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THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS.

“Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (Psa. 29:2). Holiness is the antithesis of sin, and the beauty of holiness is in direct contrast from the ugliness of sin. Sin is a deformity, a monstrosity. Sin is repulsive, repellent to the infinitely pure God: that is why He selected leprosy, the most loathsome and horrible of all diseases, to be its emblem. When the Prophet was Divinely inspired to depict the condition of degenerate Israel it was in these words, “From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores” (Isa. 1:6). O that sin were sickening and hateful to us: not merely its grosser forms, but sin itself. At the opposite extreme from the hideousness of sin is “the *beauty* of holiness.” Holiness is lovely in the sight of God: necessarily so. It is the reflection of His own nature, for He is “glorious in holiness” (Exo. 15:11). O that it may be increasingly attractive to and earnestly sought after by us. Perhaps the simplest way of bringing out the beauty of holiness will be to contrast it from the beauties of time and sense.

First, the beauty of holiness is *imperceptible to the natural man*, and therein it differs radically from the beauties of mere nature. He can behold and admire a lovely glen, the softly flowing river, the mountain pines, the rushing waterfall; but for the excellence of spiritual graces he has no eyes. He regards one who (by grace) meekly submits to sore trials as a milksop. He looks upon one who denies self for Christ’s sake as a fool. He considers the man who adheres strictly to the narrow way as one who misses the best of this life. The natural man is totally incapable of discerning the excellence of that which is of great price in the sight of God. Do some think we are stating this too strongly? Then let them be reminded of the solemn fact that when the Holy One tabernacled here upon earth the unregenerate saw in Him “no beauty” that they should desire Him (Isa. 53:2); and it is the same today. God must remove the scales from the eyes of our heart before we can perceive that holiness is beautiful.

Second, the beauty of holiness is *real and genuine*, and therein it differs radically from much of the beauty which is seen in this world. How much that appeals to the gaze of the natural man is artificial and fictitious. How much human beauty is made up, the product of the artifices of the salon. Even when physical beauty is natural, how rarely it is accompanied by moral virtues. No wonder our forefathers were accustomed to say, “Beauty is but skin deep.” Not so the beauty of holiness: it is rooted in the inner man, and sheds its purifying influence over the entire being. “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain” (Prov. 31:30). But holiness disappoints not its possessor, for its beauty is spiritual and Divine. True, it has many counterfeits in the religious world, yet the genuine article has a ring to it which the godly cannot mistake.

Third, the beauty of holiness is *abiding*, and therein it differs radically from all the beauty of earth. The wooded glen, whose varied tints are so pleasing in the summer sunlight, is leafless and drab when winter comes. The glorious sunset which human skill can neither produce nor adequately reproduce disappears within a few minutes. The fairest human countenance quickly withers: “all her beauty is departed” (Lam. 1:6). Even when it is preserved to the end of a short life, “their beauty shall consume in the grave” (Psa. 49:14). Yes, change and decay in all we see. The only beauty which is unfading and everlasting is the beauty of holiness. The fruit of the Spirit will never lose its bloom:

spiritual graces shall endure after this poor world has all gone up in smoke. How fervently, then, should we pray, "Let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us" (Psa. 90:17).

Fourth, the beauty of holiness is *satisfying*, and herein it differs radically from the beauty of the things of time and sense. Sooner or later they either pall on one or else leave an aching void. Take the globe-trotter who journeys east and west, north and south, seeking fresh scenes. How soon he tires, discovering that the loveliest landscape cannot supply contentment of mind and peace of heart. Man is more than a material creature, and therefore it requires something else than material things—no matter how beautiful—to meet his needs. It is the things of the Spirit which alone afford satisfaction. "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6). True, the Christian is never satisfied with his own holiness: rather does he continue to hunger and thirst after righteousness to the end of his wilderness journey. Nevertheless, the holier we are—the closer we walk with God—the more real rest of soul shall we enjoy. And the blessed sequel will demonstrate the contrast still more plainly: instead of discovering that we have only chased the shadows, the Christian has the assurance: "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Psa. 17:15).

Fifth, the beauty of holiness is *glorifying to God*, and therein it differs radically from much of human beauty. To glorify his Maker is the bounden duty of man, and nothing honours Him so much as our walking in separation from all that is displeasing to Him. But alas, physical charms and spiritual graces are rarely found in the same persons. A notable example of this is seen in the case of Absalom, of whom it is recorded, "In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him" (2 Sam. 14:25); yet he feared not God and perished in his sins. How many a woman has used her personal attractions to entice men rather than magnify God. How many a well-proportioned and handsome man has employed his gifts for self-glorification rather than the praise of God. But the beauty of holiness ever redounds to the honour of its Author.

"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." This is the only kind of beauty which the Lord cares for in our devotions. "Godliness is to the soul as the light is to the world, to illustrate and adorn it. It is not greatness which sets us off before God, but goodness" (Thomas Watson). Ornate architecture and expensive apparel God delights not in. It is the loveliness of inward purity and outward sanctity that pleases the thrice Holy One. Sincerity of heart, fervour of spirit, reverence of demeanour, the exercise of faith, the outgoings of love, are some of the elements which comprise the "beauty of holiness" in our worship.—A.W.P.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

9. *Christ and the Law*: Matthew 5:17-20.

“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven” (Matt. 5:20). We purpose to expound this verse by supplying answers to the following questions. First, who or what were the Scribes and Pharisees? Second, what was the character of their righteousness? Third, what is the nature of that superior righteousness which Christ requires from His subjects? Fourth, how is it obtained? Fifth, how is it manifested? Sixth, wherein does it exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees? Seventh, what is signified by, “Ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of Heaven”? Eighth, what is the relation of verse 20 to the context?

Before seeking an answer to the above questions, let us point out what a startling effect this statement of Christ’s must have produced upon His hearers. The Scribes were the most renowned teachers of the Law, and the Pharisees had the reputation of being the most exemplary models of Judaism; and for our Lord to have solemnly affirmed that such righteousness as *they* possessed was altogether inadequate for entitling them to an entrance into the kingdom which He had come to set up, must have seemed a most radical and startling declaration. The Pharisees were looked up to as those who had attained to the very pinnacle of personal piety, and the common people supposed that such heights of spirituality were quite beyond their reach. Men in general imagined that they could not be expected to equal *their* attainments. It was a proverb among the Jews that, “If but two men were to enter Heaven, the one would be a Scribe and the other a Pharisee.”

First, who were the Scribes and Pharisees? The word “Scribe” is a name of *office*, whereof there were two sorts among the Jews: civil and ecclesiastical. The former were public notaries, registering the affairs of State: such an one was Shimshai (Ezra 4:8). The latter were employed in expounding the Scriptures: such an one was Ezra (7:1, 5, 6). It was to the latter Christ referred in this Gospel: see Matthew 13:52; 23:2—interpreters of the law of Moses. They were of the tribe of Levi. The name “Pharisee” betokens a *sect*, and not an office. They differed from the Scribes inasmuch as they formed a code of morals and of ceremonial acts more rigid than the Law of Moses enjoined, basing it on the traditions of the fathers: and were held in highest esteem among the Jews: see Acts 23:6; 26:5. The Scribes, then, were the doctors of the Law; the Pharisees professing the purest practice of it.

Second, what was the character of their righteousness, and wherein lay its defectiveness? First, the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was an *external* one only, consisting of certain outward observances of the Law. They were strict in abstaining from such gross sins as adultery, theft, murder and idolatry: but they made no conscience of impure thoughts, covetousness, hatred, and coldness of heart toward God: and therefore did Christ say unto them, “Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess” etc., (Matt. 23:25, 27, 28). Second, their observance of God’s Law was a *partial* one: they laid far more stress upon its ceremonial precepts than upon its moral requirements; and therefore did Christ say unto them, “Ye pay tithes of mint and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the Law—judgment, mercy, and faith” (Matt. 23:23). Third, their actions proceeded from unsound principles: *self-interests*, rather than the glory of God was their ruling motive. They were forward in

fasting, praying at street corners, and giving alms ostentatiously; but it was all done to enhance their reputation among men (Matt. 23:5-7).

