

A lit candle, a magnifying glass over an open book, and a pen.

Annual Volume

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STUDIES IN THE
SCRIPTURES

ARTHUR W. PINK

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JANUARY

EARLY

“Those that seek me early shall find me” (Pro 8:17). Possibly this article will come before the eyes of some who have long disregarded that gracious call, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him” (Isa 55:7). What a marvel that God has borne with your heedlessness, that He did not cut you off out of the land of the living and banish you into everlasting woe! But He has not! Your day of opportunity has not yet closed. Yet none can say how much longer it will last. Then, today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart. “Those that seek me early shall find me.” What a word is this for the young—to seek the Saviour *early in life*. Perhaps you object, “But youth is the time for mirth.” True, but not the mirth of madness, rather that of peace of conscience, rejoicing in the Lord, and running in the way of His commandments. Though your years are yet but few, your sins are many in number. “Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Pro 27:1). Ere 1953 ends, you may be in your grave. Then, delay not. “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not” (Ecc 12:1).

“Those that seek me early shall find me.” What a word is this for those who have left childhood and youth behind them! Though you be but a cumberer of the ground, the Lord in His longsuffering has spared you, permitting you to enter 1953. Then, ought you not to seek Him *early this new year*? How otherwise can you express your gratitude unto the One who has exercised such infinite patience with you than by throwing down the weapons of your rebellion against Him and laying hold of His promise, “shall find me.” Find Me exactly suited to your condition. Find Me full of compassion. Find Me able to save unto the uttermost. Say not within your heart, I am too great a sinner to approach unto the Holy One. The viler you are, the more glorious will He be in saving such a wretch—as the more desperate the

disease, the more credit to the doctor who successfully prescribes for its healing. Christ never yet turned away a single soul who cast himself on His mercy and trusted in His blood. His invitation and promise is, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat 11:28). Then tarry not. Harken no longer unto Satan, who is determined to keep you from enjoying that rest.

To defer this all-important matter is not only sinful but *highly injurious*, for the longer you delay the greater will be your disposition to embrace the ways of God. If you find it difficult today to surrender unto the claims of Christ, it will be more difficult tomorrow. It is increasing hardness of heart which makes spiritual exercises so hard. The more you close your ears to the divine call, the more will the clamorous voices of the world dull your perceptions. The longer you go on in sin, the farther off from God. Delay is *dangerous*, for you provoke the Lord more by resisting Him, and He will not be mocked with impunity. God will not wait indefinitely upon a procrastinator, but declares, "My spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen 6:3). The Spirit strives for a long time with some, shaking them out of their false security, disturbing their peace, making them realize their unfitness for death, but that does not continue for ever. "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2Co 6:2). Then slight not the offers of divine grace. "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near" (Isa 55:6). There are certain seasons which are times of finding, because God then draws nearer to man than at others, and it is then that their hearts are most pliable.

"Those that seek me early shall find me" (Pro 8:17). Let us consider this word as it applies to the people of God, and more especially with their forming the habit of doing so *early in the day*. Of course, the word "early" is a relative one, for what would be an early hour for the merchant to rise would be late for the farmer. But whether you live in the city or in the country, it is your wisdom, duty, and privilege to *start the day with God*. In contradistinction from laziness and slothfulness, self-ease or reluctance, seeking God early expresses earnestness and enthusiasm. Nothing escapes the all-seeing eye of Him with whom we have to do, and it is impressive to observe how frequently He has made mention of the promptness of His servants in this respect. The Lord both noted and recorded the fact that "Abraham rose up early in the morning, taking with him Isaac his son and the wood for the burnt offering, and went unto the place of which God had told him" (Gen 22:3). There was no tardiness on his part in the performing of that painful duty, but as it were a "running" in the way of God's commandments (Psa 119:32). "And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it" (Gen 28:18), thereby manifesting the fervour of his worship.

“As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away” (Gen 44:3), to take back food to their families, for thus had Joseph given orders. Here the early hour denoted a sense of urgency. We are told of another eminent patriarch that, when his sons feasted in their houses, he “rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned” (Job 1:5). Thus did his alacrity give proof of his paternal concern for them. When God commanded His servant to deliver His mandate to Egypt’s king, He bade him, “Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh” (Exo 8:20 and repeated in 9:13), teaching us that He requires promptness, and will brook no delay. Four times over, it is recorded to the credit of Joshua that, “He rose up early in the morning” (Jos 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10) to perform his duty, thereby setting before the nation an example of briskness and intensesness. Nor was it lost upon them, for we are told that when Jericho was to be encompassed on the seventh day, the priests and men of war “rose early about the dawning of the day” (Jos 6:15), and richly did God reward such zeal. It is not the sluggard, but the diligent whom He blesses.

“My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD” (Psa 5:3). Let that holy determination of David’s be your resolve. Commence the day with God. Open your heart unto Him before opening your mouth unto any creature. Have you not cause to thank Him for His watch-care during the hours of darkness, and for renewing your strength with a refreshing sleep? Many spent the night tossing about in pain! The fruits of His fervour are said to be “new every morning” (Lam 3:23), so too should be our grateful acknowledgment of the same. Have you not real need for a season of communion with the eternal Lover of your soul before your mind is filled with the cares and concerns of the world? How can you expect His blessing upon you during the day if you slight Him? Do you not need wisdom for the tasks awaiting, to be guided through the maze of your affairs? Should you not seek His deliverance from temptations? Failure at this point is due to something far worse than carelessness. It betrays a sad spirit of independence and self-sufficiency—that you consider yourself able to go through the day *without* God’s grace and help.

“Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early” (Psa 57:8). “My glory” may refer to the tongue, for the power of articulation is what elevates man above the beasts, or the allusion may be unto the soul from which the matter of speech proceeds. David was calling upon the noblest powers of his being to bestir themselves and hymn the Redeemer’s praise. His “I myself will awake early” signified his ardour. Dull and drowsy devotions are not suited to the living God. Not only must the sacrifice be kindled with a holy fire, but ascend in a holy flame of warm devotion. Let us early and thoroughly awake ourselves for this sacred task. Over two hundred years ago Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury (1643-1715), wrote, “In the days of our fathers, when a person came early to the door of his neighbour and desired to speak with the head of the house, it was as common a

thing for the servant to tell him, ‘My master is at prayer’ as it now is to say, ‘My master is not yet up.’” Alas, how he would have to complain of this generation.

“O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee” (Psa 63:1). Do likewise, and then you will “awake to righteousness, and sin not” (1Co 15:34), laying a good foundation for the hours to come. Remember that God is “a rewarder of them that *diligently* [not tardily or reluctantly] seek him” (Heb 11:6). Let the eyes of your heart open as soon as do those of your body. Suffer not the birds of the air, with their gladsome matins, to shame you. “Early will I seek thee,” to yield myself afresh to Thee, that while the dew is on the ground, my soul may be bedewed. Only as we manifest such diligence are we justified in praying, “O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice” (Psa 90:14). To seek for my spiritual “daily bread”—Israel had to get up for theirs, *before* “the sun waxed hot” (Exo 16:21)—ere other things had time to occupy their thoughts. What a difference it would make if you formed the habit of feeding every morning on the Bread of life! Of the Saviour, we read that “In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out...into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mar 1:35 and see Joh 8:2), and those who followed His example were the first to behold Him after He was risen from the dead (Mar 16:9).

EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

37. Our Anointing (2:27)

“But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.”

In this verse and the next one the apostle continues and virtually completes what he had said upon the saints’ abiding in Christ. Though our text be by no means free of difficulty, yet by carefully noting its coherence with the context, its meaning is more or less obvious. In view of the defection of so many (verse 19) and the continued activities of antichrists to draw away others, John had addressed their

responsibility and bade them persevere in the faith, and heed not those who sought to entice them away from it. It was their duty to store the truth in their minds and treasure it in their hearts, to yield their entire beings to its sway and reduce its substance to practice. Abandon it not for any specious novelty (verse 24). In verse 25 an incentive was supplied to encourage and stimulate them in the performance of that duty. In verse 26 a solemn warning is added for the purpose of showing the necessity for their compliance therewith.

The apostle's design, then, in the verse now before us, is threefold: explanatory, consolatory, cautionary. *First*, he states the reason why believers had stood firm under the testing which had shaken and overthrown so many of their fellows. It was not because of any superior native sagacity,¹ but was to be attributed solely unto the gracious and effectual provision that God has made for the preservation of His children from the deceits of Satan. In verse 20, John had stated *implicitly* how it was that the saints had been delivered from serious error; now he affirms *explicitly* that they would continue to be kept from receiving lying vanities. Here, as everywhere else in the writings of the apostles, the grand end in view was to remove all ground for boasting from the saints and to move them to ascribe all the glory unto their Redeemer. Our security for abiding in God—in the Father and the Son—is here attributed to that which is imparted to us at regeneration: there is now that within us which preserves from the evil without us; we have been given a sure antidote against the poison of the serpent. At the new birth we received that which ensures our abiding in Christ.

Second, whereas that clear statement redounded to the honour of Christ, for it was from Him that the preservative benefit was received, it could not fail to comfort and assure the hearts of those to whom it was addressed. It must not be overlooked that, at that time, those believers were in special need of solace. They had been witnessing a most mysterious and distressing spectacle. They had seen a large number of their professing brethren forsaking the churches to which they belonged, and not a few of the ministers themselves apostatizing. That was enough thoroughly to discourage mature Christians, and much more so the babes of the family. How strengthening then to their faith to be divinely assured that the anointing which they had received from Christ was no temporary thing or evanescent experience, which would soon wear off, but a durable and effective one that would stand them in good stead unto the close of their earthly pilgrimage. How comforting to be authoritatively informed that the same divine illumination that taught them at the beginning and that had imparted to them the saving knowledge of Christ, would remain to instruct them so that they would be kept steadfast in the faith and would most certainly abide in Christ.

¹ **sagacity** – soundness of judgment; discernment.

Third, the above declaration was also intended to animate them unto increased watchfulness and diligence. While our last-made remarks stand in need of no qualification, they do need amplification lest they be perverted to a wrong use. Such an assurance must not be abused to rashness and self-confidence. However sound and extensive their spiritual knowledge, they had real need of more. There is no remaining stationary in the Christian life; unless we progress, we retrogress. Unless we make good use of what God has given us, we are in real danger of losing what we seem to have (Luk 8:18). In order to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we are required to make daily use of the means that God has provided. This anointing is not given to slothfulness and laziness. It is a vile perversion of this heavenly privilege to make God the patron of negligence and the indulger of the ease of the flesh. This divine gift increases our obligations: “for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luk 12:48). Nor must it be abused unto pride and self-sufficiency, so that we look contemptuously upon the more ignorant, for we have nothing good but what we have received (1Co 4:7).

The nature of the “anointing”

But we must now inquire into the precise nature of this inestimable gift. Some have thought that by this “anointing” the truth itself is intended, that the doctrine of the Gospel which they had received would preserve them from the seducers warned against. But such a view accords not with either the text or the context, for the truth of the Gospel was the very thing which the antichrists were attacking, and it was a true and experiential knowledge thereof which constituted the saint’s safeguard. This “anointing” is here said to *abide* in those who were the favoured recipients of the same, whereas strictly speaking we are said to abide in the truth. Again, this anointing is said to *teach* us all things, whereas the truth is that which we are taught: thus we must distinguish between that which instructs and that wherein we are instructed. Finally, it must be borne in mind that everywhere else in Scripture, the Holy Spirit is said to be the teacher of the saints, the One who establishes them in the truth, and there is nothing whatever in our text or the context which requires us to adopt any other signification.

The Greek word for “anointing” in our text is identical with the one rendered “unction” in verse 20, and has reference to one and the same thing. In our exposition of that verse we showed, first, that under the Old Testament economy prophets, priests and kings were appointed unto and confirmed in their office by being anointed with the holy oil, and that they typified the anointing of Christ Himself with the Holy Spirit (Isa 61:1; Act 10:38). It was from that enduement He was denominated “the Christ,” which means “the Anointed One.” At His incarnation His humanity received a fullness of the Spirit’s grace, being born “that holy thing” (Luk 1:35); at His baptism and entrance upon His public ministry He received a fullness of the Spirit’s gifts (Isa 11:2; Mat 3:17); while at His ascension

He was anointed with the oil of gladness (Psa 45:7; Act 2:33). “And of his fullness have we all received, and grace for grace” (Joh 1:16)—the grace in us answering (according to our proportion) to the grace that is in Him—foreshadowed of old in the anointing of Israel’s high priest, concerning which we read, “It is like the precious ointment upon the head...that went down to the skirts of his garments” (Psa 133:2), reaching to the lowest of his members. In like manner, the believer’s anointing is an emanation from Christ.

Christ is our Anointer, and the anointing that believers receive from Him is the Holy Spirit, and thus are the members conformed to their glorious Head, yet with this difference: He was anointed with the Spirit without measure (Joh 3:34), we “according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph 4:7). This “anointing,” then, is nothing less than the gift of the Holy Spirit and supply of grace which is received from the Anointed One, who is “full of grace and truth” (Joh 1:14). It is an invaluable blessing which cannot be too highly esteemed. It is a divine gift “without repentance” (Rom 11:29), never to be recalled or rescinded. It is incorruptible, and cannot be destroyed, being that good part which shall continue with them and which none can take away. This is the “oil in their vessels” (that is, in their hearts) that distinguishes the wise virgins from the foolish ones (Mat 25:4). Both had the “lamp” in their hands; that which differentiates the gracious soul from the graceless professor is something within, namely the indwelling Spirit. By this divine unction the regenerate receive light into the sacred mysteries of the Gospel, so that they have a saving and satisfying acquaintance with and experience thereof, which effectually preserves them from being imposed upon by counterfeits.

The figure of “anointing” is a very comprehensive one, which more plainly appears when we compare all the passages where the holy oil was used under the Old Testament economy. It was employed with the design of dedicating a thing or a person unto God (Gen 22:18). It was provided for the purpose of illumination, to furnish light (Exo 25:6). It was designed to lubricate and refresh, “oil to make his face to shine” (Psa 104:15). Since it was compounded of sweet spices (Exo 30:24-25), it produced a fragrance in those using the same. In the blessing pronounced on Asher it was said, “Let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes *shall be* iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be” (Deu 33:24-25), which, in figurative language, signified the Spirit supplying power for the walk. Now in all these respects the antitypical substance is communicated by Christ through the unction of the Spirit. Thereby believers are set apart and consecrated to God, illuminated and instructed, quickened and comforted, made a sweet savour unto God and unto one another. There are two beautiful allusions unto the last in the Song of Solomon. First, the spouse says of her Beloved, “Thy love *is* better than wine. Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name *is as* ointment poured forth” (1:2-3); while He in turn declares, “How fair is thy love, my sister, *my* spouse! how much better is

thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices” (4:10), where He admires the graces that the Spirit has wrought in her.

Observations about this anointing

“But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.”

Now it is the second aspect of the above that is principally in view in our text. No less than seven things are here predicated of this anointing. *First*, it was from Christ that it proceeded. Those unto whom John was writing had remained steadfast in the truth, unshaken by heresy, and he would have them know the reason for this or from whence their constancy originated: they were indebted to the Holy One for His unction. Thus were fulfilled the several promises that He made to His disciples ere He departed from this world. “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father...for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (Joh 15:26; 16:7). It was the bestowment of the risen Saviour, for when He ascended on high He “gave gifts unto men” (Eph 4:8)—an earnest of which was imparted when He “breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (Joh 20:22).

Second, this enduement was a subjective one: it “abideth *in* you.” It is a gracious experience in the inner man, which is entirely beyond the cognizance of the unregenerate. As the Lord Jesus had announced, “the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (Joh 14:17). This is made good when it can be said, “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance” (1Th 1:5). The external Word is now applied internally. The mind is divinely illumined, so as to receive a clear, convincing, contenting knowledge of the truth. At the same time the affections are purified and the heart turned unto God, so that it is fitted for spiritual and heavenly things; this is that “washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Ti 3:5). Then it is that the Word is received “in much affliction [as we are convicted of our sins], with joy of the Holy Spirit” (1Th 1:6), as He makes known to us our divine pardon. In the latter respect this anointing is “the oil of gladness” (Psa 45:7), for the Spirit is a Comforter as well as a Sanctifier. Combine divine illumination, purification, and consolation, and what a sure means are they for establishing in the truth!

Third, this anointing is a permanent blessing: it “*abideth* in you,” “that he [the Comforter] may abide with you for ever” (Joh 14:16). It is very much more than a fitful emotion or brief rapture of spirit which soon gives place to depression; namely, stable, and enduring. Therein it is to be distinguished from our varying frames and feelings. It is indeed exercised and manifested in different ways and

directions: sometimes producing groans that cannot be uttered, sometimes bestowing sweet foretastes of celestial bliss. But beneath all surface perception it is exerting a steadying influence, keeping God and eternity before the soul, so that in the hour of temptation or tribulation it turns to Him for succour.

Fourth, this unction is, in itself, sufficient: so truly so that it is affirmed of its beneficiaries, “ye need not that any man teach you”—either to convey authority to the truth, to impart a saving knowledge of it to the soul, or to induce the regenerate to adhere firmly unto it in love and obedience. The Gospel carries its own witness, and when, through the Spirit’s anointing, it is applied to the heart in saving power, it is received “not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1Th 2:13).

Fifth, it instructs its recipients: “the same anointing *teacheth* you of all things.” This is fulfillment of God’s new-covenant promise: “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD” (Jer 31:33-34). In the accomplishment of that promise the Lord works so effectually upon and within His elect that, to use the language of another apostle, they are made “partakers of the divine nature” (2Pe 1:4). There is a peculiar power accompanying the teaching of the Lord by His Spirit: “Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him?” (Job 36:22). So our Lord interpreted His promise, “All thy children *shall be* taught of the LORD” (Isa 54:13), as “every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me” (Joh 6:45). There is such an efficacy attending the divine teaching that whosoever is favoured therewith is positively assured that the same is of and from God Himself, for he now has the certifying evidence of its verity within his own soul.

The anointing of believers with the Spirit is for the purpose of giving them an experiential acquaintance and saving knowledge of the Gospel, enlightening their understandings and causing their hearts to receive the same with delight, casting their inner man into the holy image of the same (Rom 6:17). Thereby they are given the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God in Christ, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (Eph 1:17-18). Such impressions of the holiness, righteousness, goodness, and grace of God are indelibly left in their souls that Satan can no longer deceive them with lying substitutes. As another apostle said, “*Ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart” (2Co 3:3). They have received the Spirit which is of God, that they may know the things which are freely given to them by God (1Co 2:12), that they may be assured of their reality,

convinced of their value, appropriate, enjoy, and embody them in their lives. They now have a spirit of discernment, but flee from hirelings (Joh 10:5).

Sixth, it is genuine and wholesome: “and is truth, and *is no lie*”—no darkness mars the light. Thus it is simple or pure blessing, no heresy being mixed with it. Therefore it is reliable and trustworthy. The Spirit is like a seal, by which the truth is testified and certified to the soul. “For while faith ought to look to God, He alone can be a witness to Himself, so as to convince our hearts that what our ears receive has come from Him” (John Calvin, 1509-1564). The added words “and is no lie” signify that God has so endowed the regenerate with sound judgment and discernment that they will not be deceived by falsehoods, or even left in a state of uncertainty and vacillation about them. There is no danger, no possibility, of anyone being misled by what this holy unction teaches; no erring while we walk according to this direction. Therefore we are to measure everything by what the Spirit teaches in the Word. Thus not only is it thorough and complete—for “By this teaching of God Himself, they were instructed in all things essential to salvation, and could not be deceived” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821)—it also conveys a conviction which cannot be called into question or shaken by man or devil.

“There is truth and no lie in what the Spirit shows you of the love of God in Christ, and sheds abroad in your heart of that love. Be sure of that, and be not afraid to act upon the assurance of it. There is truth and no lie in what the Spirit opens up to you of the freeness and fullness of the Father’s overtures of mercy in the Son. Be sure of that, and be not afraid to act upon the assurance of it. There is truth and no lie in what the Spirit would have you grasp of the peace that passeth understanding, the hope that maketh not ashamed, the joy unspeakable that is full of glory. Be sure of that, and be not afraid to act upon the assurance of it. There is truth and no lie in that which ye have heard from the beginning, so abiding in you that you abide in the Son and in the Father. That really is the anointing that is truth and no lie. Be sure of that, and be not afraid to act out and out upon the assurance of it” (Robert S. Candlish, 1806-1873).

Instead of now taking up the seventh thing that is here predicated of our anointing (namely that it ensures our abiding in Christ), we defer it to our next chapter, and instead proffer some further remarks upon the oft-misunderstood clause “and ye need not that any man teach you.” That language calls for the expositor, to explain the force of its terms, for some ignorant souls who fail to understand the sense have been misled by its sound. Certain fanatics suppose it means that the Christian is independent of all preachers, and therefore have contended for the exclusion of oral ministry from the churches. Now it is obvious that John wrote not to promote a spirit of presumption and unwillingness to be taught by others—his own example contradicted any such idea, for he was then engaged in instructing these very persons. Nor was there any inconsistency between his statement and his practice. He taught the disciples and they were grateful and

much edified. Yet supposing him to be withdrawn from them and his pen silenced, it did not follow that they must remain ignorant. The Spirit would teach them, by him and without him as He pleased. The child of God, with the Bible in his hand and the Holy Spirit in his heart, is capable of all spiritual knowledge. Whereas divine teaching does not supersede ministerial instruction, it does surpass the same.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

89. Levitical Cities, Part 1

A year ago, we devoted three articles of this series to the Levites, wherein we considered their origin and history, their duties and functions, and the typical and spiritual significance thereof. On this occasion, it will be *the cities* which were divinely appointed them for residence which will engage our attention. Since it has pleased the Lord to devote a whole chapter, and a lengthy one, to the subject, it is evident that—whether or not we can discern it—there must be that in it which is of spiritual importance and practical value for us today. Nor shall we experience any difficulty in ascertaining its central message if we bear in mind that the *ministers of the Gospel* are the counterparts of the Levites of old. In that chapter, we find it recorded that the heads of the tribe of Levi came before the assembled court of Israel and presented their claim for suitable places where they might settle with their families and possessions. Their petition was received favourably, and their request was granted. Forty-eight cities with their suburbs were assigned them—appointed by the “lot,” as had been the case with all the other tribes.

“Then came near the heads of the fathers of the Levites unto Eleazar the priest, and unto Joshua the son of Nun, and unto the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel; and they spake unto them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, The LORD commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with the suburbs thereof for our cattle. And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance, at the commandment of the LORD, these cities and their suburbs” (21:1-3). Aaron was a descendant of Levi, and in his official capacity as the high priest of Israel, he foreshadowed the Lord Jesus, who now, as the Son of God consecrated for evermore, is “a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Heb 7:28-8:2 and cf. Rev 3:5). The sons of Aaron, by natural generation, are types of Christians who are given to

Christ to serve Him (Num 3:3), the brethren of Christ sharing by grace His double title of both king and priest (Rev 1:6-7). The priestly sons of Aaron and the ministering Levites were also a figure of the public servants of the Lord in the present dispensation, as is clear from 1 Corinthians 9, “Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1Cor 9:13-14).

In stating that ministers of the Gospel are present-day counterparts of Israel’s priests and Levites, it must be borne carefully in mind that (in keeping with the radical differences which characterize the old and the new covenants) there are marked features of dissimilarity as well as resemblance between them. It was the failure, or refusal, to recognize that fact which laid the foundation for the Judaizing and paganizing of public Christianity and the erection and development of “mystery Babylon,” with all its sacerdotal and ritualistic pretensions. While there is, as 1 Corinthians 9:13-14 shows, an analogy in the *provision* made for the support of the ministers respectively in both dispensations, there is none whatever in the *services* they render. The priests had no commission to go forth and evangelize (that fell more to the lot of the prophets—Jonah 1:2, etc.), nor is the preacher today called of God to act as an intermediary between others and himself, or in any way to offer satisfaction for their sins—only on the *essential* ground of his being a Christian (and not in an official character as a clergyman) may he intercede for his brethren or present a sacrifice of praise on their behalf.

Israel’s priests and Levites were, by their birth and calling, nearer to God than were those for whom they acted, and by virtue of their office, holier than they. But both nearness to God and sanctification are conferred in Christ, without any distinction, upon all who are called of God unto the fellowship of His Son, so that, fundamentally, saved ministers and the believers to whom they minister are equal before God. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female [and we may add, there is neither clergy nor laity]: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). Whatever vital privilege and spiritual dignity Christ purchased for one, He secured for all His redeemed alike. It is most important that we should be quite clear upon this point, for it gives the death-blow to all priestcraft. There is absolutely nothing of a sacerdotal character in true Christian ministry, and therefore, the whole system of Romanism is antichristian. Again, the Jewish priesthood was restricted to the limits of a single family—the Aaronic—whereas in the selection of those whom He calls to preach the Gospel of His Son, God is no respecter of persons, but acts according to His sovereign grace and power.

Stating it in its simplest terms, Joshua 21 sets forth the gracious provision which Jehovah made to meet the temporal needs of the Levites. They were the ones who served Him in the tabernacle and ministered to the congregation in holy things, and

as such, suitably adumbrated the divinely called ministers of the Gospel, whose lives are devoted to Christ and His churches. Unlike all the other tribes, no separate portion of Canaan was allotted to the Levites upon the distribution of the land (Deu 10:8-9; Jos 13:14). In like manner, the good soldier of Jesus Christ is forbidden to entangle himself with the affairs of this life (2Ti 2:3-4), for it would ill become one who was the messenger of heaven to occupy his heart with earthly avocations. He is called upon to practise what he preaches, to be a living exemplification of his sermons, denying all fleshly and worldly lusts, and be “an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” He is required to walk in entire separation from the world, and give himself “wholly” to the things of God and the welfare of souls, that his profiting may appear unto all (1Ti 4:12, 15). What mortification of corrupt affections and inordinate desires of earthly things and what spiritual mindedness are necessary if the preacher is to give a just representation of Him in whose name he ministers.

But though no separate portion of Canaan was to be apportioned to the Levites, that was far from signifying that they must in some way secure their own interests, or that they were left dependent upon the capricious charity of their brethren. It was not the divine will that they should earn their living by the sweat of the brow, or that they should beg their daily bread. Not so does the Lord treat His beloved servants. He is no Egyptian taskmaster, demanding that they make bricks but refusing to provide them with straw. Instead, He is “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10), who has promised to supply their every need. Thus it was with the Levites. Full provision was made for their temporal sustenance. The Lord had not only appointed that a liberal part of the heave and wave offerings was to be their food, as well as the best of the oil, and the wine, and the first-fruits, with the tithes of the children of Israel (Num 18:9-19, 24), but He had also given a commandment that the other tribes should give unto the Levites, out of their own inheritance, cities to dwell in and the suburbs round about them (Num 35:2-5). In like manner, God has stipulated that those of His people who are indebted to the spiritual ministrations of His servants should, in turn, minister to their temporal subsistence. This is clear from 1 Corinthians 9:13-14, and, though it may be somewhat of a digression, we will take a closer look at that passage.

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul was vindicating his apostleship (verse 3), which his traducers denied. They objected that he had not personally seen Jesus Christ (verse 1), as had the twelve. That he did not live like other men, going without the ordinary comforts of life (verse 4), being unmarried (verse 5). That he and his companion Barnabas were obliged to support themselves by their own manual labours (verse 6), and therefore, that he knew they were not entitled to count upon the gifts of believers for their sustenance (verse 12). The main drift of his reply was that, though he acted voluntarily on the principle of self-denial, yet that, by no means, disproved that he was sent of God, or that he had not a right to be

maintained by the saints. So far from that being the case, he was clearly and fully warranted in claiming their support. This he demonstrates by a number of plain and irrefutable arguments, educed from a variety of cogent considerations. Those arguments lay down principles which are applicable to the servants of Christ in all generations, and therefore, are pertinent for today, making known as they do the revealed will of God on this practical matter. It, therefore, behoves the Lord's people carefully to weigh the same and be regulated by them.

He began by asking, "Have not we power to forbear working?" (1Co 9:6). The word "power" there signifies right or authority, being used in the same sense as it is in John 1:12. Though in the interrogative form, it has the force of an emphatic affirmative—such is our legitimate prerogative, if we choose to exercise it—to abstain from earning our own living, and to count upon the saints ministering to our bodily needs. This he proceeded to prove by three obvious analogies. First, this accords with the universally recognized rule, "Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges?" (1Co 8:7). As it is the bounden duty of the State to provide for its defenders, equally so of the churches to care for the soldiers of Christ. Second, this is in keeping with the well-established principle that the workman is entitled to remuneration, "Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof?" (1Co 9:7). Third, this is exemplified by the law of nature, "Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not the milk of the flock?" (1 Co 9:7). The husbandman, by virtue of his calling, has a right to a livelihood from the same. But, conclusive as was such reasoning, the apostle did not conclude at that point.

Paul then proceeded to show that the duty he was contending for—the temporal maintenance of Christ's servants—was not only required by the law of nations, and the dictates of nature, but was urged by the law of God, "For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn" (cf. Deu 25:4)—an example of the humanity which marks the statutes that God gave to Israel (cf. Exo 23:19, twice repeated; Deu 22:6). Labouring for its owner, the ox was worthy of its food, and must not be deprived thereof. Upon which the apostle asks, "Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether [i.e. assuredly] for our sakes?" (1Co 9:9-10). If He be so solicitous about the welfare of animals and requires that they be treated justly and kindly, is He indifferent as to how His honoured servants be dealt with? Surely not! "For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope, and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope" (1Co 9:10). The Mosaic precept was designed in its ultimate application to enforce the principle that labour should have its remuneration, so that men would work more cheerfully. In the next verse, the obvious conclusion is drawn.

