in the all-meritorious name of His Son.

Once again we would point out that any "covenant" necessarily signifies a *mutual* agreement, *with terms to be carried out* by both parties. A vivid but most solemn example of this is found in the case of Judas and the chief priests of the Jews, concerning whom we read "they *covenanted* with him for thirty pieces of silver" (Matt. 26:15). That is to say, in return for his fulfilling the contract to betray his Master into their hands, they would pay him this sum of money, which, in Acts 1:18, is denominated "the *reward* of iniquity." It is only by paying close attention to *all* the expressions used in Scripture of God's covenant and of our relation thereto, that we can obtain a right and full conception thereof. We read of those "that *take hold of* My covenant" (Isa. 56:4, 6), "that thou shouldest *enter into* covenant with the LORD thy God" (Deut. 29:12), "those that have *made* a covenant with Me by sacrifice" (Psa. 50:5), "mercy and truth unto such as *keep* His covenant and His testimonies" (Psa. 25:10), "be ye *mindful* always of His covenant" (1 Chron. 16:15), "Ye *break* My covenant" (Lev. 26:15), "them that *forsake* the holy covenant" (Dan. 11:30).

Against what has been said above it may be objected, But this reduces the Covenant of Grace to one and the same level with the Covenant of Works. Not so, we reply: for though those covenants have something in common, yet there is a real and radical differ-

ence between them. Each of them maintains the claims of God's righteousness by enforcing the requirements of the law, but the Covenant of Works had no "Mediator," nor was any provision made for those who failed under it; whereas the Covenant of Grace supplies both. Moreover, under the Covenant of Works obedience was rendered unto an absolute God, whereas under the Covenant of Grace it is given to God in Christ, and there is a world of difference between these two things. The application of these principles to the case of Abraham

## Union and Communion.

### 3. *Mystical (Completed).*

In the previous two articles on this subject we pointed out that the everlasting love of the Triune God is *the origin* of the Church's union to Christ, and that election was the first and fundamental act of that love toward its members; that election giving them a super-creation subsistence in their glorious Head. In God's eternal thoughts and foreviews, the elect were conceived and contemplated in the Divine mind as real entities in a state of pure creaturehood, above and beyond any consideration of the Fall. Even then they were "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" and "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:3, 6). It is much to be deplored that this *original* dignity and loveliness of the Church, as anointed, graced, and blest in Christ before the foundation of the world, has almost entirely disappeared from the theology even of the "orthodox" during the past century. A glorious relationship was established between Christ and the Church in eternity past, which neither sin, Satan, nor death could sever. This alone provides the key to all of God's dealings with her in a time state.

We also pointed out that several things arise from and are branches of the everlasting love-union between Christ and the Church. First and chief of these is the *marriage* between them, marvelously and blessedly shadowed out in connection with our first parents before the Fall. We will now endeavour to point out that that marital union gave the Church *communion with Christ* in His honours and interests. A wide field—"hinted at in the Introductory article—"is here set before us, which, because of our spiritual feebleness, we are not able to fully explore. Christ admits His Church into fellowship with Himself in His names, titles, relations, grace, fullness, salvation, blessings, and benefits. As God in choosing the Church in Christ gave her a relation to His Person, giving her being in Him, so in accepting her in Him God gave Christ to her, so that she should live with Him, have communion with Him, and be like Him for ever, the everlasting object of His unchanging love.

See how this is exemplified in the Church's sharing of Christ's names and titles. As Christ is by His co-existence in the Godhead, the essential *Son of God*, so by predestination His brethren are the adopted *sons* of God, and by virtue of the marriage-union between Christ and them, they have His Father as their Father, and His God for their God (John 20:17). In Colossians 1:15 Christ, as God-man, is designated "*the Firstborn* of every creature," while in Hebrews 12:23 His people are said to be "*the Church of the Firstborn* which are written in Heaven." Is Christ the "Heir of all things" (Heb. 1:2), so believers are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). Is Christ denominated "*the Stone of Israel*" (Gen. 49:24), His people are also called "*living stones*" (1 Peter 2:5). Has Christ acquired "*a name which no one knoweth but Himself*" (Rev. 19:12), so also has the believer: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Rev. 2:17). So precious is this aspect of the truth that we take leave to copy from our introductory article:

In Jeremiah 23:6 we read, "And this is His name whereby *He* shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS," and in Jeremiah 33:16 we are told, "And this is the name wherewith *she* shall be called, The LORD our righteousness"—"this by virtue of her oneness with Him. So again in 1 Corinthians 12:12 the Church is actually designated "*the Christ*," while in Galatians 3:16 and Colossians 1:24 the Head and His Church form-

ing one body are conjointly referred to as "Christ"; hence when Saul of Tarsus was assaulting the Church, its Head protested, "Why persecutest thou *Me*?" (Acts 9:4). But what is yet more remarkable, we find the Lord Jesus given the name of His people: in Galatians 6:16 the Church is denominated, "the *Israel* of God," while in Isaiah 49:3 we hear God saying *to the Mediator* "Thou art My servant, O *Israel*, in whom I will be glorified"!