Righteousness of soul, purity of heart, the Scribes and Pharisees had no regard for. In their religion we have an exemplification of what is the natural persuasion of men the world over, namely, that a religion of external performances will suffice to ensure a blissful eternity. True, there are many who would deny this in words, but in works they substantiate it. They bring their bodies to the house of prayer, but not their souls; they worship with their mouths, but not “in spirit and in truth.” They are sticklers for immersion or early morning communion, yet take no thought of keeping their hearts with all diligence. Multitudes of professing Christians abstain from external acts of violence, yet hesitate not to rob their neighbours of a good name by spreading evil reports against them. Thousands who would not dare to rob openly, yet misrepresent their goods and cheat their customers—which shows they have more fear of breaking man’s laws than they have of breaking those of God.

Third, what is the nature of that righteousness which Christ requires from His subjects? There are three kinds of righteousness spoken of in the Scriptures. First, *inherent*, which Adam had when he left the hands of his Maker (Eccl. 7:29), which none possess by nature today. Second, *imputed* righteousness (Rom. 4:6), which is the whole of our justification before God. Third, *imparted* righteousness (Eph. 4:24), when God the Spirit makes us new creatures. Most of the older writers concluded that it was the second of these which Christ referred to here in Matthew 5:20, but we are satisfied this was a mistake. It is true that the sinner’s title for Heaven can consist only of the perfect righteousness of Christ being imputed to him upon his believing, yet there must be an experimental meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light as well as a legal right, and this we obtain through our regeneration and sanctification.

We fully agree with Mr. J. C. Philpot when he pointed out in Matthew 5:20, “Christ did not mean an external righteousness, wrought out by His obedience to the Law *for* them, but an internal righteousness wrought out by the Holy Spirit *in* them. Thus, we read of the inward as well as the outward apparel of the Church: ‘the King’s daughter is all glorious *within*, her clothing is of wrought gold’ (Psa. 45:13). Two kinds of righteousness belong to the queen: her imputed righteousness is her outward robe, the ‘clothing of wrought gold’; but imparted righteousness is her inward adorning, which makes her ‘all glorious *within*.’ This inward glory is the new man in the heart, with all his gifts and graces.” This must be so if the Church is conformed to her Head, for He was “without spot” externally, and “without blemish” internally.

As this is a point which is much disputed, we must labour it a little further. That righteousness which will bring men to Heaven is not a bare imputed one, but an imputed righteousness which is accompanied by an imparted one. Justification and sanctification must never be severed: wherever the former be pronounced, the other (in its fundamental aspect) has already been bestowed. The one concerns our standing before God, the other respects our state in ourselves. Romans 8 is just as vital and blessed a part of the Gospel as is Romans 5, and it is to the irreparable loss of the saint if the one be emphasized to the virtual exclusion of the other. Surety righteousness alone secures for us a standing before God, but evangelical righteousness is the certain proof thereof, and as the tree is known by its fruits so imputed righteousness can be recognized in no other way than by inward righteousness with its effects in the life.

To this writer the simplest and most conclusive way of ascertaining the nature of the righteousness which Christ requires from all who shall have part in His everlasting kingdom is to observe that it is placed in direct antithesis from the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Now as we have pointed out, the defects of the latter lay chiefly in three things. First, their righteousness was wholly an external one, but God requires Truth in the *inward* parts: "Man looketh on the outward appearance but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). Second, their righteousness was partial, stressing certain parts of the Law which suited their tastes, while utterly ignoring or nullifying other vital features thereof. The righteousness which God requires is a universal obedience: a living by every word that proceedeth out of His mouth. Third, their righteousness issued from a foul spring: instead of keeping the Law from a desire to please and glorify its Giver, their observance of it was only in order to promote their reputation among men.

This superior righteousness, then, consists of an obedience to the Divine Law which would be acceptable to a holy but gracious God. Such an obedience must necessarily spring from the fear of God and love to God: that is, from a genuine reverence for His authority, and from a true desire to please Him. It must comprise a strict conformity to the revealed will of God, without any self-invented and self-imposed additions thereto. It must give particular attention to the "weightier matters of the Law," namely, justice, mercy and faith. It must be a sincere and not a feigned obedience, a filial and not a slavish one, a disinterested and not a selfish one. It must be a symmetrical or complete one, having respect to all God's commandments. Such an obedience will not puff up or encourage self-righteousness, but will cause the one who sincerely aims thereat, to walk softly before the Lord and will produce humility and denying of self.

Fourth, how is this superior righteousness obtained? Not by the strivings of a fallen creature, but by the effectual working of Divine grace. Such an obedience as we have delineated above can only proceed from a heart that is reconciled to God, because, "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). Now as 2 Corinthians 5:17, 18 so plainly teaches us, God's reconciling us to Himself by Jesus Christ is the immediate outcome of our being made new creatures in Christ. Initially we become partakers of this righteousness at the new birth, when a holy nature is communicated by the Spirit, so that there is now a principle within us which "delights in the Law of God" (Rom. 7:22) and causes us to "serve" it (Rom. 7:25). Progressively this inward righteousness is developed as we "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," which is through our using the appointed means and by learning to draw our strength from the Lord. Perfectly, this inward righteousness will only be consummated at our glorification, when we shall be filled with all the fullness of God.

Fifth, how is this evangelical righteousness manifested? Inasmuch as this inward righteousness consists of and proceeds from a new creation to holiness, it is known by the fruits it produces. A radical change is affected in the temper and life of its possessor, so that he now loathes and shuns what he formerly delighted in, and loves and seeks after the things he once disliked. It is evidenced by a real hatred of sin and an unfeigned love of God. It is known by the felt antagonism between the two natures in the believer. His indwelling corruptions continually war against this principle of righteousness, so that often he is prevented from doing the good which he desires and strives to perform. This conflict with the flesh humbles the Christian, causes him to mourn over his sad failures,

and to confess he is but an unprofitable servant. Nevertheless, he continues in his efforts to mortify the old man and vivify the new. Another proof of indwelling righteousness is that its possessor has an ever-deepening appreciation of the forbearance of God and an increasing valuation of the precious blood of Christ.

Sixth, wherein does this righteousness “exceed” the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees? The superiority of the Christian’s righteousness has already been shown in some detail, but one or two other things may be pointed out in connection therewith. The Christian’s righteousness springs out of love and faith, whereas theirs issued from an evil heart of unbelief. The Christian’s righteousness is the result of his being made a partaker of the Divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), whereas theirs was altogether human. The defects of the Christian’s righteousness are covered by the infinite merits of Christ, whereas theirs has nothing to commend them unto God. Evangelical righteousness—according to the terms of the new covenant—is approved by God, but legal righteousness found no provision in the Sinaitic Compact for its acceptance by the Most High. The righteousness of the Christian secures an entrance into Heaven, but that of the Scribes and Pharisees will exclude them therefrom.

Seventh, what is signified by, “Ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven”? which is the Lord’s verdict upon those who possess not this righteousness? In our comments upon verse 19 we pointed out that this expression, “the kingdom of Heaven,” is wider than the Church which is Christ’s body, covering the whole sphere of profession—Christendom; thus including the counterfeit as well as the genuine. But we were careful to qualify that definition by saying, This is its meaning in the “great majority of cases.” There are one or two notable exceptions: as for example “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven” (18:3), where the kingdom of Heaven must refer to the kingdom of Glory. Such, too, is the case in our present verse: Christ was speaking of *real* righteousness, and that alone will secure entrance into Heaven.