"If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" (1Co 9:11). If it be right and meet that those who cultivate the earth should be encouraged to do their work diligently by the assurance that they

shall themselves be permitted to enjoy the fruit of their labours, then surely, those who engage in the far more important and exacting task of toiling in Christ's vineyard, endeavouring to advance His cause, proclaim His Gospel, feed His sheep, should be recognized and rewarded. The same precept is enforced again in 1 Timothy 2:6, "The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits." Still more plainly is the exhortation given, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal 6:6-7). Thus, it is laid down as an unchanging principle that spiritual benefits demand a temporal return. Not that any price can be put upon the invaluable ministry of the Gospel, but that those whom God has set apart to preach it have a just claim for generous compensation. And that not in the way of charity or gratuity, but as *a sacred debt*—a debt which professing Christians fail to discharge at the peril of their souls. For let none be deceived, if they fail to support the Gospel, God will severely chastise them.

Such a statement as that in verse 11 rebukes and shames any spirit of miserliness or stinginess on the part of those who participate in the privileges of a Gospel ministry, but fail to do their fair part in supporting the same. If God's servants have been used of Him to bestow one class of benefits, is it unreasonable or unequal that they should receive another class of benefits in return? Why, there is no proportion between the one and the other. They dispense that which is spiritual and concerns the eternal interests of the soul, whereas, you are required to contribute only that which is material for the needs of the body. If they have faithfully executed their office, will you consider it burdensome to discharge your obvious obligations? Shame on you if you feel that way! Instead, it should be regarded as a holy privilege. "On every principle of commutative justice, the minister's right to a subsistence must be conceded" (Charles Hodge, 1797-1878). But the apostle did not conclude his appeal even at this point, but clinched his argument by citing scriptural proof that God had ordained this very thing.

"Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?" (1Co 9:13). Here the testimony of God's own institution is quoted, linking all that has been before us in 1 Corinthians 9 with the theme of Joshua 21, for the reference has directly in view the provision made by the Lord for the maintenance of Israel's priests and Levites. They were supported in their work by the offerings of the people, being divinely permitted to eat a portion of the animals which had been presented to God in sacrifice. "The priests, the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance" (Deu 18:1 and cf. Num 5:9-10). "A part of the animal offered in sacrifice is his support, and thus, the altar and the priest become joint participators of the sacrifice. From these offerings, the priests derived

their maintenance” (Albert Barnes, 1798-1870, to whom we are indebted for not a little of the above). Thus, that for which the apostle was contending was sanctioned by divine authority.

“Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1Co 9:14). Here, by divine inspiration, the apostle declares that Christ has made the same ordinance for this dispensation as obtained under the old one. He who provided that those who served Him in His earthly temple should be partakers of the altar has also willed that those who minister His Gospel should be duly cared for. This is not optional, but obligatory. It is a divine command, which demands obedience. If on the one hand, the minister is entitled to support, on the other hand, his hearers are not at liberty to withhold the same. It is both a duty and a privilege to comply. It is not a matter of charity, but of right, that the preacher should be compensated for his labours. “The maintenance of ministers is not an arbitrary thing, left purely to the good will of the people, who may let them starve if they please. No, as the God of Israel commanded that Levites should be well provided for, so has the Lord Jesus, the King of the Church, ordained, and a perpetual ordinance it is” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Devotion to the Lord, the spirit of gratitude, the claims of love, and the workings of grace should make the duty a delight. The honour of Christ’s cause, the usefulness of His servants, yes, the happiness of His people (Act 20:35), are bound up in heeding this rule.

A beautiful illustration of compliance with the divine requirement is found in Philippians 4. There, we have the apostle expressing his appreciation and gratitude unto an assembly of the saints for the practical way in which they had manifested their love to him and their fellowship in the Gospel, “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful [solicitous], but ye lacked opportunity” (Phi 4:10). They were not among that large class of professing Christians who deem themselves willing to profit from a Gospel ministry, but who have very little concern for the temporal welfare of Christ’s servants. On the contrary, they had been mindful of His minister, and as occasion arose and opportunity was afforded, they had sent of their substance to him while he was away labouring in other parts. This brought back to his memory similar kindnesses which they had shown him years before, “Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel [when he commenced his evangelistic career], when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity” (Phi 4:15-16). So far from being a case of “out of sight, out of mind,” he was constantly in their thoughts.

During Paul’s extensive travels, the Philippians had lost touch with him—though not their interest in him, as the “wherein [i.e. during the lengthy interval] ye were also careful” attests, but they had no “opportunity” to communicate with him. But now that they learned that he was a prisoner in Rome for the truth’s sake, they

sent to him a further token of their affection and esteem by Epaphroditus (Phi 4:18). Most blessed is it to mark the spirit in which the apostle received their gift. First, while gratefully acknowledging their present (Phi 4:14), he looked above them to the One who had put into their hearts the desire to minister unto him, “I rejoiced *in the Lord* greatly” (Phi 4:10). Second, he was made happy too on *their* behalf, “Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account” (Phi 4:17)—it furnished proof of the workings of the spirit of grace within, evidencing that they were in a healthy condition spiritually. Third, he declared that their gift met with the approval of his Master, that it was “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God” Phi 4:18). Fourth, he assured them that they would be no losers by caring for him, “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phi 4:19).

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

1. The Scriptures and Sin

There is grave reason to believe that much Bible reading and Bible study of the last few years has been of no spiritual profit to those who engaged in it. Yea, we go farther. We greatly fear that in many instances it has proved a curse rather than a blessing. This is strong language, we are well aware, yet no stronger than the case calls for. Divine gifts may be misused, and divine mercies abused. That this has been so in the present instance is evident by the fruits produced. Even the natural man may (and often does) take up the study of the Scriptures with the same enthusiasm and pleasure as he might of the sciences. Where this is the case, his store of knowledge is increased, and so also is his pride. Like a chemist engaged in making interesting experiments, the intellectual searcher of the Word is quite elated when he makes some discovery in it, but the joy of the latter is no more spiritual than would be that of the former. So, too, just as the successes of the chemist generally increase his sense of self-importance and cause him to look with disdain upon others more ignorant than himself, such, alas, is often the case with those who have investigated the subjects of Bible numerics, typology, prophecy, etc.

The Word of God may be taken up from various motives. Some read it to satisfy their literary pride. In certain circles, it has become both the respectable and popular thing to obtain a general acquaintance with the contents of the Bible, simply

because it is regarded as an educational defect to be ignorant thereof. Some read it to satisfy their sense of curiosity, as they might any other book of note. Others read it to satisfy their sectarian pride. They consider it a duty to be well versed in the particular tenets of their own denomination and so search eagerly for proof-texts in support of “*our* doctrines.” Yet others read it for the purpose of being able to argue successfully with those who differ from them. But in all this, there is no thought of *God*, no yearning for *spiritual* edification, and, therefore, no real benefit to the *soul*.

Of what, then, does a true profiting from the Word consist? Does not 11 Timothy 3:16-17 furnish a clear answer to our question? There we read, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Observe what is here omitted. The Holy Scriptures are given us not for intellectual gratification and carnal speculation, but to furnish unto “all good works,” and that, by teaching, reproof, correcting us. Let us endeavour to amplify this by the help of other passages.

1. An individual is spiritually profited when the Word *convicts him of sin*. This is its first office—to reveal our depravity, to expose our vileness, to make known our wickedness. A man’s moral life may be irreproachable, his dealings with his fellows faultless, but when the Holy Spirit applies the Word to his heart and conscience, opening his sin-blinded eyes to see his relation and attitude *to God*, he cries, “Woe is me, for I am undone” (Isa 6:5). It is in this way that each truly saved soul is brought to realize his need of Christ. “They that are whole need not a physician, but they who are sick” (Mar 2:17). Yet, it is not until the spirit applies the Word in divine power that any individual is made to feel he *is* sick, sick unto death.

Such conviction that brings home to the heart the awful ravages which sin has wrought in the human constitution is not to be restricted to the initial experience which immediately precedes conversion. Each time that *God* blesses His Word to my heart, I am made to feel how far, far short I come of the standard which He has set before me, namely, “Be ye holy in *all* manner of conversation” (1Pe 1:15). Here, then, is the first test to apply. As I read of the sad failures of different ones in Scripture, does it make me realize how sadly like unto them I am? As I read of the blessed and perfect life of Christ, does it make me recognize how terribly unlike Him I am?

2. An individual is spiritually profited when the Word makes him *sorrow for sin*. Of the stony-ground hearer, it is said that he “heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself” (Mat 13:20-21). But of those who were convicted under the preaching of Peter, it is recorded that “they were *pricked* in their heart” (Act 2:37). The same contrast exists today. Many will listen to a flowery sermon, or an address on “dispensational truth” that displays oratorical

powers or exhibits the intellectual skill of the speaker, but which, usually, contains no searching application to the conscience, and it is received with approbation, but no one is humbled before God or brought into a closer walk with Him through it. But let a faithful servant of the Lord (who by grace is not seeking to acquire a reputation for his “brilliance”) bring the teaching of Scripture to bear upon character and conduct, exposing the sad failures of even the best of God’s people, and, though the crowd will despise the messenger, the truly regenerate will be thankful for the message which causes them to mourn before God and cry, “Oh, wretched man that I am” (Rom 7:24). So it is in the private reading of the Word. It is when the Holy Spirit applies it in such a way that I am made to see *and feel* my inward corruptions that I am really blessed.

What a word is that in Jeremiah 31:19: “After that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded”! Do you, my reader, know anything of such an experience? Does your study of the Word produce a broken heart and lead to a *humbling* of yourself before God? Does it convict you of your sins in such a way that you are brought to *daily* repentance before Him? The paschal lamb had to be eaten with “bitter herbs” (Exo 12:8). So as we really feed on the Word, the Holy Spirit makes it “bitter” to us *before* it becomes sweet to our taste. Note the order in Revelation 10:9, “And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.” This is ever the experimental order—there must be mourning before comfort (Mat 5:4), humbling before exalting (1Pe 5:6).

3. An individual is spiritually profited when the Word leads to *confession of sin*. The Scriptures are profitable for “reproof” (2Ti 3:16), and an honest soul will acknowledge its faults. Of the carnal, it is said, “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved” (Joh 3:20). “God be merciful unto me a sinner” (Luk 18:13) is the cry of a renewed heart, and every time we are quickened by the Word (Psa 119:25, 50, 107), there is fresh revealing to us and a fresh owning by us of our transgressions before God. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Pro 28:13). There can be no spiritual prosperity or fruitfulness (Psa 1:3) while we conceal within our breasts our guilty secrets; only as they are freely owned before God, and that in detail, shall we enjoy His mercy.

There is no real peace for the conscience and no rest for the heart while we carry the burden of unconfessed sin. Relief comes when it is fully unbosomed to God. Mark well the experience of David, “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer” (Psa 32:3-4). Is this figurative, but forcible language, unintelligible unto you? Or does your own spiritual history explain it? Ah, there is many a verse of Scripture which no

commentary save that of personal experience can satisfactorily interpret. Blessed indeed is the immediate sequel here, “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou *forgavest* the iniquity of my sin” (Psa 32:5).

4. An individual is spiritually profited when the Word produces in him *a deeper hatred of sin*. “Ye that love the LORD, hate evil” (Psa 97:10). “We cannot love God without hating that which He hates. We are not only to avoid evil, and refuse to continue in it, but we must be up in arms against it, and bear towards it a hearty indignation” (C. H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892). One of the surest tests to apply to the professed conversion is the heart’s attitude towards sin. Where the principle of holiness has been planted, there will necessarily be a loathing of all that is unholy. If our hatred of evil be genuine, we are thankful when the Word reproves even the evil which we suspected not.

This was the experience of David, “Through Thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way” (Psa 119:104). Observe well, it is not merely “I abstain from,” but “I hate,” not only “some,” or “many,” but “*every* false way,” and not only “every evil,” but “every *false* way.” “Therefore I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way” (Psa 119:128). But, it is the very opposite with the wicked, “Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee” (Psa 50:17). In Proverbs 8:13, we read, “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil,” and this godly fear comes through reading the Word, see Deuteronomy 17:18-19. Rightly has it been said, “Till sin be hated, it cannot be mortified; you will never cry against it, as the Jews did against Christ, Crucify it, Crucify it, till sin be really abhorred as He was” (E. Reyner, 1635).

5. An individual is spiritually profited when the Word causes *a forsaking of sin*. “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2Ti 2:19). The more the Word is read with the definite object of discovering what is pleasing and what is displeasing to the Lord, the more will His will become known, and if our hearts are right with Him the more will our ways be conformed thereto. There will be a “*walking* in the truth” (3Jo 1:4). At the close of 11 Corinthians 6, some precious promises are given to those who separate themselves from unbelievers. Observe, there, the *application* which the Holy Spirit makes of them. He does not say, “Having therefore these promises, be comforted and become complacent thereby,” but, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us *cleanse ourselves* from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (2Co 7:1).

“Now ye are *clean* through the word which I have spoken unto you” (Joh 15:3). Here is another important rule by which we should frequently test ourselves, Is the reading and studying of God’s word producing a *purging* of my ways? Of old, the question was asked, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” (Psa 119:9) and the divine answer is “By taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Psa

119:9). Yes, not simply by reading, believing, or memorizing it, but by the personal application of the Word to our “way.” It is by “taking heed” to such exhortations as “*flee* fornication” (1Co 6:18), “*flee* from idolatry” (1Co 10:14), “*flee* these things” (1Ti 6:11)—a covetous love for money (1Ti 6:10), “*flee* also youthful lusts” (2Ti 2:22), that the Christian is brought into practical separation from evil, for sin has not only to be confessed but “*forsaken*” (Pro 28:13).

6. An individual is spiritually profited when the Word *fortifies against sin*. The Holy Scriptures are given to us not only for the purpose of revealing our innate sinfulness, and the many, many ways in which we “come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23), but also to teach us how to obtain deliverance from sin, how to be kept from displeasing God. “Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I *might not sin* against thee” (Psa 119:11). This is what each of us is required to do. “Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart” (Job 22:22). It is particularly the commandments, the warnings, the exhortations, we need to make our own and treasure, to memorize them, meditate upon them, pray over them, and put them into practice. The only effective way of keeping a plot of ground from being overgrown by weeds is to sow good seed therein, “Overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21). So the more Christ’s Word dwells in us “richly” (Col 3:16), the less room will there be for the exercise of sin in our hearts and lives.

It is not sufficient merely to assent to the veracity of the Scriptures. They require to be received into the affections. It is unspeakably solemn to note that the Holy Spirit specifies as the ground of apostasy, “because the *love of* the truth they *received not*” (2Th 2:10, Greek). “If it lie only in the tongue or in the mind, only to make it a matter of talk and speculation, it will soon be gone. The seed which lies on the surface, the fowls in the air will pick up. Therefore, hide it deeply. Let it get from the ear into the mind, from the mind into the heart. Let it soak in further and further. It is only when it hath a prevailing sovereignty in the heart that we receive it in the love of it—when it is dearer than our dearest lust, then it will stick to us” (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677).

Nothing else will preserve from the infections of this world, deliver from the temptations of Satan, and be so effective a preservative against sin, as the Word of God received into the affections. “The law of his God is in his heart: none of his steps shall slide” (Psa 37:31). As long as the truth is active within us, stirring the conscience, and is really loved by us, we shall be kept from falling. When Joseph was tempted by Potiphar’s wife, he said, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen 39:9). The Word was in his heart, and therefore, had prevailing power over his lusts—the ineffable holiness, the mighty power of God, who is able both to save and to destroy. None of us knows when he may be tempted. Therefore, it is necessary to be prepared against it. “Who among you will give ear...and hear *for the time to come*?” (Isa 42:23). Yes, we are to anticipate the

future and be fortified against it, by storing up the Word in our hearts for coming emergencies.

7. An individual is spiritually profited when the Word causes him to *practise the opposite of sin*. “Sin is the transgressing of the law” (1Jo 3:4). God says, “Thou shalt.” Sin says, “I will not.” God says, “Thou shalt not.” Sin says, “I will.” Thus, sin is rebellion against God, the determination to have my own way (Isa 53:6). Therefore, sin is a species of anarchy in the spiritual realm, and may be likened unto the waving of the red flag in the face of God. Now, the opposite of sinning against God is submission to Him, as the opposite of lawlessness is subjection to the law. Thus, to practise the opposition of sin is to walk in the path of obedience. This is another chief reason why the Scriptures were given—to *make known* the path which is pleasing to God for us. They are profitable not only for reproof and correction, but also for “instruction in righteousness” (2Ti 3:16).

Here, then, is another important rule by which we should frequently test ourselves. Are my thoughts being formed, my heart controlled, and my ways and works regulated by God’s Word? This is what the Lord requires, “Be ye *doers* of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (Jam 1:22). This is how gratitude to and affection for Christ are to be expressed, “If ye love me, *keep* my commandments” (Joh 14:15). “We need not only light to know our way, but a heart to walk in it. Direction is necessary because of the blindness of our minds, and the effectual impulsions of grace are necessary because of the weakness of our hearts. It will not answer our duty to have a naked notion of truths, unless we embrace and pursue them” (Thomas Manton). Note, it is “the *path* of thy commandments” (Psa 119:35), not a self-chosen course, but a definitely marked one, not a public “road,” but a private “path.”

There are other ways of being spiritually profited from God’s Word than those we have named, and some of them we hope to consider (D.V.) in a future article. But let both writer and reader honestly and diligently measure himself, as in the presence of God, by the seven things here enumerated. Has your study of the Bible made you more humble, or more proud—proud of the knowledge you have acquired? Has it raised you in the esteem of your fellow men, or has it led you to take a lower place before God? Has it produced in you a deeper abhorrence and loathing of self, or has it made you more complacent? Has it caused those you mingle with, or perhaps teach, to *say*, I wish I had your *knowledge* of the Bible, or does it cause you to *pray*, “Lord give me the faith, the grace, the *holiness* Thou hast granted my friend, or teacher?” “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting *may appear* unto all” (1Ti 4:15).

SIN

Have we not well-nigh lost our sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin? We refer not merely to “crime,” though it is to be feared that many are becoming so familiar with the records thereof that their sensibilities are being blunted. Not only the profane world, but the professing world too, looks upon it with little or no deep concern. Sin is far too lightly regarded by our careless and heedless generation. We need a fresh realization of it as awful and abhorrent, as cursing and damning. We ought to recoil from sin as we would from a deadly serpent. We ought to avoid sin as we would the repulsive filth in which the sow wallows, and as the vomit of a dog. And we would, if we really perceived that it is sin which gave death its throne and the right to reign as universal monarch (Rom 5:14)—that it is sin which has totally *ruined the soul* (Eph 4:18)—that it is sin which exposes all unto “*everlasting destruction* from the presence of the Lord” (2Th 1:9).

Now, we are entirely dependent upon the Holy Scriptures for an accurate and adequate conception of sin. They alone make known how it first entered into this world. They alone acquaint us with how sin appears in the eyes of the thrice Holy One, as that “abominable thing” which He “hates” (Jer 44:4). They alone tell us of the nature of the “wages” it pays (Rom 6:23), only the first small installments of which are received in this life. They alone reveal how salvation from it is obtainable. The writings of the ancients and the works of modern heathen will be searched in vain for any real light upon these momentous facts. And is it not because the present generation is getting farther and farther away from the written Word of God that it views sin so lightly and has such an altogether inadequate conception of its enormity?

What is sin? It is that in the fallen creature which ever works against God, and against the soul’s own interest and comfort. It is not only a disease, but a crime—the transgression of God’s righteous law—and therefore, it has done more than pollute our being. It has brought us under the just condemnation of God. The least variation and deviation from the revealed will of God is *sin*. It is a species of self-love—pursuing those gratifications and fulfilling those desires that make self our chief end and aim. Sin is an internal evil, though it is manifested in many external effects. The whole seat of sin is in the will, though it spreads its evil influence throughout every faculty and member of the entire man. Sin, then, is an aversion of God, a turning away from the Chief Good unto evil. Sin is open opposition to God, not only a turning from but a turning against Him. It is the soul hating God as a Lawgiver.

None can perfectly know the utmost evil there is in sin but God Himself. Sin entails *infinite guilt* because it is committed against an infinite Object, and therefore, a finite mind is incapable of fully grasping its magnitude. It needs to be most carefully considered that the vileness and guilt of sin lie in its being committed against *God*. Let us endeavour to exhibit the force of this. Were I to approach a stranger and, without the slightest provocation, spit in his face, knock him down, and trample upon him, that would be a grave offence. But suppose that instead of being a stranger, he was one who had often befriended me. Then, my guilt would be so much the greater. But suppose that it was my own dear father and that he had ever treated me with the utmost consideration and kindness. My guilt would be that much the more aggravated, for in proportion to my obligation to show him respect would be the enormity of my disrespect.

Let us labour the point a little further. The enormity of an offence is not only increased by my obligations to the person against whom it is committed, but also by the status and authority of that person. The difference is at once perceived between my committing an uncalled-for assault upon a private citizen and upon an officer of the law. But, how much greater would be the criminality were I to smite the person of the king! The dignity of the person against whom an offence is committed vastly augments the guilt. Now, combine the two thoughts. God is vested with supreme authority, being the King of kings, and therefore, having the right to demand complete subjection from us. Moreover, He is our Creator and Benefactor—the One who gave us being and has cared for us every moment of our lives. We are, therefore, under the deepest obligation to love, honour, and serve Him. Because He is endowed with infinitude, we are under infinite obligation to Him, and therefore, all sin against Him involves infinite guilt.

God is infinitely perfect, the sum of all excellency, and it is infinitely more criminal not to love and respect *Him* than to have no love or regard for all creation. It is an infinitely greater criminality to oppose and hate God, in any way and to the slightest degree, than to oppose and hate all His creatures. If it were possible for a man to be so bloodthirsty, and with the power so to execute his murderous intentions, that he succeeded in slaying the entire human race, and could he do so without any rebellion against or opposition to God, even that incalculable crime would be far less than the least degree of opposition to God Himself. It was the realization of this awful truth which broke the heart of convicted David, making him to cry out, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight” (Psa 51:4). The realization that he had defied the authority of heaven and trampled upon the laws of the Almighty dwarfed all other considerations.

The heinousness of sin, then, is not to be gauged by the littleness or greatness of the act itself, but by the offence which is done unto *God*, and that, in turn, is measured by the light with which we are favoured, the opportunities granted us, and the privileges we have enjoyed. What are all the sins of the heathen world in

comparison with those of Christendom? “And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee” (Mat 11:23-24). But, who is there today that really believes this? The same fearful truth is emphasized in, “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much *sorer punishment*, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Heb 10:28-29).

But descending to a lower plane, we may see the heinousness of sin with regard to ourselves, by what it has done for and wrought in us. It has *defiled our nature*, “But we are all as an unclean thing” (Isa 64:6), and this to such an extent that as God said concerning Israel of old, “From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is *no soundness* in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores” (Isa 1:6). And as the apostle to the Gentiles declared, “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom 7:18). It has *degraded our nature*, “Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish” (Psa 49:12). Man fell from the fair estate in which his Maker placed him, and has become like the beasts—void of spiritual understanding, guided only by natural instincts. It has *enslaved our nature*, bringing us into bondage more cruel than the Hebrews suffered in Egypt. As it is written, “His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins” (Pro 5:22).

How deeply important it is that we should have a scriptural conception of the *nature* of sin, and perceive that it is nothing less than contempt of the Almighty, the defying of His will, the disregarding of His authority, to the ruination of ourselves. Nothing is as truly humbling as a right view of sin, as plainly appears from the case of the convicted publican—smiting upon his breast and not daring to raise his eyes to heaven (Luk 18:13). Nothing will bring us into the dust, our true place before God, as a keen sense of our sinnership. The more we are awakened to the heinousness of sin, the greater check will that be upon us, causing us to act with more caution and conscience, and moving us to pray with increased earnestness for deliverance. The deeper be our realization of the vileness of sin, the higher will be our appreciation of the cleansing blood of Christ. Then, see to it, brother preacher, that you preach not only *against* sin, but (frequently) *upon* sin itself—the fact that it is flaunting the red flag of lawlessness in the face of the King of kings.

It remains to be pointed out that we are entirely dependent upon the Holy Spirit for a vital and experimental knowledge of sin. One may read the Scriptures all his life and be able to quote accurately the various declarations about sin, and yet, have naught but a mental grasp of the subject. One may be thoroughly acquainted with

the most solemn facts about sin, and yet, the heart be entirely unmoved. The Spirit alone can open our Satan-blinded eyes to see sin in its true hideousness. The Spirit alone can so convict us of depravity that our self-righteousness receives its death wound. The Spirit alone can make us so hate evil that we depart therefrom. The Spirit alone can make us conscious of the fatal malady which sin has inflicted upon us, so that we betake ourselves to the great Physician for cleansing and healing.

SALVATION

We concluded our previous article upon “Sin” by affirming that “the Spirit alone can make us conscious of the fatal malady which sin has inflicted upon us, so that we betake ourselves to the great Physician for cleansing and healing.” This presents an aspect of our present theme which now receives scant attention in many quarters, namely, the imperative necessity of a work of divine grace being wrought by the Holy Spirit before any sinner recognizes his dire need of or is really willing to come to Christ for salvation. Those who dissent from that statement must fail to perceive either the actual condition of the sinner—alienated from God, at enmity against Him, the captive of Satan, and thoroughly in love with his bondage—or the nature of God’s salvation—changing the sinner’s heart, imparting to him a love of holiness, causing him to walk in the paths of righteousness as well as pardoning his transgressions.

“Salvation” is a very comprehensive term, and that which it connotes needs to be looked at from two chief viewpoints—the divine and the human. The divine side includes what the Father purposed, what the Son purchased, and what the Spirit performs in the sinner. That is only another way of saying that salvation has both a judicial and an experimental aspect—Christ satisfying the demands of the Law for all who truly believe in Him, the Spirit working within the soul so that we are enabled to comply with the terms of the Gospel. The human side includes what God requires from the sinner in order to his being pardoned, and in order to his reaching heaven, for the two things are not synonymous. At conversion, there is a right-about-face, so that the old course of self-pleasing and self-gratification is forsaken, but subsequently, there is the narrow way to be traversed if the pilgrim is to reach the promised inheritance.

It requires to be pointed out in this day that Christ is far more than a “fire-escape.” He is the great Physician, too. In its exposition of “salvation,” Scripture

throws the emphasis upon Christ delivering from sin. The very first declaration of the New Testament thereon is, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from [not the wrath to come, but] their sins” (Mat 1:21), and it is the business of the evangelist to make clear how He does so. It is a very inadequate and one-sided declaration to say that Christ saves us from the penalty of our sins by enduring that penalty in our stead. Yea, if we say no more than that, we seriously misrepresent the matter. Christ is not a dead, but a living Saviour, who “is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Heb 7:25)—save from the love, the dominion, the pollution of sin.

Christ did not come to rescind God’s claims upon us, or to lower the standard of righteousness which He has set before us. Rather does the salvation He has provided begin by bringing us to realize how wickedly we have disregarded God’s claims, and how woefully we have failed to measure up to His standard, and by working in us a godly sorrow for sin and a desire and seeking after holiness. The sinner is first made conscious of his dire need of a divine salvation, and this, by bringing him to see and feel that he has been a lifelong rebel against the moral Ruler of the universe, and that, despite his present horror at and grief over such wicked conduct, he has no power of his own to live a new life. Thereby does he discover that Christ is our only hope, and that He alone can heal him of the terrible wounds which sin has inflicted on his soul, and supply that grace that will enable him to walk in the paths of righteousness.

Man, then, must be told of his disease before he is ready to hear of God’s remedy. In other words, the demands of the Law must be pressed upon him before the provisions of the Gospel are set before him, for “By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:20). This is the order of the New Testament. The preaching of John the Baptist preceded that of Christ. The “axe” must be “laid unto the root of the tree” (Mat 3:10). The demand for repentance (with all that that term connotes) pressed upon the conscience. The terms of the Gospel are to be defined before the promises of the Gospel are proclaimed. The Gospel announces terms of peace to those who are in revolt against God, and they are “Be ye reconciled to God” (2Co 5:20), which signifies not only a willingness to be saved by grace alone, but the throwing down of the weapons of our warfare against Him. There can be no truce, no peace, between God (considered as Ruler and Judge) and the sinner while he deliberately harbours a traitor in Mansoul.

It is very necessary to proclaim that salvation is entirely of divine grace and in no wise of human merit. We must counteract man’s legal spirit by insisting that salvation is not of works or of creature performances. Yet, it is equally necessary to counteract man’s antinomian spirit by insisting that none can be saved without works, and that he who leads an unholy life will never reach heaven. Even conscience tells a man that he must abandon his evil course before a holy God will pardon him. Scripture emphatically confirms this, “He that covereth his sins shall

not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Pro 28:13). “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thought: and let him return [having departed in Adam] unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him” (Isa 55:7). One cannot continue revelling in his lusts and obtain pardon from a holy God.

“Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him” (Psa 85:9). Yes, and not to those who trifle with Him. “Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes” (Psa 119:155). Alas, how rarely is this side of the truth now presented. Should it be objected that these are Old Testament passages, while we do not grant that there is any force to such a quibble, let it be pointed out that the teaching of the New Testament is exactly the same. “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Act 3:19). “Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators...nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1Co 6:9-11). None but a madman supposes that God would befriend one who remained a rogue, that He would pardon one who refused to forgive those who wronged him. Christ is no Saviour for those who are determined to persevere in sin. If a person clings to sin, he clings to destruction.

We cannot be partakers of Christ and drink the cup of Belial at the same time. Right hands must be cut off and right eyes plucked out—fleshly lusts mortified—if we would enter the kingdom of God. Not that reformation itself will save anyone, or even help to do so. Nevertheless, a genuine desire to be saved is a genuine desire to be yielded up to God’s will. “But first gave their own selves to the Lord” (2Co 8:5). There must be complete surrender of ourselves to Him. No person has any right to say that he is saved while he continues in sin as he did before. How can he be saved from sin when he is still living in it? As well talk about a drowning man having been saved while he is sinking in the water.