In Colossians 3:12 Christians are exhorted to "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies." Each of those titles are given to the saints because of their *union with Christ*. They are "the elect of God" because *He* is God's "Elect" (Isa. 42:1); they are "holy" because conjoined to God's "Holy One" (Psa. 16:10); they are "beloved" because married to Him of whom the Father says, "This is My Beloved Son" (Matt. 3:17). Again, we are told that God "hath made *us kings and priests*" (Rev. 1:5), which is only because we are *united to Him* who is "the King of kings" and the "great High Priest." Is Christ called "the Sun of righteousness" (Mal. 4:2)? so we are told, "Then shall the righteous shine forth *as the sun* in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43)! Does the Redeemer declare "I am the rose of Sharon" (Song. 2:1)? then He promises of the redeemed "The desert (their fruitless state by nature) shall rejoice, and blossom *as the rose*" (Isa. 35:1)—"the only two occasions the "rose" is mentioned in Holy Writ!

Having sought to show that the Church had a super-creation excellency, that before the foundation of the world its members were chosen in Christ, united to Christ, and blessed with all spiritual blessings; we must now point out that *sin has drawn a veil* which makes it very difficult for us to discern the *original* purity, dignity and glory of Christ's mystical Body and Bride. It is much easier for us to apprehend our ruin and misery, and our redemption from it by the incarnation, obedience and sacrifice of the Son of God, than it is to realise what the Church was in the purpose, counsel and mind of God before sin entered the world. It is only by receiving into the mind what is revealed thereon in the Scriptures of Truth and by mixing faith therewith, that we can in any measure obtain a conception of this transcendent and glorious mystery. It is only as the Holy Spirit is pleased to shine upon our understandings that we can see the light in His light.

As Eve was united to Adam in her virgin purity and became his wife *before* she ate of the forbidden fruit, so in the will and eternal counsels of God the Church was wedded to Christ, over and above any foreviews of the Fall. As Eve disobeyed the Divine prohibition and fell from her pristine uprightness, and lost her original beauty, so the Church shared in the defection of the whole human race when its federal head (Adam) apostatized from his Maker. In God's infinite prescience He foresaw the Fall, having predetermined to permit it, and upon the foresight of that Fall, He entered into an everlasting covenant with Christ, the spiritual Head of the elect, to raise them up from the ruins of the Fall, by the incarnation and finished work of Christ. In this the illustrious wisdom of God was discovered and displayed in a way which would serve to be the marvel of time and the admiration of saints in Heaven to all eternity.

In Adam, the Church was brought into this world by creation pure, holy and righteous. From that *creature* purity, holiness and righteousness, she fell by Adam's first act of transgression, and became in her own nature and person, simply considered (that is, viewed apart from her eternal standing and state in Christ), impure, unholy and unrighteous.

ous. Therefore do we read that the elect are “by nature the children of wrath even as others” (Eph. 2:3); that is, because of sin, their *nature* is repellent unto Divine holiness, and falls under the condemning sentence of Divine justice. It was to redeem or deliver the Church from the state of sin and misery, and in order to raise her up again to the enjoyment of her original state and glory, to which she was decreed or predestined, that her Head and Husband, her Lord and Saviour, became actually incarnate, taking upon Him humanity, tabernacling personally in the same, and having imputed to Him the transgressions of His people, with all the guilt thereof.

Herein we may behold not only the fathomless love and amazing condescension of Christ, but also the wondrous wisdom of God, who designed that there should be *an accurate conformity of the Church to its Head*, between the mystical Wife and her celestial Husband. By their fall in Adam, a veil was drawn over the elect, so that they cannot in their ruined state be known by themselves or by others, to be the Lord’s. In their natural condition there is nothing to distinguish the elect from the non-elect: their “life is *hid* with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3). They are born into this world the same as others, with no halo of glory around their heads to mark them out as the high favourites of Heaven, with nothing to show that they are the beloved Bride of Christ. Instead, according to human observation, there is everything to the contrary: they are shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, and live in a way of open revolt from the Lord.

In like manner, a veil was drawn over Christ when He appeared on the earth. As the God-man, He had a glory with the Father “before the world was” (John 17:5), and lived a life of blessedness inconceivable by us; yet He laid aside that glory and took upon Him the form of a servant. When He was born into this world, it was not in a palace, but a cattle-shed. Ah, my reader, what was there about the Babe of Bethlehem, hanging upon His mother’s breast, to indicate that He was the Maker of Heaven and earth? Witness the vile attempt upon His life and the consequent flight into Egypt, and what was there to show that He had previously been worshipped by all the hosts of Heaven? See Him later, in the lowly peasant-home of Joseph and Mary in Nazareth, and who among the companions of His boyhood dreamed He was the incarnate Son of God? View Him in early manhood, labouring at the carpenter’s bench, and wherein did it appear that He was Jehovah’s “Fellow”? Was not the Sun of Righteousness eclipsed for a season when He was in all things “made like unto His brethren” (Heb. 2:17)?