Eighth, what is the relation of our verse to its context? Let us recall that in the whole of this passage our Lord was engaged in refuting the erroneous conception which had been formed of His mission. His detachment from the religious leader of His day, His disregard of the “traditions of the elders,” and His proclamation of *grace* in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-22), had inclined many to regard Him as the opponent of Moses. True, He had come to bring in something new, something vastly superior to that which then obtained in Israel; nevertheless there was no real conflict between Christianity and Judaism: though differing much in incidentals, there is really perfect accord in fundamentals. Alas that the spiritual unity of the two economies is now so little perceived, yea, is emphatically denied by most of the much-advertised “Bible teachers” of our day.

First, Christ plainly and emphatically declared He had not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to “fulfil” them (Matt. 5:17): in what ways He was to “fulfil” them we have endeavoured to show. Second, He solemnly affirmed the perpetuity and immutability of the Law (v. 18), asserting that not the smallest part thereof could pass away till all was fulfilled. Third, He insisted that His own servants must maintain the integrity of the Law both by practice and by preaching (v. 19), otherwise they would not receive His approval. Fourth, so far was He from being antagonistic to Moses, He demanded of His subjects a righteousness which surpassed that of the Scribes and Pharisees. Hereafter

there was not the slightest occasion for any of His hearers to have any doubt of Christ's attitude toward the Law of God.

It is most important that we perceive clearly our Lord's *design* in verse 20. It was not there His purpose to state the terms on which men might obtain the Divine favour, rather was He describing the character of those who *already possessed* the same. No doubt many of the multitude which had there flocked around Him, supposed—such is poor human nature—that by attaching themselves to His cause, they would obtain greater latitude to indulge their lusts: it must therefore have been a real shock for them to learn that the morality and spirituality which was to distinguish the genuine citizens of His kingdom would be of a far more exalted character than that taught by the Scribes and exemplified by the Pharisees. He would not regard anyone as His subject unless *his* righteousness exceeded the righteousness *of the Scribes and Pharisees*. Thus, the nature and demand of His kingdom was proof positive that He honoured and maintained the Law.

With regard to the relation of our passage to its yet wider context, we may note how that one of the principal designs of Christ throughout this Sermon was to awaken His hearers to feel their deep need of that which alone could satisfy the requirements of a holy God. It was ignorance of the Law which permitted Pharisaism to flourish, for they claimed to fulfil it in the outward letter, and consequently Christ here aimed to arouse conscience by enforcing its true import and requirements. It will be found that this Sermon returns again and again to one main idea: that of awakening men to a sense of their wretchedness, and shutting them up to the righteousness of God. That object could only be obtained by a spiritual application of the Law and by enforcing its inviolable exactions: thereby alone could they be prepared to appreciate and embrace the Gospel.—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF DAVID.

88. *His Final Folly.*

We are about to look at one more of the dark chapters in David's life, though it has a much brighter ending than had some of the others. It concerns an episode which though simple and plain in some of its features, is in other respects shrouded in deep mystery; nor do we profess to be able to fully solve it. The incident which is narrated in 2 Samuel 24 concerns the purpose which David formed for numbering Israel and Judah, in order that he might know the exact fighting strength of his people. Apparently this was quite an innocent undertaking, yet it promptly met with disfavour and opposition from the commander and officers of his army. A little later David himself acknowledged that therein he had "sinned greatly," and the Lord Himself manifested His sore displeasure by slaying no less than 70,000 of David's men by a pestilence.

On two occasions the Lord Himself had directed Moses to number the people. First in connection with their encampment in the Wilderness (Num. 1:2), and later it was enjoined with special reference to the allotments which the different tribes were to receive in Canaan (Num. 26:2). On each occasion Moses numbered the male Israelites from 20 years old and upwards, "all that were able to go forth to war"—the fighting strength of the Congregation being thereby ascertained. We mention this because it would thus appear that David had clear precedent to warrant his procedure. It is true that after Israel settled in Canaan God never again issued a command for His people to be numbered, and while we are not informed that He gave any such order to our hero at this time, yet we *are* told that the Lord, "moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah" (2 Sam. 24:1).

We are not left in any doubt that on this occasion David committed a grave fault, yet wherein lay the evil of it is not so certain. Varied indeed have been the conjectures formed and the explanations advanced by different writers thereon. Some have drawn the inference from 1 Chronicles 27:23, 24 that David's sin lay in numbering those who were *under* 20 years old (yet sufficiently developed as to be able to bear arms), and that because his act was thus illegal, it was not formally entered in the state records. Others conclude from the same passage that he erred in numbering the people at all, that his act sprang from *unbelief* in the promises of God to the Patriarchs that their seed should be as innumerable as the sand of the seashore. Others think that he was guilty of presumption, acting without any instruction from God. Others think that the fault lay in his failure to require the half shekel, which was to be paid for the service of the sanctuary when the people were numbered, as "a ransom for their souls" (Exo. 30:12).

Now we are not one of those who take pleasure in pitting the interpretations of one expositor against another, rather do we prefer to combine them when this seems permissible and helpful. In the absence of any authoritative word from God as to the precise nature of David's sin in the case before us, we shall, as we proceed to comment upon it, bear in mind these several views, which may well supplement each other. One other explanation has been advanced, which impresses us personally most strongly of all, namely, that it was pride of heart which moved Israel's king to here commit such folly. If he was intoxicated with the successes which Heaven had granted to his arms, and was more occupied with them than their Giver, then that would readily account for this disastrous lapse, for "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Some light may be cast on this mysterious episode by taking into account the relative period in David's history at which it occurred. As the previous chapters have informed us, the sword of David and of Israel had been successful over all their enemies. The Philistines had been subdued, Moab had brought gifts, garrisons had been stationed in Damascus, and the Syrians as well as the Edomites had become their servants. To such a remarkable extent had his arms been permitted to triumph, that we are told, "And the fame of David went out into all lands; and the LORD brought the fear of him upon all nations" (1 Chron. 14:17). Naught of the good of which Jehovah had spoken to him had failed. But David was human, a man of like passions with us. Man—no matter who he is—if left to himself is quite incapable of holding a blessing, as was clearly demonstrated in Eden at the beginning. The fuller be our cup of joy, the steadier the hand required to hold it.

The history of David's sin is stated thus, "And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah" (2 Sam. 24:1), or as 1 Chronicles 21:1 gives it, "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." Those two statements are not, as some have foolishly supposed, contradictory, but are complementary. Though God is not the Author of sin, and can never be charged with evil, yet as the Governor of the universe He is the Controller and Director of it, so that when it serves His righteous purpose even Satan and his hosts are requisitioned by Him: 1 Kings 22:20-22; Ezekiel 14:9, etc. In this instance it is clear at least that God permitted Satan to tempt David, and David being left to himself yielded to the temptation and sinned. Moreover, the fact that David yielded so readily, and so obstinately rejected the counsel of his servants, seems to indicate that he had not been walking with holy watchfulness before God.

It was a remarkable juncture in the history of David. The ancient foes of Israel, after centuries of conflict, had at last succumbed. Even the powerful sons of Goliath had been so crushed by his vanquisher that they no longer made any effort to antagonize. But not only had the surrounding nations been subdued, they were despoiled, and the huge quantities of gold which had been taken from them was dedicated unto the Lord (see 1 Chron. 18:11; 20:4). "Triumphs had been gained and a rest attained such as Israel had never known before. The sword was about to be sheathed and the reign of Solomon (the typical Prince of Peace) was at hand. The Ark of God, ceasing from its lengthy wanderings, was no longer to dwell in curtains. The Temple was about to be built. Israel was to be gathered there in solemn and associated worship, and God's house was to be filled with His glory. It was a bright and blessed era, but it was only a typical and shadowy one" (B. W. Newton.)

