

## Studies in the Scriptures

## The Spirit Indwelling.

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom. 8:9). The possession of the Holy Spirit is the distinguishing mark of a Christian, for to be without the Spirit is proof positive that we are out of Christ—”none of His”: fearful words! And, my reader, if we are not Christ’s, whose are we? The answer must be, *The devil’s*, for there is no third possessor of men. In the past all of us were subjects of the kingdom of darkness, the slaves of Satan, the heirs of wrath; and the great questions which each one of us needs to accurately answer are, Have I been taken out of that terrible position? Have I been translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son, made an heir of God, and become indwelt by His Holy Spirit?

Observe that the Spirit and Christ go together: if we have Christ for our Redeemer, then we have the Holy Spirit for our Indweller; but if have not the Spirit, we are not Christ’s. We may be members of His visible “Church,” we may be externally united to Him by association with His people, but unless we are partakers of that vital union which arises from the indwelling of the Spirit, we are His only by name. “The Spirit *visits* many who are unregenerate, with His motions, which they resist and quench; but in all that are sanctified He *dwells*: there He resides and rules. He is there as a man at his own house, where he is constant and welcome, and has the dominion. Shall we put this question to our hearts, Who dwells, who rules, who keeps house there? Which interest has the ascendant?” (Matthew Henry).

The Spirit belongs to Christ (Heb. 1:9, Rev. 3:1) and proceeds from Him (John 1:33; 15:26; Luke 24:49). The Spirit is sent by Christ as Mediator (Acts 2:33). He is given to God’s people in consequence of Christ’s having redeemed them from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13, 14). We have nothing but what we have in and from the Son. The Spirit is given to Christ immediately, to us derivatively. He dwells in Christ by radication, in us by operation. Therefore is the Spirit called “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9) and “the Spirit of His Son” (Gal. 4:6); and so it is Christ who “liveth in” us (Gal. 2:20). Christ is the great Fountain of the waters of life, and from Him proceeds every gift and grace. It is our glorious Head who communicates or sends from Himself that Spirit who quickens, sanctifies, and preserves His people.

What high valuation we set upon the blessed Person and work of the Holy Spirit when we learn that He is the gift, yea the dying legacy which Christ bequeathed unto His disciples to supply His absence. “How would some rejoice if they could possess any relic of any thing that belonged unto our Saviour in the days of His flesh, though of no use or benefit unto them. Yea, how great a part of men, called Christians, do boast in some pretended parcels of the tree whereon He suffered. Love abused by superstition lies at the bottom of this vanity, for they would embrace anything left them by their dying Saviour. But He left them no such things, nor did ever bless and sanctify them unto any holy or sacred ends; and therefore hath the abuse of them been punished with blindness and idolatry. But this *is* openly testified unto in the Gospel: when His heart was overflowing with love unto His disciples and care for them, when He took a holy prospect of what would be their condition, work, and temptations in the world, and thereon made provision of all that they could stand in need of, He promised to leave and give unto them *His Holy*

*Spirit* to abide with them forever” (John Owen).

Plain and express are the declarations of Holy Writ on this wondrous and glorious subject. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God *dwelleth in you?*” (1 Cor. 3:16). “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6). “Observe where the Spirit is said to dwell: not in the understanding—the fatal error of many—but in the heart. Most certainly He enlightens the understanding with truth, but He does not rest there. He makes His way to, and takes up His abode in the renewed and sanctified *heart*. There He sheds abroad the love of God. There He inspires the cry of “Abba, Father.” And be that cry never so faint, it yet is the breathing of the indwelling Spirit, and meets a response in the heart of God.

“How affecting are Paul’s words to Timothy, ‘That good thing which was committed unto thee *by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us*

“Dear Lord, and shall Thy Spirit rest,  
In such a heart as mine?  
Unworthy dwelling! glorious Guest  
Favour astonishing, Divine.”

The basis upon which the Spirit takes up His abode within the believer is twofold: first, on the ground of redemption. This is illustrated most blessedly in the cleansing of the leper—figure of the sinner. “And the priest shall take some of *the blood* of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot . . . And of the rest of *the oil* that is in his hand shall the priest put upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot, *upon the blood* of the trespass offering” (Lev. 14:14, 17). Wondrous type was that: the “oil” (emblem of the Holy Spirit) was placed “upon the blood”—only on the ground of atonement accomplished could the Holy Spirit take up His abode in sinners: this at once sets aside human merits.

There must be *moral fitness* as well. The Spirit of God will not tabernacle with unbelieving rebels. “*After* (or “when”) that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13). It is to those who obey the command “Be ye not unequally yoked together” that God promises “I will dwell in them” (2 Cor. 6:16). When by repudiating all idols, receiving Christ as Lord, trusting in the merits of His sacrifice, the heart is prepared, the Spirit of God enters to take possession for Christ’s use. When we give up ourselves to the Lord, He owneth the dedication by making our bodies the temples of the Holy Spirit, there to maintain His interests against all the opposition of the Devil.

In considering the Spirit indwelling believers we need to be on our guard against entertaining any conception of this grand fact which is gross and dishonouring to His Person. He does not so indwell as to impart His *essential* properties or perfections—such as omniscience or omnipotence; it would be blasphemy so to speak; but His saving and sanctifying operations are communicated to us as the sun is said to enter a room, when its bright beams and genial warmth are seen and felt therein. Further, we must not think that the graces and benign influences of the Spirit abide in us in the selfsame manner and measure they did in Christ: no, for God “giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him” (John 3:34)—in Him all fullness dwells.

Leaving for our next article other aspects of this theme, let us now point out that what has been before us lays the basis of the most solemn appeal and powerful exhortation. Is my body a temple of the Holy Spirit? then how devoted should it be to God and His service! Am I indwelt by the Spirit of Christ? then how I ought to lend my ear to His softest whisper, my will to His gentlest sway, my heart to His sacred influence. In disregarding His voice, in not yielding to His promptings, He is grieved, Christ is dishonoured, and we are the losers. The greatest blessing we possess is the indwelling Spirit: let us seek grace to conduct ourselves accordingly.—A.W.P.

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## **The Epistle to the Hebrews.**

### **89. *Divine Chastisement*: 12:7, 8.**

The all-important matter in connection with Divine chastenings, so far as the Christian is concerned, is the spirit in which he *receives* them. Whether or not we “profit” from them, turns entirely on the exercises of our minds and hearts under them. The advantages or disadvantages which outward things bring to us is to be measured by the effects they produce in us. Material blessings become curses if our souls are not the gainers thereby, while material losses prove benedictions if our spiritual graces are enriched therefrom. The difference between our spiritual impoverishment or our spiritual enrichment from the varied experiences of this life will very largely be determined by our heart-attitude toward them, the spirit in which they are encountered, and our subsequent conduct under them. It is all summed up in that word “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7).

As the careful reader passes from verse to verse of Hebrews 12:3-11, he will observe how the Holy Spirit has repeatedly stressed this particular point, namely, *the spirit in which* God’s chastisements are to be received. First, the tired and troubled saint is bidden to consider Him who was called upon to pass through a far rougher and deeper sea of suffering than any which His followers encounter, and this contemplation of Him is urged “lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (v. 3). Second, we are bidden to “despise not” the chastenings of the Lord, “nor faint” when we are rebuked of Him (v. 5). Third, our Christian duty is to “endure” chastening as becometh the sons of God (v. 7). Fourth, it is pointed out that since we gave reverence to our earthly fathers when they corrected us, much more should we “rather be in subjection” unto our heavenly Father (v. 9). Finally, we learn there will only be the “peaceable fruit of righteousness” issuing from our afflictions, if we are duly “exercised thereby” (v. 11).

In the previous articles we have sought to point out some of the principal considerations which should help the believer to receive God’s chastisements in a meet and becoming spirit. We have considered the blessed example left us by our Captain: may we who have enlisted under His banner diligently follow the same. We have seen that, however severe may be our trials, they are by no means extreme: we have not yet “resisted unto blood”—martyrdom has not overtaken *us*, as it did many who preceded us: shall we succumb to the showers, when they defied the fiercest storms! We have dwelt upon the needs-be for Divine reproof and correction. We have pointed out the blessed distinction there is between Divine punishment and Divine chastisement. We have contemplated the source from which all proceeds, namely, the *love* of our Father. We have shown the imperative necessity for the exercise of faith, if the heart is to be kept in peace while the rod is upon us.

“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (Heb. 12:7, 8). In these verses another consideration is presented for the comfort of those whom God is chastening. That of which we are here reminded is, that, when the Christian comports himself properly under Divine correction, he gives proof of his Divine sonship. If he endure them in a manner becoming to his profession, he supplies evidence of his Divine adoption. Blessed indeed is this, an unanswerable reply to Satan’s evil insinuation: so far from the disciplinary afflictions which the believer encounters showing that God loves him not, they afford a golden

opportunity for him to exercise and display *his* unquestioning love of the Father. If we undergo chastisements with patience and perseverance, then do we make manifest, both to ourselves and to others, the genuineness of our profession.

In the verses which are now before us the Apostle draws an inference from and makes a particular application of what had been previously affirmed, thereby confirming the exhortation. There are three things therein to be particularly noted. First, the duty which has been enjoined: Divine chastisements are to be “endured” by us: that which is included and involved by that term we shall seek to show in what follows. Second, the great benefit which is gained by a proper endurance of those chastisements: evidence is thereby obtained that God is dealing with us as “sons”: not as enemies whom He hates, but as dear children whom He loves. Third, a solemn contrast is then drawn, calculated to unmask hypocrites and expose empty professors: those who are without Divine chastisement are not sons at all, but “bastards”—claiming the Church for their mother, yet having not God for their Father: what is signified thereby will appear in the sequel.

“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons” (Heb. 12:7). This statement supplements what was before us in verse 5. Both of them speak of the spirit in which chastisements are to be received by the Christian, only with this difference: verse 5 gives the negative side, verse 7 the positive. On the one hand, we are not to “despise” or “faint” under them; on the other hand, they are to be “endured.” It has become an English proverb that “what cannot be cured must be endured,” which is but another way of saying that we must grit our teeth and make the best of a bad job. It scarcely needs pointing out that the Holy Spirit has not used the term here in its lowest and carnal sense, but rather in its noblest and spiritual signification.