When the Lord of glory became incarnate, He came under a cloud, if we may so express it. He suspended the shinings forth of His essential glory, due to the dignity of His Person, and appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh, coming not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give His life a ransom for many, that He might complete the work of redemption by which He was to redeem His spouse, and wash away her deformity and stains. In this lay the depths of Christ’s humiliation: that the Father’s co-equal should make Himself “of no reputation,” be made in the likeness of men, be made “under the law,” and so humble Himself as to be “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” In Him “dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” but for a season—“except when its beams darted forth on the Mount of Transfiguration—the breakings forth thereof were withheld. Incomprehensible grace! such as will fill the saints in Heaven with astonishment through the ages of eternity. Alas, that our hearts are so feebly moved by it now.

Herein, then, we may perceive *the conformity* between Christ and the Church: each had a celestial glory before the foundation of the world: a veil was cast over that glory

when each appeared on the earth. When the elect were brought forth into creature-existence and open being (having subsisted previously in the secret counsels of God), they were pure, holy, righteous, perfect in their natural head. Yet, being in Adam, not only by seminal union but by federal representation, when he broke the Covenant of Works and fell from God, the elect also fell in and with him into a state of sin, misery and alienation from the Lord. Therefore the Spouse of Christ became wholly unlike herself and unlike her Divine and Heavenly Bridegroom, so that she became in her natural head, and inherently in herself, altogether unholy and unrighteous, becoming sinful and impure, having undergone an eclipse of her glory, suffering the loss of the moral image of God, in which she was created: all of which is to be justly ascribed to the mutability of the creature's will—"proving that no creature has whereof to glory before God.

Estranged as the Church became in her affections and obedience to her Lord, by reason of her sunken and degraded condition through the Fall, yet the union existing between her and her celestial Husband remained the same. The very fall of the whole human race in Adam, by virtue of the mutability of the creature, only made more evident the absolute necessity of *Christ's* Headship, to the end that *by Him* the elect were so united to God by everlasting bonds as to be beyond the possibility of hazard or miscarriage or by finally falling from Him; having been blessed with super-creation grace, and that, that Christ might be the more honoured and magnified. It is His sole prerogative, as God-man, to have life *in Himself*: "For as the Father (the self-existent One) hath life in Himself; so hath He *given* to the Son (as Mediator) to have life in Himself" (John 5:26). No creature, either angel or man, "anointed cherub" or Adam when made "very good," is able to stand one moment of himself. Those who have an eternal standing before God owe it alone to Christ.

The fall of the elect of mankind (in the decree of Jehovah) was *subordinated to the glory of Christ*, it being thereby contrived to show forth and exalt His wondrous perfections. To mention here only one: consider Christ's *love for the Church*. Christ had a view of the Church in the glass of God's decrees before the world began. He saw her as graced in Himself, and destined to eternal glory. He saw her as presented to Himself by the Father as His love gift. This drew out His heart to her. He saw her as "the King's Daughter all glorious within" (Psa. 45:13). She was given to Him: they were made one by marriage-union in the everlasting settlements of Heaven. The Father blest her in Christ with all spiritual blessings. Hear Him speak as God-man before time began: "Then I was by Him, as One brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and *My delights were with the sons of men*" (Prov. 8:30, 31).

Certainly Christ's "delights" were *not* with "the sons of men" regarded as *fallen* creatures. No, He was there contemplating them in their supralapsarian state, in their original purity and beauty. Oh how vastly different must the Church have next appeared in His eyes, when He viewed her as fallen, depraved and filthy! Yet so knit was His heart to her, such was His affection for her, that it neither destroyed nor abated the same by the fore-views He took of her apostasy in Adam. Yea, as He viewed the members of His body in their debased and vile condition, His heart was drawn out in pity and compassion toward them. Therefore was He willing to be their Surety, assume all their liabilities, fully discharge their debts, and make a complete atonement for them. Their fall in Adam occasioned an opportunity for their eternal Lover to display the changelessness of His infinite



love for and to them.

“It is among the mysteries of grace, such as belong to the deep things of God, that the elect, though they fell from God by reason of sin, through the fall of the first man, by means of their union to him and interest in him; from whence they received and partook of the same equal corruption and total ruin of their natures by the infection of sin, with the rest of mankind—”having in themselves the same fountain and principle of sin which the very reprobate hath: *yet they fell not from* the grace of personal election, nor from the everlasting favour of God; nor did they lose their interest in their Heavenly Father’s love thereby.

“Their union and relation to the person of Christ, their eternal Head, and interest in Him, were not dissolved nor impaired hereby; nor did they cease to be the beloved of Immanuel’s soul. Though they, by the Fall, lost all that was given them, in Adam as their nature-head, and nature-root, yet, the grace of election still continued the same as ever; and Jesus Christ, their ever-living Head, in whom is their spiritual, everlasting life, happiness, and glory, was Alpha and Omega to them; their beginning, their eternal spring, who, as such, broke forth towards them in their fallen state, and still continues His kindness in dispensing all grace to them, to whom it will be continued with all its glorious fruits and blessings by Him to eternity” (S.E. Pierce).