Ah, that was the very point: this wonderful juncture in Israel's history was but "a typical and a shadowy" one, and therefore it made all the difference whether it were viewed by the eye of faith or with the eye of sense. To those who contemplated it with the eye of faith, and saw therein a blessed foreshadowment of a yet distant future, it afforded holy encouragement, strengthening them in patient endurance and hope. But to those who looked upon this successful period with the eye of sense, it could prove only a snare. As another has pointed out, "When the feelings of nature predominate (and they always do predominate when faith is not in vigorous exercise), triumph or success even when recognized as a gift of God's undeserved mercy, will, nevertheless, be so used as to exalt

ourselves. As weeds flourish under sunshine and showers, so when there is not watchfulness, the tendencies of our nature germinate under mercies.”

This, it seems to us, is the chief practical lesson inculcated by our present passage. It points a most solemn warning against *the dangers of success*. If adversity carries with it a measure of menace to the spiritual life, the perils of prosperity are far greater. If through our unwatchfulness the former leads to discontent and murmuring, the latter will, unless we be doubly on our guard, issue in self-complacency and self-sufficiency. It is when we are brought low, by losses and trials, that we are the most cast upon God; as it is when success crowns our efforts and our barns are well filled, that we are most apt to walk independently of Him. Little wonder, then, that the Lord trusts few of His people with much of this world’s goods. The same applies to spiritual blessings: if earnest of a coming rest are granted, they will be regarded as realities instead of foreshadowings, and then we shall rest before our time to rest—instead of continuing to press forward.

It seems likely that David had fallen into this snare, encouraging imaginations which were completely at variance with the facts of both his own and Israel’s actual condition: that is, utterly inconsistent with the truth that their national propriety was but typical and transitory. In the first place, to number the people was but the natural act of one who had persuaded himself that Israel had entered upon a period of stable and permanent rest. In the second place, to number the people was an act indicative of ownership, and it was obviously wrong for David to regard Israel as though they were *his* people, whom it was legitimate to number as *his* inheritance and strength. Instead, he should have viewed them as the congregation and inheritance of Jehovah, to be numbered only when *He* gave the command. Finally, he ought to have looked upon them as Jehovah’s *redeemed* inheritance and therefore never to be numbered without a typical ransom for the soul of each being rendered to God.

The Divine statute was very definite on this point: “When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man *a ransom for his soul* unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them . . . And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD to make an atonement for your souls” (Exo. 30:12, 16). “The very mention of the ‘atonement money’ was sufficient to banish every feeling of pride or independence both from him who numbered and from those who were numbered amongst the congregation of Jehovah: for ‘according to Jehovah’s fear so is His wrath’: that is, the nearer we draw to Jehovah to fear and to serve Him, the more do we supply occasions for His displeasure and wrath, for the higher and holier the service, the more does our natural sinful incompetence appear.

“The very fact of being His congregation, appointed to draw nigh to Him and serve Him in His holiness, must entail chastisement and plague on all numbered as His people, unless atonement interposed and provided a ransom for the soul. If David, unbidden, and in unholy elation of heart, presumed to number Israel as if there had been in them a strength that needed not to fear any chastisement, or dread any abasement, it is no wonder that the atonement money would have been withheld. It seems to have been utterly forgotten. No mention is made thereof. He seems not to have recollected the words ‘that there be no *plague* among them when thou numberest them.’ Israel was numbered as if they could forego that protection of grace which the atonement-money signified, and

stand firm on the basis of that strength which in their recent triumphs had been so marvelously exhibited" (B. W. Newton).

But we must now look at this strange and solemn incident from another angle, from the side presented to us in 1 Chronicles 21:1, where we are permitted a glimpse behind the veil: "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." Expositors have pointed out that these words, "stood up" (carefully compare Zech. 3:1) have a forensic force, being an expression which alludes to the posture of those who accuse or charge another person with a crime in a court of law. In Revelation 12:10 Satan is expressly designated, "the accuser of our brethren," which office we behold him discharging in Job 1:9-12. All these passages are admittedly deeply mysterious, yet in the light of them it appears that the spiritual condition of Israel at this time gave the Adversary an advantage, and that he promptly used the same by representing their condition to the Lord as a reason why they should be *punished*. This seems to be clearly borne out by the terms of 2 Samuel 24:1.

"And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and He moved David *against them* to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." "The Israelites had offended God by their ungrateful and repeated rebellions against David, by not duly profiting under the means employed for the revival of religion; and probably by that pride, luxury, and ungodliness, which generally springs from great prosperity. They had before, in a famine which lasted three years, experienced the effects of the Divine displeasure, and it is likely they had not been amended by the correction: but some think that the sin immediately intended was the setting up of Absalom for king, and rebelling against David. This, David had cordially forgiven; but it was a national defection from God, which He did not judge it proper to leave unpunished. So that again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and He permitted Satan to tempt and prevail against David, that in *chastising* him, He might *punish* them" (Thomas Scott).

The Nation at large was not made up of those who walked by faith and trod the path of the Divine statutes. Very far from it, as is clearly intimated by David's prayer, "Help LORD, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men" (Psa. 12:1). From 2 Samuel 23:6 it is also plain that the "sons of Belial" were strong and numerous in the midst of Israel, so that we need not be surprised that the signal triumphs which had been vouchsafed them should have awakened in the hearts of the majority a proud and self-sufficient arrogance, which was bound to affect their fellows, and which thus called forth the sore displeasure of God. Nothing gives Satan so easy an approach to and such an advantage over us as when we are swelled by a sense of our self-importance. Few things are more detestable unto God than a heart that is inflated by egotism: note how the seven things which He hates is headed by "a proud look" (Prov. 6:16-19). How urgently we need to heed the exhortation of Christ and take His yoke upon us and learn of Him who is "meek and lowly in heart."

It is indeed solemn to see one so near the end of his earthly pilgrimage, one who had (in the main) for many years walked so closely with God, now giving place to the Devil and being overcome by him. What proof is this that neither age nor experience is (in itself) any safeguard against Satan's attacks. As long as the believer is in this world the great Enemy of our Souls has access to us, is often permitted to work upon our corruptions, and under certain restrictions to tempt us. And therefore it is we are called upon to, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in

due time: casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5:6-9). We have purposely quoted the whole of that passage because it is imperative that we heed the order of its several precepts: we cannot obey those in verse 8 unless and until we respond to those in verses 6, 7.

There never comes a time, then, when the saint on earth can dispense with any part of the armour which God has provided, nor when he may relax his vigilance against his untiring and remorseless Adversary. If the time of youth be dangerous because of hot passions, the season of old age is imperiled by the surgings of pride: therefore must we watch and pray always lest we enter into temptation. And, the higher be the rank of the saint, the more important and influential be the office he holds, then the greater is his need to be doubly on his guard. It has ever been Satan's way to level his principal attacks against those who are eminent for usefulness, knowing full well that if he can encompass *their* downfall, many others will be involved either in his sin or in his sufferings. We must leave for our next (D.V.) other important lessons taught by this incident.—A.W.P.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

8. *Its Manifestation.*

Before looking at some of the obstacles which might be supposed to stand in the way of the believer being carried safely through all temptation into eternal Glory, we must guard against a possible misconception. It is not the prerogative of Divine grace to save men, continue how they will in sin, out of an absolute sovereignty because it will save them. No indeed: God saves none without rule, much less against rule. The very verse which speaks of Him being the "God of all grace" adds "who hath *called us*" and as 2 Timothy 1:9 declares, God calls us "with an *holy* calling, according to His grace"; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The Monarchy of Grace has fundamental laws, as all well-regulated monarchies have. Let the foundation of God be never so sure that "the Lord knoweth (loveth) them that are His," yet it is added, "Let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19).