Lest the reader conclude that the writer is too legalistic, consider well these quotations from one of the soundest and most widely used evangelists of the centuries. “I have these things to propound to the sinner that would know if he may be so bold to venture himself upon this grace. Dost thou see thy sins? Art thou weary of them? Wouldest thou with all thy heart be saved by Jesus Christ? I dare say no more. I dare not say less” (*The Jerusalem Sinner Saved*, by John Bunyan, 1628-1688). Again, “They that miss of life perish because they will not let go their sins, or because they take up a profession short of the saving faith of the Gospel” (*The Strait Gate*, by John Bunyan).

“There are some who stumble at Christ because of His holiness. He is too strict for them. They would be Christians, but they cannot renounce their sensual pleasure. They would be washed in His blood, but they desire still to roll in the mire of sin. Willing enough the mass of men would be to receive Christ if, after receiving Him, they might continue in their drunkenness, their wantonness, and self-

indulgence. But Christ lays the axe at the root of the tree. He tells them these things must be given up, for ‘because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience’ and ‘without holiness no man shall see the Lord.’ Human nature kicks at this” (C. H. Spurgeon on Rom 9:33). And again, “You say you do not care much about death unto sin. Well, then, there is nothing for it but you shall have your choice. If you will not have death unto sin, you shall have sin unto death. There is no alternative. If you do not die to sin, you shall die for sin. If you do not slay sin, sin will slay you. As surely as you live, my unsaved hearers, you cannot harbour any sin and go to heaven. Let no man deceive you” (C. H. Spurgeon on Rom 6).

It seems to be little recognized that the love of sin keeps far more away from Christ than does self-righteousness. Before there can be a receiving of Him, there must be a renouncing of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Sin cherished in the heart is an effectual hindrance to the exercise of faith. None but a contrite heart, softened and broken by repentance, will savingly trust in the Lord Jesus. Make no mistake on this point, dear reader, any “faith” which issues from an unhumbled and unsubdued heart is a delusion. God’s salvation removes the guilt of sin from the conscience, dethrones the love and power of sin in the heart, and the dominion of it in the life. If you really wish to be saved from selfishness, pride, uncleanness, worldliness, seek deliverance and cleansing from Christ.

FEBRUARY

LATE

In this companion article to the January one (“Early”), we do not propose to confine ourselves unto the few passages where the actual word “Late” occurs, but, instead, include those which treat of procrastination, tardiness, and lateness. As we began the former with an appeal unto the impenitent and unbelieving, so here we will first address ourselves unto those who have not yet closed with the free offer of the Gospel. Let all such who read this piece seriously ponder those solemn words, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (Jer 8:20). That was the pathetic lament of Israel during a critical emergency. They were besieged by the Chaldeans, surrounded by powerful forces of fierce foes through which they were unable to break. They had expected that the Egyptians would come to their relief, but their hopes had been dashed. They must have been nearing the point of starvation, and, with winter imminent, destruction stared them in the face, and they were filled with a spirit of despair. That doleful cry of the ancient Jews may well be accommodated unto the case of those who are destitute of any well-grounded hope and “without God in the world.”

“The harvest is past, the summer is ended.” Those words announce the sequel to the fields of golden grain which a faithful Creator (Gen 8:22; 1Pe 4:19) supplies for His ungrateful creatures. The sickle had done its work and cut down the corn. The genial sunshine of summer was over, and the icy blasts of winter were approaching. Such is a parable of our mundane existence, though, alas, the parallel fails in one important respect where the unsaved are concerned. You have been the recipients of God’s temporal mercies and have been privileged to enjoy the spiritual means of grace, but instead of bringing forth fruit to the glory of God, you have produced naught but weeds to your own dishonor. Why then should not the sickle of death remove you from this scene as a cumberer of the ground? As summer gives place to winter, so life is followed by death, and *you* are unprepared for it. Or to change the

figure, your lot is like unto those who gave utterance to this text. Your soul is besieged, besieged by sin and Satan, which are determined to bring about your eternal destruction. Perhaps you too have leaned upon an Egyptian arm of flesh to extricate you—in your case, self-efforts—only to be disappointed and mocked for your pains.

“And we are not saved” was their bitter cry. Perhaps you differ from them in this respect also. *They* were painfully conscious of their dismal plight, whereas *you* are indifferent to your perilous situation, insensible of your wretchedness. Oh, that it may please God to awaken and convict you before it be too late. To be not saved means that you are in a perishing condition. It means that the accumulated guilt of all your sins lies to your account. It means that the curse of the divine Law clamours for your damnation. Whether you know it or not, it means that you are the slave of your lusts and the captive of the devil. It means that, even now, the wrath of God abides on you. It means that you are hastening to the endless fire of hell as swiftly as the passage of time can take you thither. And *why is it* that you are “not saved”? It is because you have not sought the Lord with all your heart (Jer 29:13). And why have you not done so? Because you have been too indifferent about your eternal interests, concerned over the health of your body, heedless of the welfare of your soul, anxious to succeed in business and make good in this world, uninterested in the unsearchable riches of Christ and heedless of the world to come.

As Esau preferred the gratification of his belly to spiritual blessings, so it is greatly to be feared that some who will read these lines are far too deeply absorbed with the things of time and sense to seek seriously after eternal treasures. Little as you may realize it, that is only another way of saying that Christ is rejected because you are *in love with sin*. You are not too busy to eat, and the One, who has given you time to minister unto your body, has given time for you to care for your soul. Whatever excuses you may offer for postponing this all-important matter, you are trifling with God. You are devoid of any sense of urgency. Why is the same thought repeated, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended,” but to impress you with the fact that all earthly things have an end? Salvation is only obtainable in this life—after death, the judgment. Then, how eagerly should you seize your immediate opportunity. “Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Pro 27:1). Felix trembled at the preaching of Paul, but decided to wait for “a more convenient season.” Yet, as far as the record of Scripture goes, it never came! The foolish virgins sought oil for their lamps at the last moment, but they had left it until it was *too late*.

And now, a few words unto the believer. As in our January article, we stressed the importance of beginning the day with God, let us point out the need of *closing the day* with Him. First, that we *review* it in His presence, that we may perceive the duties we have neglected, the temptations to which we have yielded, the things we have done amiss, so that we may confess our sins and clear our consciences ere we

lie down—perhaps never to rise again in this world! Not only is it indispensable to keep short accounts with God if we are to have His smile upon us, but the forming of this habit of searching our ways and taking stock of our actions *late in the day*—comparing them with the rule of God’s Word—will make us better acquainted with ourselves and promote the grace of humility. The more we look at ourselves in the glass of God’s Word, the less cause shall we have for complacency. Nothing contributes more unto soul prosperity than the deepening of a spirit of self-judgment and self-abasement.

Second, review God’s *mercies* unto you during the day which is now ended. Mark their variety, their timelines, their uninterrupted continuity. Ponder His preserving care, the particular instances wherein He has shown Himself strong in your behalf, the dangers and calamities from which He has delivered you. Think of the comforts which God has lavished upon you, how deeply you are indebted to the bounties of His providence, and say with the Psalmist, “Blessed be the LORD, who daily loadeth us with his benefits” (Psa 68:19). Though the day may have had its trials, disappointments and afflictions, yet, they too were ordered by divine wisdom and designed for your good. And though sense perceives it not, *faith* is to recognize the same and “in every thing give thanks” (1Th 5:18). Be thankful that a merciful Creator has appointed the night as well as the day, that He grants a respite from toil, that the burden and heat of the day are not perpetual. When God “divided the light from the darkness” (Gen 1:4) and allotted to both of them their seasons successively, He saw “that it was good” (Gen 1). How grateful we should be for His drawing of the curtains of the night about us in favour to our repose!

Third, as the bird flies to its nest for shelter for the night, so *retire to your divine refuge*, and say, “Return unto thy rest, O my soul” (Psa 116:7). Whatever has disturbed your tranquility during the day, commit it now unto God. Cast thy burden on Him and repose yourself in the arms of your eternal Lover. Take not your troubles to bed with you, but resolve with the Psalmist (not in your own strength, but counting upon the sufficiency of divine grace), “I will both lay me down in peace, *and sleep*; for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety” (Psa 4:8). Place your outward man in His safe custody. Commit your inward man to the influences of the Holy Spirit, that you may be instructed in the night seasons (Psa 16:7). Lie down in peace with all men, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Eph 4:26). For if you do so, then, you are not at peace with God.

A final word to those of the Lord’s children who have reached that stage where it is *late in life* with them. What an assuring word is that, “And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you” (Isa 46:4). The unchanging JEHOVAH will not only never leave or forsake you, but will have the same care and sympathy for you now as He had in the days of your infancy, when you were unable to minister unto yourself. However infirmities press upon you, He will support and sustain, and

carry you in His everlasting arms. If then (by grace) we have learned to trust Him, we need not be anxious about the few days there may still be left for us to spend in this scene. Instead, let us lay hold of that promise, “They shall bring forth fruit in old age” (Psa 92:14). And why not? Are you not in your own person a miracle of grace? Has not divine power wrought in you from the day that you first believed? Is *old age* “too hard for the LORD” (Gen 18:14)? Perish the thought. Count upon a supernatural enablement to bring forth the peaceable fruit of righteousness—patience, meekness, contentment with your lot, rejoicing in the Lord. Fear not your passage into the next world. He, who has given grace to live by, will give grace to die by. “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for *the end* of that man is *peace*” (Ps 37:37). Of the Prince of peace it is said, “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (Joh 13:1), and that love will be evidenced by filling your soul with that peace which passes all understanding.

EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

38. Abiding in Christ (2:28)

*“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when
he shall appear, we may have confidence, and
not be ashamed before him at his coming.”*

“Abiding in Christ” means remaining steadfast

The apostle was engaged in warning professing Christians against false teachers who desired to corrupt them, yea, who had already prevailed with many of their company (verses 18-19). He had shown them up in their true colours, denouncing them as antichrists and liars (verse 22). He had exhorted the saints to hold fast the beginning of their confidence steadfast to the end (verse 24). He had reminded them of the grand promise given for their encouragement (verse 25). Then he assured the regenerate that the anointing which they had received from Christ was no mere temporary benefit, but one which would remain in them as an incorruptible principle of life and light, supplying them with such spiritual discernment as no human teaching could impart. That “anointing” consisted, as we have seen, of the

gift of the Holy Spirit and His saving grace. It is the Spirit as an illuminator and instructor that is here singled out for particular mention. He teaches nothing but infallible truth, without the slightest mixture of error. He teaches “of all things,” that is, all things essential unto our ingrafting into and continuation in Christ—the essential and fundamental things of the Gospel, whatever be requisite for our obedience to Christ and communion with Him. *That* all believers are taught, however ignorant they be in matters of lesser importance.

Paraphrasing the excellent John Owen (1616-1683), we would say that, *first*, all divine truth that is necessary to be known and believed that we may live unto God, abide in Christ, and be preserved from seducers, is revealed in the Scriptures (Act 20:32). *Second*, but of ourselves we cannot understand the Scriptures unto the ends just specified (1Co 2:14); if we could there would be no need that we should be taught them by the Spirit (1Co 2:12). *Third*, by the anointing of the Spirit believers are taught all those things, so that they are enabled to discern, understand, and acknowledge them (1Jo 2:27). The Spirit is given to Christ’s redeemed for this very purpose: that He may graciously and savingly instruct them in the truth of the Gospel by the supernatural enlightening of their minds, causing the soul to cling firmly unto it with love and delight, transforming them in the whole inner man into the image of the same. Thereby it answers to the anointing of the Lord Jesus with the same Spirit, which made Him “of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD” (Isa 11:3). “The secret of the LORD *is* with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant” (Psa 25:14). God will not conceal from them the knowledge of His will so far as their salvation is concerned in it, but will teach them the way wherein they should walk if they are to be acceptable to Him.

The general end or design of God in the gift and teaching of the Spirit is to provide for believers remaining steadfast in Christ, and thus verse 27 closes with the emphatic statement, “and even as it [the anointing] hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him.” Whatever be required in order to maintain communion with Christ all believers are taught. The especial end in view that is here singled out is preservation and deliverance from all antichrists and seducers, with the lies and false doctrines which they propagate against Christ and His Gospel. The only means whereby we may be kept from such pernicious opinions and ways is by an assured knowledge and inward acquaintance with what is revealed in Holy Writ. Truth is the only antidote against error, and none but the Holy Spirit can lead anyone into the life-giving meaning of the truth and quicken him into real fellowship with the Lord thereby. Those who lack this spiritual, sure, and establishing knowledge, possessing but a bare conjectural and theoretical acquaintance with it, are Christians only in name, receiving the Gospel from men in the letter rather than in the substance of it; and, not being rooted and grounded in the faith, are subject to any wind of false doctrine.

Nothing else ensures stability and fidelity. Man's knowledge, skill, or disputing ability is insufficient to preserve from being inveigled with fair pretences or enticed with the cunning sleights of Satan, where he lies in wait to deceive. Yea, as Owen pointed out, "Temptations may come as a storm or tempest, which quickly drives men from their greatest fleshly confidences. Hence oftentimes those who are forwardest to say, Though all men should forsake the truth yet would not they do so, are the forwardest upon trial so to do."

But this sacred anointing fails none who receive it, and because of it they never fail. *First*, because His teaching is not merely an external and doctrinal instruction, but an internal and effectual operation. Whereas He makes use indeed of the written Word and teaches nothing but what is revealed therein, He bestows an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and open our eyes so that we may see clearly the wondrous things that are in God's Law. The degree of this knowledge varies considerably, both in the clearness with which divine things are perceived and in the scope or extent of the same, the Spirit acting according to the sovereignty of His will (1Co 12:11); but none who receives His anointing comes short of whatever be necessary to ensure his abiding in Christ.

Second, the Spirit so teaches as to give a love unto and delight in the things that are taught. This is the next principal cause of action and practice, being that which binds together the different means and instruments of our security, rendering them firm and stable. Even though the mind be informed and perceives a duty, if the will and the affections be not wrought upon and won over unto a hearty approbation of the same, we shall never conform ourselves unto them in the diligent performance of that duty. That which is done merely from convictions of conscience, without any gladness of heart, will neither be acceptable unto God nor shall we be constant therein. No matter how well instructed we be by God's ministers, or what light we personally acquire by study, unless there be genuine love of the truth and the personal practice thereof, it will prove insufficient unto our preservation and the saving profession of it. This is the outstanding characteristic feature of this divine unction: it communicates a delight in the truth wherein it instructs and promotes a glad obedience to what it requires. When the blessed Spirit by His teaching breathes into the soul a holy and spiritual complacency in the things that are taught, then we taste how gracious the Lord is in them; His Word is rendered sweeter to us than the honeycomb, and we run in the way of His commandments.

This anointing imparts a secret and infallible assurance unto that which is communicated, for "it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth...He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1Jo 5:6, 10). Then, in such a connection, the "and ye need not that any man teach you" should be quite plain to all. They were not ignoramuses, who were unacquainted with the truth. They were not dependent upon Gnostics or any other "great" and wise men to indoctrinate them. No so-called "infallible church" or "pope" was

required to authenticate God's Word and persuade of its verity. As divinely enlightened, they already knew the things John was setting before them. Similarly, Paul wrote, "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1Th 4:9). So here, yet as the well-balanced Calvin remarked, "There is another use to be made of this doctrine: that when men really understand what is needful for them, we are yet to warn and rouse them, that they may be more confirmed." As every believer has faith, yet there is need for a further increase of it, so there is ever room for an enlarging and deepening of spiritual knowledge.

"And ye need not that any man teach you" is also mentioned to counteract and put down that carnal tendency of idolizing the human instrument. There is a very great danger of this. Young believers especially are apt to think too highly of those who are made a blessing to their souls. Where the affections be fixed upon the messenger rather than upon the message itself, there the teacher comes between the heart and Christ. Nor must we esteem the most gifted as though his interpretation be an oracle of God, but rather test what he says by the Word. It is so easy to fix the eye on the servant who is seen, instead of on his unseen Master. How many go to church hoping to receive something from the preacher, instead of looking to the Lord for a blessing! Though teachers be needed, they must not be relied upon. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?...So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1Co 3:5, 7). What a corrective for preacher-worship is that! Even an apostle could not open their minds to apprehend a single truth unless the Spirit was pleased to bless his efforts.

Another effect of "abiding": stability from error

"Even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." That is the seventh thing² predicated of our divine anointing: it produces a permanent stabilizing effect, preserving from dangerous error. It so instructs and establishes in the faith, imparts such a spirit of discernment of truth from falsehood, that it is now impossible for Satan to deceive them with his lies (Mat 24:24). It not only illumines the mind, but sanctifies the heart and turns the will Godward. Such impressions are made upon the soul of the holiness, sovereignty, and goodness of God, that they are instinctively repelled by any teaching that repudiates the same. They have a spiritual palate that is acute in distinguishing between what is wholesome and that which is poisonous. They have such a love of the truth that nothing can induce them to sell it. God has given them the spirit "of a sound mind" (2Ti 1:7), which enables them to perceive the sophistries of would-be seducers. It conveys to them a wisdom that makes wise the simple (Psa 19:7), which none of the schools of this world can impart. And therefore many an unlettered peasant is often far sounder in the faith

² **seventh thing** – for the first six things, see the last part of the prior chapter.

than preachers with their classical and theological degrees. Nor is their knowledge confined to merely a few simple truths: they have a deeper acquaintance with the entire doctrine of Christ, being taught in their own experience, and in such a way that none can shake them.

“*Ye shall abide in him.*” The careful reader will observe that the margin gives as an alternative rendering, “or *it*”—that is, the truth. The Greek allows either. To abide in Christ and to abide in the truth are here equivalent. In the whole of this passage, the contrast is between those who turn from Christ to antichrists, and those who remain loyal to Him and steadfast in the faith. The apostle is comforting the distressed believers by assuring them of his confidence in them: that having received from Christ an anointing that had taught them of all things necessary to their salvation and preservation they would endure to the end. He is saying what another apostle declared of the Hebrew saints, “But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb 10:39). “To ‘abide in Christ’ is to continue in the true faith and confession of Him, and of all which concerns Him—His truth, His ordinances, His worship. To abide in Christ is to persevere in the truth of His everlasting Gospel” (S.E. Pierce, 1746-1829). To abide in Christ is to have Him for our supreme Object, to centre our affections upon Him, to make Him our center and circumference—our all in all.

What does it mean “to abide” in Christ?

“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” (verse 28)

Having completed his distinct instructions and exhortations to the fathers, young men and babes (verses 13-17), John returns to and again addresses the whole family collectively under the same name of endearment (*teknion*) as in verse 12. With paternal affection the apostle now exhorts them to abide in Christ. That term “little children” was the one His beloved Master had employed that never-to-be-forgotten night when He so graciously instructed the eleven in the upper room on the eve of His crucifixion: “Little children, yet a little while I am with you” (Joh 13:33). Doubtless that tender word made a particularly deep impression upon the one who was wont to recline on His bosom, and was tenderly cherished in his memory—so much so that he in turn made use of it when addressing his dear converts. As his mind reverted to the great “paschal discourse,” he would recall how that the Saviour had used the word “abide” no less than eight times in John 15:4-11, for “continue ye in my love” (verse 9) and “that my joy might remain in you” (verse 11) are the same in the original as the “abide in me” of verse 4. Now this exhortation “abide in him” is so blessed, so important, and so comprehensive, as to call for a fuller opening by the expositor.

To abide, in the language of Scripture, means more than merely to remain in one place. It has a moral force, and signifies to adhere unto. Thus it implies a previous

union or connection with a person or thing. To be in Christ, and to abide in Him, are distinct thoughts. In order to abide in Christ, one must first be in Him. The former respects a union that is effected by the gracious power of God, and cannot be dissolved or suspended. Accordingly, believers are never enjoined to “be in Christ,” for that could not be the subject of exhortation, since it already exists as an accomplished fact by new creation. But to “abide in Christ” is the subject of injunction, because the exercise of the believer’s responsibility is involved therein. Union with Christ has made possible a life of communion with Him, and that life may be suitably addressed, and is required to respond to His call.

Unlike the *being* in Christ, the *abiding* is capable of interruption. When assured that “we are in him that is true” (1Jo 5:20), the reference is to a union that cannot be disannulled, to a standing that cannot be shaken. But when we hear the Lord saying “abide in me” (or an apostle repeating His word), it implies that we are exposed to failure at this point, or have already failed therein. It is therefore a word which calls us to vigilance.

In calling upon believers to abide in Christ, John was bidding them to adhere steadfastly to His Gospel, to live in constant dependence upon Him in faith and hope, to render loving obedience to His commandments, to enter into fellowship with Him. Thereby they would have the assurance of being approved disciples, and in the day to come would not be ashamed before Him, as will all hypocrites and apostates. Some may consider it needless, if not meaningless, to press the duty of perseverance when the exercise of it is certain. Having stated so emphatically, “Ye shall abide in him,” why, in the very next breath, enjoin them to do that very thing?—Because privileges do not cancel obligations, but rather increase them. While our abiding in Christ is ensured by the grace of the Spirit, that releases us not from the discharge of our accountability. The Spirit is not given to exempt us from the performance of duty, but to enable us to discharge it. It is just *because* He indwells us that we ought to be the more diligent and faithful. Talents are given us to use, and not to bury in the ground. It is the Spirit’s presence and power that makes failure on our part inexcusable.

The Lord Jesus informed Peter, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not,” nevertheless, shortly after, He bade him “Pray that ye enter not into temptation” (Luk 22:32, 40). He who regards those things as being “inconsistent,” knows nothing yet as he ought to know. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, another apostle definitely assured the saints, “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” Then might they not remain passive and be carried down the stream of temptation? No indeed: very different is the use that he makes of that encouraging assurance, namely “Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry” (verse 14). He drew an argument from that very promise for the performance of duty. Promises are given for the purpose of quickening industry, and animating us

in the use of means. God does not preserve His people by physical force, and compel them to retain their standing in Christ—as He establishes the earth and the heavens by the forth putting of His might. Instead, He is pleased to use rational means which are suited to moral agents. The inward workings of His grace do not set aside or render nugatory³ external warnings, expositions, and admonitions.

In Philippians 2:12-13, Paul employed the same spiritual logic that he had used when addressing the Corinthians: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.” There he argues that we ought to be active and diligent because God is working in us! Both the willing and the doing are freely ascribed unto God, and yet for that very reason we are to do. He will assist in the performing of it. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for God leaves you not alone. Though the task be far beyond your puny strength, He gives assurance, “My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in your weakness” (2Co 12:9). Grace is a dynamic, an operating, principle, and, where it dwells, radically affects our thoughts, influences our desires, produces good works. Divine grace cannot tabernacle in a human heart without breaking forth to act in the life. It is evidenced by its fruits. Just because you have received a divine anointing that assures your spiritual preservation from all seducers of souls, *see to it* that you abide in Christ—remain loyal to Him at all costs.

We must now consider the reason or the motive by which the exhortation is enforced: “And now, little children, abide in him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” Christ is now hid from the eyes of the world, for He has gone into heaven itself “to appear in the presence of God” (Heb 9:24) as the great High Priest of those for whom He died. But the Scriptures plainly and repeatedly testify that Christ will appear again—personally, publicly (Act 1:11), when He shall sit upon the throne of His glory (Mat 25:31), when “every eye shall see him” (Rev 1:7).

In view of this blessed and solemn fact the questions may well be asked, “But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?” (Mal 3:2). God’s Word makes answer. On the one hand, it assures the saints, “he that dwelleth [abideth] in love dwelleth in God, and God in him: Herein is our love made perfect [i.e. reaches its designed end], that we may have boldness [confidence] in the day of judgment” (1Jo 4:16-17). On the other hand, “the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,” but will be “like the chaff which the wind driveth away” (Psa 1:5, 4).

In the great day to come, the searchlight of divine holiness will be turned upon two radically different classes of persons, clearly revealing them for what they are, and each will, righteously, be dealt with accordingly. Those that have done good

³ **nugatory** – invalid; inoperative.

will come forth unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation (Joh 5:29); or, to cite an Old Testament passage whose language approximates more closely unto that of our present text, Daniel 12:2, speaking of the same event, declares that “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” The two classes will be separated one from another, “as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats” (Mat 25:32). On the one hand, Christ will take vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the Gospel; on the other, He will be glorified in His saints (2Th 1:8, 10). That same clear-cut and searching distinction is preserved in our text: those who abide in Christ will have confidence before Him at His appearing, but those who were disloyal and followed the antichrists will “be ashamed before him at his coming.” As the Saviour announced, “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” (Mar 8:38).

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

90. Levitical Cities, Part 2

“Then came near the heads of the fathers of the Levites unto Eleazar the priest, and unto Joshua the son of Nun, and unto the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel” (Jos 21:1). There are one or two details here which call for a brief word of explanation. First, each of the tribes was divided into or was grouped under its leading families, they being the descendants of the original sons—the heads, or chiefs, being designated “fathers.” Second, Eleazar is mentioned here because this transaction involved the use of “the lot,” and he was the one who bore the sacred bag containing the Urim and the Thummim, by which the divine will was made known. Joshua was also present as Israel’s commander, to see that all was done in an orderly manner. Third, the additional reference to “the heads of the fathers of the tribes” clearly intimates that they were now formally assembled as a court, to examine the petitions of claimants and determine their cases.

The careful reader will observe that the chapter opens with the word “Then.” That time mark is more than a historical reference, pointing an important practical lesson which we do well to heed. Historically, the incident recorded here occurred

“When they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts,” and when “the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun” (Jos 19:49). Then, Joshua was bidden by the Lord, “Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses” (Jos 20:2). Now, the Lord had previously given orders that those cities of refuge (six in number) were to be “among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites...and to them ye shall add forty and two cities. So all the cities which ye shall give to the Levites shall be forty and eight cities: them shall ye give with their suburbs” (Num 35:6-7). Those cities of refuge had now been specified (Jos 21:7-8), but as yet, the remaining forty-two had not been assigned them.

““And they spake unto them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan’ (Jos 21:2), for that was where the tabernacle was now situated, and therefore, the place where the mind of the Lord could be authoritatively ascertained. It is blessed to see that the Levites deferred their appeal until all the other tribes had been provided for, thereby setting an admirable pattern before all the official servants of God, to suppress everything in themselves which has even the appearance of covetousness. How incongruous and reprehensible it is for those who profess to be the ministers of grace and truth to exhibit a mercenary or greedy demeanour! It was “an instance of their humility, modesty, and patience (and Levites should be examples of these and other virtues) that they were willing to be served last, and they fared never the worse for it. Let not God’s ministers complain, if at any time, they find themselves postponed in men’s thoughts and cares, but let them make sure of the favour of God and the honour that comes from Him, and then they may well enough afford to bear the slights and neglects of men” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

It should also be carefully noted that these God-honouring Levites made known their claim openly and publicly, instead of secretly and privately. They did not engage in a “whispering campaign,” going around sowing the seeds of dissension among their brethren, or of criticism of Joshua, complaining at their being neglected—for as yet no provision had been made where they should reside with their families and flocks. No, they applied in an orderly and frank manner before the divinely appointed court, saying, “The LORD commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with the suburbs thereof for our cattle” (Jos 21:2). Their petition was brief and to the point, their language firm but reverent. They came not as beggars, and asked for no favours. Their appeal was neither to charity nor to equity—as being due them on the ground of fairness. They used no claim of worthiness or fidelity to duty. Instead, their appeal was made to *the word* of God, that which He had commanded by Moses, and thus, they acted on the basis of a, “Thus saith the LORD.”

It is quite evident, then, that on this occasion the Levites were far from being actuated by a spirit of either discontent or covetousness. Had they been moved by avarice, they had not waited until now, but had either taken matters into their own

hands or had put in their claim much earlier. No, it was an orderly request that they should now receive that to which they were entitled by divine grant. Most commendable was their meekness and patience. How different the character and conduct of so many ecclesiastics during the Christian era, whose love of money and lust for power knew no bounds, scrupling not to employ the most tyrannous measures and heartless methods to impoverish their members while they lived in luxury and resided in their “palaces”! And the same spirit is by nature in every preacher, and against its least indulgence he needs to be on his guard. Unspeakably solemn is it to note that the oft-quoted words, “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1Ti 6:10), occur in one of the *pastoral* epistles! They are succeeded by, “But thou, O man of God [i.e. servant of Christ], flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1Ti 6:10-11).

Nor is it without reason that the injunction, “Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content” is found in *the same epistle* (1Ti 6:8), immediately preceding the above warning and exhortation. Few realize the sinfulness of discontent, which is nothing but a species of self-will, a secret murmuring against Providence, a being dissatisfied with the portion God has given us. Contrariwise, contentment is a holy composure of mind, a resting in the Lord, a thankful enjoyment of what He *has* graciously bestowed. Hence, contentment is the spiritual antidote to covetousness, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have” (Heb 13:5)—the former vice can be avoided only by assiduously cultivating the opposite virtue. If the preacher is to magnify his office and glorify his Master, he needs to mortify his fleshly lusts and carnal ambitions, abstaining from all extravagance, and living frugally, evidencing that his affections are set upon things above and not on things below. When Socrates, the pagan philosopher, beheld a display of costly and elegant articles for sale, he exclaimed, “How many things are here that I need not!” Such ought to be the attitude and language of every child of God as he passes through this “Vanity Fair,” pre-eminently so in the case of His servants.

“Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving [commending] ourselves as the ministers of God” (2Co 6:3-4). What an exalted standard of piety is that! Yet nothing less is what the Holy One requires of His representatives. The unbelieving are ever ready to charge the Gospel itself with having a strong tendency to encourage the carnalities which disgrace the character of so many professors, and especially if the same appear in the lives of those who preach it. Nor is that a thing to be wondered at. What can be expected from those who have no experiential acquaintance with the things of God than to conclude that those who preach salvation by grace through Jesus Christ are the products of the same? In their judgment, the daily life of the preacher either

commends or condemns his message. Hence it is that, among other reasons, the minister of Christ is bidden, “In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech [and not the slang of the world], that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (Ti 2:7-8).