Christ was first the “Head” and then the “Saviour” of the Church (Eph. 5:23). All is eternally secured in the Person of the Lord Jesus. When God permitted the fall of all mankind in Adam, the elect fell in him; yet they fell not from the heart and arms of Christ. They lost in Adam the creature blessings of purity, holiness and righteousness, which as their natural head he should have conveyed to them, and received from him instead an impure and sinful nature, the fruits of which are as justly deserving of Divine wrath as are the sins of the non-elect. In that state they are, in themselves, without hope and help. This it is which made way for their need of redemption, to be delivered out of it, and which provided an occasion for their Husband to become their Redeemer, which He engaged to be before the foundation of the world. “On His head are *many* crowns” (Rev. 19:12), each representing a separate and distinctive glory, which it is the joy of saints to separately contemplate.

“The elect lost their all that was given unto them and bestowed upon them in their nature-head. But they lost not their interest in the grace of election in the Person of Christ, in the supernatural spiritual blessings which had been bestowed upon them in Christ their eternal Head; and this secured them from everlasting ruin and misery. The love of God to His elect in Christ was not weakened, nor the union-knot between Christ and His Church loosed, by all which befell them and came upon them by the Fall. Christ being the Head of the Church, the life, light, grace, holiness, righteousness, glory, and blessings in Christ, could not undergo any hazard or damage by the Fall.

“The Body being defiled with sin, the glorious Head and Husband who had loved His Spouse as Himself, having viewed her as the object of His Father’s complacency and delight, descended from Heaven, by His mysterious incarnation, to fulfill His covenant stipulations on her behalf, and act a part of Redeemer and Saviour” (From “Christ’s love to His Church” by S.E. Pierce, to whom we gladly own our indebtedness for much in this article).—”A.W.P.

## The Doctrine of Sanctification.

### 6. *Its Nature (Completed).*

That which we have laboured to show in the previous sections of this article is the fact that the sanctification of the Christian is very much more than a bare setting apart of him unto God: it is also, and chiefly, a work of grace wrought in his soul. God not only *accounts* His people holy, but actually *makes* them so. The various materials and articles used in the tabernacle of old, when dedicated to God, were changed only in their *use*, but when man is dedicated to God he is changed in his *nature*, so that not only is there a vital difference between him and others, but a radical difference between him and himself (1 Cor. 6:11)—“between what he was, and now is. That change of nature is a real necessity, for the man himself must be made holy before his actions can be so. Grace is planted in the heart, from whence its influence is diffused throughout all departments of his life. Internal holiness is an hatred of sin and a love of that which is good, and external holiness is the avoiding of the one and the pursuing of the other. Wherever there be a change of heart fruits will appear in the conduct.

Like “salvation” itself—“according to the use of the term in Scripture (see 2 Tim. 1:9, salvation in the past; Phil. 2:12, salvation in the present; Rom. 13:11, salvation in the future) and in the actual history of the redeemed—”so sanctification must be considered under *its three tenses*. There is a very real sense in which all of God’s elect have already *been* sanctified: Jude 1, Hebrews 10:10, 2 Thessalonians 2:13. There is also a very real sense in which those of God’s people on earth are daily *being* sanctified: 2 Corinthians 4:16, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:23. And there is also a very real sense in which the Christian’s (complete) sanctification is yet *future*: Romans 8:30, Hebrews 12:23, 1 John 3:2. Unless this threefold distinction be carefully borne in mind our thoughts are bound to be confused. Objectively, our sanctification is already an accomplished fact (1 Cor. 1:2), in which one saint shares equally with another. Subjectively, our sanctification is *not* complete in this life (Phil. 3:12) and varies considerably in different Christians, though the promise of Philippians 1:6 belongs alike to all of them.

Though our sanctification be complete in all its parts, yet it is not now perfect in its degrees. As the new-born babe possesses a soul and body, endowed with all their members, yet they are undeveloped and far from a state of maturity. So it is with the Christian, who (in comparison with the life to come) remains throughout this life but a “babe in Christ” (1 Peter 2:2). We know but “in part” (1 Cor. 13:12), and we are sanctified but in part, for “there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed” (Josh. 13:1). In the most gracious there remains a double principle: the flesh and the spirit, the old man and the new man. We are a mixture and a medley during our present state. There is a conflict between operating principles (sin and grace), so that every act is mixed: there is tin mixed with our silver and dross with our gold. Our best deeds are defiled, and therefore we continue to feed upon the Lamb *with* “bitter herbs” (Exo. 12:8).

Holiness in the heart discovers itself by godly sorrowings and godly aspirations. “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Matt. 5:4): “mourn” because of the swellings of pride, the workings of unbelief, the surgings of discontent; “mourn” because of the feebleness of their faith, the coldness of their love, their lack of conformity to Christ. There is nothing which more plainly evidences a person to be sanctified than a broken and contrite heart—“grieving over that which is contrary to holiness. Rightly did the Puritan John Owen say, “Evangelical repentance is that which carrieth the believing

soul through all its failures, infirmities, and sins. He is not able to live one day without the constant exercise of it. *It is as necessary unto the continuance of spiritual life as faith is.* It is that continual, habitual, self-abasement which arises from a sense of the majesty and holiness of God, and the consciousness of our miserable failures." It is this which makes the real Christian so thankful for Romans 7, for he finds it corresponds exactly with his own inward experience.