In order to ascertain the force and scope of any word which is used in Holy Scripture neither its acceptance in ordinary speech nor its dictionary etymology is to be consulted; instead, a concordance must be used, so as to find out how it is actually employed on the sacred page. In the case now before us, we do not have far to seek, for in the immediate context it is found in a connection where it cannot be misunderstood. In verse 2 we read that the Saviour “endured the cross,” and in verse 3 that He “endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.” It was in the highest and noblest sense that Christ “endured” His sufferings: He remained steadfast under the sorest trials, forsaking not the path of duty. He meekly and heroically bore the acutest afflictions without murmuring against or fainting under them. How, then, is the Christian to conduct himself in the fires? We subjoin a sevenfold answer.

First, the Christian is to “endure” chastisement *inquiringly*. While it be true that all chastisement is not the consequence of personal disobedience or sinful conduct, yet much of it is so, and therefore it is always the part of wisdom for us to seek for the *why* of it. There is a cause for every effect, and a reason for all God’s dealings. The Lord does not act capriciously, nor does He afflict willingly (Lam. 3:33). Every time the Father’s rod falls upon us it is a call to self-examination, for pondering the path of our feet, for heeding that repeated word in Haggai “Consider your ways” (1:5). It is our bounden duty to search ourselves and seek to discover the reason of God’s displeasure. This may not be a pleasant exercise, and if we are honest with ourselves it is likely to occasion us much concern and sorrow; nevertheless, a broken and contrite heart is never despised by the One with whom we have to do.

Alas, only too often this self-examination and inquiring into the cause of our

affliction is quite neglected, *relief* therefrom being the uppermost thought in the sufferer's mind. There is a most solemn warning upon this point in 2 Chronicles 16:12, 13, "And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease *he sought not to the LORD*, but to the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers." How many professing Christians do likewise today. As soon as sickness strikes them, their first thought and desire is not that the affliction may be sanctified unto their souls, but how quickly their bodies may be relieved. We do not fully agree with some brethren who affirm that the Christian ought never to call in a doctor, and that the whole medical fraternity is of the Devil—in such case the Holy Spirit had never denominated Luke "the beloved physician," nor had Christ said the sick "need" a physician. On the other hand, it is unmistakably evident that physical healing is not the first need of an ailing saint.

Second, the Christian is to "endure" chastisement *prayerfully*. If our inquiry is to be prosecuted successfully, then are we in urgent need of Divine assistance. Those who rely upon their own judgment are certain to err. As our hearts are exercised as to the *cause* of the chastening, we need to seek earnestly unto God, for it is only in *His* light that we "see light" (Psa. 36:9). It is not sufficient to examine ourselves: we must request the Divine Physician to diagnose our case, saying "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psa 139:23, 24). Nevertheless, let it be pointed out that such a request cannot be presented sincerely unless we have personally endeavoured to thoroughly search ourselves and purpose to continue so doing.

Prayer was never designed to be a substitute for the personal discharge of duty: rather is it appointed as a means for procuring help therein. While it remains our duty to honestly scrutinise our hearts and inspect our ways, measuring them by the holy requirements of Scripture, yet only the immediate assistance of the Spirit will enable us to prosecute our quest with any real profit and success. Therefore we need to enter the secret place and inquire of the Lord "show me *wherefore* Thou contendest with me" (Job 10:2). If we sincerely ask Him to make known unto us what it is in our ways He is displeased with, and for which He is now rebuking us, He will not mock us. Request of Him the hearing ear, and He will tell what is wrong. Let there be no reserve, but an honest desire to know what needs correcting, and He will show you.

Third, the Christian is to "endure" chastisement *humbly*. When the Lord has responded to your request and has made known the cause of His chastening, see to it that you quarrel not with Him. If there be any feeling that the scourging is heavier than you deserve, the thought must be promptly rejected. "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment (or chastisement) of his sins?" (Lam. 3:39). If we take issue with the Most High, we shall only be made to smart the more for our pains. Rather must we seek grace to heed that word, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God" (1 Peter 5:6). Ask Him to quicken conscience, shine into your heart, and bring to light the hidden things of darkness, so that you may perceive your inward sins as well as your outward. And then will you exclaim, "I know, O LORD, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (Psa. 119:75).

Fourth, the Christian is to "endure" chastisement *patiently*. Probably that is the prime thought in our text: steadfastness, a resolute continuance in the path of duty, an abiding service of God with all our hearts, notwithstanding the present trial, is what we are called

unto. But Satan whispers, "What is the use? you *have* endeavoured, earnestly, to please the Lord, and how is He rewarding you? You cannot satisfy Him: the more you give, the more He demands; He is a hard and tyrannical Master." Such vile suggestions must be put from us as the malicious lies of him who hates God and seeks to encompass our destruction. God has only your good in view when the rod is laid upon you. Just as the grass needs to be mown to preserve its freshness, as the vine has to be pruned to ensure its fruitfulness, as friction is necessary to produce electric power, as fire alone will consume the dross, even so the discipline of trial is indispensable for the education of the Christian.

"Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9). Keep before you the example of Christ: He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, yet before His shearers He was "dumb." He never fretted or murmured, and we are to "follow His steps." "Let patience have her perfect work" (James 1:4). For this we have to be much in prayer; for this we need the strengthening help of the Holy Spirit. God tells us that chastisement is not "joyous" but "grievous": if it were not, it would not be "chastening." But He also assures us that "*afterwards* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11). Lay hold of that word "*afterwards*": anticipate the happy sequel, and in the comfort thereof continue pressing forward along the path of duty. "Better is *the end* of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit" (Eccl. 7:8).

Fifth, the Christian is to "endure" chastisement *believingly*. This was how Job endured his: "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (1:21). Ah, he looked behind all secondary causes and perceived that above the Sabeans and Chaldeans was Jehovah Himself. But is it not at *this* point we most often fail? Only too frequently we see only the injustice of men, the malice of the world, the enmity of Satan, in our trials: that is walking by sight. Faith brings God into the scene. "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living" (Psa. 27:13). It is an adage of the world that "Seeing is believing": but in the spiritual realm the order is reversed: there we must "believe" in order to "see." And *what is it* which the saint most desires to "see"? Why, "the goodness of the Lord," for unless he sees *that*, he "faints." And *how* does faith see "the goodness of the Lord" in chastisements? By viewing them as proceeding from God's love, as ordered by His wisdom, and as designed for our profit.

As the bee sucks honey out of the bitter herb, so faith may extract much good from afflictions. Faith can turn water into wine, and make bread out of stones. Unbelief gives up in the hour of trial and sinks in despair; but faith keeps the head above water and hopefully looks for deliverance. Human reason may not be able to understand the mysterious ways of God, but faith knows that the sorest disappointments and the heaviest losses are among the "all things" which work together for our good. Carnal friends may tell us that it is useless to strive any longer; but faith says, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job. 13:5). What a wonderful promise is that in Psalm 91:15, "I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him." Ah, but faith alone can feel that Presence, and faith alone can enjoy now the assured deliverance. It was because of the joy set before Him (by the exercise of faith) that Christ "endured the cross," and only as we view God's precious promises will we patiently endure *our* cross.

Sixth, the Christian is to "endure" chastisement *hopefully*. Though quite distinct, the

line of demarcation between faith and hope is not a very broad one, and in some of the things said above we have rather anticipated what belongs to this particular point. “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man *seeth*, why doth he yet *hope for*? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom. 8:24, 25). This passage clearly intimates that “hope” relates to *the future*. “Hope” in Scripture is far more than a warrantless wish: it is a firm conviction and a comforting expectation of a future good. Now inasmuch as chastisement, patiently and believingly endured, is certain to issue in blessing, hope is to be exercised. “When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10): that is the language of confident expectation.

While it be true that faith supports the heart under trial, it is equally a fact—though less recognized—that *hope* buoys it up. When the wings of hope are spread, the soul is able to soar above the present distress, and inhale the invigorating air of future bliss. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; *while* we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen” (2 Cor. 4:17, 18): that also is the language of joyous anticipation. No matter how dark may be the clouds which now cover thy horizon, ere long the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. Then seek to walk in the steps of our father Abraham, “who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations” (Rom. 4:18).

Seventh, the Christian is to “endure” chastisement *thankfully*. Be grateful, my despondent brother, that the great God cares so much for a worm of the earth as to be at such pains in your spiritual education. O what a marvel that the Maker of Heaven and earth should go to so much trouble in His son-training of us! Fail not, then, to thank Him for His goodness, His faithfulness, His patience, toward thee. “We are chastened of the Lord (now), that we should not be condemned with the world” in the day to come (1 Cor. 11:32): what cause for praise is this! If the Lord Jesus, on the awful night of His betrayal, “sang an hymn” (Matt. 26:30), how much more should we, under our infinitely lighter sorrows, sound forth the praises of our God. May Divine grace enable both writer and reader to “endure chastening” in this sevenfold spirit, and then will God be glorified and we advantaged.

“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons” (Heb. 12:7). This does not mean that upon our discharge of the duty enjoined God will act toward us “as with sons,” for this He does in the chastisements themselves, as the Apostle has clearly shown. No, rather, the force of these words is, If ye *endure* chastening, then you have the evidence in yourselves that God deals with you as sons. In other words, the more I am enabled to conduct myself under troubles as becometh a child of God, the clearer is the proof of my Divine adoption. The new birth is known by its fruits, and the more my spiritual graces are exercised under testing, the more do I make manifest my regeneration. Furthermore, the clearer the evidence of my regeneration, the clearer do I perceive the dealings of a *Father* toward me in His discipline.

The patient endurance of chastenings is not only of great price in the sight of God, but is of inestimable value unto the souls of them that believe. While it be true that the sevenfold description we have given above depicts not the spirit in which all Christians *do* receive chastening, but rather the spirit in which they *ought* to receive it, and that all coming short thereof is to be mourned and confessed before God; nevertheless, it remains that no truly born-again person continues to either utterly “despise” the rod or completely



“faint” beneath it. No, herein lies a fundamental difference between the good-ground hearer and the stony-ground one: of the former it is written, “The righteous also shall hold on his way” (Job 17:9); of the latter, it is recorded, “Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, by and by he is offended” (Matt. 13:21).