Returning more directly to the Levites in Joshua 21, in their, “The LORD commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in,” they were, in reality, *pleading a divine promise*! It was recorded in Numbers 35:1-8, that JEHOVAH issued definite orders to that end, and therefore, they were asking only for that to which they had a right by divine authority. Here too they have left an example, which needs to be followed, not only by God’s servants, but by all of His people, for it is *the use* which we make of His promises that, to a considerable extent, regulates our spiritual prosperity, as well as the peace and joy of our hearts. First, we should labour to become well acquainted with the same, for while we remain in ignorance, no benefit can be derived from them. Those Levites were informed upon that which concerned their interests. So should we be. We should daily search the Scriptures for them, and make an inventory of our spiritual wealth. The divine promises are the peculiar treasure of the saints, for the substance of faith’s inheritance is wrapped up in them. Second, they should be carefully stored in our minds, constantly meditated upon, and every effort of Satan’s to rob us of the same, steadfastly resisted.

Third, God’s promises are to be personally appropriated and pleaded before His throne of grace. This is one reason why He has given them to us. Not only to manifest His lovingkindness in making known His gracious intentions, but also for the comfort of our hearts. Had He so pleased, our Father could have bestowed His blessings without giving us notice of His benign purposes, but He has ordained that we should enjoy them twice over—first by faith, and then by fruition. By this means, He weans our hearts away from things seen and temporal, and draws them onward and upward to things which are spiritual and eternal. Thus are we to make His promises the support and stay of our souls. Not only are they to be the food of faith, but the regulators of our petitions. Real prayer is the making request for those things which God is pledged to bestow, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us” (1Jo 5:14). That is, according as His will is made known to us in His Word—anything other than that is self-will on our part (Jam 4:3).

While on the one hand, God has promised to bestow, on the other hand, we are required to make request—that He may be duly owned and honoured, that we express our dependence upon Him. “Ask, and ye shall receive” (Mat 7:7-8; 21:22) is the divinely appointed way. In Ezekiel 36:36, God makes most definite promise to His people, adding, “I the LORD have spoken it, and *I will do it*.” Yet immediately after, He declares, “Thus saith the LORD God; I will yet [nevertheless]

for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, *to do it* for them” (Eze 36:37). Such inquiry is designed for the strengthening of our faith, the quickening of our hope, the development of our patience. Cities had been divinely assured unto the Levites, yet, they received them not until they appealed for them by pleading God’s word to them through Moses! And that has been recorded for our instruction. One wonders how often it is the case that “Ye have not, because ye ask not” (Jam 4:2)—always so, when faith be not in exercise (Jam 1:6-7). Observe well how Jacob pleaded the divine promise in Genesis 32:9-12, Moses in Exodus 32:13, David in Psalm 119:58, Solomon in 1 Kings 8:25, and go thou and do likewise.

“And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance, at the commandment of the LORD, these cities and their suburbs” (Jos 21:3). Thus was the priestly tribe fully provided for through its brethren by divine ordinance, and it is blessed to mark how particularly the Holy Spirit has placed it upon record that they discharged this obligation as an act of obedience unto God. They might have demurred at being called upon to relinquish some of the places which they had fought hard to obtain, but they raised no objection, and duly performed their duty when reminded of the divine will. In like manner, Christians are bidden to communicate unto those who care for their spiritual interests, and to do so at God’s commandment. Equally striking is it to observe how that the portion received by the Levites was a *gift*—so referred to in both verses 2 and 3. This act of giving was designed by the Lord to counteract that selfish spirit and attachment to a present world which is common to all of us. The same principle is illustrated again in Romans 15:27, “their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their [Israel’s] spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.”

The principle which was to regulate the allocating of the Levitical cities by their brethren was clearly defined in Numbers 35:8, “And the cities which ye shall give shall be of the possession of the children of Israel: from them that have many ye shall give many: but from them that have few ye shall give few; every one shall give of his cities unto the Levites according to his inheritance which he inheriteth.” Thus was each tribe accorded the opportunity of making grateful acknowledgment unto the Lord of what He had so graciously bestowed upon them, for what they gave unto the Levites was accepted as given to Him, and thereby were their possessions sanctified to them—some of the best and largest of the cities being freely donated. The several tribes were not assessed uniformly, but according to the extent of their possessions. The equity of such an arrangement is at once apparent. The same was duly executed, for out of Judah’s and Simeon’s lots (the most extensive) nine cities were given, whereas, out of the other tribes only four cities were taken from each (Jos 21). In like manner, New Testament saints are exhorted, “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him” (1Co 16:2), i.e. a definite proportion of his income.

If it be true on the one side that a mercenary priesthood has been notorious for its greedy grasping of wealth and temporal power, on the other side, only too frequently, many of the most devoted and self-sacrificing of Christ's servants have received the scantiest acknowledgment. As Albert Barnes (1798-1870) remarked, "The poor beast that has served the man and his family in the days of his vigour is often turned out in old age to die, and something like this sometimes occurs in the treatment of ministers of the Gospel. The conduct of a people, generous in many other respects, is often unaccountable in their treatment of their pastors, and one of the lessons which ministers often have to learn, like their Master, by bitter experience, is the ingratitude of those in whose welfare they have toiled and prayed and wept." Yet that is far from being always the case, as this writer can thankfully testify. For upwards of forty years, the Lord has moved His stewards to minister freely and liberally to his temporal needs, so that we too can reply to His question, "Lacked ye anything? Nothing." (Luk 22:35). No good thing has He withheld from us.

The method followed by Israel in selecting the Levitical cities appears to have been something like this. First, the court, after duly considering the size of its inheritance, appointed how many cities should be taken out of each tribe. Then, the "fathers of the tribes" agreed among themselves which cities were most suitable. After that had been settled, the forty-eight cities were divided into four groups, for the four branches of the Levitical tribe. Lots were cast to determine the distribution of them. The sons of Levi were Gershom, Kohath, Merari. From Kohath descended Moses, Aaron and Miriam (1Ch 6:1-3). The "children of Aaron" (Jos 21:4) were not only Levites, but priests too, whose more immediate work was to serve at the altar. It should be duly noted that though this was the least numerous of the four branches, yet, in keeping with the prominence of the priesthood throughout the book of Joshua, "the first lot" (Jos 21:10) was for the children of Aaron, and thus was honour placed again upon this divine institution. It is further to be observed that more cities were assigned unto them than to any other branch of Levi.

It should perhaps be pointed out that the term "city" in Scripture does not signify (as it does with us today) a large town having a corporation, but simply "an inclosed space"—see Genesis 4:17 for the first mention. The "suburbs," as pastures for the cattle, extended for nearly a mile in every direction (Num 35:5). In appointing the larger number of cities for the children of Aaron, we see a proof of the divine foreknowledge, for those who have made a thorough study of this detail, judge that they increased more than any of the other three families, therefore, larger accommodation would be required for their descendants in the future. That their cities were taken from that part of Canaan which had been given to the tribes of Judah, Simeon and Benjamin (Jos 21:4) was also profoundly significant, illustrating as it did the wise disposings of Providence, for that was the territory which lay nearest to *Jerusalem*, which centuries later was to be the site of the temple, and the

headquarters of Judaism. That was the place which had been chosen in the divine counsels where God should put His name. “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Act 15:18)!

In Joshua 21:8, the statement is repeated, “And the children of Israel gave by lot unto the Levites these cities with their suburbs, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.” This is to intimate that all was done by divine appointment and in obedience unto God’s will. There is a touching detail recorded in Joshua 21:11, which we must not overlook, for there we are told that the city of Hebron became the possession of the children of Aaron. It will be remembered that this was the city which had been given to Caleb by the commandment of the Lord (Jos 15:13). It seems, then, that he had personally made it a voluntary present unto the priests, thereby setting an example before his fellows of noble generosity and devotion to the cause of JEHOVAH. How he puts to shame many church members of today who are so neglectful of the maintenance of Christ’s servants! Those who are indifferent to the temporal welfare of His ministers cannot be in communion with Him who notices the fall of every sparrow (Mat 10:29), or recognize the holy privileges of being “fellow helpers to the truth” (3Jo 1:8). May writer and reader ever act in this manner “according to the commandment of the LORD.”

CAST DOWN

Those two words may be regarded both actively and passively, according as they refer to a deed or to a state into which we have fallen. There is quite a variety of passages in which they occur. For instance, we are told, “Great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed...and cast them down at Jesus’ feet; and he healed them” (Mat 15:30). On the other hand, they “rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill...that they might cast him down headlong” (Luk 4:29). “And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees” (1Ki 18:42), when he prayed for rain. “God hath power to help, and to cast down” (2Ch 25:8). “Thou castedst them down into destruction” (Psa 73:18). “The accuser of our brethren is cast down” (Rev 12:10).

The first time the words occur is in Exodus 7:10, “Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent.” That was preliminary to the ten plagues which were sent on Egypt. Though it made not that

haughty monarch to feel, it should have made him fear, since it was a demonstration of the might possessed by the One whom Aaron served. But instead of being awed and humbled, the king called for his magicians, and we read that they “did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod [not a snake which they had substituted by sleight of hand], and they became serpents” (Exo 7:11). That there is something mysterious here is admitted, though we see no reason for bringing in the power of the devil. Personally, we consider the latter was as much a miracle as the former, and by the power *of God*. That it was as truly a case of the wise being taken in their own craftiness as that of Saul in 1 Samuel 28:8-20, and of Ahab in 1 Kings 22:20-23—God’s causing the rods of Pharaoh’s magicians to become serpents intimated that he and his people were under the dominion of Satan. Aaron’s rod swallowing theirs foreshadowed, from the beginning, the end of the conflict between Pharaoh and JEHOVAH, as of every other, where powers terrestrial or infernal contend with the Almighty.

But let us turn now to the moral and practical side of things. When providence appears to frown, most of us are apt to be depressed. It is true that some possess a more mercurial temperament than others, their feelings undergoing a change as frequently as the barometer does in fluctuating weather, one day in the mountain top, the next in the slough of despond. Yet, even those more stable and equitable are liable to be cast down in spirit when faced by a trying situation and everything seems to be against them. If it be human to err, it is equally human to be dejected when our circumstances are distressing and our experience be a painful one. We shall, therefore, raise the inquiry, “Is it *wrong* to be cast down?” That is a question which does not admit of an unqualified yes or no in reply. It depends upon the cause and occasion of such despondency, upon the duration thereof, upon the accompaniments and effects of the same.

If lowness of spirits were something sinful *per se*, then it would necessarily follow that God requires us to live as stoics in this world, uninfluenced, unaffected by whatever goes on either within or without us. It certainly is not wrong to be deeply concerned over our sins, nor to be affected thereby, for our Lord declared, “Blessed are they that mourn” (Mat 5:4). It certainly is not unlawful for us to take to heart the low state of Christ’s cause in this world. Nor should we be callously indifferent as we behold this pleasure-loving generation rushing madly unto a hopeless eternity. The Saviour Himself wept over Jerusalem (Luk 19:41) as He contemplated its rejection of Himself and foresaw the fearful judgments shortly to fall upon it. But if I be gloomy and glum simply because my will has been crossed and my cherished plans thwarted, that is reprehensible. If I so mourn over my sins as to give way to a spirit of despair (instead of availing myself of 1 John 1:9), or if I so take to heart the sad state of Christendom as to become incapacitated for the performance of duty, that is blameworthy. It is wrong to allow any grief to mar my communion with God or prevent my rejoicing in Him.

Thus, it is the part of wisdom to investigate the cause of my despondency and inquire with the Psalmist, “*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me?*” (Psa 42:5, 11). He desired to know the reason for his being dispirited. Often that is the first step toward recovery from such a state. As C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) said, “To search out the cause of our sorrow is the best surgery for grief.” When thoroughly disheartened, we need to take ourselves to task, and carefully examine and cross-examine ourselves. If it be only your pride or your self-confidence that be cast down, well and good. But if it be a delighting yourself in the Lord and enjoying fellowship in Him, then, unbelief lies at the root of your complaint. Even though the divine rod be upon you, the exhortation is, “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him” (Heb 12:5). Neither harden yourself against it nor be crushed by it. Suffer not a haughty spirit, which refuses to be humbled under the hand of God, nor give way to a despairing heart, which sinks beneath it.

It should be carefully noted that David did more than make inquiry. He preached to himself—“Hope thou in God” (Psa 42:5, 11; 43:5). Ah, that is what the despondent soul needs to do. Nothing else will bring relief to the heart. The immediate outlook may be dark, but the divine promises are bright. The world may be at its wits’ end, but the Christian need not be so. The creature may fail you, but the Creator will not, if you truly put your trust in Him—as this writer has proved times without number. There is One who is “a very present help in trouble” (Psa 46:1) and He never deserts those who really make Him their refuge. Though faith and hope be distinct graces, the latter is never exercised when the former is inactive. That is clear from such passages as Romans 5:2 and 15:13. Faith looks upward, hope looks onward. Faith lays hold of the divine promises. Hope sustains the heart during the interval, enabling us to wait patiently for the fulfilment. “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psa 30:5).

“Hope thou in God.” Repining and murmuring will get you nowhere. Fretting and wringing the hands bring no relief either temporally or spiritually. The more pressing your situation or acute your circumstances, the better the opportunity for proving the sufficiency of God. Faith cannot be exercised when everything needful is at hand to sight. If it be for past follies that God is now chastening you, then hope in His *mercy*. If you penitently confess your sins, there is abundant mercy with Him to blot them all out (Isa 55:7). If it be over financial straitness and the drying up of accustomed supplies that you be cast down, hope in God’s *power*. If every door seems shut against you, and every channel of help fast closed, yet, nothing is too hard for the Almighty (Jer 32:17, 27), as Elijah proved in time of famine (1Ki 17 & 18). Hope in His *faithfulness*. Men may have deceived you, failed to fulfill their engagements, friends turned their backs upon you in the hour of need, but He, who cannot lie (Ti 1:2), is to be depended upon. Doubt neither His promises nor His lovingkindness.

“For I shall yet praise him, who is the *health* of my countenance” (Psa 42:11). That peculiar term suggests that David’s soul being cast down was to be attributed partly to his physical condition—as is so often the case with God’s people, for suffering of the body reacts upon the spirit. Spurgeon was evidently of the same mind, for one of his comments was, “My God will clear away the furrows from my brow, and the tear-marks from my cheeks, and therefore will I lift up my head and smile in the face of the strait.” Such is ever the blessed assurance of those who truly hope in God. They know that “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all” (Psa 34:19). When the fiery trial has done its work and your bonds are burned off (Dan 3:25), you will then thank God for the trials which are now so unpleasant. Then, confidently anticipate the future. Whatever be the cause, heed that word, “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1Pe 5:7).

“Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand” (Psa 37:24). Blessed assurance is that, and one which should be regarded in its widest scope. A good man may fall, as David did, in a most deplorable manner, yet, he was not cast down to rise no more, as are those abandoned by God, but was recovered by repentance. He may fall into various errors, but he shall not be suffered to make shipwreck of the Faith. He may, through trying circumstances, fall into a state of gloom, yet God will not cast him off. Sooner or later, he shall prove that God “comforteth those that are cast down” (2Co 7:6). The time of our distress is commonly that of God’s gracious intervention, and it is then we should strongly endeavour to *expect it*. The objects of His tenderest solicitude are those in desperate situations, “Thou wilt save the afflicted people” (Psa 18:27). He who dwells in the high and holy place, dwells also in his children, “*to revive* the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa 57:15).

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

2. The Scriptures and God

The Holy Scriptures are wholly supernatural. They are a divine revelation. “All scripture is given by inspiration *of* God” (2Ti 3:16). It is not merely that God elevated men’s minds, but that He directed their thoughts. It is not simply that He

communicated concepts to them, but that He dictated the very words they used. “The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2Pe 1:21). Any human “theory” which denies their verbal inspiration is a device of Satan’s, an attack upon God’s truth. The divine image is stamped upon every page. Writings so holy, so heavenly, so awe-producing, could not have been created by man.

The Scriptures make known a *supernatural* God. That may be a very trite remark, yet today, it needs making. The “god” which is believed in by many professing Christians is becoming more and more paganized. The prominent place which “sport” now has in the nation’s life, the excessive love of pleasure, the abolition of home-life, the brazen immodesty of women, are so many symptoms of the same disease which brought about the downfall and death of the empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. And the twentieth-century idea of God, which is entertained by the majority of people in lands nominally “Christian,” is rapidly approximating to the character ascribed to the gods of the ancients. In sharp contrast therewith, the God of Holy Writ is clothed with such perfections and vested with such attributes that no nominal intellect could possibly have invented them.

God can only be known by means of a *supernatural revelation* of Himself. Apart from the Scriptures, even a theoretical acquaintance with Him is impossible. It still holds true that “The world by wisdom knew not God” (1Co 1:21). Where the Scriptures are ignored, God is “the unknown God” (Act 17:23). But something more than the Scriptures is required before the soul can *know* God, know Him in a real, personal, vital way. This seems to be recognized by few today. The prevailing practice assumes that a knowledge of God can be obtained through studying the Word, in the same way as a knowledge of chemistry may be secured by mastering its textbooks. An intellectual knowledge of God maybe, not so a spiritual one! A supernatural God can only be known supernaturally (i.e. known in a manner *above* that which mere nature can acquire), by a supernatural revelation of Himself to the heart. “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, *to* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). The one who has been favoured with this supernatural experience has learned that only “in thy light shall we see light” (Psa 36:9).

God can only be known through a *supernatural faculty*. Christ made this clear when He said, “Except a man be born again, *he cannot* see the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:3). The unregenerate have no *spiritual knowledge* of God. “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” (1Co 2:14). Water, of itself, never rises above its own level. So the natural man is incapable of perceiving that which transcends mere nature. “This is life eternal, that they might *know thee* the only true God” (Joh 17:3). Eternal life must be imparted before the “true God” can be known. Plainly is this affirmed in 1 John 5:20, “We know that

the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, *that we may know him* that is true.” Yes, an “understanding,” a spiritual understanding, by new creation, must be given *before* God can be known in a spiritual way.

A supernatural knowledge of God produces *a supernatural experience*, and this is something to which the multitudes of church members are total strangers. Most of the “religion” of the day is but a touching up of “old Adam.” It is merely a garnishing of sepulchers full of corruption. It is an outward “form.” Even where there is a sound creed, only too often, it is a dead orthodoxy. Nor should this be wondered at. It has ever been thus. It was so when Christ was here upon earth. The Jews were very orthodox. At that time, they were free from idolatry. The temple stood at Jerusalem, the Law was expounded, JEHOVAH was worshipped. And yet Christ said to them, “He that sent me is true, whom ye *know not*” (Joh 7:28). “Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also” (Joh 8:19). “It is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God. Yet *ye have not known him*” (Joh 8:54-55). And mark it well, this is said to a people who had the Scriptures, searched them diligently, and venerated them as God’s Word! They were well acquainted with God theoretically, but a spiritual knowledge of Him, they had not.

As it was in Judaism, so it is in Christendom. Multitudes who “believe” in the Holy Trinity are completely devoid of a supernatural or spiritual knowledge of God. How are we so sure of this? In this way—the character of the fruit reveals the character of the tree that bears it. The nature of the waters makes known the nature of the fountain from which they flow. A supernatural knowledge of God produces a supernatural experience, and a supernatural experience results in *supernatural fruit*. That is to say, God actually dwelling in the heart revolutionizes, transforms the life. There is that brought forth which mere nature cannot produce, yea, that which is directly contrary thereto. And this is noticeably absent from the lives of perhaps ninety-five out of every hundred now professing to be God’s children. There is nothing in the life of the average professing Christian except what *can be* accounted for on natural grounds. But in the genuine child of God, it is far otherwise. He is, in truth, a *miracle* of grace; he is a “*new creature in Christ Jesus*” (2Co 5:17). His experience, his life, is supernatural.

The supernatural experience of the Christian is seen in his *attitude toward God*. Having within him the life of God, having been made a “partaker of the divine nature” (2Pe 1:4), he, necessarily, loves God, loves the things of God, loves what God loves, and, contrariwise, he hates what God hates. This supernatural experience is wrought in him by the Spirit of God, and that by means of the Word of God. The Spirit never works apart from the Word. By that Word, He quickens. By that Word, He produces conviction of sin. By that word, He sanctifies. By that Word, He gives assurance. By that Word, He makes the saint to grow. Thus, each one of us may ascertain the extent to which we are profiting from our reading and studying of the

Scriptures by the *effects* which they are, through the Spirit's application of them, *producing in us*. Let us enter now into details. He who is truly and spiritually profiting from the Scriptures has:

A clearer recognition of God's claims

The great controversy between the Creator and the creature has been whether He or they should be God, whether His wisdom or theirs should be the guiding principle of their actions, whether His will or theirs should be supreme. That which brought about the fall of Lucifer was his resentment at being in subjection to his Maker, "Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt *my* throne about the stars of God...I will be like the most High" (Isa 14:13-14). The lie of the serpent which lured our first parents to their destruction was, "Ye shall be *as gods*" (Gen 3:5). And ever since then, the heart-sentiment of the natural man has been, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?" (Job 21:14-15). "Our lips are our own, who is LORD over us?" (Psa 12:4).

Sin has alienated man from God (Eph 4:18). His heart is averse to Him, his will is opposed to His, his mind is at enmity against Him. Contrariwise, *salvation* is being restored to God, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might *bring us to God*" (1Pe 3:18). Legally, that has already been done. Experimentally, it is in process of accomplishment. Salvation means being reconciled to God, and that involves and includes sin's dominion over us being broken, enmity within us being slain, the heart being won to God. This is what true conversion is. It is a tearing down of every idol, a renouncing of the empty vanities of a cheating world, and taking God for our Portion, our Ruler, our All in all. Of the Corinthians, we read that they "first gave their own hearts unto the Lord" (2Co 8:5). The desire and determination of those truly converted is that they "should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2Co 5:15).

God's claims are now recognized, His rightful dominion over us is acknowledged. He is owned *as* God. The converted yield themselves "unto God, as those that are alive from the dead," and their members as "instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom 6:13). This is the demand which He makes upon us—To *be* our *God*, to be served as such by us, for us to be and do, absolutely and without reserve, whatsoever He demands, surrendering ourselves fully to Him (see Luk 14:26-27, 33). It belongs to God as God to legislate, prescribe, determine for us. It belongs to us as a bounden duty to be ruled, governed, disposed of by Him at His pleasure.

A greater fear of God's majesty

“Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him” (Psa 33:8). God is so high above us that the thought of His majesty should make us tremble. His power is so great that the realization of it ought to terrify us. He is so ineffably holy, and His abhorrence of sin is so infinite, that the very thought of wrongdoing ought to fill us with horror. “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him” (Psa 89:7).

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Pro 9:10), and “Wisdom” is a right use of “knowledge.” Just so far as God is *truly* known will He be duly feared. Of the wicked, it is written, “There is *no* fear of God before their eyes” (Rom 3:18). They have no realization of His majesty, no concern for His authority, no respect for His commandments, no alarm that He shall judge them. But concerning His covenant people, God has promised, “I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me” (Jer 32:40). Therefore do they tremble at His Word (Isa 66:5), and walk softly before Him.

The fear of the LORD is to hate evil” (Pro 8:13). And again, “By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil” (Pro 16:6). The man who lives in the fear of God is conscious that “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Pro 15:3), therefore is he conscientious about his private conduct as well as his public. The one who is deterred from committing certain sins because the eyes of men are upon him, and who hesitates not to commit them when alone, is destitute of the fear of God. So too, the man who moderates his language when Christians are about him, but does not so at other times, is devoid of God's fear. He has no awe-inspiring consciousness that God sees and hears them at *all* times. The truly regenerate soul is *afraid* of disobeying and defying God. Nor does he want to. No, his real and deepest desire is to *please Him* in all things, at all times, and in all places. His earnest prayer is “Unite my heart to fear thy name” (Psa 86:11).

Now, even the saint has to be *taught* the fear of God (Psa 34:11). And here, as ever, it is through the Scriptures that this teaching is given us (Pro 2:5). It is through them we learn that God's eye is ever upon us, marking our actions, weighing our motives. As the Holy Spirit *applies* the Scriptures to our hearts, we give increasing heed to that command, “Be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long” (Pro 23:17). Thus, just so far as we are awed by God's awful majesty, are made conscious that “Thou God seest me” (Gen 16:13), and work out our salvation with “fear and trembling” (Phi 2:12), are we truly profited from our reading and study of the Bible.

A deeper reverence of God's commandments

Sin entered this world by Adam's breaking of God's Law, and all his fallen children are begotten in his depraved likeness (Gen 5:3). "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1Jo 3:4). Sin is a species of high treason, spiritual anarchy. It is the repudiation of God's dominion, the setting aside of His authority, rebellion against His will. Sin is having our own way. Now, salvation is deliverance from sin, from its guilt, from its power as well as its penalty. The same Spirit who convicts of the need of God's grace also convicts of the need of God's government to rule us. God's promise to His covenant people is, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God" (Heb 8:10).

A spirit of obedience is communicated to every regenerated soul. Said Christ, "If a man love me, he *will* keep my words" (Joh 14:23). There is the test, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1Jo 2:3). None of us keeps them perfectly, yet every real Christian both desires and strives to do so. He says with Paul, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom 7:22). He says with the Psalmist, "I have *chosen* the way of truth," "Thy testimonies have I *taken* as an heritage for ever" (Psa 119:30, 111). And teaching which lowers God's authority, which ignores His commands, which affirms that the Christian is, in *no* sense, under the Law, is of the devil, no matter how oily-mouthed his human instrument may be. Christ has redeemed His people from the curse of the law and not from the command of it. He has saved them from the wrath of God, but not from His government. "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart" (Luk 10:27) never has been and never will be repealed.

I Corinthians 9:21 expressly affirms that we *are* "under the law to Christ." "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself so to walk, even as he walked" (1Jo 2:6). And *how* did Christ "walk"? In perfect obedience to God, in complete subjection to His law, honouring and obeying it in thought and word and deed. He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it (Mat 5:17). And our love for Him is expressed not in pleasing emotions or beautiful words, but in keeping His commandments (Joh 14:15), and the commandments of Christ are the commandments of God (cf. Exo 20:6). The earnest prayer of the real Christian is, "*Make me to go* in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight" (Psa 119:35). Just so far as our reading and study of Scripture is, by the Spirit's application, begetting within us a greater love and a deeper respect for and a more punctual keeping of God's commandments are we really profiting thereby.

A firmer trust in God's sufficiency

Whatsoever or whomsoever a man most trusts in is his “god.” Some trust in health, others in wealth, some in self, others in their friends. That which characterizes all the unregenerate is that they lean upon an arm of flesh. But the election of grace have their hearts drawn from all creature supports, to rest upon the living God. God’s people are the children of faith. The language of their hearts is, “O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed” (Psa 25:2). And again, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). They rely upon God to provide, protect, and bless them. They look to an unseen Resource, count upon an invisible God, lean upon a hidden Arm.

True, there are times when their faith wavers, but though they fall, they are not utterly cast down. Though it be not their uniform experience, yet Psalm 56:11 expresses the general state of their souls, “In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.” Their earnest prayer is, “Lord, increase our faith” (Luk 17:5). “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). Thus, as the Scriptures are pondered, their promises received in the mind, faith is strengthened, confidence in God increased, assurance deepened. By this, we may discover whether or not we are profiting from our study of the Bible.

A fuller delight in God's perfections

That in which a man most delights is his “god.” The poor worldling seeks satisfaction in his pursuits, pleasures, and possessions. Ignoring the Substance, he vainly pursues the shadows. But the Christian delights in the wondrous perfections of God. Really, to own God as *our* God is not only to submit to His scepter, but is to love Him more than the world, to value Him above everything and everyone else. It is to have, with the Psalmist, an experiential realization that “*All* my springs are in thee” (Psa 87:7). The redeemed have not only received a joy from God, such as this poor world cannot impart, but they “Rejoice *in* God” (Rom 5:11), such as the poor worldling knows nothing about. The language of such is, “The LORD is *my portion*” (Lam 3:24).

Spiritual exercises are irksome to the flesh. But the real Christian says, “It is *good* for me to draw near to God” (Psa 73:28). The carnal man has many cravings and ambitions. The regenerate soul declares, “*One* thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD” (Psa 27:4). And why? Because the true sentiment of his heart is, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psa 73:25). Ah, my reader, if your heart has not been drawn out to love and *delight in* God, then it is still dead toward Him.

The language of the saints is, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: *yet* I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab 3:17-18). Ah, that is a supernatural experience indeed! Yes, the Christian can rejoice when all his worldly possessions are taken from him (see Heb 10:34). When he lies in a dungeon with back bleeding, he can still sing praises to God (see Act 16:25). Thus, to the extent that you are being weaned from the empty pleasures of this world, are learning that there is no blessing outside of God, are discovering He is the Source and Sum of all excellency, and your heart is being drawn out to Him, your mind stayed on Him, your soul finding its joy and satisfaction in Him, are you really profiting from the Scriptures.

A larger submission to God’s providences

It is natural to murmur when things go wrong, it is supernatural to hold our peace (Lev 10:3). It is natural to be disappointed when our plans miscarry, it is supernatural to bow to *His* appointments. It is natural to want our own way, it is supernatural to say, “Not my will, but thine be done” (Luk 22:42). It is natural to rebel when a loved one is taken from us by death, it is supernatural to say from the heart, “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; *blessed be* the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). As God is truly made our Portion, we learn to admire His wisdom, and to know that He does all things well. Thus, the heart is kept in “perfect peace” as the mind is stayed on Him (Isa 26:3). Here, then, is another sure test. If your Bible study is teaching you that *God’s* way is best, it is causing you to submit unrepiningly to all His dispensations, if you are enabled to give thanks for *all* things (Eph 5:20), then are you profiting indeed.