On the other hand, we do unhesitatingly declare the Scriptures teach that the saving grace of God is an effectual, all-powerful, infallible principle in the hearts of the regenerate, enabling them to keep those rules that are essentially requisite to salvation. The one thing which Arminians suppose stands in the way of this is man's free will—as if God had made a creature which He was unable to rule. We are not ashamed to affirm that there is such a supremacy in Divine grace that it engages all in God to its triumphant issue. On the one hand, grace complies with Divine wisdom, justice, and holiness in setting rules; on the other hand, grace draws all other attributes of God into an engagement for the preserving of us, keeping our otherwise perverse wills within the compass of those rules, and overcoming all opposition to the contrary. Hence it is that God makes so absolute a covenant: "I will not turn away from them to do them good . . . they shall not depart from Me" (Jer. 32:40).

We now desire to point out the arguments of comfort and support which may be drawn from this grand truth that the God of all grace will safely carry His people through all temptations. Having begun as the God of all grace in justifying them after this manner, and in sanctifying them at their effectual call, what is there which should divert and hinder Him from conducting them to eternal Glory? Is it the *guilt* of sin, incurred by transgressions after calling? or the *power* of sin again recovering its strength in them? If neither of these, then nothing else remains. As both of them, at times, acutely distress the consciences and minds of Christians, it is advisable for us to point out that there is nothing in either of them which can even *begin* to turn God's heart from off His beloved children. May the Lord graciously help us to make this quite clear.

If anything was calculated to provoke God *not* to continue His grace unto the Christian it would be the guilt of those sins committed after his calling. But that shall *not* be able to so do. If God justified them at the first from sins mountain high, and thereby became engaged to continue a God of all grace ever after to them, then surely He will not fail to pardon their after-sins. Compare matters as they stood in this respect before calling with the state thereof after. First, at our calling God pardoned a continued course of sinning for many years, wherein there had been laid up a multitude too great for us to number; but in pardoning our sins *after* conversion it is at worst but of backslidings, and those repaired by many sincere repentings coming between. If then, God pardoned an entire course of sinning, will He not much more easily continue to pardon backslidings intermingled with repentings, even though they are sins committed again and again?

“Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD, for I am *married* unto you” (Jer. 3:14). Married Israel had been to God before, but she had gone a-whoring from Him. At his first conversion God is espoused to the believer and He did then give up Himself to be a God of all grace to him. How marvellous is such grace to His unfaithful spouse! “Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon you: for I am *merciful* saith the LORD” (Jer. 3:12). So merciful is He that He pardons on the lowest terms we could desire: “Only *acknowledge* thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed My voice” (v. 13). The same is found again in Isaiah 57:17, 18 and Hosea 14:4, where He promises to heal their backslidings.

Now if the God of all grace picked us up out of the mire when our hearts were wholly hard and impenitent, broke them, and forgave us all our years of sinning—then shall He not continue to melt our hearts when we backslide, and recover us? Then He forgave you all your past sins in one immeasurable lump; now He distributes His pardon daily as you humble yourself for transgressions. That fountain opened “for sin and for uncleanness (Zech. 13:1) is constantly available for us. Do you not confess your sins, plead the blood of Christ, seek for mercy at the Throne of Grace, and beg forgiveness through Christ’s intercession? If so, you shall not seek in vain; for though God pardons not because of your humbling and seeking (as they are your doing), yet in this course runs His pardoning grace.

But will not those who have been effectually called, reply: Alas, my sins since conversion have been greater and grosser than any I committed before. Answer: first, you may have been very young when first converted: since then, as you have developed according to the course of nature, lusts, too, have grown, and you are more conscious of them than in early youth. Second, your circumstances may account for them, though not excuse them. Some do sin worse after conversion than before: Job and Jeremiah sinned more grievously in later life than during their earlier years, for their temptations grew much higher. Third, consider not only your awful sins, but your sincere repenting too—your earnest crying to God against them, which were not disregarded by Him—demonstrating again that He is “the God of all grace.”

One other thing which might be supposed to obstruct the course of God’s grace begun in us at effectual calling, causing His heart to be diverted from us, is the *power* and ragings of sin within the Christian. But if He did sanctify us at the first as the God of all grace, then surely that affords a sure ground of confirmation that, notwithstanding the hazards with which our remaining corruptions might seem to threaten us, He will assuredly preserve grace in us despite all the temptations we are subject to. At his sanctification God laid in the soul of the Christian the seeds of every grace and gracious disposition that he shall ever possess: is He not well able to nourish and preserve this garden of His own planting? Listen to His most precious promise, “I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day” (Isa. 27:3).

“Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But He giveth more grace. Wherefore He saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:5, 6). This clearly denotes that our fiercest and most perilous conflicts are with some particular lust or temptation, for so the Apostle’s instance here carries it—the lust of envy. But when a regenerated soul is conscious of this corruption and does humble himself under it and for it, bewailing the same before God,

this shows that a contrary grace is working within him, opposing the activities of that lust, *resisting* that envy (and the pride from which it springs), and therefore it is that he seeks for humility (the contrary grace to pride); and the Lord as the God of all grace gives him “more grace.”

But many a poor soul will reply: alas, I greatly fear that my condition is far worse now than ever it was previously. Answer: take the very worst condition that you have ever been in since conversion, and consider the frame of your heart therein, and then compare it with the best mood you were ever in before conversion. Honestly, would you exchange this now for that then? Before conversion you had not the least iota of holy affection in you, no aim at the glory of God; but since conversion you have (take the whole course of your Christian life) had an eye unto God and sought to please Him. True, like David, you must say, “I have gone astray like (not a sow, but) a lost sheep”; yet can you also add with him, “seek me, for I do not forget Thy commandments” (Psa. 119:176).

Before your conversion you never called upon God, unless as a formality; but now you often cry unto Him unfeignedly. Before, you had no real hatred of sin and no pursuit after holiness; but now you have, though falling far short of what you would be. You talk of lusts harrying you with temptations; yes, but once you had the Devil dwelling *within* you, as in his own house, in peace, and taking you captive at his will. You complain of coldness in the performance of spiritual duties; yes, but once you were wholly dead. It may be your graces are not shining, and yet there are in you longings after God, desires to fear His name. There is, then, a living spiritual creature in you, which, like the mole underground, is working up towards the air, heaving up the earth.

A further proof (in 1 Peter 5:10) that the God of all grace will carry safely through all suffering and temptations into Heaven those whom He has called, is contained in the words “called us unto His *eternal glory*.” Though we are not yet in actual possession and full enjoyment thereof, nevertheless God has already invested us with a full and indefeasible right thereunto. This “glory” was the firstborn of all God’s thoughts and intentions concerning us, for it was the end or upshot of His gracious designs with us. Said the Lord Jesus, “Fear not, little flock: for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32), and He will exclaim in the Day to come, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34), which refers unto Heaven itself, where God reigns as undisputed King.

Now God’s heart is so set upon this glory as His first and last end for His people that, when His electing grace is made known at our calling, He does then give us a full right thereto. Though He may suspend the giving us the full possession of it for some years, yet He does not suspend the complete title thereto, for the whole of salvation is then stated upon them. A beautiful (and designed) type of this is found in 1 Samuel 16:18. In the open view of his brethren, God sent Samuel to David while he was yet young, and anointed him king, thereby investing him unto a sure right to the kingdom of Israel—that anointing being the earnest and pledge of all the rest. But for many years David’s possession of the kingdom was delayed, and during that time he suffered much at the hands of Saul; nevertheless, God miraculously preserved him and brought him safely into it.