The sanctified soul, then, is very far from being satisfied with the measure of experimental holiness which is yet his portion. He is painfully conscious of the feebleness of his graces, the leanness of his soul, and the defilements from his inward corruption. But, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6), or "they that are hungering and thirsting" as the Greek reads, being the participle of the present tense; intimating a *present* disposition of soul. Christ pronounces "blessed" (in contrast from those under "the curse") they who are hungering and thirsting after His righteousness imparted as well as imputed, who thirst after the righteousness of sanctification as well as the righteousness of justification—"i.e., the Spirit infusing into the soul holy principles, supernatural graces, spiritual qualities, and then strengthening and developing the same. Such has been the experience of the saints in all ages, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psa. 42:1, 2).

One of the things which prevents so many from obtaining a right view of the nature of sanctification is that scarcely any of the bestowments of the Gospel are clearly defined in their minds, all being jumbled up together. While every spiritual privilege the believer enjoys is the fruit of God's electing love and the purchase of Christ's mediation, and so are all parts of one grand whole, yet it is our loss if we fail to definitely distinguish them one from the other. Reconciliation and justification, adoption and forgiveness, regeneration and sanctification, all combine to form the present portion of those whom the Father draws to the Son; nevertheless, each of these terms stands for a specific branch of that "great salvation" to which they were appointed. It makes much for our peace of mind and joy of heart when we are able to apprehend these things severally. We shall therefore devote the remainder of this article unto a comparison of sanctification with other blessings of the Christian.

1. *Regeneration and sanctification.* It may appear to some who read critically our articles on "Regeneration" (1931 issues) and who have closely followed what has been said in our discussion of the nature of sanctification, that we have almost, if not quite, obliterated all real difference between what is wrought in us at the new birth and what God works in us at our sanctification. It is not easy to preserve a definite line of distinction between them, because they have a number of things in common; yet the leading points of contrast between them needs to be considered if we are to differentiate them in our minds. We shall therefore occupy the next two or three paragraphs with an examination of this point, wherein we shall endeavour to set forth the relation of the one to the other. Perhaps it will help us the most to consider this by saying that, in one sense, the relation between regeneration and sanctification is that of the infant to the adult.

In likening the connection between regeneration and sanctification to the relation between an infant and an adult, it should be pointed out that we have in mind our practical and progressive sanctification, and not our objective and absolute sanctification. Our absolute sanctification, so far as our state before God is concerned, is simultaneous with our

regeneration. The essential thing in our regeneration is the Spirit's quickening of us into newness of life; the essential thing in our sanctification is that thenceforth we are an habitation of God, through the indwelling of the Spirit, and from *that* standpoint all the subsequent progressive advances in the spiritual life are but the effects, fruits, and manifestations of that initial consecration or anointing. The consecration of the tabernacle, and later of the temple, was a single act, done once and for all; after, there were many evidences of its continuance or perpetuity. But it is with the *experimental* aspect we would here treat.

At regeneration a principle of holiness is communicated to us; practical sanctification is the *exercise* of that principle in living unto God. In regeneration the Spirit imparts saving grace; in His work of sanctification, He *strengthens and develops* the same. As "original sin" or that indwelling corruption which is in us at our natural birth, contains within it the seeds of all sin, so that grace which is imparted to us at the new birth contains within it the seeds of all spiritual graces; and as the one develops and manifests itself as we grow, so it is with the other. "Sanctification is a constant, progressive renewing of the whole man, whereby the new creature doth daily more and more die unto sin and live unto God. Regeneration is the birth, sanctification is the groweth of this babe of grace. In regeneration, the sun of holiness rises; in sanctification it keepeth its course and shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day (Prov. 4:18). The former is a specifical change from nature to grace (Eph. 5:8); the latter is a gradual change from one degree of grace to another (Psa. 84:7), whereby the Christian goeth from strength to strength till he appear before God in Zion" (George Swinnock, 1660).

Thus, the foundation of sanctification is laid in regeneration, in that a holy principle is then first formed in us. That holy principle evidences itself in conversion, which is turning away from sin to holiness, from Satan to Christ, from the world to God. It continues to evidence itself under the constant work of mortification and vivification, or the practical putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new; and is completed at glorification. The great difference then between regeneration and experimental and practical sanctification is that the former is a Divine *act*, done once and for all; while the latter is a Divine *work* of God's grace, wherein He sustains and develops, continues and perfects the work He then began. The one is a birth, the other the growth. The making of us practically holy is the design which God has in view when He quickens us: it is the necessary means to this end, for sanctification is the *crown* of the whole process of salvation.