A more fervent praise for God’s goodness

Praise is the outflow of a heart which finds its satisfaction in God. The language of such a one is, “I will bless the LORD at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Psa 34:1). What abundant cause have God’s people for praising Him! Loved with an everlasting love, made sons and heirs, all things working together for their good, their every need supplied, an eternity of bliss assured them. Their harps of gladness ought never to be silent. Nor will they be while they enjoy fellowship with Him who is “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16). The more we are “increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10), the more shall we adore Him. But, it is only as the Word dwells in us richly that we are filled with spiritual songs (Col 3:16) and make melody in our hearts to the Lord. The more our souls are

drawn out in true worship, the more we are found thanking and praising our great God, the clearer evidence we give that our study of His Word is profiting us.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS

“Though his pen is stilled by his home-going, yet his articles will ever go on as a testimony unto his and our blessed Lord.”

“Mr. Pink has gone to be with the Lord he loved and served, and what an abundant entrance he had.”

“And now, he has gone from us to be ‘with Christ, which is far better,’ who is there to minister the Word as faithfully as he sought to do? It would seem his ministry was too much needed to be able to spare him.”

“Truly a ‘great man in Israel has fallen.’ His removal has occasioned a great loss...to the Church of God in general.”

“Your good husband’s home call is a great loss to us all who have benefited by his keen brain and his Spirit-guided and able pen.”

“It is the loss of a friend whom having not seen we loved...his work will live long in those whose appetites for the deep spiritual things of the Word were made keener and whose witness will continue to glorify our Lord whom he loved.”

“We count it a blessing that we were introduced to the Studies, and though we are sorry that the hand that wrote to us will write no more, we have the joy of knowing our loss is his gain.”

“We have lost a father in Israel. We have and will have great cause for thankfulness to the Head of the Church for His gift, and we bow to His sovereign will in taking back His gift....We cannot help but mourn with many who have been blessed of the Lord through his ministry.”

“The Church of God on earth lost a great witness—one of its greatest in this day of apostasy—when your husband was called home.”

“In these days, when so little spiritual food is given, Mr. Pink’s written ministry has been a blessing to many of the Lord’s people.”

“His going is a great loss, and such a magnificent champion of the faith will be sorely missed. There seem so few like him today who have the intellectual attainment and great spiritual depth to serve our Lord as wonderfully as he did in his written ministry.”

“How many, many times I have marveled at his amazing knowledge of the Bible, and how, by comparing Scripture with Scripture, he showed so clearly what was truth.”

“Truly the God of all grace gave to him in an unusual measure the gifts of knowledge, wisdom, untiring devotion, and earnest zeal for the cause of Christ, His Gospel, and His people.”

“We feel there is not anyone with such spiritual insight into the Word as our brother Pink, and none which has labored so untiringly to bring the message needed for the times as he did. This has left in our hearts an aching void which will be hard to fill after such a long period of sweet fellowship around God’s Word.”

“The Christian Church has lost one of its finest Bible expositors and hundreds of young men like myself have lost the benefit of his wise and deeply spiritual exegesis.”

“I look back with great pleasure upon the hours I have spent in reading in the Studies, and remember that your husband was a master in Israel in writing those volumes.”

“We thank God that we had the privilege of sitting at his feet these six and a half years, and we thank God for the spiritual illumination He gave him to bring out of His treasures things new and old for the sustenance of the flock.”

“The death of your beloved husband is a great loss to the whole Christian Church—but the Lord knows best when His servant’s work is done in this earthly sphere.”

“It is your loss and the loss of the multitude whose spiritual lives he has enriched by his consecration and knowledge that I mourn.”

“What a calamitous loss for the Church of God in these degenerate days!...We feel like orphans with our spiritual father and best earthly friend taken from us.”

“Humanly we could cry out against it and wonder why such a one was taken when he was so evidently used of the Lord. But God, in His infinite wisdom, has done the right and good thing.”

“I cannot express to you what a help Mr. Pink was to me. I have STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES in bound volumes and read them now in preference to anything else I have or get. His way of putting things seemed to suit my way of thinking.”

“I am one of those who have been helped by your husband’s written ministry. God has now provided some better work for him, but there are few able to replace him. ‘His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face.’”

“The privilege and talent and light given him through his studies of the Bible, which he lived only to pass on to others, were a great blessing. He found the true light. Being dead to his work, his writings will live on. Praise the Lord!”

“The long, wonderful work of your dear husband is ended. I for one shall miss the wonderful, unique Studies which I have read with profit, edification and enjoyment.”

MARCH

THE SUCCOURING SAVIOUR

“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb 2:18). One of the principal designs of the apostle in this epistle was to elevate and strengthen the faith of the sorely tried and wavering Hebrews—and by parity of reason, all who are weak in grace. The method which he followed in the prosecuting of that end was to set forth the transcendent excellency of Christ, with His good will unto the sons of men. He exhibits at length the perfections of His person, His offices, and His work. He declares Him to be the Son of God (Heb 1:5), who has been made the Heir of all things (Heb 1:2), that He is the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His person (Heb 1:3). Full demonstration was made of His immeasurable superiority to angels (Heb 1:5-8), yet, so infinite was His condescension and great His love unto those given Him by the Father that He deigned to take a place lower than that occupied by those celestial creatures, yea, “In all things...to be made like unto his brethren” (Heb 2:17). In His offices, He is revealed as the supreme Prophet, the final Spokesman of deity (Heb 1:1-2), as a glorious King (Heb 1:8), as “a merciful and faithful high priest” (Heb 2:17), in His work, as making “reconciliation [literally “propitiation”] for the sins of the people” (Heb 2:17), as ever living to make intercession for them (Heb 7:25), as “bringing many sons unto glory” (Heb 2:10).

So amazing was the grace of this august Being that He not only partook of the nature of those He came here to save, but He entered fully into their lot and circumstances, became subject to their infirmities, was tempted in all respects as they are (inward corruptions excepted), shed His precious blood, and died a shameful and accursed death in their stead and on their behalf. And all of this, in order to make manifest the reality and abundance of His mercy unto sinners, fire their hearts, and draw out the affections of believers unto Him. In the words quoted above, the apostle points out one of the blessed consequences of the Son’s having

become incarnate and entered into fellowship with His suffering people. First, the Lord of glory came down into the realm of temptation. Scripture is always to be understood in its widest possible latitude, and therefore, “tempt” is to be taken here as signifying put to the proof, subjected to trials and troubles, solicited unto evil. Christ was tempted by God, by men, by the devil. Second, He “suffered” while being tempted. Those temptations were not mere shows or make-beliefs, but real and painful. It could not be otherwise, for not only did He partake of all human sensibilities, but His holiness felt acutely every form of evil. Third, the remembrance of His sufferings makes Him the more mindful of ours.

“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb 2:18). Let us consider, first, the timeliness and preciousness of those words to those unto whom they were originally addressed. The Hebrew saints were Jews who had been converted in the days of Christ and under the preaching of the apostles, and were in peculiarly trying circumstances. Their unconverted countrymen regarded them as apostates from Moses, and therefore, from JEHOVAH Himself. They would have no fellowship with them, but instead, regarded them with the utmost contempt and treated them most cruelly. This resulted in great distress and privation, so that they “endured a great fight of afflictions,” were “made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions,” even to “the spoiling of their goods” (Heb 10:32-34), because of their continued loyalty to Christ. Hence, they were strongly tempted to abandon the Christian profession, resume their former place under Judaism, and thereby escape further trouble. Now, it was unto believers in such a situation that our text was addressed. The apostle reminds them that Christ Himself was severely tempted, that He was subjected to worse trials than ours, yet, that He endured the same and emerged a victorious Overcomer. Then, he assured them that the Saviour was able to sustain, comfort, and strengthen them.

Though few Christians today be in identical circumstances with those oppressed Hebrews, many *are* in trying situations. The world hates them, and does so in proportion to their fidelity and conformity unto Christ. Some are treated harshly by ungodly relatives. Some suffer at the hands of graceless professors. Others are experiencing divine chastisement or perplexing providences, or are passing through the waters of bereavement or a painful sickness. And at such times, Satan is particularly active, launching upon them his fiercest attacks, tempting them in various ways. Well, dear friend, here is relief—real, present, all-sufficient relief. Turn your heart and eye to the Saviour, and consider how well-qualified He is to succour you. He is clothed with our humanity, and therefore capable of being “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb 4:15). The experiences through which He passed fit Him to pity us. He knows all about your case, fully understands your trials, and gauges the strength of your temptation. He is no indifferent spectator, but full of compassion. He wept by the grave of Lazarus (Joh 11:35), and

He is the same today as He was yesterday. He is faithful in responding to the appeals of His people.

“He is able to succour” (Heb 2:18) no matter what form the temptation or trial takes. “Succour” is quite a comprehensive word. It means to befriend, to assist those in need, to strengthen the weak. But the Greek term is even more striking and beautifully expressive. It signifies to hasten in response to a cry of distress, literally to “run in to the call” of another. Chrysostom (c. 347-407) interpreted it, “He gives out His hand unto them with all readiness.” A blessed illustration thereof is seen in the case of Christ stretching forth His hand and catching hold of Peter as he was beginning to sink in the sea (Mat 14:30-31). That was the Saviour succouring one of His own. The same tender benevolence was yet more fully exemplified in Luke 10:33-35, where we behold Him as the good Samaritan tending the wounded traveler. “He is *able*”—the Greek word implies both a fitness and a willingness to do a thing. Christ is alike competent and ready to undertake for His people. There is no unwillingness in Him—the straitness is always in us. “He is *able* to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him” (Heb 7:25) signifies readiness as well as ability.

During His sojourn upon this earth, was He not ever ready to heal diseased bodies? And think you that He is now unwilling to minister unto distressed souls? Perish the thought. He was always at the disposal of the maimed, the blind, the palsied, yea, of the repellent leper, too. He was ever prepared, uncomplainingly, to relieve suffering, though it cost Him something—“There went virtue out of him” (Luk 6:19)—and though there was much unbelief expressed by those who were befriended. As it was then a part of His mission to heal the sick, so it is now a part of His ministry to bind up the broken-hearted. What a Saviour is ours! The almighty God, the all-tender Man. One who is infinitely above us in His original nature and present glory, yet, One who became flesh and blood, lived on the same plane as we do, experienced the same troubles, suffered as we—though far more acutely. Then, how well qualified is He to supply your every need! Meditate much upon these things. Waver not in a childlike confidence in Him. Cast all your care upon Him, knowing that He cares for you.

Whatever be your case or circumstances, the succouring Saviour is all-sufficient and enters sympathetically into your condition. He knew what it was to be bodily weary (Joh 4:6) and exhausted (Mar 4:36-38). He knew what it was to suffer hunger and thirst. Are you homeless? When here, *He* had not where to lay His head (Mat 8:20). Are you in straitened circumstances? *He* was cradled in a manger (Luk 2:7). Are you grief stricken? *He* was the Man of sorrows (Isa 53:3). Are you misunderstood by fellow believers? So was *He*, by His own disciples (Mat 15:16). Whatever be your lot, He can enter fully into it. He experienced all the miseries of mankind, and has not forgotten the same. Are you assailed by Satan? So was *He*. Do blasphemous thoughts at times torment your mind? The devil tempted Him

idolatrously to worship him. Are you in such desperation as to think of making an end of yourself? Satan challenged Him to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. He “was in all points tempted like as we are, sin excepted” (Heb 4:15).

Angels may pity, but they can have no fellow feeling. But Christ’s compassion (to suffer with) moves Him to succour. In some instances, He does so *before* the temptation comes, and that in a variety of ways. He prepares for it by forewarning of the same, as with Israel being afflicted in Egypt (Gen 15:13), and Paul (Act 9:16). In our case, by causing His providences to presage the same, by fitting us for them, as Christ was anointed with the Spirit ere the devil tempted Him, or by melting the heart with a sense of His goodness, which moves us to say, “How can I do this great wickedness?” (Gen 39:9). He succours *under* temptation. In some cases, by the powerful application of a precept or promise, which, as a cable, holds the heart fast amid the storm—by a providential interposition which prevents our executing the evil intention, or by removing the temptation itself—by giving us to prove the sufficiency of His grace (2Co 12:9). He succours *after* temptation—by giving us a spirit of contrition (Luk 22:61-62), moving us to confess our sins. And as angels ministered unto Him after His conflict with Satan, so He ministers unto us. Then, no matter how dire your situation or acute your suffering, apply to Christ for relief and deliverance, and count upon His help. It is when the child is most ill that the mother comes and sits beside it, Isaiah 66:13!

EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

39. Righteousness (2:29)

*“If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every
one that doeth righteousness is born of him.”*

Summary: “Abide in him”

“And now, little children” (verse 28): in view of all that I have said from verse 12 onwards and especially from verse 18, let me summarize in this one word,

“Abide in him.” Give continued evidence of your loyalty to Christ. Make Him the grand object of your hearts, the center of your affections, the One with whom you converse daily. Follow the example He has left you. Seek all your joy in Him. Endeavour to become better established in His doctrine. Strive to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Him. It is of the utmost importance that you do so; nothing will so effectually preserve you from error as to keep your hearts and minds fixed on the Lord Jesus. As John Calvin (1509-1564) remarked, “Faith is not a naked and frigid apprehension of Christ, but a lively and real sense of His power, which produces confidence.” The Greek word for “confidence” here literally means liberty of utterance, free-spokenness, as may be seen from its force in Acts 4:13, 29, 31 and 2 Corinthians 3:12. They who abide in Christ, who commune regularly with Him, have freedom of approach and liberty of speech at the throne of grace, for assurance of heart is ever the effect of true piety. “Hence it is that the godly calmly wait for Christ, nor do they dread His coming” (Calvin).

All who trust in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, who genuinely endeavour to live unto Christ, die in Him (Heb 11:13; 1Th 4:14). They shall be raised by Him and be made “like Him” (1Jo 3:2), conformed to the image of God’s Son, glorified (Rom 8:29-30). They will meet Him with confidence and joy, for He is the One they most of all desire to behold. But different far will be the attitude and demeanour of those spoken of in verse 19, and all like unto them. Those who originally made profession of faith in Christ, but who turned away from Him unto His enemies, abandoning Him in order to follow the course of this world, will in the day of His appearing shrink from Him with terror and horror. They will be “ashamed before him at his coming” (2:28), ashamed of their infidelity, of their mad policy, of their wretched choice of forsaking the living Fountain for cisterns that hold no water (Jer 2:13). Literally, “ashamed *from* him,” their guilty consciences causing them to shrink from His holy presence. They will be put to the utmost confusion and dishonour. The word occurs again in Luke 16:3 and Philippians 1:20. But, blessed be God, it is written, “Whosoever believeth on him shall *not* be ashamed” (Rom 9:33).

Verse 28

“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (verse 28). That admits of two distinct interpretations, though the one by no means necessarily excludes the other. First, the “we” may legitimately be regarded as John speaking of himself and his fellow ministers as believers, taking his place alongside those for whom he wrote, intimating thereby that he was himself following the same course, and prescribed for himself what he did for them—as he included himself personally in the “we” of 1:6, 8-9, etc. Second, the “we” of 2:28 may also be fairly considered as

referring to himself and others as the servants of God—as in 1:1-4, he alludes to himself and his fellow apostles officially. In support of this is the significant change of person from the second to the first. In verses 20-27 he had uniformly used the “ye,” as a teacher instructing his disciples. He might well have kept to that form of address—he does return to it in the very next verse: “If ye know that he is righteous.” In what immediately follows, John had the ultimate in view: the great day of reckoning when as a minister of Christ he would be called upon to render an account of his stewardship, particularly concerning those who, under God, he had begotten through the Gospel (1Co 4:15).

Looked at from the latter standpoint, verse 28 is to be regarded both as the climax of the entire passage and as an affecting appeal to the divine love in the saints. Quite a number of weighty reasons and strong inducements had been set before the Lord’s people to turn a deaf ear unto all false teachers, and remain steadfast in their allegiance to Christ. And now they are informed that it is not only to their advantage and security so to do, but in the day to come he will be the gainer thereby: “And now, little children, abide in him; that [in order that] when he shall appear we [your spiritual fathers] may have confidence and not be ashamed [of you] before him at his coming.” That interpretation gives added force and pertinency to the tender form of address, “little children.” If you give ear to the antichrists and become followers of them, it will be a serious reflection upon us who were responsible for your indoctrination and establishment in the faith; your infidelity would impugn our fidelity. Thus our text is to be considered as a parallel appeal to the one found in John’s Second Epistle, and which throws light thereon: “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward” (2Jo 1:8).

There is not a little in the New Testament that reveals the special relation that pastors sustain to their children in the faith, and also which clearly intimates that the present conduct of Christians has a close bearing on the minister’s approbation and reward by Christ when He shall make good that word, “My reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Rev 22:12). “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2Co 11:2). He had been an instrument in the Spirit’s hand of moving them to give up themselves to the Lord, and take Him as their Husband and Head, and was much concerned that their affections should not be diverted from Christ, or they receive “another gospel” (verse 4). Sustaining such an intimate relation to his converts, Paul was deeply interested in their spiritual welfare, and longed to present them unto Christ at His judgment-seat as those who had conducted themselves consistently with their dedication to Him, so that it would then appear that his labours on their behalf had not been in vain. As he said elsewhere, “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man with wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col 1:28).

The under-shepherds of Christ will be called upon to render an account unto the chief Shepherd of their ministerial stewardship in the day of reckoning, and therefore are the members of their flocks exhorted, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief ” (Heb 13:17). Ministers are expressly appointed of God for the guarding of their members from error, and to warn against those sins that endanger the soul. They will have to render an account of how they discharged their duty, used their talents, redeemed their time; whether those committed to their care were built up in the faith, or whether souls were lost through their neglect—the lives of their members will be witnesses for or against them. It is in view of that solemn reckoning in the future that each minister is exhorted, “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2Ti 4:1-2)—for in that day his service will either be approved or disapproved by his Master.

Thus, “And now, little children, abide in him; [so] that when he shall appear we may have confidence [His approval], and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” Do you be careful how you walk, so that in the day of accounts we may not be put to the blush because you have profited so little from the grace and truth we have ministered unto you. If you give heed to the antichrists, that will be a serious reflection upon us; that we rejoiced over your apparent conversion, baptized you, received you into church fellowship, only for you to fall away and apostatize from the faith. In such a case it would show that our labours were fruitless and our expectations would be disappointed. It would then seem to prove that we had failed to set before you the only preservative from all false doctrine. See here, my readers, the solemn effect of careless walking: it brings reproach on your pastor that he should have such “seals” to his ministry. The apostle longed that both he and they together might “receive a full reward” (2Jo 1:8), which would be the case only if they remained steadfast in the faith and in their obedience to Christ. As Paul also reminded the saints, “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy” (1Th 2:19-20, cf. Heb 13:17).

Verse 29

“If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him” (verse 29). There is considerable difference of opinion as to how this verse fits into the framework of the epistle. Scarcely any of the commentators make any serious attempt to show its coherence with that which precedes, regarding

it more or less as a detached statement. Robert S. Candlish (1806-1873) considered “The apostle passes to a new thought or theme.” Personally, we believe there is a very close connection between the words now before us and those that we have just finished expounding; yet our recognition of the same will depend largely upon a correct apprehension of the terms used. The opening “if” is not one of doubt, but rather of certainty; it is not the raising of a question, but an appeal to an established fact—having the force of “since,” forasmuch as you are assured that He is righteous. The pronoun has its antecedent in the One the apostle was speaking about in the foregoing verses, namely, Jesus Christ. There He is seen as the One who shall separate the precious from the vile, and as the rewarder of His servants: in a word, as “the righteous judge” (2Ti 4:8), who shall deal faithfully and impartially with every one.

Whereas it is evident and certain that Christ is righteous, it clearly follows that, “*every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.*” He that “doeth righteousness” is a variant of he that “abideth in him”—his abiding in Christ is manifested by submitting to Him, by actually doing His revealed will. Thus verse 29 is a further word of discrimination, the drawing of the line again between gracious and graceless professors. It announces one of the tests by which we may identify the regenerate and distinguish them from the unregenerate, namely, by their conduct, for it is by the fruits which it bears that the tree is known. In sharp contrast with “the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2), the renewed child of God walks in obedience to Him, treads “the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake” (Psa 23:3), heeding His precepts and keeping His statutes. Verse 29 is very much more than an aphorism or mere abstract doctrinal statement: it is a clearly implied exhortation, bidding us examine the claims of those who profess to be Christians and desire fellowship with us as such. But [in] this criterion of being a doer of righteousness, we are to distinguish between the genuine and the spurious, and thus be delivered from being imposed upon by hypocrites. It scarcely needs pointing out that honesty requires that we first faithfully test ourselves by this rule before we apply it to others.

There has always been a considerable number in Christendom who “hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom 1:18): those who are well versed in theology, but devoid of any sanctifying effects therefrom; whose heads are filled with orthodox views, but whose hearts and lives are unaffected thereby. And John was very anxious to preserve the saints from wasting their affections upon those who were not entitled to the same. He would have them equipped to distinguish clearly between those who were for Christ and those who (despite their pretensions to the contrary) were against Him. He would have them know that there is a radical difference between the righteous and the unrighteous, so that they should walk in separation from the latter. All through his epistle he is most insistent on segregating the one from the other (1:6-7; 2:3-5, 9-11; 3:10, etc.). Here again in our text the

apostle draws the picture of a real child of God; that there may be no mistaking him, he adds to the statement that he who has received the Spirit and abides in Christ is also a doer of righteousness. It therefore follows that those who are thoroughly worldly and carnal in their walk are not born of Christ. The unrighteous must not be regarded as righteous!

“He is righteous.” We are more apt to think of Christ as gracious and compassionate, merciful and tender, than righteous; but there is much said in Scripture about His righteousness. As God, He is essentially righteous. As man, He is also perfectly righteous, fulfilling the Law in thought, word, and deed. As Mediator, He was righteous in faithfully discharging His commission and finishing the work given Him to do. He is the Author of that everlasting righteousness which is revealed in the Gospel and received by faith. In Isaiah 11:5, it was announced, “Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.” In Old Testament times God spoke of Him as “My righteous servant” (Isa 53:11), as “a righteous Branch” (Jer 23:5), as “the Sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2). By the spirit of prophecy Christ declared, “I have preached righteousness in the great congregation” (Psa 40:9). How righteously He dealt with the rich young ruler, exposing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, reproved His own disciples, accepted the awful cup in Gethsemane! Verily, He was the Lamb without blemish and without spot. When the Father crowned Him with glory and honour He bore testimony to Christ, “Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness” (Psa 45:7). He is the antitypical “King of righteousness” (Heb 7:2). He is expressly declared to be “Jesus Christ the righteous” (1Jo 2:1). And by amazing grace believers own Him as “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer 23:6), for He has wrought out for them and covered them with the “robe of righteousness” (Isa 61:10).

“If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” It has been objected by those who ought to know better that the “he” cannot here refer to Christ, because nowhere else in Scripture is regeneration ascribed to the Son. Even were that the case, the objection would have no real validity—as well deny that it was “through the eternal Spirit” that Christ offered Himself without spot to God, because nowhere else are we told so except in Hebrews 9:14. But our text is by no means the sole passage where, by clear implication at least, Christ is represented as the Author of the new birth. He is denominated “the everlasting Father” (Isa 9:6), and says “Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me” (Isa 8:18, and cf. Heb 2:13). God expressly declared of the Saviour, “He shall see his seed,” yea, that “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isa 53:10-11)—what are that “seed” and “travail of his soul” but those who are “born of him”? As the Son Himself declared, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (Joh 12:24). It is by Christ that we are given the power of privilege “to become the sons of God” (Joh 1:12)

The saving operations of God are ascribed to each of the Persons in the Trinity. In one passage we are said to be justified “by the Spirit of our God” (1Co 6:11), though elsewhere that is predicated of the Father (Rom 5:1) and of Christ (Act 13:39). So too the new birth is attributed equally to the Spirit (Joh 3:6), to the Father (Jam 1:18), and to Christ Jesus (Eph 2:10), the new spiritual nature being derived from Him as His “seed” (Psa 22:30). Nor is it at all strange that John should here attribute our new birth immediately⁴ to Christ. His chief design in the whole of the context is to exalt Him in the esteem of His redeemed, to evince how deeply indebted they are to Him, and to emphasize the intimate and spiritual oneness which there is between Him and them. Christ is our Advocate with the Father (verse 1). He is the Propitiation for our sins (verse 2). He is our Exemplar (verse 6). He is our Anointer (verse 27). He is the Rewarder of our works (verse 28). And [here] He is the Author of our regeneration. The last mentioned supplies yet a further link with the context, furnishing as it does an additional reason or argument in support of the injunction to constancy. To “abide in him” is enforced first by the consideration of the great day of accounts, and second by the consideration of the dignity of those called upon to be faithful to Him: they are His dear children.

“*If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.*” The twofold “ye know” is closely related to the repeated “teacheth you of all things” and “hath taught you” of verse 27. The anointing Spirit communicates a spiritual judgment and discernment, enabling its possessor to perceive that which is hidden from those who are wise and prudent in their own esteem. It imparts a true knowledge of Christ and the ability to identify their brethren and sisters in Him. Until we have a true concept of Christ’s character, we cannot form a just opinion of those who are His. But further, the anointing Spirit ensures an abiding in Christ, and it is the doing of righteousness that is the visible proof and practical fruit of such abiding—for doing righteousness is a complying with His revealed will. It was so with the Son Himself: “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love” (Joh 15:10). It was by walking in full subjection to the Father that Christ demonstrated His Sonship. In the case of the Christian, this knowledge is first *objective*—apprehended from the Scriptures; then *subjective*—realized in experience; then *influential*—expressing itself in the doing of righteousness; and therefore *evidential*—supplying proof of the new birth.

In our text then, the apostle enunciates the simple but obvious principle: that like produces like, that it is an unvarying law of creation that everything should bring forth “after his kind” (Gen 1:11). That there must be and is a reproduction of the parent in the child, was taught plainly by our Lord: concerning Himself, “the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever

⁴ **immediately** – directly, without the help of someone or something.

he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” (Joh 5:19). To the Jews He said, “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.” And again, “If God were your Father, ye would love me”—nature and conduct *must* correspond. It did so in their case: “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (Joh 8:39, 42, 44). Since Christ be righteous, those born of Him are righteous; the members are conformed to their Head in nature, character, and conduct. But the emphasis is here placed first on what they do, rather than on what they are, the one serving to make manifest the other.

Instead of arguing from cause to effect, as in “every good tree bringeth forth good fruit” (Mat 7:17), the apostle reasons from actions back to principles. Where there are righteous works, there must be a righteous principle producing them. Since none of the fallen sons of men be righteous by nature, then the presence of righteous works evinces that the producer has been made a partaker of “the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24). On the one hand, regeneration is the foundation of all righteousness in the soul, being that which inducts us into the kingdom of God (Joh 3:3), when divine power gives us “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2Pe 1:3). On the other hand, a righteous walk is one of the visible marks of a new birth, for we are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph 2:10). The emphasis is placed here on the latter because it is the testing of profession that is in view, the drawing of the line between the real and the false. He “doeth righteousness” not in order to be saved, but in demonstration of the fact that Christ has saved him. Only those who bear Christ’s image and walk before Him in the ways of righteousness are born of Him. Those who give no evidence of so doing are either deliberate hypocrites or utterly deluded souls.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

91. Pledges Honoured

“Then Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh” (Jos 22:1). The opening, “Then,” looks back to Jos 21:43-45, where there is a brief but blessed summing up of all that is recorded in the foregoing chapters, “And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the LORD gave them

rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.” Therein we behold His unchanging faithfulness—notwithstanding their wilderness provocations, He brought them into Canaan. Therein we have exhibited the perfect harmony which there is between God’s words and His works, which are wonderful not only in contrivance, but equally so in their execution. Therein we learn how sure is the fulfilment of divine prophecy. Every detail predicted was literally accomplished.

The Lord had promised to give the land of Canaan unto Abram’s seed for a possession (Gen 12:7), and He had now done so. He promised to make Abram’s seed a prolific and numerous one (Gen 13:16), and they “multiplied and grew” (Exo 1:12), so that by the time they left Egypt a single family had become “about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, besides children” (Exo 12:37). The Lord promised to preserve them in all places whither they went (Gen 28:15), and He had done so—in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and throughout all their wilderness journeyings. He promised to bring into Canaan the fourth generation of Abram’s descendants after their sojourn in Egypt (Gen 15:16), and a close examination of Exodus 6:16-28, proves that so it came to pass. The Lord promised to give them success in their fighting, “I will send my fear before thee (cf. Jos 2:9), and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee...for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand” (Exo 23:27, 31), and so their sons acknowledged (Psa 44:3). He promised to deliver “kings” into their hands (Deu 7:24), and Joshua 10:24, 40 attests that He did so. He promised to give them “rest” in the land (Deu 12:10), and we are told “the LORD gave them rest” (Jos 21:44).

There were indeed some of the original inhabitants still left in the land to test and try God’s people, but at the close of the seven-year campaign, all open conflict had ceased. The whole of Canaan had now been given by divine lot unto Abram’s descendants. The greater part of it was then occupied by the different tribes, and they were peacefully settled in their heritage. If they continued to obey the Lord and count upon His enablement, they should still more completely possess their possessions. “There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel.” Such will be the triumphant testimony of the whole Church collectively and of every Christian individually. In due season shall all that God has promised the spiritual Israel come to pass, with regard both to their present comfort and future felicity. All will be accomplished, exactly and perfectly, as God has declared, for all His promises are in Christ yea and amen (2Co 1:20). At the last, when the whole company of the redeemed will have entered their eternal rest and inheritance, they will bear joyous witness that “He hath done all things well.”

“Then Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh” (Jos 22:1). The passage which opens with those words contains the sequel to what is recorded at some length in Numbers 32. There we read, “Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle: and when they saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that, behold, the place was a place for cattle...came and spake unto Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and unto the princes of the congregation, saying...the country which the LORD smote before the congregation of Israel, is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle; wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan” (Num 32:1-5). They referred to the land which had formerly been occupied by Sihon and Og, whose forces Israel had, under God, completely destroyed, and whose territory they then seized by right of victory (Num 21:21-35). Lying in the Jordan valley, the ground was well watered, and ideal for pasturage.