A mere suffering of things calamitous is not, in itself, any evidence of our acceptance with God. Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upwards, so that afflictions or chastisements are no pledges of our adoption; but if we “endure” them with any measure of real faith, submission and perseverance, so that we “faint not” under them—abandon not the Faith or entirely cease seeking to serve the Lord—then do we demonstrate our Divine sonship. So too it is the proper frame of our minds and the due exercises of our hearts which lets in a sense of God’s gracious design toward us in His chastenings. The Greek word for “dealeth with us as with sons” is very blessed: literally it signifies “he *offered Himself* unto us”: He proposeth Himself not as an enemy, but as a Friend; not as toward strangers, but toward His own beloved children.

“But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (Heb. 12:8). These words present the reverse side of the argument established in the preceding verse: since it be true, both in the natural and in the spiritual realm, that disciplinary dealing is inseparable from the relation between fathers and sons, so that an evidence of adoption is to be clearly inferred therefrom, it necessarily follows that those who are “without chastisement” are not children at all. What we have here is a testing and discriminative rule, which it behooves each of us to measure himself by. That we may not err therein, let us attend to its several terms.

When the Apostle says “But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers” it is obvious that his words are not to be taken in their widest latitude: the word “all” refers not to all men, but to the “sons” of whom he is speaking. In like manner, “chastisement” is not here to be taken for everything that is grievous and afflictive, for none entirely escape trouble in this life. But *comparatively* speaking, there are those who are largely exempt: such the Psalmist referred to when he said, “For there are no bands in *their* death: but their strength is firm. *They* are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men” (Psa. 73:4, 5). No, it is God’s *disciplinary* dealings which the Apostle is speaking of, corrective instruction which promotes holiness. There are many professors who, whatever trials they may experience, are without any Divine *chastisement* for their good.

Those who are “without chastisement” are but “bastards.” It is common knowledge that bastards are despised and neglected—though unjustly so—by those who illegitimately begot them: they are not the objects of that love and care as those begotten in wedlock. This solemn fact has its counterpart in the religious realm. There is a large class who are destitute of Divine chastisements, for they give no evidence that they receive them, endure them, or improve them. There is a yet more solemn meaning in this word: under the law “bastards” *had no right of inheritance*: “A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD” (Deut. 23:2): no cross, no crown: to be without God’s disciplinary chastenings now means that we must be excluded from His presence hereafter. Here, then, is a further reason why the Christian should be contented with his present lot: the Father’s rod upon him now evidences his title unto the Inheritance in the day to come.—A.W.P.

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## **The Life of David.**

### *41. His Condemnation by Michal.*

In the closing verses of 2 Samuel 6 there is to be seen a mingling of the lights and shadows: the blessed fruits of the Spirit appear, but the evil works of Satan are also evident. As it often is in the natural world, so we find it in the moral realm—conflicting forces clash with each other: sunshine and rain, calm and storm, summer and winter constantly alternate. That which is spread before our senses in nature is but an external adumbration of what exists in the invisible: two mighty beings, diametrically opposed to each other, the Lord God and the Devil, are ever at work. Such too is the life of the individual Christian, for he is a miniature replica of the world: in him “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5:17), and consequently in his experience there is ever a mingling of the lights and shadows.

Before it ended, the joyful day of David’s bringing up of the Ark to Jerusalem was overcast by a domestic cloud. There was one in his own household who was incapable of entering into the fervour of his heart toward God, who was irritated by his devotion, and who bitterly condemned his zeal: one who was near and dear to him railed upon the king for his earnestness in Jehovah’s cause and service. The enmity of the Serpent was stirred by the honour accorded the holy Ark, the procession of the Levites, the jubilation of Israel’s ruler, and the offerings which had been presented before the Lord. The anointed eye has no difficulty in discerning behind Michal him who is the inveterate Enemy of God and His people, and in her biting denunciation of David, the Christian of today may learn what to expect from those who are not one with him in the Lord.

Our last article closed at the verse “So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet” (2 Sam. 6:15). Our present lesson opens with “and as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul’s daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart” (v. 16), and, as we shall see from the sequel, that secret hatred of David was shortly after vented in open opposition. Let not those who are engaged in the happy service of the Lord be surprised when they encounter antagonism; when, so far from their efforts being appreciated by all, there will be some who decry and denounce them. It was so with the prophets; it was so with Christ’s forerunner; it was so with the Lord of glory Himself; it was so with His Apostles; and it will continue to be so with all His faithful servants unto the end of time. It cannot be otherwise while Satan is out of the Pit.

“And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul’s daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart” (2 Sam. 6:16). Saul himself had grievously neglected the public worship of Jehovah, and his daughter appears to have had no sense of the importance and value of heavenly things. It could hardly be expected that a woman who had idols, “teraphim,” in her house (1 Sam. 19:13), cared anything for the holy Ark, and hence she regarded her husband with scorn as she beheld his show of gratitude and joy. Poor creature, though a king’s daughter, and married to the present monarch of Israel, Michal was quite incapable of entering into the gladness and zeal of the man after God’s own heart. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”

(1 Cor. 2:14).

Yes, not only is the natural man (the unregenerate) unable to apprehend the things of the Spirit, but that of which He is the Author appears as “foolishness” unto him. When the Lord Jesus was so occupied in ministering unto the needy multitude that He and His disciples “could not so much as eat bread,” we are told that His kinsmen “went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is *beside Himself*” (Mark 3:21). When the Apostles began to “speak with other tongues,” the wondrous works of God, some mocked and said, “These men are full of new wine” (Acts 2). When Paul reasoned so earnestly with Agrippa, he answered “thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad” (Acts 26:24). And, my reader, there is something seriously lacking in you and me if similar charges are not made against us today!

The world will tolerate religion so long as its carnal repose is not disturbed; yea, while it provides a garb to hide its shame, the world approves. But let the high claims of God be pressed, let it be insisted on that HE demands the *first* place in our affections, thoughts, lives, and such a message is at once distasteful. The professing Christian who attends the church on Sunday and the theatre during the week, who contributes occasionally to missionary societies but underpays his servants and overcharges his customers, is commended for his broadmindedness and shrewdness. But the real Christian who lives in the fear of the Lord all the day long, and who conducts himself as a stranger and pilgrim in this scene, is condemned as a bigot and puritan. Let the saint weep over the dishonoring of his Lord by many that bear His name, or leap for joy in His service as David did, and like David he will be dubbed a fanatic and his wholeheartedness will be similarly censured.

“And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD” (2 Sam. 6:17). The word “tabernacle” does not signify a building made of wood or stone, but rather a tent. Joshua had erected such an one centuries before, but doubtless that had decayed and perished long ago. It is to be noted that David did not bring the Ark into his own residence, but into a separate curtained canopy which he had provided for it. In the days of Solomon a more stately temple was built to house the sacred coffer. As the Ark was so manifestly a figure of Christ, its abiding first in a lowly tent and then in a magnificent edifice, no doubt foreshadowed the twofold state of the Saviour: first in humiliation, and then in glory.

“And David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.” Now that his noble design had been completely effected, David presented suitable sacrifices unto the Lord. His object in so doing was probably twofold: to express his deep gratitude unto God for the success of his undertaking, and to supplicate a continuance of His favours. An important lesson for us is therein inculcated: praises are to mingle with our prayers: God is to be recognized and owned amid our joys as well as sought unto under our sorrows. “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms” (James 5:13): the first is easily remembered, but the latter is often forgotten. God has appointed “feasts” as well as “fasts,” for He is to be given the first place by us at all times.

“And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts” (2 Sam. 6:18). This seems to have been an official act, consonant with the position to which God had instated

him. The expression occurs first in Genesis 14:19, where we find that Melchizedek, priest of the Most High, “blessed” Abraham. At a later date, Moses (Exo. 39:43), Joshua (Joshua 22:6), and Solomon (1 Kings 8:14) “blessed the people”: in each case it was their leaders who did so. The added words that David “blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts” signifies that he, formally and authoritatively, pronounced His blessing upon those who had been committed to his care.

As a prophet of God, and as king over the people, it was both David’s privilege and duty to do so, for “without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better” (Heb. 7:7). In this act we may see David prefiguring his greater Son and Lord. Of Him it is recorded, “And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and *blessed* them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:50, 51). There we behold Christ as the Prophet unto and the King over the Church, officially blessing its ministers: that was His final act ere He left this earth and took His place on high, to administer all the blessings which He had purchased for His people; and unto the end of the age the efficacy of His benediction abides. If by grace the writer and reader be among those whom *He* has blest, then are we blessed indeed.

“And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed every one to his house” (2 Sam. 6:19). Those who accompanied David on his joyous undertaking were now bounteously feasted: having presented his thank offerings unto the Lord, presents were now made to the people. “When the heart is engaged in cheerfulness, that should open the hand in liberality: as they to whom God is merciful ought to show mercy in forgiving; so they to whom God is bountiful ought to exercise bounty in giving” (Matthew Henry). Compare Esther 9:22: the feast of Purim, celebrating the Jews’ deliverance from the plot of Haman, was observed with “sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.” By this act David confirmed his interest in the people, and would endear himself to them, so that they would be encouraged to attend him again should he have occasion to call them. The typical significance is obvious.

“Then David returned to bless his household” (2 Sam. 6:20). In attending to his official duties, David did not overlook his domestic responsibilities. “Ministers must not think that their public performances will excuse them from their family worship: but when they have, with their instructions and prayers, blessed the solemn assemblies, they must return in the same manner to bless their households, for with them they are in a particular manner charged” (Matthew Henry). Nor must they be deterred from the discharge of this obligation and privilege should there be those under their roof whose hearts do not accompany them in such holy exercises: God must be honoured by the head of the house and the family altar maintained, no matter how much Satan may oppose the same.