One of the chief defects of modern teaching on this subject has been in regarding the new birth at the summum bonum of the spiritual life of the believer. Instead of its being the goal, it is but the starting-point. Instead of being the end, it is only a means to the end. Regeneration must be supplemented by sanctification, or otherwise the soul would remain at a standstill—"if such a thing were possible: for it seems to be an unchanging law in every realm that where there is no progression, there must be retrogression. That spiritual growth which is so essential, lies in progressive sanctification, wherein all the faculties of the soul are more and more brought under the purifying and regulating influence of the principle of holiness which is implanted at the new birth, for thus alone do we "grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:15).

2. *Justification and sanctification.* The relation between justification and sanctification is clearly revealed in Romans 3 to 8: that Epistle being the great doctrinal treatise of the New Testament. In the 5th chapter we see the believing sinner declared righteous before

God and at peace with Him, given an immutable standing in His favour, reconciled to Him, assured of his preservation, and so rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. Yet, great as are these blessings, something more is required by the quickened conscience, namely, deliverance from the power and pollution of inherited sin. Accordingly, this is dealt with at length in Romans 6, 7, 8, where various fundamental aspects of sanctification are treated of. First it is demonstrated that the believer has been *judicially* cleansed from sin and the curse of the law, and that, in order that he may be *practically* delivered from the dominion of sin, so that he may delight in and serve the law. Union with Christ not only involves identification with His death, but participation in His resurrection.

Yet though sanctification is discussed by the Apostle *after* his exposition of justification, it is a serious error to conclude that there may be, and often is, a considerable interval of time between the two things, or that sanctification is a consequent of justification; still worse is the teaching of some that, having been justified we must now seek sanctification, without which we must certainly perish—"thus making the security of justification to depend upon a holy walk. No, though the two truths are dealt with singly by the Apostle, they are inseparable: though they are to be contemplated alone, they must not be divided. Christ cannot be halved: in Him the believing sinner has both righteousness and holiness. Each department of the Gospel needs to be considered distinctly, but not pitted against each other. Let us not draw a false conclusion, then, because justification is treated of in Romans 3 to 5 and sanctification in 6 to 8: the one passage supplements the other: they are two halves of one whole.

The Christian's regeneration is not the cause of his justification, nor is justification the cause of his sanctification—"for *Christ* is the cause of all three; yet there is an *order* preserved between them: not an order of time, but of nature. First we are recovered to God's image, then to His favour, and then to His fellowship. So inseparable are justification and sanctification that sometimes the one is presented first and sometimes the other: see Romans 8:1 and 13, 1 John 1:9; then Micah 7:19 and 1 Corinthians 6:11. First, God quickens the dead soul: being made alive spiritually, he is now capacitated to act faith in Christ, by which he is (instrumentally) justified. In sanctification the Spirit carries on and perfects the work in regeneration, and that progressive work is accomplished under the new relation into which the believer is introduced by justification. Having been judicially reconciled to God, the way is now open for an experimental fellowship with Him, and that is maintained as the Spirit carries forward His work of sanctification.

"Though justification and sanctification are both of them blessings of grace, and though they are absolutely inseparable, yet they are so manifestly distinct, that there is in various respects a wide difference between them. Justification respects the person in a legal sense, is a single act of grace, and terminates in a relative change; that is, a freedom from punishment and a right to life. Sanctification regards him in an experimental sense, is a continued work of grace, and terminates in a real change, as to the quality both of habits and actions. The former is by a righteousness without us; the latter is by holiness wrought in us. Justification is by Christ as a priest, and has regard to the guilt of sin; sanctification is by Him as a king, and refers to its dominion. Justification is instantaneous and complete in all its real subjects; but sanctification is progressive" (A. Booth, 1813).

3. *Purification and sanctification.* These two things are not absolutely identical: though inseparable, they are yet distinguishable. We cannot do better than quote from G.

Smeaton, "The two words frequently occurring in the ritual of Israel 'sanctify' and 'purify,' are so closely allied in sense, that some regard them as synonymous. But a slight shade of distinction between the two may be discerned as follows. It is assumed that ever-recurring defilements, of a ceremonial kind, called for sacrifices of expiation; and the word 'purify' referred to these rites and sacrifices which removed the stains which excluded the worshipper from the privilege of approach to the sanctuary of God, and from fellowship with His people. The defilement which he contracted excluded him from access. But when this same Israelite was purged by sacrifice, he was readmitted to the full participation of the privilege. He was then *sanctified*, or *holy*. Thus the latter is the consequence of the former. We may affirm, then, that the two words in this reference to the old worship, are very closely allied; so much so, that the one involves the other. This will throw light upon the use of these two expressions in the New Testament: Ephesians 2:15, 16, Hebrews 2:11, Titus 2:14. All these passages represent a man defiled by sin and excluded from God, but readmitted to access and fellowship, and so pronounced holy, as soon as the blood of sacrifice is applied to him." Often the term "purge" or "purify" (especially in Hebrews) includes justification as well.