For several months, the camp of Israel had remained stationary on the plains of Moab: looking backward to the house of bondage from which they had been delivered; looking forward to the land of Canaan which had been promised them for their inheritance. Behind them lay the dreary desert, before them was the river of Jordan. In view of the mentioning of “the princes of the congregation” (Num 32:2) in addition to Eleazar, it would appear that an official conference of the Sanhedrin, or chief counsel of the nation, was being held—perhaps over the disposing of the territory which had been acquired by their recent victory. The language used by the spokesman of the two tribes also conveys the impression that their request was of the nature of a formal petition. It was to the effect that they should be given the title to settle in the luxurious valley of Jazer and Gilead. There was nothing underhand or stealthy in the appeal which they made, but an honourable and open approach unto the heads of authority, and in a meek and modest spirit, as their “if we have found grace in thy sight” (Num 32:5) evinces. Notwithstanding, the commentators generally condemn their action.

It is concluded by some that their conduct was very blameworthy. That they showed contempt of Canaan, or, if not that, were following the line of least resistance in wanting to remain where they were, and thus, escape the hardships and fighting which the crossing of the Jordan would involve. Others see in their proposal a display of covetousness, a greedy desire to make this fertile portion their own. Still others charge them with being lacking in public spirit, putting their own private interests before the common good of the nation. Personally, we see nothing definite in the narrative to support such views, but rather some things to the contrary. Had their request been as reprehensible as these critics make out, they had been promptly informed of its *unlawfulness*, and there the matter would have terminated. Most certainly the Lord had never confirmed it! God had already delivered this land into the hands of Israel, and someone must inherit and inhabit it.

It was particularly suited for pasturage, and *that* was what these tribes, with their “very great multitude of cattle” (Num 32:1), most needed. Nor were they despising the Lord’s inheritance, for the boundary of Canaan was not the Jordan, but rather the mountain-range of Gilead, which separated it from the desert lying beyond. Thus, as Joshua 22:9 shows, the section desired by these tribes was as much *within* Canaan as was the land on the farther side of the Jordan.

Moses was thoroughly displeased with their suggestion, placing the worst construction upon it. He supposed that their request proceeded from a spirit of cowardice and sloth. He considered that they were giving way to unbelief, distrusting God’s power, seeking to shelve their responsibility (Num 35:6). In any case, it would mean the weakening of Israel’s army by a reduction of at least one fifth of its manpower. Moreover, they were asking him to establish a dangerous precedent, which others might desire to follow (Num 35:7). He recalled the faint-heartedness of their fathers, and the disastrous sequel which had attended the same (Num 35:8-9). He feared that their attitude would bring down the Lord’s wrath upon the whole congregation (Num 35:14). But his suspicions were unwarranted, and his fears unnecessary.

“And they came near unto him, and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones: but we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place: and our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land. We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance. For we will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward” (Num 32:16-19). Thus did they show how grievously Moses had misjudged them, and how unfounded were his surmisings. They had no intention of sitting still while the other tribes went to war. Without murmuring or disputing, they expressed a willingness to share their brethren’s burden. So far from being afraid to enter the field against the enemy, they were prepared to take the lead and go “before the children of Israel” (Num 32:17). They would remain with their fellows until all of them were duly settled. Nor would they require any compensation or expect to receive any share of the spoils.

Satisfied with their explanation and assurances, Moses conditionally granted their request. Holding them to their promises, he agreed to the proposal on their fulfilment of its terms. If they carried out their part of the contract, the land of Jazer and Gilead should be their “possession before the Lord” (Num 32:22). But if they went back upon their word, then they would be offending against God Himself, and in such an event, their sin was certain to find them out (Num 32:23), which signifies that bitter and inevitable would be the consequences, and not discovered or brought to light. “Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth” (Num 32:25) was their ready response and solemn vow. Thereupon the agreement was formally and

publicly ratified before Israel's supreme court, Joshua (who was to succeed him) being expressly informed of the compact (Num 32:28), according to the terms of which the coasts and cities of Sihon and Og became the possession of the two and a half tribes (Num 32:33). Thus did they strikingly prefigure the Old Testament saints, who entered into their spiritual inheritance during the Mosaic economy.

When Joshua took over the leadership, he addressed himself to the two and a half tribes thus, "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land," and then detailed the stipulated conditions of this provisional arrangement (Jos 1:12-15). As we pointed out in the ninth article of this series, Joshua was acting here not on the ground of natural prudence, but in obedience to his Master's will. The Lord had bidden him to "observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee" (Jos 1:7), and *this* was one of those things (Num 32:28)! Thus, the new head of the nation did not take it for granted that they would carry out their agreement, but definitely reminded them of the same and held them to it. It is blessed, too, to observe the ground upon which he appealed to them. It was neither as a personal favour to himself for their co-operation, nor as an encouragement unto their brethren, but as an act of obedience, "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you" (Jos 1:13).

Equally blessed is it to hear their response, "And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the LORD thy God be with thee" (Jos 1:16-17). Thus did they solemnly and explicitly renew their agreement; and, as the sequel demonstrates, it was no idle boast that they made. It is ever God's way to honour those who honour Him: Joshua had given Him His proper place by complying with his commission and magnifying God's Word, and now the Lord graciously inclined these two and a half tribes willingly to serve under him. In his, "until the LORD have given your brethren rest...and they also have possessed the land" (Jos 1:15), he expressed his unwavering faith in the successful outcome of the campaign, and here the Lord moved these men to give him their full support. They averred their willingness to accept him as their commander and yield full obedience to his authority.

Faithfully did they fulfill their part of the agreement, "And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses spake unto them: about forty thousand prepared for war passed over before the LORD unto battle, to the plains of Jericho" (Jos 4:12-13). How the Holy Spirit delights to record the obedience of saints! And now we come to the happy sequel to the whole of the above, "Then Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and said unto them, Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you: ye have not left your brethren these

many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God” (Jos 22:2-3). A real tribute of praise was that, and a signal proof of the magnanimity of the one who paid it. Though they had only discharged a manifest obligation and fulfilled their part of the contract, it cost Joshua nothing to acknowledge their fidelity and commend their obedience, and such a word from their general would mean much to them.

They had given further proof of the sterling quality of their character by submitting to the authority of Joshua. They might have pleaded that their agreement had been made with *Moses*, and that, since death cancels all contracts, his decease relieved them of their engagement. But having put their hand to the plough, they refused to look back (Luk 9:62). Or, to change the figure, they conducted themselves in a manner that was in every respect the very opposite of that of the Ephraimites at a later date, of whom we read that they “turned back in the day of battle. They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law” (Psa 78:9-10). Alas, how the courage of many who enlist under the banner of Christ fails them in the day of testing, so that they retreat before the foe, and in the hour of temptation, prove false to their good resolutions and solemn promises and vows. Different far was it with these Reubenites and Gadites. Not only did they begin well, but they also endured unto the end. Yea, their wholehearted devotion to the cause of God and His people *increased*, for a comparison of Joshua 1:16 with Numbers 32:31, reveals that the promise which they made unto Joshua went beyond that which they had pledged unto Moses.

For seven years, they had served obediently under Joshua, had disinterestedly put the welfare of the nation before their own private comforts, had made no attempt to rejoin their families, but had remained by the side of their brethren until Canaan was conquered. Most commendable was their meekness in waiting for their dismissal. They did not chafe at the delay, but were submissive to their leader’s will. Instead of seeking out Joshua and complaining that it was high time for them to return to their homes, they quietly tarried for Him to take the initiative in the matter. As another remarked, “Like good soldiers they would not move till they had orders from their general. They had not only done their duty to Joshua and Israel, but, which was best of all, they had made conscience of their duty to God. ‘Ye have kept the charge,’ or, as the word is, ‘Ye have kept the keeping,’ that is, Ye have carefully and circumspectly kept the commandments of the Lord your God, not only in this particular instance of continuing in the service of Israel to the end of the war, but, in general, you have kept up religion in your part of the camp—a rare and excellent thing among soldiers, and which is worthy to be praised” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

“And now the LORD your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as He promised them: therefore now return ye, and get you unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the

other side Jordan” (Jos 22:4). How careful was Joshua to place the crown of honour where it rightly belonged, and ascribe the glory of their victory unto the Author of the same! At the same time, he considered it meet that thankful acknowledgment should be made to those who had assisted him therein. “God must be chiefly eyed in our praises, but instruments must not be altogether overlooked” (Henry). Equally definite was Joshua in here magnifying the fidelity of JEHOVAH, reminding Israel that the successful outcome of their military efforts, and the resultant rest for the whole nation, was the fulfilment of the sure word of the Lord. Having faithfully performed their part of the contract by sharing the hardships and dangers of their brethren, Joshua now made good the assurances which Moses had given to the two and a half tribes, publicly and solemnly granting them an honourable discharge from the army and authorizing them to rejoin their families.

“But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Jos 22:5). Ere dismissing the two and a half tribes, Joshua gave them salutary counsel. No instructions were furnished for the fortifying of their cities or for the cultivation of their land, the whole emphasis being placed upon the regulating of their spiritual lives. Nor was there any lowering of the rule to meet their “moral inability,” but a strict maintaining of God’s claims upon them. “Perfect obedience to the divine Law was no more practicable in the days of Joshua than at present, yet his exhortation takes no notice of this, for the standard of obedience cannot be too high (Mat 5:43-48), nor our aim too high, as we are sure to fall very far short of what we propose for ourselves. But the consciousness of our imperfections subserves the purposes of humiliation, and the feeling of our insufficiency dictates prayers for forgiveness and assistance” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821). It is not sufficient that we know God’s Law, we are required to *do* it. In order to obedience, we must “take diligent heed.” We shall only walk in God’s ways to the extent that we serve Him wholeheartedly, for love to Him is the spring of all acceptable obedience and worship.

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

3. The Scriptures and Christ

The order we follow in this series is that of *experience*. It is not until man is made thoroughly displeased with himself that he begins to aspire after God. The fallen creature, deluded by Satan, is self-satisfied till his sin-blinded eyes are opened to get a sight of himself. The Holy Spirit first works in us a sense of our ignorance, vanity, poverty and depravity, before He brings us to perceive and acknowledge that in God alone are to be found true wisdom, real blessedness, perfect goodness and unspotted righteousness. We must be made conscious of our imperfections ere we can really appreciate the divine perfections. As the perfections of God are contemplated, man becomes still more aware of the infinite distance that separates him from the Most High. As he learns something of God's pressing claims upon him, and his own utter inability to meet them, he is prepared to hear and welcome the good news that Another has fully met those claims for all who are led to believe in Him.

"Search the scriptures," said the Lord Jesus, and then He added, "for...they are they which testify *of me*" (Joh 5:39). They testify of Him as the only Saviour for perishing sinners, as the only Mediator between God and men, as the only One through whom the Father can be approached. They testify to the wondrous perfections of His person, the varied glories of His offices, the sufficiency of His finished work. Apart from the Scriptures, He cannot be known. In them alone, He is revealed. When the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto His people, in thus making known to the soul, He uses naught but what is written. While it is true that Christ is the key to the Scriptures, it is equally true that only in the Scriptures do we have an opening-up of the "mystery of Christ" (Eph 3:4).

Now, the measure in which we profit from our reading and study of the Scriptures may be ascertained by the extent to which *Christ* is becoming more real and more precious unto our hearts. To "grow in grace" is defined as "and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2Pe 3:18). The second clause there is not something in addition to the first, but is an explanation of it. To "know" Christ (Phi 3:10) was the supreme longing and aim of the apostle Paul, a longing and an aim to which he subordinated all other interests. But, mark it well, the "knowledge" which is spoken of in these verses is not intellectual, but spiritual, not theoretical, but experimental, not general, but personal. It is a supernatural

knowledge, which is imparted to the regenerate heart by the operations of the Holy Spirit, as He interprets and applies to us the Scriptures concerning Him.

Now, the knowledge of Christ which the blessed Spirit imparts to the believer through the Scriptures profits him in different ways, according to his varying frames, circumstances, and needs. Concerning the bread which God gave to the children of Israel during their wilderness wanderings, it is recorded that “some gathered more, some less” (Exo 16:17). The same is true in our apprehension of Him of whom the manna was a type. There is that in the wondrous person of Christ which is exactly suited to our every condition, every circumstance, every need, both for time and eternity. But we are slow in realizing it, and slower still to act upon it. There is an inexhaustible fullness in Christ (Joh 1:16) which is available for us to draw from, and the principle regulating the extent to which we become “strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2Ti 2:1) is, “according unto your faith be it unto you” (Mat 9:29).

1. An individual is profited from the Scriptures when they reveal to him *his need of Christ*. Man, in his natural estate, deems himself self-sufficient. True, he has a dim perception that all is not quite right between himself and God, yet has he no difficulty in persuading himself that *he* is able to do that which will propitiate Him. *That* lies at the foundation of all man’s “religion,” begun by Cain, in whose “way” (Jude 11) the multitudes still walk. Tell the devout religionist that, “They that are in the flesh *cannot* please God” (Rom 8:8), and he is at once offended. Press upon him the fact that, “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa 64:6), and his hypocritical urbanity at once gives place to anger. So it was when Christ was on earth. The most religious people of all, the Jews, had no sense that *they* were “lost” and in dire need of an almighty Saviour.

“They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Mat 9:12). It is the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit, by His application of the Scriptures, to convict sinners of their desperate condition, to bring them to see that their state is such that “from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness” in them, but “wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores” (Isa 1:6). As the Spirit convicts us of our sins—our ingratitude to God, our murmuring against Him, our wanderings from Him—as He presses upon us the claims of God—His right to our love, obedience, and adoration, and all our sad failures to render Him His due—then are we made to recognize that Christ is our only hope, and that, except we flee to Him for refuge, the righteous wrath of God will most certainly fall upon us.

Nor is this to be limited to the initial experience of conversion. The more the Spirit deepens His work of grace in the regenerated soul, the more that individual is made conscious of his pollution, his sinfulness, and his vileness, and the more does he discover his need of and learn to value that precious, precious blood which cleanses from all sin. The Spirit is here to glorify Christ, and one chief way in

which He does so is by opening wider and wider the eyes of those for whom He died, to see how suited Christ is for such wretched, foul, hell-deserving creatures. Yes, the more we are truly profiting from our reading of the Scriptures, the more do we feel our need of Him.

2. An individual is profited from the Scriptures when they *make Christ more real* to him. The great mass of the Israelitish nation saw nothing more than the outward shell in the rites and ceremonies which God instructed, but a regenerated remnant were privileged to behold Christ Himself. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day" said Christ (Joh 8:56). Moses esteemed "the reproach of Christ" greater riches than the treasures of Egypt (Heb 11:26). So it is in Christendom. To the multitudes, Christ is but a name, or at most a historical character. They have no personal dealings with Him, enjoy no spiritual communion with Him. Should they hear one speak in rapture of His excellency, they regard him as an enthusiast or a fanatic. To them, Christ is unreal, vague, intangible. But with the real Christian, it is far otherwise. The language of his heart is,

*"I have heard the voice of Jesus,
Tell me not of aught beside;
I have seen the face of Jesus,
All my soul is satisfied."*

Yet such a blissful sight is not the consistent and unvarying experience of the saints. Just as clouds come in between the sun and the earth, so failures in our walk interrupt our communion with Christ and serve to hide from us the light of His countenance. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest* myself to him" (Joh 14:21). Yes, it is the one who by grace is treading the path of obedience to whom the Lord Jesus grants manifestations of Himself. And the more frequent and prolonged these manifestations are, the more real He becomes to the soul, until we are able to say with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; *but now* mine eye *seeth thee*" (Job 42:5). Thus, the more Christ is becoming a living reality to me, the more I am profiting from the Word.

3. An individual is profited from the Scriptures when he becomes *more engrossed with Christ's perfections*. It is a sense of need which first drives the soul to Christ, but it is the realization of His excellency which draws us to run after Him. The more real Christ becomes to us, the more are we attracted by His perfections. At the beginning, He is viewed only as a Saviour, but as the Spirit continues to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, we discover that upon His head are "many crowns" (Rev 19:12). Of old, it was said, "His name shall be called Wonderful" (Isa 9:6). His name signifies all that He is as made known in Scripture. "Wonderful" are His offices, in their number, variety, sufficiency. He is the Friend that sticks closer than a brother, to help in every time of need. He is the great High

Priest, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He is the Advocate with the Father, who pleads our cause when Satan accuses us.

Our great need is to be occupied with Christ, to sit at His feet as Mary did, and receive out of His fullness. Our chief delight should be to “*Consider* the Apostle and High Priest of our profession” (Heb 3:1)—to contemplate the various relations which He sustains to us, to meditate upon the many promises He has given, to dwell upon His wondrous and changeless love for us. As we do this, we shall so delight ourselves in the Lord that the siren voices of this world will lose all their charm for us. Ah, my reader, do you know anything about this in your own actual experience? Is Christ the chief among ten thousand to your soul? Has He won your heart? Is it your chief joy to get alone and be occupied with Him? If not, your Bible reading and study has profited you little indeed.

4. An individual is profited from the Scriptures as *Christ becomes more precious* to him. Christ is precious in the esteem of all true believers (1Pe 2:7). They count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord (Phi 3:8). His name to them is an ointment poured forth (Song 1:3). As the glory of God that appeared in the wondrous beauty of the temple, and in the wisdom and splendour of Solomon, drew worshippers to Him from the uttermost parts of the earth, so the unparalleled excellency of Christ, which was prefigured thereby, does more powerfully attract the hearts of His people. The devil knows this full well, therefore is he ceaselessly engaged in blinding the minds of them that believe not, by placing between them and Christ the allurements of this world. God permits him to assail the believer also, but it is written, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jam 4:7). Resist him by definite and earnest prayer, entreating the Spirit to draw out your affections to Christ.

The more we are engaged with Christ’s perfections, the more we love and adore Him. It is lack of experimental acquaintance with Him that makes our hearts so cold towards Him. But where real and daily fellowship is cultivated, the Christian will be able to say with the Psalmist, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psa 73:25). This it is which is the very essence and distinguishing nature of true Christianity. Legalistic zealots may be busily engaged in tithing mint and anise and cumin, they may encompass sea and land to make one proselyte, and yet have no love for God in Christ. It is the heart that God looks at, “My son, give me thine heart” (Pro 23:26) is His demand. The more precious Christ is to us, the more delight does He have in us.

5. An individual who is profited from the Scriptures has an *increasing confidence in Christ*. There is “little faith” (Mat 8:26) and “great faith” (Mat 8:10). There is “full assurance of faith” (Heb 10:22), and trusting in the Lord “with all the heart” (Pro 3:5). Just as there is growing “from strength to strength” (Psa 84:7), so we read of “from faith to faith” (Rom 1:17). The stronger and steadier our faith, the

more the Lord Jesus is honoured. Even a cursory reading of the four Gospels reveals the fact that nothing pleased the Saviour more than the firm reliance which was placed in Him by the few who really counted upon Him. He Himself lived and walked by faith, and the more we do so, the more are the members being conformed to their Head. Above everything else, there is one thing to be aimed at and diligently sought by earnest prayer, that our faith may be increased. Of the Thessalonian saints, Paul was able to say, “Your faith groweth exceedingly” (2Th 1:3).

Now, Christ cannot be trusted at all unless He be known, and the better He is known, the more will He be trusted: “And they that know thy name *will* put their trust in thee” (Psa 9:10). As Christ becomes more real to the heart, as we are increasingly occupied with His manifold perfections and He becomes more precious to us, confidence in Him is deepened until it becomes as natural to trust Him as it is to breathe. The Christian life is a *walk* of faith (2Co 5:7), and that very expression denotes a continual progress, an increasing deliverance from doubts and fears, a fuller assurance that all He has promised He will perform. Abraham is the father of all them that believe, and thus, the record of his life furnishes an illustration of what a deepening confidence in the Lord signifies. First, at His bare word, he turned his back upon all that was dear to the flesh. Second, he went forth in simple dependence on Him and dwelt as a stranger and sojourner in the land of promise, though he never owned a single acre of it. Third, when the promise was made of a seed in his old age, he considered not the obstacles in the way of its fulfilment, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. Finally, when called on to offer up Isaac, through whom the promises were to be realized, he accounted that God was able to “raise him up, even from the dead” (Heb 11:19).

In the history of Abraham, we are shown how grace is able to subdue an evil heart of unbelief, how the spirit may be victorious over the flesh, how the supernatural fruits of a God-given and God-sustained faith may be brought forth by a man of like passions with us. This is recorded for our encouragement, for us to pray that it may please the Lord to work in us what He wrought in and through the father of the faithful. Nothing more pleases, honours and glorifies Christ than the confiding trust, the expectant confidence and the childlike faith of those to whom He has given every cause to trust Him with all their hearts. And nothing more evidences that we are being profited from the Scriptures than an increasing faith in Christ.

6. An individual is profited from the Scriptures when they beget in him *a deepening desire to please Christ*. “Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price” (1Co 6:19-20) is the first great fact that Christians need to apprehend. Henceforth, they are not to “live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again” (2Co 5:15). Love delights to please its object, and the more our affections are drawn out to Christ, the more shall we desire to honour Him by a

life of obedience to His known will. “If a man love me, he will keep my words” (Joh 14:23). It is not in happy emotions or in verbal professions of devotion, but in the actual assumption of His yoke and the practical submitting to His precepts that Christ is most honoured.

It is at this point particularly that the genuineness of our profession may be tested and proved. Have they a faith in Christ who make no effort to learn His will? What a contempt of the king if his subjects refuse to read his proclamation! Where there is faith in Christ, there will be delight in His commandments, and a sorrowing when they are broken by us. When we displease Christ, we should mourn over our failure. It is impossible seriously to believe that it was my sins which caused the Son of God to shed His precious blood without my hating them. If Christ groaned under sin, we shall too. And the more sincere those groanings be, the more earnestly shall we seek grace for deliverance from all that displeases, and strength to do all that which pleases our blessed Redeemer.

7. An individual is profited from the Scriptures when they cause him to *long for the return of Christ*. Love can be satisfied with nothing short of a sight of its object. True, even now, we behold Christ by faith, yet, it is “through a glass, darkly.” But at His coming, we shall behold Him “face to face” (1Co 13:12). Then will be fulfilled His own words, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (Joh 17:24). Only this will fully meet the longings of His heart, and only this will meet the longings of those redeemed by Him. Only then will He “see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isa 53:11), and, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psa 17:15).

At the return of Christ, we shall be done with sin for ever. The elect are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God’s Son, and that divine purpose will be realized only when Christ receives His people unto Himself. “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1Jo 3:2). Never again will our communion with Him be broken. Never again shall we groan and moan over our inward corruptions. Never again shall we be harassed with unbelief. He will present His Church to Himself, “A glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Eph 5:27). For that hour, we eagerly wait. For our Redeemer, we lovingly look. The more we yearn for the coming One, the more we are trimming our lamps in earnest expectation of His coming, the more do we give evidence that we are profiting from our knowledge of the Word.

Let the reader and writer honestly search themselves as in the presence of God. Let us seek truthful answers to these questions. Have we a deeper felt sense of our need of Christ? Is He Himself becoming to us a brighter and living reality? Are we finding increasing delight in being occupied with His lovely perfections? Is Christ

Himself becoming daily more precious to us? Is our faith in Him growing so that we confidently trust Him for everything? Are we really seeking to please Him in all the details of our lives? Are we so yearning for Him that we would be filled with joy did we know for certain that He would come during the next twenty-four hours? May the Holy Spirit search our hearts with these pointed questions.

SECURITY

Is it true that when a sinner is really saved by Christ he is safe for ever? Or may he be saved today and lost tomorrow? Different schools of theology have returned an emphatic affirmative to each of these questions, and both refer to the Bible in support of their conflicting contentions. To the writer, it appears that very unwise and unguarded statements have been made by both parties. Some Calvinists have boldly affirmed that if a sinner has truly received Christ as his Saviour, no matter what he does afterwards or what his subsequent life may be, he cannot possibly perish. Some Arminians have placed a question mark against the sufficiency of Christ's atonement and the efficacy of the Spirit's operations by saying that when a sinner repents and believes in Christ, he is merely put on probation, and that his own faithfulness and good works will prove the deciding factor as to whether or not he reaches the promised land.

Endless volumes have been written on the subject, but neither side has satisfied the other. Nor is this surprising! Party spirit runs too high, sectarian prejudice has been too strong. Only too often the aim of the contestants has been to silence their opponent rather than to arrive at the truth. The method followed has frequently been quite unworthy of those professing to be "the children of light." One class of passage has been pressed into service, while another class has been ignored or explained away. Is it not a fact that if some Calvinists were quite frank, they would have to acknowledge that there are some verses in Scripture which they wish were not there at all? And if some Arminians were equally frank, must they not confess that there are certain statements in the Word which they are unable to fit into the creed to which they are committed?

In the light of theological history, does it not seem evident that the subject of the Christian's security, like every other truth of Holy Writ, must have two sides to it—that there enter into it both God's sovereignty and human responsibility? Perhaps it is failure to recognize and reckon upon this which has caused so much confusion

and contention thereon. More than once have we heard a renowned Bible-teacher of orthodox reputation declare, "I do not believe in the perseverance of the saints, but I do believe in the preservation of the Saviour." But why deny the former when the Scriptures have so much to say upon it? Would it not be equally unwarrantable for me to say, "I do not believe that men must breathe in order to live, but I do believe that the Creator gives life so that we shall breathe"? The one exists not without the other. To say that God preserves by causing us to persevere is not to rob Him of His glory by dividing the honours, but is simply to affirm that He deals with us as moral agents.

In declaring that when a sinner repents and trusts in Christ, he is secure for ever, and no matter what his subsequent life may be, he cannot perish, some imagine Christ's faithfulness, power, and grace are greatly magnified. But are *those* His only attributes? What about His righteousness, wisdom, and holiness? Faithfulness would become reckless indulgence if the waywardness of a Christian were winked at. Grace would be disgraced were the requirements of morality flouted. Power would degenerate into "might is right" were the demands of holiness ignored. One of the divine attributes must never be extolled at the expense of another. Grace reigns (i.e. it is regnant, supreme), yet it reigns "through righteousness" (Rom 5:21) and not in defiance of it. As in salvation itself, the wisdom of God is conspicuously exemplified by the wondrous way in which justice and mercy harmonize, so in the securing of the believer, the divine perfections act in perfect consonance.

Are there not many today professing to be Christians whose daily lives differ nothing from thousands of non-professors? They are rarely, if ever, found at the prayer meeting, they have no family worship, they seldom read the Scriptures, they are unwilling to converse on spiritual things, their walk is thoroughly worldly, yet, they are quite sure *they* are bound for heaven. Inquire into the ground of their confidence and they will tell you that so many years ago they accepted Christ as their personal Saviour, and "Once saved always saved" is now their comfort. It is not difficult to anticipate the thoughts of some. True, there are many in Christendom who have never been born again, yet, this in no wise conflicts with the Lord's declaration that none of His sheep shall ever perish. But have we any right to appropriate to ourselves Christ's promise in John 10:28-29 *unless we answer the description* of His sheep in the previous verse, "My sheep *hear* my voice...and they *follow* me" (Joh 10:27)?

The precious truth of divine preservation is designed for the deepening of the Christian's gratitude. It assures him that nothing shall ever separate from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:35-39). It reveals the blessed fact that the power of God is engaged to protect them from evil and deliver them from their foes (Luk 1:69, 71). What a song of thanksgiving this should raise in the hearts of the redeemed! This blessed truth is designed as a divine tonic for our drooping spirits. Fighting the good fight of faith, how often the battle seems to be going against us.

Were it not for God's promises, we might well be in doubt as to the ultimate issue. Living in a hostile world, Satan and his hosts seeking to bring about our destruction, having no might of our own, despair might well fill our hearts were God to leave us entirely to ourselves. But, blessed be His name, He does not, "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and *delivereth* them" (Psa 34:7).

But, like every other truth revealed in Scripture, the divine preservation of the saints is capable of being perverted and "wrested" to men's destruction (2Pe 3:16). Religious hypocrites, empty professors, baptized worldlings, make a wrong use of it, whereby the truth of God is dishonoured. They draw from it a peace and joy to which they are not entitled. They assume, without warrant, that they are saved, and though they have none of the marks of regeneration and bear no spiritual fruit, they persuade themselves that God will carry them safely through to glory. Satan has deceived them into thinking that some years ago they savingly believed in Christ, and, assured that the Bible teaches "None can fall from grace and be lost," they go on in carnal confidence, from which it is to be feared many are never aroused till they awake in hell.

Now, God Himself has *safeguarded* this truth of divine preservation by inseparably linking with it the complementary truth of human perseverance. Nowhere has God promised to preserve anyone while he is following a course of self-will and self-pleasing. It is not in the path of fleshly indulgence and conformity to this world, but in the highway of holiness that the protecting grace of God is to be found. If I drink poison, no praying will deliver me from its deadly effects. If I neglect the means of grace, then my soul will starve. If I wickedly presume upon God's mercy and expect Him to shield me when I deliberately run into the place of temptation, then I shall be justly left to reap as I have sown. "*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed*" (Joh 8:31); "*Give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall*" (2Pe 1:10). "*If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father*" (1Jo 2:24).

It needs to be steadily borne in mind that the Christian is yet *in the place of danger*. It is this which gives force to the *warnings* of Scripture. There are certain danger-signals which the Spirit has set up, and which it is the part of wisdom for us duly to heed. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" (Rom 8:13). This informs us what will be the end should a certain line of conduct be persevered in. "Be not highminded, *but fear*: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee" (Rom 11:20-21). "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal 6:7-8).

It may be objected that such a pressing of the duty of perseverance and such a calling intention to these warnings are quite unnecessary where *real* Christians are

concerned. That all those truly born again *will* persevere, and therefore, it is pointless to *urge* them to do so. Not so did the apostles think and act. “They sent forth Barnabas that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would *cleave unto* the Lord” (Act 11:22-23). And again, “They returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, *and exhorting them to continue* in the faith” (Act 14:21-22).