“And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!” (v. 20). Being a total stranger to the zeal for God which filled David, incapable of appreciating his elevation of heart over the bringing home of the Ark, she regarded his joyous dancing as unbecoming a king, and imagined he was bemeaning himself in the eyes of his

subjects. Having no heart herself for God, she despised the exuberance of one who had. Being obsessed with thoughts of temporal dignity and glory, she looked upon David's transports of religious fervour in the midst of his people, as degrading to his high office. "David *the brave captain*, leading forth the people to battle and returning with them in triumph, she admired; but David *the saint*, leading the people in the ordinances of God, and setting before them the example of fervency of spirit in His service, she despised" (Thomas Scott).

Base ingratitude was this for Michal to thus revile the very one who had been so devoted to her that he had declined to accept a crown unless she was restored to him (2 Sam. 3:13). Fearful sin was this to insult and denounce her lord, whom God required her to reverence. Having secretly scorned him in her heart, she now openly chides with her lips, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." She was highly displeased with his deep veneration for the holy Ark, and basely misrepresented his conduct by charging him with indecent dancing before it. There can be no doubt that her charge was a false one, for it is a common thing for those who have no piety themselves to paint others in false colours and hold them up as the most odious characters.

But the wicked conduct of Michal is not difficult to account for: at heart she was a partisan of the fallen house of Saul, and a despiser of Jehovah and His worship. As she grew older, her character had hardened in its lines and became more and more like her father's in its insatiable pride, and in its half dread and half hatred of David. Now she poured forth her venom in these mocking jibes. Because David had laid aside his royal robes, and had girded himself in a plain "linen ephod" (v. 14), she vilely charged him with immodesty. O how empty professors hate the true pilgrim spirit! Nothing riles them more than to see the children of God refusing to conform to the extravagant and flesh-pleasing fashions of the world, and instead, dress and act as becometh the followers of Him, who, when here, had "not where to lay His head" (Matt. 8:20).

"And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD" (2 Sam. 6:21). David now vindicated himself. He had no reason to be ashamed of his conduct, for what he had done was only for the glory of God. No matter through what distorted lens the evil eyes of Michal might view it, his conscience was clear. If our own hearts condemn us not, we need not be troubled over the censures of the ungodly. Moreover, had not God recently elevated him to the throne? then it was but fitting that he should show his jubilant gratitude. There was an implied reproof in his reference to Saul and "all his house": God had not been honoured in *their* courts—all the more reason, then, why He should be publicly magnified now.

"And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour" (v. 22). David replies to Michal's evil charge in the language of irony, which was suitably answering "a fool according to his folly" (Prov. 26:5). The force of his words is, If because of my setting aside the showy robes of imperial majesty and clothing myself in plain linen, and dancing before the Ark of God's glory I am regarded by *you* as mean, then I, who am but "dust and ashes" in the sight of the Almighty, will humble myself yet more before Him; and so far from the common people despising me for the same, they will esteem one who takes a lowly place before the Lord. The more we be condemned for well-doing, the more

resolute should we be in it.

“Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death” (2 Sam. 6:23). Thus did God punish David’s wife for her sin. “She unjustly reproached David for his devotion, and therefore God justly put her under the perpetual reproach of barrenness. They that honour God, He will honour; but those that despise Him, and His servants and service, shall be lightly esteemed” (Matthew Henry). There is a searching application to this verse which holds good today. We often hear quoted the first half of 1 Samuel 2:30, but the second half is not so frequently cited. It is just as true that they who “despise” the Lord shall be “lightly esteemed” by

Him as those who “honour” Him shall be “honoured” by Him. A solemn example of this is found here: in mocking David, Michal insulted his Master (Luke 10:16)! Beware how you slight or speak evil against God’s servants, lest spiritual “barrenness” be your portion!—A.W.P.

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## **The Divine Covenants.**

### *3. The Noahic.*

*Noah is the connecting link between “the world that then was” which “being overflowed with water, perished,” and the earth which now is “reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:6, 7). He lived upon both, was preserved from the awful judgment which swallowed up the former, and given dominion over the latter in its pristine state. A period of sixteen centuries intervened between the covenant of works which God entered into with Adam, and the covenant of grace which He made with Noah. So far as the Scriptures inform us, no other covenant was instituted by the Lord during that interval. There were Divine revelations, Divine promises and precepts, in fact the antediluvians enjoyed very much more light from Heaven than they are commonly credited with. But during those early centuries, where grace abounded, sin did much more abound, until “God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth” (Gen. 6:12).*

“The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing” (1 Peter 3:20), and “space” was granted the ungodly to turn from their wickedness. Enoch prophesied “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” (Jude 14, 15). Noah too was “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5), and therefore must have warned his hearers that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18). But it was all to no avail: “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Eccl. 8:11). The evil continued to increase, till the Divine patience was thoroughly exhausted. The threatened punishment came, and the ungodly were swept from the earth, and the first great period in the world’s history closed in judgment.

The facts briefly stated above require to be carefully kept in mind, for they throw not a little light upon the covenant which the Lord God made with Noah. They explain the reason for the transaction itself, and impart at least some aid towards a right conception of the particular form it took. The background of that covenant was Divine judgment: drastic, unsparing, effectual. Every individual of the ungodly race perished: the great deluge completely relieved the earth of their presence and crimes. In due time the water subsided, and Noah and his family came from their place of refuge to people the earth afresh. It is scarcely possible for us to form any adequate conception of the feelings of Noah on this occasion. The terrible and destructive visitation in which the hand of God was so manifest, must have given him an impression of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and of the ineffable holiness and righteousness of God such as he had not previously entertained.

“In one respect the world seemed to have suffered material loss by the visitation of the deluge. Along with the agents and instruments of evil there had also been swept away by it the emblems of grace and hope—paradise with its tree of life and its cherubim of glory. We can conceive Noah and his household, when they first left the ark, looking around with melancholy feelings on the position they now occupied, not only as being the sole survivors of a numerous offspring, but also as being themselves bereft of the



sacred memorials which bore evidence of a happy past, and exhibited the pledge of a yet happier future. An important link of communion with Heaven, it might well have seemed was broken by the change thus brought through the deluge on the world" (P. Fairbairn).

As we pointed out many years ago in our "Gleanings in Genesis," the contents of Genesis 4, though exceedingly terse, intimate that from the time of Adam onwards, there was a specific place where God was to be worshipped. When we are told in verses 3 and 4 that Cain and Abel "brought an offering unto the Lord," the implication is clear that they came to some particular location of His appointing. When we read that Abel brought "the firstling of his flock *and the fat thereof*" we cannot escape the conclusion that there was an *altar* where the victim must be offered and upon which its fat must be burned. These necessary inferences receive clear corroboration in the words of verse 16, "And Cain *went out* from the presence of the LORD," which can hardly mean less than that he was formally prohibited from the place where the presence of Jehovah was symbolically manifest. That place of worship appears to have been located at the east of the Garden of Eden.

In their commentary on Genesis, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown translate the last verse of Genesis 3 as follows, "And He (God) dwelt at the east of the Garden of Eden between the Cherubim, as a Shekinah (a fire tongue or fire-sword) to keep open the way to the tree of life." The same thought is presented in the Jerusalem Targum. Thus it would seem that when man was excluded from the Garden, God established a mercy-seat, protected by cherubim, the fire tongue or sword being the emblem of His presence, and whosoever would worship Him must approach that mercy-seat with a bloody sacrifice. We may add that the Hebrew word "shaken" which in Genesis 3:24 is rendered "placed," is defined in Young's concordance "to tabernacle"; eighty-three times in the Old Testament it is translated "to dwell," as in Exodus 25:8, etc.

The signal and sovereign mercy which God had displayed toward Noah must also have deeply affected him. He would be strongly constrained to give some sweet expression to the overwhelming emotions of his heart. Accordingly, his very first act on taking possession of the new earth was to engage in a service of solemn worship: "And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar" (Gen. 8:20). Nothing could have been more becoming and appropriate: it was an acknowledgment of his deep obligations to the Lord, an expression of gratitude for the rich grace shown him, an intimation of his sense of personal unworthiness, an exercise of faith in the promised Seed through whom alone Divine blessings were conferred, and an avowal of his determination to consecrate himself to God and walk before Him in humble obedience.

It was in connection with this act of worship that the Lord God now entered into a covenant with the new head of the race; but before examining its terms, let us further ponder the circumstances in which Noah now found himself, and try to form some idea of the thoughts which must then have exercised his mind. "However remarkable the deliverance he had experienced, whatever the conclusions he might have been warranted to draw from it in regard to the certainty of the Divine favour towards himself, and however ardent his gratitude in the view of the great mercy of which he had been the recipient, he was still a man, and his novel situation could hardly fail to awaken anxiety and apprehension on several distinct grounds. He and his family were few in number, and with very slender means of shelter and defense in their reach. His condition was far from

secure.

“Although the natural disposition of the animals preserved with him in the ark had been by Divine power brought under restraint, he could not be ignorant that, when again left at large, their natural tempers and the instinctive ferocity of some of them would be resumed and multiplying, in a more rapid ratio than his own family, he might probably have distrusted his ability to cope with them, and might have anticipated the likelihood of perishing before their destructive violence. He knew, too, that the heart of man was full of evil, and that however his naturally bad propensities may have been awed by the fearful catastrophe from which he had recently escaped, the effect of it was not likely to be lasting; the time he might well fear would come—and that at no distant period—when the sinful tendencies of the heart would acquire strength, would be excited by temptation, and soon issue in the most disastrous consequences.

“He must have had a distinct and painful remembrance of those sins of lawlessness and violence with which he had been familiar in the old world. He might reasonably dread their repetition, and look forward to times when human life would be held cheap, and when wanton passion would not scruple to sacrifice it in the furtherance of its selfish purposes, unrestrained by any competent authority, and only feebly checked by the dread of revenge. The prospect would have been anything but cheering, and it cannot be thought surprising that he should have contemplated it with feelings of concern and dismay. He could form his views of the future simply from what he knew of the past, and his memory could recall little but what was painful and distressing” (John Kelly, 1861).