But note well that God has not only called us unto His glory, but unto “His *eternal glory*,” whereby is implied not simply that the glory is eternal as an adjunct of it—but that our calling and estate thereby is into the eternity of that glory, as well as unto the glory itself. This implies two things. First, he that is called of God has a spiritual life or

glory begun in his soul which is eternal—note how the image of Christ wrought in the believer in this life is termed “glory” in 2 Corinthians 3:18. This glory or spiritual life in the Christian is indestructible: “Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die” (John 11:26). Second, it imports that when a man is called, he is put into possession of an eternal right of glory—not a present right to glory only, but a *perpetual* right; a present right that reaches to eternity. We are “made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7).

There is yet one other phrase in 1 Peter 5:10 which remains to be considered: “by Jesus Christ.” There is a security which Jesus Christ gives, as well as that of the Father’s, to confirm the believer’s faith that he shall be strengthened and enabled to persevere. God is the God of all grace to us *by Jesus Christ*: all His acts of grace towards us are in and through Him: He elected us at first and then loved us only as considered in Jesus Christ. God having thus laid Christ as the Mediator, or rather as the foundation of His grace, it is a sure ground of its continuance to us. All God’s purposes of grace were made in Christ, and all His promises are established and performed in and through Him.

There are two Persons engaged for the preservation of saints unto Glory: God the Father and Jesus Christ. We have seen what confirmation to our faith the interests that God the Father has to us does afford; equally full and strong is that supplied by the interest which Jesus Christ has to them. The making of our salvation sure and steadfast against all opposition is directly founded upon Him and committed to Him. Concerning Jesus Christ, God says, “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, *a sure foundation*: he that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa. 28:16), or as the Apostle explains, “shall not be confounded” (1 Peter 2:6). We are “the called of Jesus Christ” (Rom. 1:6). We have “eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). God “stablisheth us with you in Christ” (2 Cor. 1:21).

Little space remains for us to consider the security which a due contemplation of Christ’s Person, His relation to us, and office for us, affords to our faith that we shall be Divinely strengthened to persevere unto the end. Only a few details can therefore be mentioned. First, His *redemptive work*. This is of such infinite worth that it not only purchased for us our first calling into grace (Rom. 5:2), but together therewith, our continuance in that grace. Christ meritoriously bought off all our temptations and an ability in Himself to succour and establish us to the end. “Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world” (Gal. 1:4). “Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). While His precious blood retains its infinite value in the esteem of God, not one of His sheep can perish.

Second, Christ’s *tender pity*. “For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb. 2:18). In the previous verse it is declared that He is a “merciful High Priest” to pity us, so that He has a heart and willingness to help His people; but in verse 18 it is added that He is able so to do. And mark, it is not affirmed that He is able in respect of His personal power, as He is God, but there is a further and acquired ability as He is man. He was made a frail man, subject to temptations, and the painful experiences through which He passed in the days of His humiliation engages His heart to pity us when in distress, and because of this acquired tenderness, He is able to succour us in temptation.

Third, His *intercession*. “For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:10), that is, by His life for us in Heaven. “Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25). If, then, you have come unto God by Him, Christ’s intercession effectually secures your uttermost salvation. Because He has taken you into His heart, He has taken you into His prayers. Once Christ takes us into His prayers, He will never leave us out, but prevail for us, whatever be our case or whatever we fall into (1 John 2:1)—clear proof of this was furnished by the case of Peter. A man may be cast out of the prayers of a saint, as Saul was out of Samuel’s; but none was ever cast out of Christ’s prayers whom He once took in. His prayers will prevail to prevent you falling into such sins as God will not forgive.

Fourth, *Christ’s interest in that glory* we are called unto and our interest in Christ’s glory, for they are one. “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9); that is, to be partakers of the same things (in our measure) that He is partaker of. “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection” (Rom. 6:5). The Apostle declares that God, “calls you by our Gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 2:14). It is Christ’s own glory—the reward of that wondrous work by which He so illustriously magnified the Father—which His people are brought into, for nothing short of this would satisfy the heart of Christ: “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory” (John 17:24).

Here, then, is how the secret election of God in eternity past is openly manifested unto His people in this time state: by a supernatural call, and by miraculously bringing them through a world which is as hostile to their souls as Babylon’s furnace was to the bodies of the three Hebrews.—A.W.P.

THE HOLY SABBATH.

4. *Its Renewal.*

In order to bridge the small gap between this article and last month's, we must ponder a very striking passage in Exodus 16, from which we may learn some facts of deep importance concerning the existence and observance of the Holy Sabbath prior to Israel's reaching Sinai. That chapter records God's giving of the manna as Israel's daily food while they were in the wilderness. First, "Behold, I will rain bread from Heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in My Law or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily" (vv. 4, 5). From these verses it is unmistakably clear that a Divine *Law* was in existence *before* the Ten Commandments were inscribed on the tables of stone, and from what follows it is equally evident that the observance of the Sabbath was part of this self-same Law: in no other way can these words of God to Moses be explained.

The Lord was about to give His people a daily supply of manna, and made it known to Moses that a double supply should be furnished them on the sixth day—to make up for none being given them on the seventh. In this respect Exodus 16 is parallel with Genesis 2:2, 3, inasmuch as once more we see the Creator condescending to be the Exemplar of His creatures: Jehovah manifested His regard for the Sabbath by withholding manna on that day. "We may here observe three miracles in honour of the Sabbath, and to secure it against desecration were wrought every week before the promulgation of the Law at Sinai. Double the quantity of manna fell on the sixth day. None fell on the Sabbath. The manna preserved for that day did not corrupt" (Robert Haldane).

Next we are told, "And it came to pass on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses" (v. 22). Now note very particularly the definite language of Moses in reply, "This is that which the LORD hath said, Tomorrow is the Rest of the Holy Sabbath unto the Lord" (v. 23). This is the *first express mention* of the "Sabbath" in the history of Israel, and the terms in which it is here introduced utterly precludes the absurd idea that the Sabbath was then, for the first time formally and legally instituted. No candid mind reading this chapter for the first time would ever conclude that here was a most important religious ordinance, quite unknown before, now given to the people. Rather is it not obvious to any careful reader that throughout the whole of this narrative two facts (unnamed) were in the mind of the writer, without regard to which the account is unintelligible: that a Divine Law was binding on the people (by which they were to be proved afresh), and that they had a sufficient knowledge thereof as to be expected to keep the Sabbath.

The words of Moses in verse 23 are brought in only incidentally, in answer to a question put to him by the elders: the substance of which is, the people have done quite right in gathering a double supply of manna on the sixth day. Moses was far from speaking in the style of one promulgating a new law, nor do we find him giving any detailed instructions as to the manner in which the seventh day was to be kept. The Wilderness of Sin was far from being the birthplace of this blessed ordinance: these scenes described in Exodus 16 obviously point us back to an earlier and primeval appointment. But ere passing on let us duly note that the words of Moses in verse 23 affirmed the three principal features of the Sabbath: first, it is designed for "rest"; second, it is "holy"—set apart from

the six working days; third, it is to be kept "to the Lord": that is, it is a day for Divine worship and service.

"And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep My commandments and My laws?" (vv. 27, 28). Here we have illustrated the universal rebellion of the human heart. Here we have exemplified the common tendency to desecrate God's holy day. Even after the most explicit instructions to rest on the seventh day (v. 23), some of the people went out "for to gather." And mark God's response: "*How long* refuse ye to keep My commandments and My laws." This was not the first time that Israel had profaned the Sabbath: the words "how long" prove this.

They also confirm what we said above on verse 4: long before Sinai was reached, Israel had God's commandments and laws. Jehovah Himself says so, and the man who denies it, no matter what his standing or reputation, is guilty of the awful sin of making God a liar. "How long refuse ye" looks back to the wicked conduct of Israel while in Egypt.