To sum up, Scripture teaches no mechanical security wherein God deals with men as with sticks and stones. No, it calls upon believers to “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phi 2:12). God preserves His people in a way consistent with His holiness, and in a manner that enforces the discharge of their responsibility, namely, by moving them to *use* the provided means of grace, and *avoid* those things which have a fatal tendency. Christians are “kept by the power of God,” but the very next words tell us *how* He keeps them, “through faith” or “faithfulness” (1Pe 1:5).

WHOLEHEARTED TRUST

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart” (Pro 3:5)

One of the principal differences between the book of Psalms and the book of Proverbs is this—in the former, we hear, for the most part, the saints addressing God, praising and petitioning Him. In the latter, it is God addressing His people, giving counsels for their walk. Though there is not a little in the book of Proverbs which is, in its ultimate scope (veiled) prophecy, yet its first application is of a practical nature, containing divine precepts for the regulation of every branch of our earthly lives. In Proverbs 3:5-6 is found a word which is of great importance and value for our souls. Its weighty language impresses us at once, and the more it is prayerfully pondered, the more will the anointed eye discern the divine wisdom which dictated it. It falls into four parts, to each of which we purpose devoting a separate article.

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart.” As the opening words of Proverbs 3 plainly intimate, the contents of this chapter are addressed directly to the children of God. What, then, is the first implication of our present text? Surely, a very humbling one—that we *need* such an admonition—that we have to be told to, “Trust in the LORD.” One had thought it were as natural for a Christian to trust in

the Lord as it is to breathe. Alas, our experience has shown us otherwise. The sad and awful fact is that we are readier to trust in anyone, yea, in anything, rather than in the living God. That is why we need exhorting, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart.”

But exactly what is meant by, “Trust in the LORD”? The Hebrew verb literally means to “lean upon.” It conveys the idea of one who is conscious of feebleness and so turns and rests upon a stronger one for support. It presupposes confidence in and reliance upon the Lord. To “Trust in the LORD” means to count upon Him in every emergency, to look to Him for the supply of every need, to say with the Psalmist, “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.” To “Trust in the LORD” means to expect confidently the fulfilment of His every promise, in His own good time and way. It means that we cast all our care upon Him, drawing from Him strength day by day and hour by hour, and thus proving the sufficiency of His grace. Thus, to “Trust in the LORD” means for the Christian *to continue* even as he commenced!

When we first really turned to the Lord, conscious of our deep and desperate need, how did we act? We repudiated all confidence in self, abandoned all our own doings, and cast ourselves upon Him as our only hope and confidence. Now, just as we acted when we first came to Him for salvation, so should we daily rely on Him for all needed wisdom, strength, and grace.

But what is meant by trust in the Lord “with all thine heart”? I think three things are chiefly intended. First, it means giving unto God our *undivided* confidence, not looking to any other for help and relief. It was at this point that Judah failed of old. Hear JEHOVAH’S complaint against her, “And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD” (Jer 3:10). A parallel to our text is found in that word, “Wait thou *only* upon God” (Psa 62:5). Second, it means *with child-like simplicity*. You know how a little child trusts. There is no reasoning. He simply takes his parents’ words at their face value, and has implicit confidence that his father will make good what he has said. He dwells not on the difficulties in the way, but expects a fulfilment of what is promised. So it should be with us and our heavenly Father’s words. Third, it means with our *affection* going out to Him. As we read in 1 Corinthians 13:7, love “believeth all things, hopeth all things.” Thus, to trust in the Lord with all our heart is love’s reliance. It is the affections going out to Him in believing dependency and expectation.

It is blessed to ponder a number of examples, recorded in Scripture for our encouragement, of men who did trust in the Lord with all their hearts. Abraham upon Mount Moriah is a case in point. He had received commandment to take his well-beloved son and present him to JEHOVAH as a burnt offering. His response evidenced not only his obedience, but his wholehearted trust or confidence in God. The Lord had said, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Gen 21:12). But how could

that be, if he were slain? Instead of leaning unto his own understanding, he fully trusted in the Lord, and left Him to harmonize His promise with His precepts.

Another illustration equally striking, though perhaps less known, is found in the response made by Hezekiah to the threatening letter he had received from the king of Assyria. A most critical situation confronted him. That heathen monarch aspired to world conquest. One kingdom after another had fallen before him; now he blatantly threatened Israel. What was Hezekiah's response? Did he wring his hands in despair? No. What then? Did he confer with his generals, or set about strengthening his army? No, instead, "Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD" (2Ki 19:14 and read his prayer in verses 15-19).

An urgent crisis, similar the last, confronted Asa. "There came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah" (2Ch 14:9). It is easy to read this, but endeavour to visualize that vast hostile force. What was the King's response? This, "And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we *rest on thee*, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee" (2Ch 14:11). *That* illustrates and exemplifies our text.

Let us seek now to apply this divine admonition to the details of our daily lives, particularly to the mysteries of providence therein. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous" (Psa 34:19), and some of them are very trying and painful to the flesh. Oftentimes, they bring us to wit's-end corner. Perhaps our experience is like that of the disciples on the storm-tossed sea. It is dark and the wind is contrary to us. Even so, the call comes, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart" (Pro 3:5). Remember that the winds and the waves obey *His will*.

Or possibly, our circumstances resemble those of Israel at the Red Sea. The enemy threatens at our rear and before us stands a cold and unfriendly ocean. There seems no way of escape. Even so, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart." Or the lot of some Christian reader may be that of the widow to whom God's prophet was sent—the barrel of meal is almost empty, your circumstances are critical to the last degree, and your heart's faint within you.

What is such a one to do? Why, turn to the sure promise of God, or, better still, look up to the Promiser Himself. "*Hitherto* hath the LORD helped us" (1Sa 17:12)—then will He fail them now? "*Remember* all the way which the LORD thy God led thee" (Deu 8:2)—let the memory of past mercies and deliverances reassure you now. God is still the same. Is it not written, "He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee" (Job 5:19)? True, the

afflictions of the righteous are many, yet the very verse which affirms this adds, “but the LORD delivereth him out of them all” (Psa 34:19).

Possibly some reader is saying, “But I am growing old and feeble. Soon I shall no longer be able to work. Then what will become of me?” To you also the word is, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart.” God has placed on record a special promise for your comfort, “And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you” (Isa 46:4). Then can you not fully trust Him?

Perhaps another is thinking, “It is the prospect of *tomorrow* which renders me so uneasy and fearful. I know that God says ‘Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof’ (Mat 6:34), but I cannot help looking forward and anticipating the pressing emergency ahead of me.” Very well, if you must look forward, look upward, too. *God* is on the throne, and He will not vacate it when the morrow arrives! Is it not written, “My God *shall* supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phi 4:19)? That covers the future. Then, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart.” A very large part of this consists in calmly and confidently counting upon God *to continue* supplying our every need.

A blessed illustration of wholehearted trust, fully authenticated, came before us in a book which we recently read. Some years ago, in Germany, there was a daughter of God who was very poor in this world’s goods. So poor that she literally lived from hand to mouth, yet uncomplainingly, and with confidence in the Lord. One afternoon, several Christian friends called to see her. They, too, were very poor, and much fatigued from the journey, and looked in sore need of some refreshment. But in this sister’s cupboard was neither bread nor coffee. It was empty. She lifted up her heart unto Him from whom every good and every perfect gift comes, and felt sure that her fervent desire to entertain, not angels, but some of His children, was granted. She filled the kettle with water and put it on the fire, and presently it began to boil. The sister silently thanked the Lord for granting her request, and laid the table, though nothing was in sight. But still the hand of God was withheld, for, “Patience must have her perfect work” (Jam 1:4). Again, she lifted up her heart to God, and said, “Lord, the kettle is boiling!” Just then came a knock at the door, and other friends, who knew nothing of the urgency of her case, appeared with baskets on their arms. Soon the table was filled with good things. God never disappoints real faith in *Him*!

APRIL

IDENTIFICATION OF THE GODLY

“My yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Mat 11:30). Probably there is no passage in the New Testament more familiar to churchgoers than the one (Mat 11:28-30) of which our quotation is the final clause. Yet, there is scarcely any other that has been so sadly mangled by unqualified novices and unfaithful preachers. The invitation and promise with which it opens have been divorced from the conditions by which they are qualified, so that an entirely inadequate, in fact a false, apprehension of the same has been conveyed of what our Lord there taught. That which is required from those desiring rest of soul—namely, submission to the authority of Christ and the following of His example—is omitted. They emphasize His *gift*, but are silent upon *the terms* upon which He bestows it. Far better instructed thereon than so many of our modern evangelists was good old Matthew Henry (1662-1714). Outlining the whole passage, that helpful commentator pointed out:

“We are here invited to Christ as our Priest, Prince, and Prophet, to be saved, and, *in order to that*, to be ruled and taught by Him. First, we must come to Christ as our Rest and repose ourselves in Him. Second, we must come to Him as our Ruler, and submit ourselves in Him, ‘Take my yoke upon you.’ This must go along with the former, for Christ is exalted to be both a Prince and a Saviour (Act 5:31), ‘a priest upon his throne’ (Zec 6:13). The *rest* He promises is a release from the drudgery of sin, not from the service of God. Christ has a yoke for our necks, as well as a crown for our heads, and this yoke He expects [better, “requires”] we should take upon us and draw in. Third, we must come to Him as our Teacher, and set ourselves to learn of Him. We must learn of Him to be ‘meek and lowly,’ to mortify our pride and passion, which render us so unlike to Him. We must so learn of Christ as to learn Christ (Eph 4:20), for He is both Teacher and Lesson, Guide and Way.”

“My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” This is not a poetic hyperbole, but the language of truth and soberness, and, therefore, is not to be denied or doubted. The Saviour was there drawing a blessed contrast with the scribes and Pharisees, of whom He said, “For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers” (Mat 23:4). In order to gratify a domineering spirit, they usurped authority, and, by their inventions and traditions, removed liberties which God allowed, and imposed irksome injunctions which He had never enjoined. They demanded a greater strictness in the observing of the ceremonial law than the Lord did, obtruding severe tasks (under pain of heavy penalties), but offering no assistance unto those who submitted to their dictates. They were the false shepherds who ruled “with force and with cruelty” (Eze 34:4). Such has ever characterized a carnal priesthood. Now, in sharp and blessed opposition thereto, the great High Priest of God’s people presents a yoke which is easy and a burden that is light, and places His everlasting arms beneath those who voluntarily take and wear the same.

Christ is no Egyptian taskmaster, requiring men to make bricks without straw, but “a merciful and faithful high priest” (Heb 2:17), One who can be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (4:15). Therefore, it is not fetters and chains which He imposes upon His followers, but a yoke that is pleasant and a burden that is light. As others before us have pointed out, the Greek word rendered “easy” also signifies “good and gracious.” So far from Christ’s yoke being galling and painful, to the yielding neck it is benign and delightful. It is designed not for our injury, but for our benefit. The first reference in His “my yoke” and “my burden” is unto the one that Christ Himself wore and bore, and which He declared to be easy and light. And what did they consist of? Why, doing the Father’s will, being about His Father’s business. In that will He delighted (Psa 40:8), and to do that business was what had brought Him down from heaven to earth (Luk 2:49). Since His followers are predestinated to be conformed unto His image, He requires that they should wear the yoke which He sets before them. Christ gives rest not *in* sin and unlawful pleasures, but *from* them, by engaging the heart with something infinitely better. It is rest, not in our lusts, but in Himself.

First, the Lord says, “Take my yoke upon you” (Mat 11:29). To take His yoke upon us is to enlist under His banner, to make a public profession of His Gospel, to surrender to His lordship. To learn of Him is to take our place at His feet as little children to be instructed by Him. It is to submit ourselves wholly to His will, to obey His precepts, and to pattern our lives after His example. Those are the conditions which must be fulfilled by us if we are to obtain rest unto our souls. Then, second, He assures us “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” That is the inducement to comply with His terms. By those words, each professing Christian reader should honestly and seriously examine himself. They afford a sure criterion by which we may test ourselves and ascertain whether or not we have

really taken His yoke upon us. Each one may identify himself by his answers to these questions—Am I finding the yoke I am wearing easy or difficult? Is the burden I am carrying light or heavy?

As John Newton (1725-1807) declared, “This verse alone, if seriously attended to, might convince multitudes that, though they bear the name of Christians and are found among the Lord’s worshipping people, they are as yet entire strangers to the religion of the Gospel. Can it be supposed that our Lord would give a false character of His yoke? If not, how can any dream that they are His followers while they account a life of communion with God and entire devotedness to His service to be dull and burdensome? Those, however, who have made the happy trial find it to be such a burden as wings are to a bird. Far from complaining of it, they are convinced that there is no real pleasure attainable in any other way.” Christ’s commandments are not, in themselves, “grievous” (1Jo 5:3), but are “holy, just, and good” (Rom 7:12). They are given in love, and are to be fulfilled by love. “*In keeping of them there is great reward*” (Psa 19:11). *For* the keeping of them, full assistance is obtainable from Him if we do but seek the same. It is the way of transgressors that is “hard” (Pro 13:15), but strong consolation is to be found in the way of duty, and in Christ’s presence there is fullness of joy.

Wisdom’s ways “are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Pro 3:17). It must be so, for every part is lighted from above, the whole path is strewn with precious promises, each step is heavenward. The only happiness worth seeking is to be found therein. Yes, it must be so, for there is comfort and contentment in walking with God. If, then, the way along which the reader is journeying be unpleasant, he is a stranger to Wisdom’s ways and is a fool. Those ways are pleasant only to Wisdom’s children. The yoke of Christ is irksome and distasteful to the unregenerate, for it makes directly against the motions of the carnal nature. The service of Christ is veritable drudgery to those who are in love with the world and who find their delight in gratifying the lusts of the flesh. To the self-willed and self-seeking, the commandments of the Lord cannot but be offensive, for they require the denying of self and the pursuit and cultivation of personal holiness. But to one whose heart has been captivated by Christ, to be under His yoke is delectable. If he comes to Him daily to be renewed in the inner man, yields himself afresh to His rule, sits at His feet to be taught of Him the loveliness of meekness and lowliness, enjoys communion with Him, then, His will is “good and acceptable” (Rom 12:2) to him.

“And my burden is light” (Mat 11:30). It is so to those who “learn of him” (Eph 4:20). No burden is heavy if it is shouldered *by love*. “Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her” (Gen 29:20)! Is it a burden for a father to work and provide for his wife and children? Not if he has real affection for them. Is it a burden for a fond mother to sit through the night tending her little one when it is sick? So far from it, she refuses to entrust the

task unto another. Where there be a genuine desire to please Christ, the wheels of duty run smoothly. Wisdom's children find their burden light because they have the assurance that their efforts are acceptable to Christ—not for any excellence in their performances, but because they have been done from a desire to glorify Him. What is heavy to flesh and blood is light to faith and grace, and because it has to be borne but for a moment (2Co 4:17). The burden is light just in proportion as we lay aside every weight (Heb 12:1), and because He gives strength to bear it.

None can adequately describe the radical contrast there is between the bondage and misery of the service of sin and the liberty and peace of practical holiness. But anyone, who has personally experienced both, need have no difficulty in determining whether he be out of Christ or yoked to Him. If you have a peace which passes understanding and a joy which the world knows nothing of, you are a godly person. If despite both inward and outward opposition, you find obedience to Christ desirable and agreeable, then, His Spirit must indwell you, and the more you grow in grace, the easier His yoke and the lighter His burden.

EXPOSITION OF JOHN'S FIRST EPISTLE

40. Amazing Grace (3:1)

*“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us,
that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the
world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”*

Having stated that “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him” (2:29)—which means, in a word, that the performing of good works is one of the sure evidences of the new birth—the apostle's mind was carried back to the *originating cause*, namely, the eternal love of the Father. The contemplation thereof moved him to break forth into adoring and joyous celebration of the same. But human language is entirely inadequate to express and describe the divine acts that produce our salvation, and great care needs

to be taken lest we either carnalize⁵ or unduly restrict the terms that are employed in connection therewith. We agree with John Calvin (1509-1564) that “when he says love has bestowed, he means that it is from mere bounty and benevolence that God makes us His children...Love, then, is declared here to be gratuitous. There is, indeed, an impropriety in the language, but the apostle preferred speaking thus rather than not to express that the more abundantly God’s goodness has been manifested toward us, the greater are our obligations to Him.” Thus by “love” here we understand the divine benignity or His amazing grace.

The chapter division at this point is apt to mislead, detaching in our minds that which is here said from what immediately precedes: 3:1 is closely connected with 2:29. The thought of sonship is carried forward, with the design of emphasizing the blessedness of such a high dignity and honour bestowed. That is first denoted by the call to “behold” it, and then by considering the “manner” of the same. So far from regarding 3:1 as the commencement of a new subject, the perspicuous Calvin considered that it furnished the second (implied) argument in proving that faith is necessarily connected with a holy and pure life. “The first argument is that we are spiritually begotten after the likeness of Christ; it hence follows that no one is born of Him except he who lives righteously. The second argument is from the dignity and excellence of our calling, for it was no common honour he says that the heavenly Father bestowed upon us when He adopted us as His children. This being so great a favour, the desire for purity ought to be kindled in us, so as to be conformed to His image. Nor, indeed, can it be otherwise, but that he who acknowledges himself to be one of God’s children purifies himself. And to make this exhortation more forceful, he amplifies the favour of God.”

The apostle was overwhelmed with astonishment as he contemplated the amazing grace that conferred such honour and felicity upon worms of the earth, as to call them into the relation of sons. Whether he viewed the ineffable greatness and elevation of the Father, the insignificance and degradation of the subjects, the uniqueness and inestimable value of the blessing bestowed, or the manner and marvel of its communication, he was “lost to wonder, love, and praise.” That the Father should ever deign⁶ to notice us at all is an act of infinite condescension on His part: that He should so highly distinguish us as to set His heart upon us, choose in Christ, redeem and regenerate lifelong rebels against Him, completely passes knowledge, and so far exceeds human comprehension as to defy expression by tongue or pen. Such a prodigy is without parallel, not only on earth but in heaven also; as Thomas Scott (1747-1821) rightly said, it is “incapable of being illustrated by any comparison”—any attempt to do so beclouds its uniqueness and is only a darkening of counsel by mere words. Rather let us earnestly seek grace to evince

⁵ **carnalize** – to limit to man’s experience; to derive from human reasoning.

⁶ **deign** – stoop down to us; lower oneself.

our gratitude thereat, and endeavour to walk worthy of such a calling by a humble and obedient walk.

Our text opens with a call to attention, for while the word “*behold*” here is a word of adoring wonderment, an exclamation of astonishment at such a display of grace, yet it is much more than a bare interjection. It is a verb summoning to action. Thomas Manton (1620-1677), with his customary thoroughness, showed that there is a threefold “behold” in Scripture, and that each of them is applicable in this place. *First*, the behold of demonstration, to denote the reality of the object, as in “Behold your king” (Joh 19:14)—there He is before your very eyes, said Pilate unto the Jews. When prefixed to a doctrinal statement, it avers the certainty of it, as in “Lo [behold] this, we have searched it, so it *is*; hear it, and know thou *it* for thy good” (Job 5:27). *Second*, there is the behold of admiration, which is designed to awaken our drowsy minds when something extraordinary is presented to our attention, challenging our most serious thoughts, as in “Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow” (Lam 1:12). *Third*, the behold of gratulation,⁷ rejoicing and delighting ourselves in the privilege, as in “Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” (Psa 121:4)—take comfort therefrom.

Now each of those senses is to be included here, “*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.*” Behold it with faith and confidence. Though so astonishing and mysterious, entertain not the least doubt about it, for it is certified by a “Thus saith the Lord.” Behold it with adoring gratitude. It is of vast importance and inestimable value, so give the same your most care careful and prayerful attention. Ponder it deeply, meditate much thereon, that the Father Himself has laid hold of depraved and hell-deserving sinners and made them the brethren of His dear Son. This too is “the Lord’s doing: it is marvelous in our eyes” (Mat 21:42). Behold it with exultation and jubilation, that so blessed a privilege and high a dignity is yours as to be made the children of God, the high favourites of heaven, more closely related to God than the holy angels. How that should bow us in wonderment and worship before the throne of grace! What comfort and consolation should it afford us amid the trials and tribulations of this life! How it should quicken our thankfulness and draw out our affections Godward—the chief motives and springs of Gospel obedience. How it should make us contented with our present portion; if you be a child of God, it matters little what your earthly possessions amount to.

This word “behold” is used all through Scripture on particular and special occasions. When the Lord God made mention of the incarnation and mission of the Messiah, He said, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel”; and again, “Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him...Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong *hand*, and his arm shall rule for him” (Isa 7:14; 40:10). When the Father would have

⁷ **gratulation** – expression of joy or gratification at the sight of something.

us fix our hearts and minds on the person of His co-equal Son, He says, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth” (Isa 42:1). When His forerunner introduced Him to the Jews he cried, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Joh 1:29). During His earthly ministry, Christ prefaced many of His weightiest utterances with a “behold!” (Mat 12:42; 23:38; 25:6, etc.). After His ascension the Lord Jesus declared, “Behold, I come quickly” (Rev 22:7, 12). So that this word “behold” is used in the sacred page by the Father, by the Son, by the Holy Spirit, by the prophets, and by the apostles as introductory to the most blessed and momentous subjects revealed and recorded therein. John would have his little children contemplate this glorious truth of the Father’s love with reverence and awe, for he would stir up their pure minds to holy wonderment and admiration. He would have them engage their best thoughts thereon to the ravishing of their souls.

“*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.*” The “behold” is intensified by the words immediately following. It is not simply take notice of and adore the love of the Father, but particularly the *sort of love* that is here in view, the wonderful expression thereof. The question has been raised as to whether the reference be to the *kind* or *degree* of His love. Personally, we consider that both ideas are included: its uniqueness and its greatness. According to its usage in the New Testament this expression is a contrastive one. When Gabriel addressed the virgin Mary as “thou that art highly favoured...blessed art thou among women,” she “cast in her mind *what manner of* salutation this should be” (Luk 1:28-29)—she was mystified by such an unprecedented experience. When the Saviour calmed the raging tempest with a word of command, His disciples marveled, saying, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!” (Mat 8:27); they have witnessed the supernatural. “What manner of persons you ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2Pe 3:11), which means (in contrast with the wicked) what paragons of virtue you should be—signifying not only the kind but also the degree of piety which God requires from us.

In view of the above examples (to which Luke 7:39 and Mark 13:1 may be added), “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us” imports: Consider and adore the nature and extent, the marvel and magnitude, the uniqueness and superlative excellence of that love. It is in marked contrast, both in character and in greatness, with all other. It is incomparable, transcendent, infinite. Its cause is inexplicable; its effects are most glorious. Perhaps this is one reason why the divine benignity is here termed His *love*, rather than His *grace*. Love is especially sensitive: “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). Thomas Goodwin⁸ pointed out, “Of all things in God

⁸ **Thomas Goodwin** (1600-1680) – born in Norfolk and educated at Cambridge, Goodwin became vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Cambridge. He became a Congregationalist in London in 1634. In 1639 persecution

or man, love desires to have itself considered and taken notice of, as much as wisdom, and power, or any other thing; therefore he calls on them to behold *God's* love. Above all, love desires notice taken by the parties beloved, to whom it is in special directed unto more than any other, for the emphasis lies in the speciality of it; therefore he would not have them run out in general thoughts admiring God's love to mankind and giving His Son, but as having bestowed Him upon us," His dear children.

Our present verse is one of many which illustrates the importance of observing the connection between a statement and the setting in which it occurs—failure to take into account the context conveys a wrong idea of its scope, that which is *qualified* being taken in an *unlimited* sense. Such is the case here; a wrong use has been made of it. It is appealed to by those who believe in what is termed "the universal Fatherhood of God"—i.e., that all men are spiritually God's children. Apart from any other consideration, the principles of honest exegesis exclude such an interpretation of this sentence. The question, "Who are the 'us' upon whom the Father has bestowed His love?" requires answer. Obviously it is those whom the apostle is addressing. And who are they? 2:29 tells us plainly: they are those that give unmistakable evidence of being born of Christ by being doers of righteousness, and the only ones of whom that is the case are those who have received from Him the Holy Spirit (verse 27). Thus the "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us" has no reference whatever to the unregenerate, nor is any individual warranted in regarding God as his heavenly Father unless he be walking in newness of life and bears His moral image.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." John would have us look not only to the fountain-head or spring of our blessings, attentively [to] consider the matchless mercy shown us, but he would engage our hearts with that which has been communicated to us personally. John is not here calling upon the saints to believe the love wherewith God has loved them, nor is he bidding them receive the knowledge of it into their minds that they might rejoice over the same in their hearts. Rather is he exhorting them to contemplate that love in its grand original, in its freeness and sovereignty, in its nature and manner, in its gifts and blessedness; that it was actually bestowed upon them—that the Father had not only conceived love toward them, and willed it unto them, but that He had really and truly imparted it to them. That statement is almost parallel with "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom 5:5). That is what the "behold" directs our attention unto: to ponder and adore that love

drove him to Holland, where he pastored a church at Arnheim. He returned to London as a member of the Westminster Assembly and leader of the Dissenting Brethren in it. In 1650 he was appointed president of Magdalen College, Oxford. He was a prominent member of the Savoy Assembly in 1658.

not abstractly but concretely; that is, not simply as it exists within the bosom of Deity, but in its outward manifestation, its actual bestowment upon us.

Love

We are invited to look upon and admire the Father's love in its infinite condescension, in its gratuitous character, in its blessed application. It is indeed a great wonder that He preserves in being such worthless wretches, supplying our temporal needs, and having any love for us. It is yet more wonderful that His love should be actually engaged toward us. But it is surely most wonderful of all that His love should be communicated to us—given freely, disinterestedly,⁹ abundantly. No other cause can be assigned why He should have set His heart upon them, other than His own determination: “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace” (Eph 1:5-6). The good pleasure of the divine will is the originating cause; the manifestation of divine grace the end and issue of all. *That* love is not one merely of pity and compassion, but of delight and complacency: as it is written, “The LORD thy God in the midst of thee *is* mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing” (Zep 3:17). To take that into our minds and have it realized in our hearts, to live in the apprehension thereof, is to have real communion with the Father in all the blessedness of His love.

Consider the inestimable privilege which is here specified: “*that we should be called the sons of God.*” The word “called” does not here refer to God's making us His children by an effectual or inward call from death unto life, but rather the acknowledging of us to be His children. It is not the act of regeneration that is in view, but the fact of our sonship that is affirmed. “In Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Gen 21:12) means, The children of Isaac shall be regarded and recognized as thy seed. Yea, of Christ Himself after the flesh, it was said to Mary, “that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luk 1:35), which obviously signifies *shall be acknowledged as such*, and not made so. Thus it is here: the Father owning the ones born of Christ, [as] mentioned in the previous verse. When the Father calls us His sons, it is not that He bestows the title upon us, but *avers* that relationship; as in Romans 9:26, where the apostle quotes from Hosea, “And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God,” that is, God recognizes none as His children but those born of His Spirit and conformed to the image of His Son. And again, “If thou...call the Sabbath a delight” (Isa 58:13), [i.e.,] regard and treat it as such.

⁹ **disinterestedly** – without expectation for personal gain.

This is what we are called upon to behold: the fathomless love of the Father in owning us not merely as His subjects or servants, but as His sons. It is a particular and peculiar relationship that pertains to the regenerate, for it is not a blessing that is common to all men. It originates in the Father's love. It is based upon our union with Christ, our being born of Him. To be a child of God is to be an heir of glory (Rom 8:17), and to be regarded as such by the Father is a confirmation of it. It is a very high honour indeed to sustain this relationship, far, far greater than any which this world can bestow. David asked, "Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son in law?" (1Sa 18:23); then what is it to be acknowledged as a son of the King of kings! "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee" (Isa 43:4) is His own blessed testimony. What weight should that have with us! What assurance it should convey to our minds! What wonderment it should evoke! Does it not move each of us to admit with the returning prodigal, I am not worthy "to be called thy son" (Luk 15:19)? How it should influence our daily lives: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also loved us" (Eph 5:1-2).

The qualities of the Father's love

We must not conclude this chapter without pointing out the principal qualities of the Father's love. It was *spontaneous*. Nothing outside God Himself moved Him to it. There was nothing in us to attract it, but everything to the contrary (Eze 16:5-6). It was *eternal* (Jer 31:3), for God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and entered into an everlasting covenant of grace with Him on our behalf. It was *sovereign, selective, and discriminating*, for He loves not all; it is peculiar to the elect—"Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that thou bearest unto *thy people*" (Psa 106:4). It is *sacrificial*, for God "spared not his own Son" but delivered Him up to the cross in order that sinners might be saved (Rom 8:32). Christ shed not His blood in order to induce God to love His people; it was because God loved them that He provided such a costly offering for them. It is *infinite*. There is a depth to it that none can fathom, a height that none can reach, a length and breadth that cannot be measured. It is *invincible*. "Put not your trust in princes" said the Psalmist, for they will fail you; but God's love is reliable and cannot be thwarted. It is *immutable*, knowing no change (Mal 3:6), being without variableness or shadow of turning. Truly His love is *unique*.

How the Father's love is exercised

Equally blessed is it to observe how His love is exercised. Behold His *foreordaining* love: "In love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children"

(Eph 1:4-5). Deuteronomy 7:7-8 shows that election is the fruit of God's love; likewise does 2 Thessalonians 2:13 teach us. Behold God's *redeeming* love: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1Jo 4:9-10). Behold His *regenerating* love: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph 2:4-5). Behold His *drawing* love: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer 31:3), sweetly wooing us unto Himself. Behold His *communicating* love: "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5). Behold His *comforting* love: "even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation" (2Th 2:16). Behold His *preserving* love: "nothing does or can separate us from it" (Rom 8:38-39). Thus its manner is as matchless as its nature.