But more; Noah had not only witnessed the outbreaks of human depravity in its worst forms, but he had also seen the failure of all the religious means employed to restrain the same. Outside of his own little family, the worship of God had entirely ceased, the preaching of His servants was completely disregarded, and profligacy and violence universally prevailed. Even his building of the ark—”by the which he condemned the world” (Heb. 11:7)—had no effect upon the wicked. The Divine warnings were openly flouted until the flood came and swept them all away. Nor had Noah any reason now to believe that human nature had undergone any radical change for the better, or that sin had been eradicated from the hearts of the few survivors of the deluge. As Noah reflected upon the past, his anticipations of the future must have been anxious and gloomy.

What assurance could he have that the evil propensities of fallen men would not again break out in works just as heinous as any performed by those who had found a watery grave? Would not men still be impatient against Divine restraints and treat the Divine warnings with reckless contempt? Were such fears realized, should the corruption of the human heart once more develop in enormities and unlimited crimes, then what else could be expected than a repetition of the judgment which he had just survived? And where could such a recurrence of crime and punishment end? Did there not seem but one likely answer: the Almighty, in His righteous indignation, would utterly exterminate a guilty race which refused to be reclaimed. Such fears would not be the bogies of unwarranted pessimism, but the natural and logical conclusions to be drawn from what had already transpired upon the theatre of this earth. It is only by thus entering into the exercises of Noah’s heart that we can really appreciate the *pertinency* of that assurance which Jehovah now gave him.

But as we endeavour to follow the thoughts which must have presented themselves to

our patriarch's mind, we must not overlook one bright ray of comfort which doubtless did much to relieve the darkness of his trepidations. When God had declared unto Noah, "And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die," He also added, "*But with thee will I establish My covenant*" (Gen. 6:17, 18). That gracious promise provided a resting place for his poor heart during the dreary days and months when he had been shut up in the ark, and must also have imparted some cheer as he now stood upon the judgment-swept and desolate earth. Yet, who that has any personal experience of the fierce assaults made by carnal reasonings (unbelief), can doubt but what Noah's faith now met with a painful conflict as it sought to withstand the influence of gloom and anxiety.

Some readers may consider that we have gone beyond due bounds in what has been said above, and that we have drawn too much upon our own imagination. But Scripture says, "As in water face answereth to face, *so the heart of man to man*" (Prov. 27:19). How had you felt, dear reader, had *you* been in Noah's place? What had been my thoughts, had I been circumstanced as he was? Would we had no such fears as those we have sought to describe? Had we anticipated the unknown future without any such dark forebodings? Could we have passed through such a fearful ordeal and have returned to an earth from which the last of our former companions had been swept away, without wondering if the next storm of Divine judgment would not quite complete its awful work? Would we, only eight all told, have been quite confident that the wild beasts would leave us unmolested? Why, it is *just this very mental background* which enables us to appreciate the tender mercy in what God now said unto Noah.

"And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you (why such repetition, but for the sake of emphasis?) shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; *into your hand are they delivered*. Every moving thing that liveth shall be *meat for you*; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat...And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish My covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish My covenant with you; *neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood*; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen. 9:1-4, 8-11). What does such language *imply*? What fears were such gracious declarations designed to calm? What other conclusions can logically be drawn from these verses than those that we have sketched in the preceding paragraphs? To the writer at least, an endeavour to place ourselves in Noah's position and follow out the thoughts most likely to engage his mind, has caused us to admire as never before *the suitability* of the Divine revelation then given to Noah.

That which we have assayed to do in this first article upon the Noahic covenant has been to indicate its background, the occasion of it, and *why* it took the particular form it did. Just as the various Messianic prophecies, given by God at different times and at wide intervals, *were suited* to the local occasions when they were first made, so it was in the different renewals of His Covenant of Grace. Each of those renewals—unto Abraham,

Moses, David, etc.—adumbrated some special feature of the Everlasting Covenant into which God had entered with the Mediator; but the immediate circumstances of each of those favoured men *molded*, or gave form to, each particular feature of the Eternal Agreement which was severally shadowed forth unto them. We trust that the reader will now the better perceive *the reasons why* God gave unto Noah the particular statements recorded in Genesis 9.—A.W.P.

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## Union and Communion.

### 2. Mediatorial.

*That which is now to engage our attention is the constitution of the Person of Christ, not as He existed from all eternity with the Father and the Holy Spirit, but as He was upon earth working out the salvation of His Church, and as He now is in Heaven at God's right hand. It was an essential part of His covenant-engagement that the beloved Son should become the Surety of His people, and in order thereto, assume their nature into union with His Divine Person, and thus become God and man in the Person of one Christ. In consequence of that union all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily or personally, in a manner and to an extent it does not, will not, and cannot, in any other. This is the next greatest mystery which is revealed in Holy Writ, being the foundation upon which the Church is built (Matt. 16:18), and concerning which a belief thereof is absolutely essential unto salvation. It is therefore impossible to over estimate the importance, blessedness, and value of this truth.*

This Mediatorial union—denominated the “Hypostatic (personal) union” by theologians—or the conjunction of the Divine and human natures in the God-man Mediator, is based upon that infinitely higher union which we sought to contemplate in the last two articles. Divine union—between the Eternal Three—was the foundation of the Mediatorial union. Had there been only one Person in the Divine Essence or Godhead, our salvation had been utterly impossible: we could not be joined to the very nature or essence of God, without either ungodding Him or deifying us. For the elect to have been taken into immediate union with God would produce a change in the Divine nature—an addition to it—something which can never be. Even the Man Christ Jesus could not be taken into immediate union with the Divine Essence absolutely considered, though He could and was with One in that Essence.

We are conscious of the fact that we have just stepped into deep water, and perhaps those who are accustomed to paddle in the shallows will be unwilling to follow; but for the sake of the few who desire, by grace, to believe, and as far as God now permits, to understand the *mysteries* of our faith, we deemed it expedient to touch briefly upon this profound depth—not in a spirit of unholy boldness, but in fear and trembling. As it was impossible that the Divine nature should suffer and die, so it was for us to be joined thereto. But we could become one with a Divine *Person* who Himself subsisted *in* the Divine Essence, and Omniscience found a way whereby that should be effected. By virtue of the Son's assuming our humanity the elect have been taken into union with a Divine Person, yet not into union with the Divine nature or Essence itself. Thus we have sought to point out an error against which we need to carefully guard, lest we entertain thoughts grossly dishonouring to the Godhead.

The highest union of all is that incomprehensible and yet ineffable union which exists between the three Divine Persons in the one Divine Essence. The next great union—founded, as we have briefly intimated above, upon that essential one—is the union of our nature unto the second Person in Jehovah, so that the Word made flesh is both God and man in the Person of Jesus Christ. This too is a profound and unfathomable mystery, yet is it revealed as a cardinal article of our faith. It is a subject of pure revelation, and only from the sacred Scriptures can we obtain any light thereon. It falls not within our province to *explain* this mystery, yet it is our privilege and duty to spare no pains in prayerfully seeking sound and clear views of the same, for there can be no true growing

in grace except as we grow in the scriptural and Spirit-imparted knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Right thoughts of Him are to be esteemed far above all silver and gold.

Rightly did the Puritan John Flavel say of this subject, “We walk upon the brink of danger; the least tread awry may engulf us in the bogs of error.” There are certain vital postulates which are necessary to the scriptural setting forth of “the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9), if the truth about His wondrous and glorious Person is to be maintained; such as the following. First, that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly God, possessing the Divine nature and all its essential attributes. Second, that He is also true Man, possessing human nature in all its essential properties and sinless infirmities. Third, that those two diverse natures are united in His unique Person, yet ever remain distinct and unmixed, so that the Divine is not humanized, nor the human deified. Fourth, that both of those natures were and are operative in all of His mediatorial acts, so that while they may be distinguished, they cannot be separated. These great verities must be held firmly by us if we are to believe in and worship *the Christ of God*.

“The Son of God, the second Person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon Him man’s nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures—the Godhead and the manhood—were inseparably joined together in one Person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which Person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man” (Westminster Catechism). This is a clear and helpful setting forth of the constitution of Christ’s theanthropic Person, i.e., His Person as the God-man.

Let it not be supposed that because this is one of the deep mysteries of Christianity, it is a subject in which only theologians are interested, or that it is a matter upon which Christians may lawfully differ. Not so: it is a vital truth which is to be held fast at all costs, a precious truth revealed for the nourishing of faith. Only as the Holy Spirit enables us to receive into our minds and hearts the revelation which the Father has so graciously made of His Son shall we be effectually preserved from the subtle errors of Satan. The value of *what* Christ did depended entirely upon *who* He was, and therefore it is of the very first importance we should attain unto right views of the constitution of His wondrous Person. If the angels “desire to look into” these things (1 Peter 1:12)—figured by the cherubim with their faces turned toward the mercy-seat on the Ark (Exo. 25)—how much more should we who are chiefly concerned therein.

The “doctrine of Christ” or the truth concerning the constitution of His Person is of such fundamental and vital concern that without the belief of it no man can be a Christian: “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God” (1 John 4:2), that is, born of God, one of His people, and on the side of His truth. On the other hand, “every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God” (1 John 4:3). As John Newton well put it,

“What think ye of Christ? is the test  
To try both your state and your scheme,  
You cannot be right in the rest,  
Unless you think rightly of Him.”

But the great majority of people have no desire to meditate upon *Him*, wishing rather to banish all thoughts of Him from their minds, and even among those who sing, “How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,” few are willing to read *and re-read* the deeper things about His Person.

That which determines our *interest* in a person is our *love* for him. I am not much concerned about the ancestry and history of one who is a stranger to me, but when it comes to a person who is an object of my affections, then the smallest details about him are welcomed by me. A letter filled with little items about the person and doings of her absent son would be dearly treasured by his fond mother, but would be pointless and wearisome to one not acquainted with him. Does not the same principle hold good regarding the blessed Person of our Lord and Saviour? One who is, experimentally, a stranger to Him, cannot be expected to relish a setting forth of the mysterious constitution of His Person, but those who, by grace, esteem Him as the Fairest among ten thousand to their souls, are ready to read, meditate upon, and study, if thereby they may be favoured with clearer and fuller views *of Him*.