Finally, observe how verse 29 supplies one more proof that Sabbath observance was no new thing at this time: "See, for that the LORD hath given you the Sabbath, therefore He giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." Mark the careful distinction in the verbs used here: "the LORD *hath given* you the Sabbath, therefore He *giveth* you on the sixth day the bread of two days." What excuseless ignorance, then, is betrayed by those who affirm that the Sabbath was first instituted at Sinai. It is either ignorance or willful perversion of the Scriptures, and charity requires us to conclude that it must surely be the former.

We are now to consider the renewing or reinforcing of the Holy Sabbath at Sinai. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the LORD made Heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath Day and hallowed it" (Exo. 20:8-11). The Ten Commandments were uttered immediately by the voice of God Himself in the hearing of all the people (Exo. 19), whereas all the other laws (whether ceremonial or judicial) were given through Moses. Those Ten Commandments, and they alone, were twice written by the finger of God on tables of stone, to denote their durability and permanence. The Ten Commandments were put *inside* the sacred ark itself, whereas the other laws (written in a book by Moses) were only placed in its side.

But if God in those ways emphasized the supreme momentousness of the Ten Words, giving them a place superior to all other laws, He also signalized in a peculiar way the outstanding importance and value of the Fourth Commandment. First, it is marked with a particular memento above the other commands: "remember"—partly because of our proneness to neglect, and partly because of its vast importance. Second, it is noticeable that the other nine are expressed simply, either negatively or positively, but this one *both* ways: "keep it holy . . . in it thou shalt not do any work" as if God put particular care to fence it on all sides. Third, its striking position in the Decalogue: it is put at the close of the first table and before the beginning of the second, to signify the observance of both tables depends radically upon our obedience to this particular precept.

It is indeed instructive to observe—O that we may have ears to hear—how the Lord God has fenced this particular commandment with more hedges than any of the other nine, to prevent our violation thereof and to render excuseless any trifling therewith. In addition to what has been pointed out above, we note, fourth, this commandment has more reasons to enforce it than has any of the others. God has therein condescended to give three cogent arguments to press the observance of this law upon us. The first is taken from His own example, which certainly it is both our glory and our duty to imitate in all things in which He has proposed Himself to be our pattern: God rested on the seventh day, and so must we. The second reason is taken from the bountiful portion of time which God has allowed us for the affairs of this life, namely, six-sevenths of our days, and therefore it is but fitting and equitable that the seventh should be devoted to God. Third, from the dedication of the seventh day to God's immediate worship and service: "the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it."

Let us observe that the character of those reasons wherewith God enforces the Fourth Commandment contain in them a most forcible argument to show that the Sabbath is *perpetually binding*. Negatively, we note there is nothing whatever in those reasons which suggest that the Sabbath ordinance was a ceremonial institution, or that it was to be regarded as being among those things which were typical of Christ to come in the flesh, which things were therefore to be abolished at His coming. Positively, there lies upon us today an obligation just as strong and binding as rested upon the Jews of old, for we equally with them are duty-bound to heed the example which the Creator set His creatures at the beginning. We are clearly required to own God as the Lord of our time by devoting one seventh thereof to His worship, and we certainly need the blessings attendant on a due observance of the Sabbath as much as ever did the Israelites in Old Testament times.

It is often asserted that Sabbath observance was made binding on the Hebrews only. But this is a most serious error. Not only is the Fourth Commandment of perpetual force, but it is *universally binding*: the arguments made above for the former, apply with equal force to the latter. The tribute which the Fourth Commandment demands for God is unquestionably due Him from all His creatures alike. This Commandment is "holy and just" (Rom. 7:12), and as the Apostle shows in that chapter, is also "good," for Gentiles as much so as for Jews. We could imagine some reason for saying that the Fifth Commandment has an exclusive Jewish cast, because the promise subjoined to it refers to long life "in the land." This it might be supposed was something spoken to the Jews alone. But such a supposition is immediately ruled out of court by Ephesians 6:1, 2—note "this IS (not "was") the first commandment with promise."

"The ground on which the obligation to keep the Sabbath is based in the Commandment is the most universal in its bearing that could possibly be conceived: 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy . . . for in six days the Lord made Heaven and earth.' There is manifestly nothing Jewish here, nothing connected with individual interests or even national history. The grand fact out of which the precept is made to grow is of equal significance to the whole world, and why should not the precept be the same? It seems, indeed, as if God, in the appointment of this law, had taken especial precautions against the attempts which He foresaw would be made to get rid of the institution, and that on this account He based its foundations first in the original framework and constitution of

nature" (P. Fairbairn). What spiritual mind can doubt that this was what regulated Him who knew the end from the beginning.

How utterly futile are all these quibblings of men. How baseless their contentions. How strikingly were they anticipated and refuted by the Lord from the start. Why the very terms of the Fourth Commandment itself bring its obligation to bear upon the Gentiles! So far from obedience to this precept being limited to the Jews, it legislated also for "the *stranger* that is within thy gates"! Observe how godly Nehemiah enforced the observance of it upon the Gentiles as well as the Jew: "There dwelt men of *Tyre* also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah . . . I commanded that the gate should be shut and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath" (Neh. 13:16-19). It was the observance of it and not the obligation of it which was peculiar to the Jews. It was placed in their custody for the good of all mankind.

The Fourth Commandment *in the Decalogue* was not the original institution of the Sabbath, but rather its formal *renewal* and re-enforcement. As we have shown in previous articles, the actual sanctification and appointment of the Sacred Day of rest in worship takes us back to Eden itself, synchronizing with the very creation of man. It has also been shown that there are quite a number of unmistakable traces of the Sabbath being actually observed by God's people in the very earliest days of human history. But after the family of Jacob settled down in Egypt, they soon learned the ways of the heathen and, to a considerable extent at least, abandoned the instituted worship (Gen. 26:5) of Jehovah. Ezekiel 20:4-8 leaves us in no doubt that it was because of their idolatry the Lord employed the Egyptians in so severely chastising them.

"And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto demons, after whom they have gone a-whoring" (Lev. 17:7). The reference here is to Israel's wickedness while sojourning in the land of Pharaoh: as Joshua 24:14 tells us, "Put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood (see vv. 2, 3) and in *Egypt*," and as Ezekiel 23:3 declares, "They committed whoredom in *Egypt*." It was pure grace which moved the Lord to deliver His wayward people from the house of bondage, and enter into a covenant with them. But grace ever reigns through righteousness, and never at the expense of the requirements of holiness. Accordingly Jehovah, in a most awe-inspiring manner, renewed His Law at Sinai, and intimated its lasting character by inscribing it on stones by His own finger; in the very center of which He placed the Sabbath statute. God has given us liberty to follow our lawful callings throughout the six working days, and therefore it is but little for us to devote the seventh to Him.

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." "Remember": call to mind its original institution; cherish it in your affections; duly meet its just requirement, "The Sabbath": the sacred rest: its merciful freedom from temporal toil, its opportunities for obtaining deliverance from bondage of sin, its foreshadowment of the Eternal Rest awaiting those who now walk obediently to the Divine statutes. "To keep it holy": sever it from common use and consecrate the same to the service of God. It is no less a sin than a sacrilegious stealing of that which is holy to purloin any part of that time which God has consecrated to Himself and to employ in it either sinful or secular activities. How the Sabbath is to be observed, what works are permissible and what are not, will be considered by us (D.V.) in future articles.—A.W.P.

CHRIST FULFILLING THE LAW.

“Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Matt. 5:17). Though we have only just completed a more or less full exposition of the passage in which this verse occurs, we propose to quote some of the comments made thereon by one of the ablest Scottish divines of last century: principally because he treats of it from a different angle than we did, and also because its grand theme is now so little believed. Our present author dealt with its doctrinal import, in relation to the Atonement.—A.W.P.