Objective holiness is the result of a *relationship* with God, He having set apart some thing or person for His own pleasure. But the setting apart of one *unto God*, necessarily involves the separating of it from all that is opposed to Him: all believers were set apart or consecrated to God by the sacrifice of Christ. Subjective holiness is the result of a *work* of God wrought in the soul, setting that person apart for His use. Thus "holiness" has two fundamental aspects. Growing out of the second is the soul's apprehension of God's claims upon him, and his presentation of himself unto God for His exclusive use (Rom. 12:1, etc.), which is *practical* sanctification. The supreme example of all three is found in Jesus Christ, the *Holy* One of God. Objectively, He was the One, "whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world" (John 10:36); subjectively, He "received the Spirit without measure" (John 3:34); and practically, He lived for the glory of God, being absolutely devoted to His will;—"only with thus tremendous difference: *He* needed no inward purification as we do.

To sum up. Holiness, then, is both a relationship and a moral quality. It has both a negative and a positive side: cleansing from impurity, adorning with the grace of the Spirit. Sanctification is, first, a position of honour to which God has appointed His people. Second, it is a state of purity which Christ has purchased for them. Third, it is an endowment given to them by the Holy Spirit. Fourth, it is a course of devoted conduct in keeping therewith. Fifth, it is a standard of moral perfection, at which they are ever to aim: 1 Peter 1:15. A "saint" is one who was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), who has been cleansed from the guilt and pollution of sin by the blood of Christ (Heb. 13:12), who has been consecrated to God by the indwelling Spirit (2 Col. 1:21, 22), who has been made inwardly holy by the impartation of the principle of grace (Phil. 1:6), and whose duty, privilege, and aim is to walk suitably thereto (Eph. 4:1).—A.W.P.

### Unpardonable Sin.

We feel that a separate though brief word on this subject needs to be added to what we said in the Hebrews' article (*December*, 1934 issue). The particular point we are here concerned with is to remove any possible misconception from the mind of the reader as to *why* there is no hope of forgiveness after a sinner has passed a certain bound, as to *why* certain sins are unpardonable. We say certain "sins," for as pointed out in the Hebrews article the "unpardonable sin" is not some one specific offense, but varies considerably in different cases—"blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is one form of it, total apostasy from the Truth is another, suicide is yet another. The sin of Esau was quite different from that of Cain's, and each of theirs from that of King Saul's. This fact of itself surely intimates that *the unpardonableness* of any sin lies not in the character of the offence itself, but must be sought for elsewhere. In this conclusion we differ from other writers on the subject.

Negatively, the unpardonableness of any sin lies not in the enormity of it abstractly considered. By which we mean, it is not because the guilt of it is so great that the mercy of God cannot remit it. This should be obvious from a careful examination of those cases which God *has pardoned*. Take such an one as Manasseh. Peruse the dark record of his life, and bear in mind that he lived not amid the gross darkness of heathendom, but in the favoured land of Israel where God was known; that he was not a private person, but king in Jerusalem, where his evil example exerted an incalculable influence for harm; and that he was guilty of not only one or two isolated crimes, but persisted in a steady course of vile conduct for many years. Compare the recorded sins of Cain, Esau or Saul, with what is said of this monster of wickedness.

"He did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall My name be for ever. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and *dealt with a familiar spirit*, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. And he set a carved image, *the idol* which he had made, *in the house of God* . . . So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and *to do worse than the heathen*, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: *but they would not hearken*" (2 Chron. 33:2-7, 9, 10).

Surely if any man had sinned away the day of grace, Manasseh must have done so. Surely if the intrinsic evil of any offences renders them unpardonable, those committed by this man must have been such. Surely if there are some crimes too high for the mercy of God to reach unto, it must have been those perpetrated by this Satan-controlled king. Surely if one may sink too low for the Holy Spirit to deliver him, it must have been this wretch, who so grievously provoked Jehovah. Ah, read the sequel: "And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and *He was entreated of him*, and heard his supplication" (vv. 12, 13).

If, then, the case of Manasseh demonstrates that the unpardonableness of sin lies not in the enormity of it abstractly considered, the history of Saul of Tarsus makes it equally evident that it is not because the crimson of certain crimes is of too deep a dye for the atoning blood of Christ to cleanse it. This man, who by the Spirit of inspiration, denominated himself “the chief of sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15), was present at the brutal stoning of the godly Stephen—”his murderers laying down their clothes at Saul’s feet (Acts 7:58). He would, therefore, hear not only that proto-martyr’s sermon, but also his dying prayer. That a deep impression must have been left on his mind we cannot doubt, but instead of yielding to the convictions made upon his conscience, he resisted them, as is evident from the Lord’s words, “It is hard for thee to *kick against the pricks*” (Acts 9:5).

“And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him” (Acts 8:2). But so far from “the chief of sinners” being melted by such a tragic spectacle, he added sin to sin: “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison” (Acts 8:3). Nor did *that* content him: “And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem” (Acts 9:1, 2). What a vivid picture do those words “breathing out threatenings and slaughter” set before us—”as of one possessed with an insatiable thirst for blood, like a ravenous beast seeking its innocent prey. Hear his own account at a later date. “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were *put to death*, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them *oft* in every synagogue, and *compelled them to blaspheme*; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities” (Acts 26:9-11).