Surely this is a subject of thrilling interest, for it is one in which the infinite wisdom of God is most gloriously exhibited. “To unite finite and infinite, almightiness and weakness, immortality and mortality, immutability with a thing subject to change; to have a nature from eternity and yet a nature subject to the revolutions of time; a nature to make a law, and a nature to be subjected to the law; to be God blessed forever in the bosom of His Father, and an infant exposed to calamities from the womb of His mother: terms seeming most distant from union, most incapable of conjunction, to shake hands together, to be most intimately conjoined; glory and vileness, fulness and emptiness, Heaven and earth; He that made all things, in one Person with a nature that is made; Immanuel, God and man in one; that which is most spiritual to partake of that which is carnal flesh and blood; one with the Father in His Godhead, one with us in His manhood; the Godhead to be in Him in the fullest perfection, and the manhood in the greatest purity; the creature one with the Creator, and the Creator one with the creature. Thus is the incomprehensible wisdom of God declared in the Word being made flesh.

“The terms of this union were infinitely distant. What greater distance can there be than between the Deity and humanity, between the Creator and the creature? Can you imagine the distance between eternity and time, infinite power and miserable infirmity, and immortal Spirit and dying flesh, the highest being and nothing? Yet these are espoused. A God of unmixed blessedness is linked personally with a man of perpetual sorrows; life incapable to die joined to a body in that economy incapable to live without dying first; infinite purity and a reputed sinner, eternal blessedness with a cursed nature, omniscience and ignorance; that which is entirely independent and that which is totally dependent, met together in a personal union, the eternal Son, the seed of Abraham (Heb. 2:16). What more miraculous than for God to become man, and man to become God! That a Person possessed of all the perfections of the Godhead should inherit all the imperfections of the manhood in one Person, sin only excepted; a holiness incapable of sinning to be made sin. Was there not need of an infinite power to bring together terms so far asunder, to elevate the humanity to be capable of, and disposed for, a conjunction with the Deity?” (S. Charnock).

The regulation of our thoughts about Him who is Divinely denominated “Wonderful,” is what every believer should pray and earnestly aim at. It is of deepest

importance that we should have scriptural views concerning Him, not only in general, but in detail; not only that we may be fortified against pernicious errors touching His Person, which are now so rife, but also that we may be enabled to appreciate those particular instances in which the Divine wisdom shines forth with greatest splendour. This it is which will give Christ the “pre-eminence” in our minds, revealing how high above the relation and union which exists between Christians and God, is the relation and union between Christ Himself and God. Yes, nothing short of this should be our aim and quest “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).

Before seeking to contemplate, separately, the various aspects of and elements in the great mystery of “God manifest in flesh,” we will devote the remainder of this article unto a consideration of some of the reasons *why* it was needful for the Son of God to become the Son of man. The union of two distinct natures in the Person of the Lord Jesus was a fundamental requisite for the union of sinners to God in Christ. We were once with God in Adam, but when he fell, a breach was made: as it is written, “They are all *gone out of the way*” (Rom. 3:12), which clearly implies that they were once found in “the way.” That breach being made, we cannot be restored unto God, unless and until He came to us. A Divine Person must take our nature in order to reconcile our persons to God, and therefore do we read of Christ that He “once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might *bring us to God*” (1 Peter 3:18). But let us enter a little into detail, even though the ground here be familiar to most of our readers.

First, it was requisite that one of the Divine Persons should be made under that very law which was originally given to man, and which man transgressed. “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal 4:4). Observe the order: He was “made of a woman” in order to be “made under the law.” He who was “in the form of God” took upon Him “the form of a servant,” that is, entered the place of subjection. He came to repair our lost condition, and in order thereto it was needful that He submit Himself unto the Divine precepts, that by His obedience He might recover what by their disobedience His people had lost. And by the perfect obedience of this august Person, the law was more “magnified” than it had been insulted by our rebellion.

Second, it was requisite that He who would save His people from their sins should suffer the penalty of that law which they had broken. There was an awful curse pronounced upon those who broke the law, and the Saviour must take His people’s place and undergo it: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, *being made a curse for us*” (Gal. 3:13). That curse was death, but how could God the Son die? Only by assuming a mortal nature. Third, it was requisite that in delivering Satan’s captives the great Enemy should be conquered by One in the same nature as had been defeated by him. Accordingly it is written, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14).

Fourth, it was requisite that the Redeemer should take possession of Heaven for us in our nature, and therefore did He say, “I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). Blessed indeed is that word in Hebrews 6, “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: which hope we have as an anchor of the



soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that *within the veil*; whither the forerunner is *for us entered*, even Jesus” (vv. 18-20). Fifth, it was requisite that the mighty Redeemer should also be capable, experimentally, of having compassion on the infirmities of His people, and how could this be had He never encountered them in His own person? “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

Not only was it necessary for God the Son to assume a *human* nature, but also that His humanity should be derived from *the common root* of our first parents. It would not suitably have answered the Divine purpose that Christ’s humanity should be created immediately out of nothing, because there had then been no such alliance between Him and us as to lay a foundation of hope of salvation by His undertaking. No, it was essential that He should sustain the character and perform the work of a *redeemer*, that He should be our Goal or *near Kinsman*, for to Him alone belonged the *right* of redemption: see Leviticus 25:48, 49; Ruth 2:20 and 3:9, margin. So it was declared at the beginning: He was to be *the woman’s* “Seed” (Gen. 3:15), and thus become our Kinsman. “For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are *all of one* (i.e., one stock): for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb. 2:11).

Yet, it was also absolutely necessary, notwithstanding, that the nature in which redemption was to be performed should not only be derived from its original root, but also by *such derivation* that it should not be tainted by sin or partake in any degree of that moral defilement in which every child of Adam is conceived and born. It was requisite that our High Priest should be “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” “If the human nature of Christ had partook, in any measure, of that pollution which, since the Fall, is hereditary to us, it would have been destitute of the holy image of God, as we are prior to regeneration: and, consequently, He would have been rendered incapable of making the least atonement for us. He who is himself sinful, cannot satisfy Divine justice on the behalf of another; because, by one offence, he forfeits his own soul. Here, then, the adorable wisdom of God appears in its richest glory. For though it was necessary our Surety should be man, and the seed of the woman, yet He was conceived in such a manner as to be entirely without sin” (A. Booth).

God brought a clean thing out of an unclean. The manhood of Christ was derived from the common stock of our humanity, yet was it neither begotten nor conceived by carnal concupiscence. Original sin is propagated by ordinary generation, but the Son of man was produced by extraordinary generation. It is by the father’s act that a child is begotten in the image and likeness of our first fallen and corrupted father. But though a real Man, Christ was not begotten by a man. His humanity was produced from the substance of Mary by an extraordinary operation of the Holy Spirit above nature, and hence His miraculous and immaculate conception is far above the compass of human reason to either understand or express. Through the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit, the humanity of Christ was conceived by a virgin who had never known a man. It was an act of Omnipotence to produce it; it was an act of Divine holiness to sanctify it; it was an act of Omniscience to unite it unto the Person of the eternal Son of God.—A.W.P.

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### Christ in Glory.

“And they shall hang upon Him all the glory of His Father’s house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons” (Isa. 22:24). “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim. 2:20, 21).

They are called “vessels” because the Lord forms them for Himself, to show forth His praise; sometimes vessels of honour and glory, because He draws a greater revenue of honor and glory to Himself from them than from all the world beside. In a word, they are called “vessels” because the milk, the wine, the honey, and the oil of Divine grace is bestowed and laid up in them; and out of the fulness of Christ they are daily receiving grace for grace. And as the vessels of a house are its *ornament*, so are fruitful believers the ornament of the Church, and of the great Owner thereof, for He calls them His crown and diadem.

We are here told that these vessels are *of different sizes*: some are vessels of “cups,” and others are vessels of “flagons”; plainly intimating that in God’s family there are saints of different stature—there are babes, young men, and fathers; “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph. 4:7). Some are like the smoking flax, others like a flaming lamp; some are like the bruised reed, others like the tall cedar in Lebanon. And if you ask me *why* God will have it so, that the vessels of the house shall be of different sizes, I answer, 1. For the manifestation of His own sovereignty. He is the Lord of the house, and He will do all His pleasure; and it is the good will and pleasure of God to give more of His grace to one, and to another less; and who may say unto Him, “What doeth Thou?” He is no man’s debtor, but may do with His own what He pleases. 2. Because this is for the beauty and ornament of the house. It serves not a little to adorn a house that there are different vessels in it: some more and some less, for different services. The least vessel, like the least member in the natural body has its proper usefulness in the body, so that the one cannot say to the other, “I have no need of thee.” 3. God will have it so, that there may be room for the edifying exercises of the fellowship of saints. If every saint had the same degree of faith, love, knowledge, and other graces, the one could not be edified by the other; but it is otherwise ordered, that the strong may be useful to the weak in strengthening, and that those who have more knowledge and experience than others may communicate of their gifts, to the benefit and edifying of others, until they all come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

I come now to show that *all* the vessels of different sizes, from vessels of “cups” to vessels of “flagons,” *do hang upon the great Manager*, Jesus Christ, as upon a nail fastened in a sure place. This is what is commonly called the mystical union between Christ and the Church, and is in Scripture set forth to us by a variety of metaphors, sometimes by the union that is between the branches of a tree and the root of it; for as all the branches hang upon the root, and receive their sap and nourishment, growth and fruit from it, so does every believer, whether of a higher or lower stature, receive life, grace, and growth from Christ. “I am like a green fir tree. *From Me* is thy fruit found” (Hosea 14:8). “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). Sometimes this

union is represented by the union betwixt the building and the foundation upon which it stands. As the whole building and every stone of it hangs and rests on the foundation and receive their support and stability from it, so doth the whole house of God, and every spiritual, living stone thereof, hang upon Christ by faith of His Spirit's operation: "To whom coming, as unto a living Stone, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:4, 5). Sometimes this union is represented to us by the union betwixt the head and the members of the natural body (Eph. 4:15, 16; Col. 2:19); from which you will perceive that the whole body, and every particular member, greater or lesser, hangs upon Christ as by "joints and bands." But here arises the main question to our present purpose: What *are* these "bands" by which all believers, from the least to the greatest, hang upon Christ? Answer: these "bands" are principally two—the Holy Spirit and faith of the Spirit's operation.