1. In the fulfillment of the Law and of the Prophets the Lord Jesus must be considered as acting in the capacity of a *surety or substitute*; and the obedience in both lights was, beyond doubt, *vicarious*. Hence His active obedience is for us, and reckoned to our account, not otherwise than if *we* had fulfilled it. The entire obedience of Christ was a compliance with the will of God as expressed in the Law. And His conscious aim in His mission, as He here expresses it, was to fulfil the Law. If, according to the federal agreement, the Law was the special sphere of Christ’s earthly work, it is obvious that without a clear conception of the Law, not only in the extent of its claims, but also in the extent of the curse which it entails, we cannot adequately know His obedience in our stead. Hence we must look at the usual threefold division of human duty, in relation to God, to ourselves, and to our fellowmen, if we would adequately apprehend the extent and breadth of this obedience.

With regard to the duties toward God, the whole life of Christ shows that He was animated by supreme love to God (John 14:31), that a desire to glorify God was His grand aim in all things (John 17:4); and that, from love to His Father, He followed with an undeviating purpose the will of God in all things (John 15:10). He gives expression to this at the threshold of the greatest trial: “But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence” (John 14:31). The trust which He reposed in the Father, the prayers and the thanksgivings recorded in His history, all suffice to show this.

The second class of duties are those which we owe to ourselves. And these, too, Jesus fulfilled in a perfect purity of conduct, in a self-denial which distinguished Him as the meek and lowly One (Matt. 11:29) and in that marked feature of His character by which He pleased not Himself (Rom. 15:3).

As to the third class of duties, again, those toward our neighbour, and which are summed up in that word which Paul designates the fulfilling of the Law—the Lord Jesus speaks of it when He says, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). This He did; and He went about during all His previous life doing good (Acts 10:38). It was in the exercise of this love that He made intercession for His own (John 17:9), and prayed for His enemies (Luke 23:34). And among these duties must be comprehended that obedience to His parents to which there is an early allusion (Luke 2:51), and which shone out so brightly on the Cross, just before the earthly relation toward his mother was dissolved forever (John 19:26).

Thus at every step we can trace the most prompt and undeviating fulfillment of the Divine Law. It was no common obedience, however, which was necessary to constitute the ground of our acceptance, but one which must needs pass through unparalleled difficulties and sorrows, which we can but faintly conceive of, and which must possess a value, on account of the dignity of His Person, such as is nothing short of infinite. The

grand commandment laid on Him, and the culmination of His whole obedience, was to die; and hence it was in the spontaneous oblation of His life that the greatness of the obedience was peculiarly displayed.

2. It was one *undivided obedience*; for Scripture knows of only one service or work in which all the elements of submission or obedience meet. It was not a double obedience. The entire life of Jesus must be apprehended as one connected deed. But the obligation was twofold, including the perfect obedience of His life, as well as the suffering of death, or the obedience unto death. The right formula, then, is not “to obey or suffer”; for the claim to a service of love with all the heart still unalterable devolves upon man as man, just as it did in man’s primeval state. Not only so: the person who expiates sin must of necessity accept the curse with the utmost alacrity and adoring love, and with a full sense that the infliction of it is to the glory of God. These two elements enter into the Lord’s obedience, and neither could be omitted. Hence only a person free from all moral defilement, and therefore not needing to satisfy for personal defects, was in a position to undergo the inconceivable suffering due to sin. What He did concurred with what He suffered, to satisfy the Divine Law, and to place man in the position which he occupied before the Fall or, rather, in a higher relation, because in a primal state and in a state of confirmation.

Had the Church been left to herself without the attacks of error, the two elements of Christ’s obedience probably would not have been so much sundered as they have often unduly been. We may distinguish, but not divide, the parts of that obedience which is one. But the obedience of Christ before His final sufferings, and during them, or, as it has been called, the active and passive obedience, may be vindicated, as two distinct but connected elements, in His propitiatory work. The active obedience belongs to the atonement, and is an essential part of the satisfaction to Divine justice, in the wide and proper acceptation of the word justice. This is a question which has been canvassed long and earnestly; and we rather refer to it in connection with this passage, because the tendency to deny the element of the active obedience is so strong in modern theology. The question is not whether the holiness and active obedience of Christ were necessary to sanctify His sufferings, which no one will call in question, but whether they were available for this alone.

Nor is this the question: whether Christ’s passive obedience is the ground of our salvation: without the other. It is *not*, whether Christ’s holy obedience was necessary to His Person as a due prerequisite to that atonement which He offered, but, whether Christ, in His entire obedience as well as in His expiatory work, won an unchallengeable title to life for such as are willing to be dependent on Him, and who were unable personally to meet the law’s demand—“This do, and thou shalt live.” The consequences of denying the active obedience of Christ are these: either God must be supposed to recede from His rights, which would just be tantamount to saying that He denied Himself, or man must be held to procure the title to Heaven by some services of his own, which are imperfect in their nature. Either supposition is inconsistent with the Gospel. If, however, we dismiss scholastic terms, the matter may be put in the following Biblical way, to which no exception can be taken: The law must be kept, and sin must be punished; and Divine wisdom and grace provided a man, that is, a God-man, who was in a position to accomplish both, and did so.

3. Christ's people are thus, through faith in Him, considered as if *they* had always fulfilled the Divine Law. This is the *second* fruit of Christ's satisfaction, as sin-bearing is the *first*. Thus, according to this essential element of Divine truth, the Lord Jesus not only bore sin, but fulfilled all the claims of the Divine Law, and so put His people in possession of a perfect and immaculate righteousness, and secured for them its due reward. For as God could not have ceased to demand punishment at the hands of sinners, from the very perfection of His nature, so He cannot but *confer a reward* from the same rectitude of His nature, when His Law has been fulfilled for them in so complete a way, and by a Person so excellent.

But to all these Biblical views of Divine truth not a few objections have been taken, and some of them of a nature that seem, at first sight, plausible and staggering.

a. Thus, it is asked, Was not Christ, as a man, bound, in common with every rational creature, to render obedience to God on His own account? The answer to this is not difficult. A right view of Christ's humiliation will suffice to show that He did not owe obedience on His own account, and that He was not under the Law by any necessity of nature. He owed obedience, not precisely because He took humanity, but because He willed to be made under the Law for us. The Law was not given for the human nature in union with a Divine Person, except as He condescended to be abased, and was made under it voluntarily, as a means to an end. Christ became man for no personal object of His own, but only to be a Mediator for others, and in that capacity to fulfil the Law.

But for this, He would not have come into the world, or have become man, hence the obedience which He voluntarily discharged was only *for His people*, not for Himself; and Scripture never deduces His active obedience from any natural or inevitable obligation, but always regards it as the end and scope of His mission. Nor can we regard the Lord Jesus as a mere man. He was still the Son of God, neither bound to assume humanity, nor submit to the laws of humanity, nor to encounter any of those numerous temptations by which His obedience was to be exercised. And He did all this spontaneously and vicariously in a humanity which He had assumed, not to be a separate person, but merely as a rational and intelligent instrument or organ, by means of which that great work of vicarious obedience could be accomplished.

b. But it is asked again, How can one be righteous, because another was obedient? The answer is obvious. The entire constitution of our race, as contradistinguished from that of other orders of being, was of this nature—that it stood or fell *in a representative*; and Christ is the second man. Men may quarrel with this arrangement and destroy themselves by proud and petulant rebellion, but it will stand, notwithstanding. Believers are treated in Christ as perfectly righteous, and as if *they* had done all that *He* did. The race is saved on the same principle on which it was placed at first: and we who believe are the fulfillers of the Law in the second man, the Lord from Heaven.—George Smeaton.