Now my reader compare these atrocious deeds with the recorded sins of Cain, Esau, or Saul king of Israel. What comparison is there between them? If *they* angered God so that He gave them up to final impenitency—”which He did—”suppose you not that Saul of Tarsus provoked Him yet more sorely? Did, then, this “chief of sinners” commit offences which no atoning sacrifice could reach unto? Are there some sins too black, too heinous, too Heaven-insulting, for the blood of Christ to cleanse? If there are, must they not have been perpetrated by Saul of Tarsus? In view of the fact that *he* found mercy of the Lord, that even *his* dreadful crimes received forgiveness, are we not obliged to conclude that the unpardonableness of any sin *lies not* in its being beyond the reach of propitiation?

We are therefore shut up to one alternative: the unpardonableness of any sin must be attributed to the *sovereign will* of the Divine Judge. So He Himself affirms: “Therefore hath He mercy on whom *He will* have mercy, and whom *He will* He hardeneth” (Rom. 9:18). The exercise of Divine mercy, the provision of an atoning sacrifice, the application of its virtues to particular cases, lies entirely within the good pleasure of a sovereign God. This has not been recognised and acknowledged as it ought to have been. Even good men, well taught in the Scriptures, have been guilty of speaking about what God was *obliged* to do, and what He *could not* do. The fact that Scripture repeatedly affirms that “with God all things are possible,” should curb us from limiting the Holy One of Israel, even in our thoughts. Talk not of “impossibilities” in the presence of Him who is both



omnipotent and omniscient.

There is only one thing which God “cannot” do (we stoop not to such absurdities as to whether He can make two and two equal five), and that is, *act contrary to* His own infinite perfections. And therein lies His ineffable uniqueness: God cannot lie, God cannot deny Himself, God cannot be tempted with evil. And why not? Because He, and He alone, is *immutable*. Apart from acting contrary to His own perfections, God can do anything and everything He pleases. He is under no restraint whatsoever. His actions are circumscribed or constrained neither by His “nature,” His “law,” or “the good of the universe”; but are regulated solely by His own imperial *will*. The only reason why there is a universe, is because God was pleased to will it into existence. The only reason there was a law given by God to His creatures, is because it so pleased Him to enact one. True, *having given* the law, God now deals with His creatures according to its requirements. But there could have been no reason outside Himself why, in the first instance, He purposed to place His creatures under law; and therefore His *will* must be the sole source of it.

What saith the Scriptures? This, that God “worketh *all* things after the counsel of His own WILL” (Eph. 1:11). This foundational fact is exemplified and illustrated at every point. Why were the elect chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world and predestinated unto the adoption of children? Because such was “according to the good pleasure of His *will*” (Eph. 1:5). Again; “What if God, *willing* to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” (Rom. 9:22). Let our Sublapsarian friends note that the exercise of God’s wrath—”His punitive justice”—proceeds not from any moral “necessity,” but is ascribed purely to the Divine *will*. Observe again those words “that *will* by no means clear the guilty” (Exo. 34:7), and dare not to change them to “who *can* by no means clear the guilty.” Both justice and mercy are regulated solely by God’s *will*.

Again we ask, What saith the Scriptures? This: “Therefore hath He mercy on whom He *will* have mercy, and whom He *will* He hardeneth” (Rom. 9:18). And again we affirm, Divine mercy and Divine justice are regulated solely by God’s imperial will. While it be true, blessedly true, that God cannot act *contrary to* His own perfections or attributes, yet it is equally true that God is under no restraint or constraint in the *exercise* of them. Patience and power are among the excellencies of God’s nature or being, but is there ever a time when He is *obliged to exercise* them? Perish the thought. The same is true of every other Divine perfection: the *exercise* of them is determined by nothing outside of God’s own will. He is supreme sovereign, doing as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases; though never doing wrong. Nor are *we* in anywise competent to decide *what is right* and what is wrong in the conduct of the Most High. What He does *is right* simply because HE does it.

The absolute *sovereignty of God* supplies the key, and nothing else does, to the *unpardonableness* of any sin. God has sovereignly assigned the limits to which He will suffer each rebellious creature to go—and that limit varies considerably in different cases. He has sovereignly determined when any sinner shall be finally deserted by the Holy Spirit and given over to hopeless impenitency. He has sovereignly determined when sin becomes unpardonable in the life of each transgressor. It is *this* which makes the subject so unspeakably solemn, for men have no means of knowing whether or not their very next act may seal their doom irrevocably. When Christ said to the Pharisees, “Ye *shall* die in your sins” (John 8:21), they might be allowed to live on another fifty years, and

hear the Apostle Paul preach the Gospel, yet *their* day of grace was over. The sins of Manasseh and Paul were pardoned because God had *sovereignly decreed* they should be; the sins of the Pharisees were unpardonable because God had so *sovereignly ordained*. Beware then of trifling with God. Beware of continuing to provoke the Most High. He will not be mocked with impunity.—”A.W.P.