First, I say the Spirit is one, and the principal band whereby believers do hang upon Christ: "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). By the Holy Spirit the union is made up between Christ and His members: "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). Yes, the Spirit Himself is the band: "We know that He (Christ) abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1 John 3:24). The Spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus, by the means of the Word, in a day of regeneration, enters into the soul and quickens it; and in the very quickening by the Spirit, it becomes a member of Christ, and so forever after hangs upon Him as a Nail in a sure place.

Second. Another band by which they all hang upon the Nail is faith by the Spirit's operation—not mere historical, temporary, partial, or legal faith, but a living, working, receiving, justifying, and sanctifying faith, which applies and appropriates Christ by the means of the Word of grace and promise; such a faith as eats the flesh and drinks the blood of Christ; and so lives in and upon Him; according as it is written, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20). In a word, faith hangs all its everlasting concerns upon the Nail fastened in a sure place, and there it stays and rests all its cares and concerns; and in this way the soul is kept in perfect peace, knowing that the Nail, being well fastened, will not yield or give way. And thus it is that *all the glory*, the whole offspring and issue, and the vessels of the house, greater and lesser, hang upon our blessed Eliakim.

The next inquiry is, *Why is Christ* constituted sole Manager of His Father's house? Why doth He hang all the vessels *upon Him*, as upon a nail fastened in a sure place? I answer, the management of the house, and of all its concerns, is committed unto Christ because it was the good pleasure of God that it should be so. But although sovereignty is enough to satisfy us upon this head, yet there are some ways of infinite Wisdom to be observed in this constitution of things in the Church, which is the house of the living God; as (1) He only had ability for bearing such a weight: "I have laid help," saith the Lord, "upon One this is mighty." (2) Because Christ voluntarily undertook it in the council of peace, saying, "Lo, I come! I delight to do Thy will, O My God" (Psa. 40:7, 8), whereupon Jehovah the Father said and determined, "He shall build the temple and bear all the glory" (Zech. 6:13). (3) Hereby a new revenue of glory is brought in to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, even "glory to God in the highest," higher glory than what comes in by creation and providence. (4) Because hereby His saints are brought to

honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. (5) Because this was for the safety and comfort of the children of God. All their everlasting concerns hang upon Him, that they may warble out that song through eternity: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:12, 13).

Again. See hence why it is that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro, to show Himself strong on behalf of His people in this world; why He rides in the heavens for their help; and makes all things work together for their good. There is good reason for it. They are the offspring and issue of His family; they are the gold and silver vessels of His house; and you know, if a man have power and ability, he will not suffer his offspring to be hurt, or his house to be plundered of his valuable furniture, which he has bought at a dear rate. Hence it is that the Lord watches His house day and night, lest any hurt it. All His saints are in the hand of Christ, and He defies Hell and earth to pluck them out of His hands.

2. See what trust and credit our glorious Kinsman-Redeemer has with His Father. Why, you see how that He puts the whole family under His hand; He hangs the whole glory upon Him: "He hath made Him to be *Head over* all things to the Church, which is His body"; "All Power in heaven and earth is given unto Me," says Christ; "The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." And seeing He has such trust and credit with His Father, what an indignity is done to the Father, and the Son also, when a sinner, through unbelief, declares Him to be unworthy of any credit, and says, practically, that the Nail that God has fastened is loose, weak, or insufficient, and therefore he will not venture the weight of his salvation upon it, but will choose rather to hang upon some nails of his own fastening, such as the nail of an empty profession, the nail of God's general mercy, the nail of legal duties, and obedience, which are all but rusty, weak, broken nails, that will give way and ruin all that depend upon them.

3. See hence one great ground and reason of the perseverance of the saints, and why they cannot fall totally or finally away from a state of grace: because they hang upon the Nail fastened in a sure place. Being the great Manager of His Father's house and family *He* has them in custody, and is to give an account of every vessel of the house unto His Father; and He will make *a good account* of every one of them, and say to His Father, that entrusted them with Him, "Of all Thou hast given Me, I have lost none. Here am I, and the children which Thou hast given me." If a believer can fall totally or finally away, it is because the Nail may break or be loosed, or because the bands by which they hang upon the Nail may be broken or cut. But none of these can fall out. The Nail, as you heard in the first part of this discourse, is so fixed that Heaven and earth will sooner be dissolved than that it should yield or give way in the least; and as for the bands by which they hang upon the Nail, they are so firm, strong, and well-fastened, that the soul, when it has a view of its security in the light of the Lord, is able to exclaim with Paul, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution" etc. (Rom. 8:35).

4. See the great difference between the state of a believer now, under a covenant of grace, and the state of Adam, under a covenant of works. Adam, the first covenant-head and representative, though an innocent, yet was but a fallible creature; and being left to

the freedom of his own will, that nail gave way, and he and all his posterity fell into a horrible pit of sin and misery, from which the whole creation could not recover them. But the case of the believer is not so, he hangs on a Nail in a sure place; he stands on the foundation God has laid in Zion, against which the gates of Hell shall never prevail. Many a pull and pluck has the devil and the world given at the vessels that hang upon this Nail; and yet by all their power and policy they never were able to carry off a cup, much less a flagon, that did hang upon the Nail fastened in a sure place. To this purpose are those words of Christ, none shall “pluck them out of My hand” (John 10:28).

5. See hence that the saints have no cause of boasting or glorying in themselves, but only in Christ; for *He* is the Nail, upon whom all the glory and all the offspring and issue do hang. Where is boasting? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Now the law of faith is to lay the whole weight of our salvation upon Christ; to receive Him and rest upon Him alone for eternal life, and to receive out of His fullness grace for grace. And, therefore, “he that glorieth, let him glory *in the Lord*,” saying, “The Lord is my strength and song, He also is become my salvation.” When the believer finds pride of gifts or grace begin to stir in his heart, he should at once check it by putting these, or the like questions to himself: “What hast thou, O man, that thou hast not *received*? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou boast as though thou hadst not received it? Let none of the branches that grow upon the true Vine boast, as though they had their stand, strength or righteousness *in themselves*. “If thou boast, (remember) thou bearest not the root, but the Root (bearest) thee” (Rom. 11:18). All hang upon the Nail.

6. See hence a good reason for that solemn work and duty of covenanting, by “stretching out her hands unto God” as it is said of Ethiopia (Psa. 68:31). This duty is warranted by Scripture example, and Scripture prophecy concerning the days of the New Testament. As God the Father by solemn oath has constituted His own Son the great Manager of His house, hanging all the offspring and issue upon Him; so it is highly reasonable that all the offspring and issue of the family should confess His deed by solemn oath and covenant, before the whole world, because this is for His declarative glory, upon whom all the glory hangs. It is requisite that we not only believe with the heart unto righteousness, but confess Him with the mouth unto salvation (Rom. 10:10). And this is in a peculiar manner necessary in a day like this, when the prophets are become such fools, and the spiritual men so mad, as to derogate from the glory of the great Manager of His Father’s house His prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices, by tolerating the erroneous, foisting in moral virtue in the room of His everlasting righteousness.

I say, what more just and reasonable in such a case, than that all who love our Lord Jesus Christ and regard His honour and glory, should, in the most solemn manner imaginable, declare their adherence to Him in the presence of angels and men, saying with Joshua “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” There are a generation of men in our day, who set up only for a private, selfish kind of religion. If they believe with the heart, they think they have done enough; if they enjoy raptures of love to Christ, they are easy what come of Jerusalem, what come of the Ark of God. Let error in doctrine, corruption in worship, tyranny in government prevail as much as they will, it is all a small matter—these are not the essentials: all is well with them if they have what they call “the Spirit.” But what sort of a spirit is that which follows, cleaves to abjured prelacy, a corrupt backsliding ministry, and judges that deny the obligation of solemn

covenants? Surely such a spirit must be the spirit of the old serpent transforming himself into an angel of light. A deceived heart and a subtle devil have turned them aside from the truth.—Ralph Erskine, 1743. (Completed in the June issue.)

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As Brother Pink was penning this *Studies* in 1935, he requested prayers of readers that the blessing of God would continue on this publication. As we publish this issue of the *Studies* 67 years later, we, too, request your prayers that the blessing of God may continue on this publication.

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## **The Doctrine of Sanctification.**

### *4. Its Problem.*

It should hardly be necessary for us to explain that when speaking of the *problem* of sanctification we refer not to such as unto God, but rather as it appears unto our feeble perceptions. But in these days it is not wise to take anything for granted, for not only are there some ready to make a man an offender for a word if he fails to express himself to their satisfaction, but there are others who need to have the simplest terms defined unto them. No, it would be blasphemy to affirm that sanctification, or anything else, ever presented any problem to the great Jehovah. Omniscience can never be confronted with any difficulty, still less an emergency. But to the Christian's finite understanding, deranged as it has been by sin, the problem of Holiness is a very real and actual one; far more perplexing, we may add, than that presented by the subject of justification.

There are various subsidiary difficulties in sanctification, as we intimated in the fourth and fifth paragraphs of the Introductory article, such as whether sanctification itself be a quality or a position, whether it be legal or experimental, whether it be absolute or progressive; all of which need to be cleared up in any satisfactory treatment of this theme. But far more intricate is the problem itself of how one who is a moral leper can be fit to worship in the Sanctuary of God. Strange to say this problem is the acutest unto those who are the most spiritual. Self-righteous Pharisees and self-satisfied Laodiceans are in no wise troubled over the matter. Antinomians cut the knot (instead of untying it) and deny all difficulty by asserting that the holiness of Christ is imputed to us. But those who realize God requires *personal* holiness, yet are conscious of their own filthiness, are deeply concerned thereupon.

Things are now, generally, at such a low ebb, that some of our readers may be surprised to find us making any reference at all to the *problem* of sanctification. In most places today, either the doctrine taught is so inadequate and powerless, or the practice maintained is so defective that few are likely to be exercised in conscience over the nature of that holiness without which none shall see the Lord. The claims of God are now so whittled down, the exalted standard which Scripture sets forth is so disregarded, *heart-purity* (in which vital godliness so largely consists) is so little emphasised, that it is rare to find any concerned about their personal state. If there be some preachers zealously warning against the worthlessness of good works to save where there be no faith in Christ, there are far more who earnestly cry up an empty faith, which is unaccompanied by personal holiness and obedience.

Such a low standard of spiritual living now prevails, that comparatively few of the Lord's own people have any clear or disturbing conceptions of how far, far short they come of measuring up to the holy model which God has set before us in His Word. Such feeble and faulty ideals of Christian living now prevail that those who are preserved from the grosser evils which even the world condemns, are "at ease in Zion." So little is the fear of God upon souls, so faintly are the majority of professing Christians conscious of the plague of their own hearts, that in most quarters to speak about the *problem* of sanctification would be talking in an unknown tongue. A fearful miasma has settled down upon nine-tenths of Christendom, deadening the senses, blunting spiritual perceptions, paralysing endeavour after deeper personal piety, till almost anything is regarded as being acceptable unto God.

On the other hand there is no doubt that some of us have intensified the problem by

creating for ourselves additional and needless difficulties through erroneous ideas of what sanctification is or what it involves in this life. The writer has been personally acquainted with more than one who was in abject despair through failing—after the most earnest and resolute efforts—to attain unto a state which false teachers had told them was attainable in this life, and who terminated their mortal wretchedness by committing suicide; and it has long been a wonder to him that thousands more who heed such teachers do not act likewise. There is no need to multiply difficulties: scriptural sanctification is neither the eradication of sin, the purification of the carnal nature, nor even the partial putting to sleep of the “flesh”; still less does it secure an exemption from the attacks and harassments of Satan.

Yet, on the other side, we must not minimize the problem, and reduce it to such simple proportions that we suppose a complete solution thereto is provided by merely affirming that Christ is our sanctification, and in himself the believing sinner remains unchanged to the end of his earthly course. If we die unholy in ourselves, then we are most assuredly lost for eternity, for only the “pure in heart” shall ever see God (Matt. 5:8). What that purity of heart is, and how it is to be obtained, is the very real problem which sanctification raises. It is at the heart God looks (1 Sam. 16:7), and it is with the heart we need to be most concerned, for *out of it* “are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). The severest woes were pronounced by Christ upon men not because their external conduct was foul, but because *within* they were “full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness” (Matt. 23:27).

That personal holiness is absolutely essential for an entrance into Heaven was shown at length in our last article, and that what men regard as the lesser pollutions of sin just as effectually exclude from the kingdom of God as do the most heinous crimes, is clear from 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10. The question which forces itself upon us is, *How* shall men be sanctified so as to suit an infinitely pure God? That we must be justified before we can stand before a righteous God is no more obvious than that it is necessary we must be sanctified so as to live in the presence of a holy God. But man is utterly without holiness; yea, he is impure, foul, filthy. The testimony of Scripture on this point is plain and full. “They are *corrupt*, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become *filthy*” (Psa. 14:1-3).

The testimony of Scripture is that all men are vile and polluted; that they are, root and branch, source and stream, heart and life, not only disobedient, but *unholy*, and therefore *unfit* for God’s presence. The Lord Jesus who knew what was in man, makes this clear enough when, revealing with His own light that loathsome den, the human heart, He says, “Out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23). Nor must we forget the confession of saints concerning themselves has always corresponded to God’s testimony. David says, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psa. 51:5). Job declared, “Behold I am vile” (40:4, 6). Isaiah cried out, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (6:5).

But the most remarkable confession of this absolute vileness is contained in an



acknowledgment by the Old Testament church—a sentence which has been taken up by all believers as exactly expressing what they all have to say of their condition by nature: “But we are all *as an unclean thing*, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6). Strong language indeed is that, yet not one whit too strong to depict the mud and mire into which the Fall has brought us. If, then, when considering the doctrine of justification we found it appropriate—in view of man’s self-will, lawlessness, and disobedience—to ask, “how shall a man be just with God?” it is no less so now we are contemplating the doctrine of sanctification to enquire—in view of man’s uncleanness and filthiness—“*Who shall bring a clean thing out of an unclean?*” (Job 14:4).

We have no more power to make ourselves holy than we have to unmake or unbeing ourselves; we are no more able to cleanse our hearts than we can command or direct the winds. Sin in dominion is the “plague” of the heart (1 Kings 8:38), and as no disease is so deadly as the plague, so there is no plague so deadly as *that of the heart*. “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). The proud cannot make himself humble; the carnal cannot force himself to become spiritual; the earthly man can no more transform himself into a heavenly man than he can make the sun go backward or the earth fly upward. Sanctification is a work altogether above the powers of human nature: alas that this is so little realized today.

Even among those preachers who desire to be regarded as orthodox, who do not deny the Fall as an historical fact, few among them perceive the dire effects and extent thereof. “*Bruised by the fall*,” as one popular hymn puts it, states the truth far too mildly; yea, entirely misstates it. Through the breach of the first covenant all men have lost the image of God, and now bear the image of the Devil (John 8:44). The whole of their faculties are so depraved that they can neither think (2 Cor. 3:5), speak, nor do anything truly good and acceptable unto God. They are by birth altogether unholy, unclean, loathsome and abominable, in nature, heart, and life; and it is altogether beyond their power to change themselves.

Not only so, but the Curse of the law lying upon them has severed all spiritual relation between God and them, cutting off all communion and communication with Heaven. The driving from the Garden of our first parents and the establishment of the cherubim with the flaming sword at its entrance, denoted that in point of justice they were barred from all sanctifying influences reaching them—that being the greatest benefit man is capable of, as assimilating him to God Himself or rendering him like Him. The *curse* has fixed a gulf between God and fallen creatures, so that sanctifying influences cannot pass from Him unto them any more than their unholy desires and prayers can pass unto Him. It is written, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD” (Prov. 15:8). And again, “The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD” (v. 26).

It has, then, been rightly said that our sanctification “is no less a mystery than our justification” (T. Boston). As the depravity of human nature has always been so manifest that it could not escape notice even in the world, so in all ages men have been seeking to discover a remedy for the same, and have supposed a cure could be achieved by a right use of their rational faculties. But the outcome has always been, at best, but an outward show and semblance of sanctification, going under the name of “moral virtue.” But so far is that from meeting the requirements of Him who is Light, that men themselves, once

their eyes are (in any measure) anointed with heavenly eyesalve, perceive their moral virtue to be as “filthy rags,” a menstrous cloth. Until men are regenerate and act from a principle of grace in the heart, all their actions are but imitations of real obedience and piety, as an ape would mimic a man.

It is a common error of those that are unregenerate to seek to reform their conduct without any realization that their *state* must be changed before their lives can possibly be changed from sin to righteousness. The tree itself must be made good before its fruit can possibly be good. As well attempt to make a watch go, whose mainspring is broken, by washing its face and polishing its back, as for one under the curse of God to produce any works acceptable to Him. That was the great mistake Nicodemus laboured under: he supposed that *teaching* was all he needed, so that he might adjust his walk to the acceptance of Heaven. But to him the Lord Jesus declared, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John 3:7): that was only another way of saying, Nicodemus, you cannot perform spiritual works before you possess a spiritual nature, and a spiritual nature cannot be had until you are born again.

Multitudes have laboured with great earnestness to subdue their evil propensities, and have struggled long and hard to bring their inward thoughts and affections into conformity with the Law of God. They have sought to abstain from all sins, and to perform every known duty. They have been so devout and intent that they have undermined their health, and were so fervent in their zeal that they were ready to kill their bodies with fastings and macerations, if only they might kill their sinful lusts. They were strongly convinced that holiness was absolutely necessary unto salvation, and were so deeply affected with the terrors of damnation as to forsake the world and shut themselves up in convents and monasteries; yet all the while ignorant of the *mystery* of sanctification—that *a new state* MUST precede *a new life*.

It is positively asserted by Divine inspiration that, “They that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:8). Alas, how few understand the meaning of those words “in the flesh”; how many suppose they only signify to be inordinately addicted to the baser passions. Whereas, to be “in the flesh” is to be in a state of nature—fallen, depraved, alienated from the life of God. To be “in the flesh” is not simply being a personal transgressor of God’s holy Law, but is *the cause* of all sinfulness and sinning. The “flesh” is the very *nature* of man as corrupted by the fall of Adam, and propagated from him to us in that corrupt state by natural generation. To be “in the flesh” is also being in complete subjection to the power of the Devil, who is the certain conqueror of all who attempt to fight him in their own strength or with his own weapons. The flesh can no more be brought to holiness by man’s most vehement endeavours, than he can bring a dead carcass to life by chafing and rubbing it.

The varied elements which entered into the problem of Justification were: God’s Law requires from us perfect obedience to its statutes; this we have utterly failed to render; we are therefore under the condemnation and curse of the law; the Judge Himself is inflexibly just, and will by no means clear the guilty: how, then, can men be shown mercy without justice being flouted? The elements which enter into the problem of Sanctification are: God’s Law requires inward as well as outward conformity to it: but we are born into this world with a nature that is totally depraved, and can by no means be brought into subjection to the law (Rom. 8:7). God Himself is ineffably pure, how then can a moral leper be admitted into His presence? We are utterly without holiness, and can

no more make ourselves holy than the Ethiopian can change his skin. Even though a holy nature be imparted by regeneration, how can one with the flesh, unchanged, within him, draw near as a worshipper unto the Heavenly Sanctuary? How can I as a person possibly regard myself as holy, while conscious that I am full of sin? How can I honestly profess to have a “pure heart,” while realizing that a sea of corruption still rages within me? If my *state* must be changed before anything in my *life* is acceptable to God, what can I possibly do?—I cannot unmake myself. If *I* know that I am polluted and vile, and utterly unsuited unto the thrice holy God, how much less can *He* regard me as fit for His presence?—A.W.P.

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