A brief word now on the present modification of our enjoyment of God's love. "*Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*" Though so greatly honoured by the Father, that will not bring you into favour with those who are strangers to Him. No matter how lavish He be in the display of His love toward us, the unregenerate will not value us on that account. The natural man is devoid of spiritual discernment, and perceives not that the saints are the excellent of the earth (Psa 16:3), the blessed ones—rather does he regard them as fools and fanatics who are turning their backs on the happiness of life.

But so far from stumbling the Christian, or even discouraging him, it is just what he should expect. Nor will this disesteem be only from the openly godless: it is from professors that the most cruel treatment will come. It was the religious element that persecuted Christ! They perceived not His glory, though it shone constantly before them in His character and conduct, His ministry and miracles; but they were blind, seeing in Him *no* beauty. Sufficient for the disciple to be as his Master: to be unknown, despised, opposed, is part of our conformity to Him (Rom 8:29).

The excellency of our sonship is not to be measured by the world's judgment, for its opinion is worthless. Sufficient for the believer to be assured that his Father loves him, that he has His approbation. Suffer not the slights of godless professors to dim your joy in Him.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

92. A Type of Christ

Throughout this lengthy series, one of our chief objects has been to show that the book of Joshua is very much more than an interesting and important history. That it is not only rich in spiritual value and moral instruction, but that it also contains much that anticipated and illustrated truth which is set forth more formally and doctrinally in the New Testament. While the later Scriptures are needed to explain not a little that is found in its earlier pages, they, in turn, often serve to throw light upon the other. For instance, if on the one hand, the Gospels and Epistles are required to interpret for us the wonderful prophecy of Isaiah 53—on the other hand, what a wealth of meaning we discover there to be in those words, “Christ our *passover* is sacrificed for us” (1Co 5:7), when pondered in the light of Exodus 12! The perfections of God are exhibited in the complete harmony which ever exists between His works and His Word, for from the beginning, He so ordered His dealings with men and so shaped the experiences of His people as to adumbrate future events of far greater magnitude.

As the opening words of the Epistle to the Hebrews state, it pleased God to employ quite a variety of methods and means in communicating to us the Holy Scriptures. Among the “divers manners,” wherein He spoke in time past, were dark parables and mysterious prophecies, as well as plain precepts and simple promises. Sometimes, the language was literal, at others, highly poetical. That divine revelation did not always come in narrative form. Much teaching during the old economy was by type and symbol. The Gospel was principally set forth by means of pictorial representations and religious ceremonies. The whole of the Mosaic ritual possessed an occult significance, those ancient institutions being invested with a prophetic meaning, forecasting things to come. The tabernacle, both as a whole and in all its parts, spoke of Christ. The Aaronic priesthood and its various sacrifices proclaimed an evangelical message, pointing forward to the great High Priest and His perfect sacrifice. If prophecy be “history written beforehand,” with equal truth can it be said that sacred history was made to foreshadow the grand scheme of redemption—while recording actual events, those events presaged future blessings.

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples [or “types”]; and they are written for our admonition” (1Co 10:11). The reference is to the experiences of Israel in the wilderness. The things which are there related were real historical

incidents, and yet, at the same time, were spiritual omens, and it is in this latter respect that they are of chief interest and value for us today. In addition to all the instruction through the symbolical and ritualistic institutions of Judaism, it pleased God to prepare the minds of His people for the incarnation and advent of His blessed Son to this earth by making many of the outstanding characters of the Old Testament to prefigure His person and work, and to adumbrate some of the principal relations which He was to sustain. Adam prefigured His federal headship (Rom 5:13), Moses His prophetic office (Deu 18:18), Melchizedek His priesthood (Psa 110:4), David His kingship (Rev 5:5). As there is a fullness in Christ, which all the names and titles given in Scripture are insufficient to set forth, neither can all the personal types of Him adequately display the One who is “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16). But just as each designation emphasizes some particular perfection, so Abel, Isaac, Samuel, Jonah, etc., illustrated one feature or another in His character or career.

The same remarks hold good concerning the many emblems taken from nature to represent Him. And how varied and numerous they are! He is presented before us under the figures of light and life, of bread and water, as the door and the way, as shepherd and true vine—but the whole universe contains not that which is sufficient to portray the manifold glories of Christ. Every perfection is found in Him, fully developed, symmetrically proportioned. In Abraham, we see the activities of faith, in Moses, the spirit of meekness, in Caleb, whole-hearted devotion, in Daniel, uncompromising fidelity, in John, the apostle of love. But, in the Lord Jesus every grace is found. Utterly impossible is it, then, for finite creatures fully to reflect the excellencies of One who is infinite. At most, but a few could be exhibited by them, and those, very imperfectly. Nevertheless, they did, in their measure, foreshadow the Substance. Yet, they require to be interpreted in careful accord with the general Analogy of Faith. The light is a similitude of Christ (Joh 8:12), yet only in certain respects, for He does not wane. In like manner, though at many points there are unmistakable parallels between their lives, not everything recorded of the type was reproduced in the Antitype. The following are some of the ways in which Joshua foreshadowed Christ.

1. He was called of God for a stupendous undertaking, “For he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inhabit the land (Deu 3:28), as Christ also vanquishes all their enemies, and conducts the Church to heaven.
2. He was to serve as a shepherd to Israel (Num 27:15-18, and cf. Joh 10:3).
3. Morally, he was well qualified for the task, being one of two who “wholly followed the LORD” (Num 32:12), as Christ could say, “I do always those things that please him” (Joh 8:29).
4. God declared he should be eminently successful. “As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee” (Jos 1:5)—compare John 6:37-39.

5. His very name at once serves to identify him as a type. Originally, it was “Oshua” or “Hosea,” which signifies “salvation.” But later, he was called “Jehoshua” or “Joshua,” that is “JEHOVAH’s salvation” (Num 13:16), which, through the Greek, is precisely the same as the precious and more familiar name “Jesus,” as the marginal rendering of Acts 7:45 and Hebrews 4:8 shows. 6. That blessed name is “above every name” (Phi 2:9), and one of the numerous ways in which God has caused its superlative excellency to be demonstrated is by placing it at the head of the first book in Scripture bearing a personal title—as the very first name mentioned in the New Testament is that of “Jesus Christ”! In all things, He has the pre-eminence. 7. The occasion when our hero was distinguished by a change of name is noteworthy, namely, as he was on the point of first entering the land of Canaan (Num 13:8, 16), as the name by which the incarnate Son was to be called was given Him just before He appeared on the earth (Mat 1:21). 8. He was the subject of prediction, for the promises of Exodus 23:20-23 received a germinal fulfilment in Joshua, as it also had its terminal accomplishment in Christ (see Vol. 24, p. 225 of the *Studies*, October 1945).

9. Of the Messiah, it was foretold, “Out of Egypt have I called my son” (Mat 2:15), and in striking accord therewith, Joshua was born and reared in Egypt, and, with the sole exception of Caleb, he was the only adult Israelite in the great exodus who survived the forty years’ wandering in the wilderness, and actually entered Canaan. 10. It is blessed to find that from first to last, he is seen as the successful saviour or deliverer of the people. The initial reference to him is in Exodus 17. It was on the occasion when Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim, “Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek” (Exo 17:9). From that brief statement, we gather that he had already attracted the notice of Moses as a man of valour and as one competent to command others. Nor were his expectations disappointed, “And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword” (Exo 17:13). 11. Therein, he prefigured Christ as “the captain” of our salvation (Heb 2:10). 12. From the beginning, he appears as a successful warrior vanquishing the foes of the Lord. In type, Moses—as in the antitype, God—could say, “I have laid help upon one that is mighty” (Psa 89:19). 13. It is remarkable that this first exploit of our hero should be expressly recorded as a “memorial” (Exo 17:14)—just as Christ’s first miracle was (Joh 2:11). 14. We may also see here yet another line in the typical picture. The help of Christ is indispensable in subduing the flesh—of which Amalek is the figure (Exo 17:16).

The next reference to him is found in Exodus 24:13. There we learn that “Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God.” Thus, at that early stage in his career, Joshua was the “minister” of Moses, the personal attendant of that eminent man of God. While there in the mount, the faith, patience, and fidelity of Joshua were put to a severe and protracted trial, for he was left alone during the whole time that Moses was in the presence of JEHOVAH. 15. Thus was

he tempted or *tested* for “forty days and forty nights” (Exo 24:18 and cf. Mat 4:2!). In marked contrast with the unbelief and impatience of Aaron and the people in the camp below, Joshua trustfully and perseveringly awaited the return of his master. Thereby was he proved and manifested to be “a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master’s use” (2Ti 2:21)—of conducting Israel into their inheritance. Proof that Joshua had remained in the mount during those forty days and nights is supplied by Exodus 32:15-18, for when Moses descended from the mount, Joshua was with him. But, let us now take a closer look at the several relations which Joshua sustained to Moses.

That there was an intimate connection between them is clear from the opening words of the book which bears his name, for there we are told that he was “Moses’ minister” (Jos 1:1). 16. Thus, Joshua is not set over against Moses as his antagonist, but rather as his attender and supporter. Equally so, it is a serious mistake to regard the Law and the Gospel as being mutual enemies. The Son of God came here to “magnify the law, and make in honourable” (Isa 42:21 and cf. Rom 8:3-4). And He did so by fulfilling it (Mat 5:17)—by rendering perfect obedience to its precepts and enduring its full penalty on behalf of His sinful people. As Joshua was the minister of Moses, so Christ was “made under the law” (Gal 4:4)! But more, it is very plain from the book of Deuteronomy that the mission of Joshua was to *complement* that of Moses—to bring to a successful issue that which the former began. The one led Israel out of Egypt and through their wilderness journeyings. The other conducted them safely through the Jordan into the promised land. Thus, as the Law-giver is more excellent than the Law, Joshua is greater than Moses.

How striking it is that Joshua is presented in this twofold character, as both subservient and yet superior unto Moses, as taking orders from him (Exo 17:9) and then displacing him (Jos 1:1-2)! How the wonderful accuracy of the type appears therein! But there is yet a closer link between them. The commission Joshua received was, “Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth” (Jos 1:7-8). Joshua was to be guided and governed wholly by the written Word, which was something quite unprecedented. No man before Joshua had received orders from God to regulate all his conduct by the words of a book—Abraham, like Moses, received his instructions from the mouth of the Lord, but Joshua is peculiarly *the man of the Book*. 17. Thus, He accurately portrayed Him who declared, “In the volume of the book it is written of me” (Psa 40:7), and who lived by every word that proceeded out the mouth of God (Mat 4:4).

Numbers 27:18-22 records his ordination to be Israel’s leader, as Christ is in Matthew 3:13-17 and John 1:29-34. 19. His enduement—“Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him” (Deu

34:9), and “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power” (Act 10:38). 20. Joshua is to be regarded chiefly in his *official* character. “Arise, go over to this Jordan, *thou*, and all this *people*, unto the land which I do give to them” (Jos 1:2). So it was as the Head of the Church that Christ acted and transacted (Eph 1:22-23). 21. He was divinely assured that “There shall not any man be able to stand before thee” (Jos 1:5), which was gloriously fulfilled in the Antitype (Joh 18:6; Psa 110:1). 22. “Unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers” (Jos 1:6). So Christ is the Giver of rest (Mat 11:28). 23. At the same time was made good the word, “He shall cause Israel to inherit” (Deu 1:38 and cf. Eph 1:11). 24. He was divinely commissioned. “Have not I commanded thee?” (Jos 1:9). “I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment” (Joh 12:49).

25. Nevertheless, he was invested with full authority, so that he “commanded the officers of the people” (Jos 1:10). And Christ “taught them as one having authority” (Mat 7:29) and issued His commandments (Mat 28:20). 26. His lordship was publicly owned. “They answered Joshua, saying: All that thou commandest us we will do” (Jos 1:16). “His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (Joh 2:5). 27. Repeatedly we are told that “Joshua rose early in the morning” (Jos 3:1; 6:12), which showed that his heart was in his work and that he diligently applied himself to the same, as did the Antitype (Mar 1:35; Luk 4:42). 28. He enforced the Scriptures. “Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you” (Jos 1:13 and cf. Mar 7:10, etc.). 29. Disobedience to him was fatal. “Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment...shall be put to death” (Jos 1:18 and cf. Joh 3:36; 12:48). 30. He taught the truth. “Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God” (Jos 3:9 and see Luk 4:17-21; 24:27).

31. “Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel” (Jos 4:4). “Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority” (Luk 9:1). 32. “On that day the LORD magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel” (Jos 4:14). That was at the Jordan, when he was publicly authenticated unto his great mission. How very striking to note that the next thing recorded of him was his issuing commandments to the priests (Jos 4:16-17). So after God magnified Christ at the Jordan, we get the sermon on the mount, with its repeated, “I say unto you” (Mat 5-7). 33. In reporting favourably of Canaan. “The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land” (Num 14:7). Joshua was virtually saying, “In my Father’s house are many mansions,” and “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Joh 14:2; Luk 12:32). 34. He was threatened by stoning (Num 14:10 and cf. Joh 8:59).

35. How striking it is to observe that Joshua instituted two “memorials” (Jos 4:8-9, 19-24) to mark the safe passage of Israel through Jordan, as Christ appointed baptism and the holy supper to memorialize our union with Him in death and

resurrection! 36. In Joshua 5:3, Joshua is seen as the circumciser of the people, as in Colossians 2:11, believers are declared to be circumcised in Christ, “with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.” 37. He kept the Passover (Jos 5:10 and cf. Luk 22:15). 38. In Joshua 5:15 and 11:8-9, 15, we behold the obedient servant, faithful in the discharge of his duty. Compare Philippians 2:8. 39. In Joshua 7:13, he is called upon to “sanctify the people”—“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate” (Heb 13:12). 40. In Joshua 6:25, we see him as the saviour of a harlot. Compare John 8:11.

41. “And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship” (Jos 5:14). “And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed” (Mat 26:39). 42. He foretold things to come (Jos 6:26 and see 1 Kings 16:34 and cf. Mat 24:2). 43. “The LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country” (Jos 6:27 and cf. Mar 7:36-37). 44. Mark his zeal for the honour of God’s great name (Jos 7:9 and cf. Joh 12:28). 45. In Joshua 10:10-14, we behold him as the great miracle worker. Compare Matthew 8:27. 46. In Joshua 7:19, we behold him as the judge. Compare Acts 17:30. 47. In Joshua 10:25, his faith in God is expressed. See Hebrews 12:2. 48. In Joshua 10:40-42, we see him as the mighty victor, and so too in Colossians 2:14 and Revelation 6:2. 49. In Joshua 9:23, we see him ratifying what his twelve princes had done. Compare Matthew 18:18. 50. In Joshua 10:43, he is seen as the preserver of all Israel. Compare John 10:28. 51. In Joshua 13:13 and 17:4, we see him as the fulfiller of God’s promises. See 11 Corinthians 1:20. 52. Note his refusal to show partiality to members of his own tribe (Jos 17:14-18 and see Mat 20:20-23).

53. Behold him rebuking slackness (Jos 17:15 and see Luk 9:62). 54. He asks for his own inheritance (Jos 19:50-51 and see Psa 2:6). 55. He is a builder of his own heritage (Jos 19:50 and see Mat 16:19). 56. He is the fulfiller of the covenant (Jos 22:4). 57. He is the enforcer of holiness (Jos 22:5 and cf. Mat 5:48). 58. He is the bestower of blessing (Jos 14:13 and 22:6 and cf. Luk 24:50). 59. He is a rewarder of obedience (Jos 22:6, 8 and cf. Rev 22:14). 60. He concludes his ministry with discourses (Jos 23:24 and cf. Joh 13-17).

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

4. The Scriptures and Prayer

A prayerless Christian is a contradiction in terms. Just as a still-born child is a dead one, so a professing believer who prays not is devoid of spiritual life. Prayer is the breath of the new nature in the saint, as the Word of God is its food. When the Lord would assure the Damascus disciple that Saul of Tarsus had been truly converted, He told him, “Behold, he prayeth” (Act 9:11). On many occasions had that self-righteous Pharisee bowed his knees before God and gone through his “devotions,” but this was the first time he had ever really *prayed*. This important distinction needs emphasizing in this day of powerless forms (2Ti 3:5). They who content themselves with formal addresses unto God know Him not, for “the spirits of grace *and* supplications” (Zec 12:10) are never separated. God has no dumb children in His regenerated family, “Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?” (Luk 18:7). Yes, “cry” unto Him, not merely “say” their prayers.

But will the reader be surprised when the writer declares it is his deepening conviction that, probably, the Lord’s own people sin more in their efforts to pray than in connection with any other thing they engage in? What hypocrisy there is, where there should be reality! What presumptuous demandings, where there should be submissiveness! What formality, where there should be brokenness of heart. How little we really *feel* the sins we confess, and what little *sense* of deep need for the mercies we seek. And even where God grants a measure of deliverance from these awful sins, how much coldness of heart, how much unbelief, how much self-will and self-pleasing have we to bewail. Those who have no conscience upon these things are strangers to the spirit of holiness.

Now, the Word of God should be our directory in prayer. Alas, how often we have made our own fleshly inclinations the rule of our asking. The Holy Scriptures have been given to us “that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2Ti 3:17). Since we are required to “pray in the Spirit” (Jude 1:20), it follows that our prayers ought to be according to the Scriptures, seeing that He is their Author throughout. It equally follows that according to the measure in which the Word of Christ dwells in us “richly” (Col 3:16) or sparsely, the more or the less will our petitions be in harmony with the mind of the Spirit, for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Mat 12:34). In proportion as we hide the Word in our hearts, and it cleanses, moulds and regulates our inner man, will

our prayers be acceptable in God's sight. Then shall we be able to say, as David did in another connection, "Of thine own have we given thee" (1Ch 29:14).

Thus, the purity and power of our prayer-life are another index by which we may determine the extent to which we are profiting from our reading and searching of the Scriptures. If our Bible study is not, under the blessing of the Spirit, convicting us of the sin of prayerlessness, revealing to us the place which prayer ought to have in our daily lives, and is actually bringing us *to* spend more time in the secret place of the Most High, unless it is teaching us how to pray more acceptably to God, how to appropriate His promises and plead them before Him, how to appropriate His precepts and turn them into petitions, then, not only has the time we spent over the Word been to little or no soul enrichment, but the very knowledge we have acquired of its letter will only add to our condemnation in the day to come. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (Jam 1:22) applies to its prayer-admonitions as to everything else in it. Let us now point out seven criteria.

1. We are profited from the Scriptures when we are brought to realize *the deep importance of prayer*. It is really to be feared that many present-day readers (and even students) of the Bible have no deep convictions that a definite prayer-life is absolutely essential to a daily walking and communing with God, as it is for deliverance from the power of indwelling sin, the seductions of the world, and the assaults of Satan. If such a conviction really gripped their hearts, would they not spend far more time on their faces before God? It is worse than idle to reply, "A multitude of duties which have to be performed crowd out prayer, though much against my wishes." But the fact remains, that each of us takes time for anything we deem to be imperative. Who ever lived a busier life than our Saviour? Yet, who found more time for prayer? If we truly yearn to be supplicants and intercessors before God and use all the available time we now have, He will so order things for us that we shall have more time.

The lack of positive conviction of the deep importance of prayer is plainly evidenced in the corporate life of professing Christians. God has plainly said, "My house shall be called the house of prayer" (Mat 21:13). Note, not "the house of preaching and singing," but of *prayer*. Yet, in the great majority of even so-called orthodox churches, the ministry of prayer has become a negligible quantity. There are still evangelistic campaigns, and Bible-teaching conferences, but how rarely one hears of two weeks set apart for special prayer! And how much good do their "Bible conferences" accomplish if the prayer-life of the churches is not strengthened? But when the Spirit of God applies in power to our hearts such words as, "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation" (Mar 14:38). "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Phi 4:6). "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col 4:2) Then are we being profited from the Scriptures!

2. We are profited from the Scriptures when we are made to feel that *we know not how to pray*. “We know not what we should pray for as we ought” (Rom 8:26). How very few professing Christians really believe this. The idea most generally entertained is that people know well enough what they should pray for, only they are careless and wicked, and so fail to pray for what they are fully assured is their duty. But such a conception is at direct variance with this inspired declaration in Romans 8:26. It is to be observed that that flesh-humbling affirmation is made not simply of men in general, but of the saints of God in particular, among which the apostle hesitated not to include himself, “We know not what we should pray for as we ought.” If this be the condition of the regenerate, how much more so of the unregenerate! Yet, it is one thing to read and mentally assent to what this verse says, but it is quite another to have an experimental realization of it, for the heart to be made to feel that what God requires from us, He must *Himself* work in and through us.

*I often say my prayers,
But do I ever pray?
Or do the wishes of my heart
Dictate the words I say?
I might as well kneel down
And worship gods of stone,
As offer to the living God
A prayer of words alone.*

It is many years since the writer was taught those lines by his mother—“Now present with the Lord”—but their searching message still comes home with force to him. The Christian can no more *pray* without the direct enabling of the Holy Spirit than he can create a world. This must be so, for real prayer is a felt need awakened within us by the Spirit, so that we ask God, in the name of Christ, for that which is in accord with His holy will. “If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us” (1Jo 5:14). But to ask something which is not according to God’s will is not praying, but presuming. True, God’s revealed will is made known in His Word, yet not in such a way as a cookery book contains recipes and directions for preparing various dishes. The Scriptures frequently enumerate principles which call for continuous exercise of heart and divine help to show us their application unto different cases and circumstances. Thus, we are being profited from the Scriptures when we are taught our deep need of crying, “Lord, *teach* us to pray” (Luk 11:1), and are actually constrained to beg Him for the spirit of prayer.

3. We are profited from the Scriptures when we are made conscious *of our need of the Spirit’s help*. First, that He may make known to us our real wants. Take, for example, our temporal needs. How often we are in some external strait, things from without press hard upon us, and we long to be delivered from these trials and

difficulties. Surely *here* we “know” of ourselves *what* to pray for. No, indeed; far from it. The truth is that, despite our natural desire for relief, so ignorant are we, so dull is our discernment, that (even where there is an exercised conscience) we know not what submission unto His pleasure God may require, or how He may sanctify these afflictions to our inner good. Therefore does God call the petitions of most who seek for relief from external trials “howlings,” and not a crying unto Him with the heart (see Hosea 7:14). “For who knoweth what is good for man in this life?” (Ecc 6:12). Ah, heavenly wisdom is needed to teach us our temporal “needs” so as to make them a matter of prayer according to the mind of God.

Perhaps a few words need to be added to what has just been said. Temporal things *may be* scripturally prayed for (Mat 6:11, etc.), but with this threefold limitation. First, *incidentally* and not primarily, for they are not the things which Christians are principally concerned in (Mat 6:33). It is heavenly and eternal things (Col 3:1) which are to be sought first and foremost, as of far greater importance and value than temporal things. Second, *subordinately*, as a means to an end. In seeking material things from God, it should not be in order that we may be gratified, but as an aid to our pleasing Him better. Third, *submissively*, not dictatorially, for that would be the sin of presumption. Moreover, we know not whether any temporal *mercy* would really contribute to our highest good (Psa 106:18), and, therefore, we must leave it with God to decide.

We have inward wants as well as outward. Some of these may be discerned in the light of conscience, such as the guilt and defilement of sin, of sins against light and nature and the plain letter of the law. Nevertheless, the knowledge which we have of ourselves, by means of the conscience, is so dark and confused that, apart from the Spirit, we are in no way able to discover the true fountain of cleansing. The things about which believers do and ought to treat, primarily, with God in their supplications are the inward frames and spiritual dispositions of their souls. Thus, David was not satisfied with confessing all known transgressions and his original sin (Psa 51:1-5), nor yet with an acknowledgment that none could understand his errors, whence he desired to be cleansed from “secret faults” (Psa 19:12), but he also begged God to undertake the inward searching of his heart and find out what was amiss in him (Psa 139:23-24), knowing that God principally requires “truth in the inward parts” (Psa 51:6). Thus, in view of 1 Corinthians 2:10-12, we should definitely seek the Spirit’s aid that we may pray acceptably to God.

4. We are profited from the Scriptures when the Spirit teaches us *the right end in praying*. God has appointed the ordinance of prayer with at least a three-fold design. First, that the great triune God might be honoured, for prayer is an act of worship, a paying homage to the Father as the Giver, in the Son’s name, by whom alone we may approach Him, by the moving and directing power of the Holy Spirit. Second, to humble our hearts, for prayer is ordained to bring us into the place of dependency, to develop within us a sense of our helplessness, by owning that,

without the Lord, we can do nothing, and that we are beggars upon His charity for everything we are and have. But how feebly is this realized (if it be at all) by any of us until the Spirit takes us in hand, removes pride from us, and gives God His true place in our hearts and thoughts. Third, as a means or way of obtaining for ourselves the good things for which we ask.

It is greatly to be feared that one of the principal reasons why so many of our prayers remain unanswered is because we have a wrong, an unworthy, end in view. Our Saviour said, "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Mat 7:7). But James affirms of some, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (Jam 4:3). To pray for anything, and not expressly unto the end which God has designed, is to "ask amiss," and, therefore, to no purpose. Whatever confidence we may have in our own wisdom and integrity, if we are left to ourselves, our aims will never be suited to the will of God. Unless the Spirit restrains the flesh within us, our own natural and distempered affections intermix themselves in our supplications, and, thus, are rendered vain. "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1Co 10:31), yet none but the Spirit can enable us to subordinate all our desires unto God's glory.

5. We are profited from the Scriptures when we are taught *how to plead God's promises*. Prayer must be in faith (Rom 10:14), or God will not hear it. Now faith respects God's promises (Heb 4:1; Rom 4:21). If, therefore, we understand not what God stands pledged to give, we cannot pray at all. The promises of God contain the matter of prayer and define the measure of it. What God has promised, all that He has promised, and nothing else, we are to pray for. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God" (Deu 29:29), but the declaration of His will and the revelation of His grace belong unto us, and are our rule. There is nothing that we really stand in need of but God has promised to supply it, yet, in such a way and under such limitations as will make it good and useful to us. So, too, there is nothing God has promised but we stand in need of it, or are some way or other concerned in it as members of the mystical body of Christ. Hence, the better we are acquainted with the divine promises, and the more we are enabled to understand the goodness, grace, and mercy prepared and proposed in them, the better equipped are we for acceptable prayer.

Some of God's promises are general rather than specific. Some are conditional, others unconditional. Some are fulfilled in this life, others in the world to come. Nor are we able of ourselves to discern which promise is most suited to our particular case and present emergency and need, or to appropriate by faith and rightly plead it before God. Wherefore, we are expressly told, "For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given us of God" (1Co 2:11-12). Should someone reply, "If so much be required unto

acceptable praying, if we cannot supplicate God aright without much less trouble than you indicate, few will continue long in this duty.” Then, we answer that such an objector knows not what it is to pray, nor does he seem willing to learn.

6. We are profited from the Scriptures when we are brought to *complete submission unto God*. As stated above, one of the divine designs in appointing prayer as an ordinance was that we might be humbled. This is outwardly denoted when we bow the knee before the Lord. Prayer is an acknowledgment of our helplessness, and a looking to Him from whom all our help comes. It is an owning of His sufficiency to supply our every need. It is making known our “requests” (Phi 4:6) unto God. But requests are very different from “*demands*.” “The throne of grace is not set up that we may come and there vent our passions before God” (William Gurnall, 1617-1679). We are to spread our case before God, but leave it to His superior wisdom to prescribe how it shall be dealt with. There must be no dictating, nor can we “claim” anything from God, for we are beggars dependent upon His mere mercy. In all our praying, we must add, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

But may not faith plead God’s promises and expect an answer? Certainly, but it must be *God’s* answer. Paul besought the Lord thrice to remove his thorn in the flesh. Instead of doing so, the Lord gave him grace to endure it (2Co 12). Many of God’s promises are promiscuous rather than personal. He has promised His Church pastors, teachers and evangelists, yet many a local company of His saints has languished long without either. Some of God’s promises are indefinite and general, rather than absolute and universal, as for example Ephesians 6:2-3. God has not bound Himself to give in kind or specie, to grant the particular thing we ask for, even though we ask in faith. Moreover, He reserves to *Himself* the right to determine the fit time and season for bestowing His mercies. “Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth...it *may be* ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’s anger” (Zep 2:3). Just because it “may be” God’s will to grant a certain temporal mercy unto me, it is my duty to cast myself upon Him and plead for it, yet with entire submission to His good pleasure for the performance of it.

7. We are profited from the Scriptures when prayer becomes *a real and deep joy*. Merely to “say” our prayers each morning and evening is an irksome task, a duty to be performed which brings a sigh of relief when it is done. But really to come into the conscious presence of God, to behold the glorious light of His countenance, to commune with Him at the mercy seat, is a foretaste of the eternal bliss awaiting us in heaven. The one who is blessed with this experience says with the Psalmist, “It is good for me to draw near to God” (Psa 73:28). Yes, good for the heart, for it is quietened. Good for faith, for it is strengthened. Good for the soul, for it is blessed. It is lack of this soul communion with God which is the root cause of our unanswered prayers. “Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he *shall* give thee the desires of thine heart” (Psa 37:4).

What is it which, under the blessing of the Spirit, produces and promotes this joy in prayer? First, it is the heart's delight in God as the Object of prayer, and particularly the recognition and realization of God as *our Father*. Thus, when the disciples asked the Lord Jesus to teach them to pray, He said, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven." And again, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba [the Hebrew for "Father"], Father" (Gal 4:6), which includes a filial, holy delight in God, such as children have in their parents in their most affectionate addresses unto them. So again, in Ephesians 2:18, we are told, for the strengthening of faith and the comfort of our hearts, "For through him [Christ] we both have access by one Spirit unto *the Father*." What peace, what assurance, what freedom this gives to the soul—to know we are approaching our Father!

Second, joy in prayer is furthered by the heart's apprehension and the soul's sight of God as on the throne of *grace*—a "sight" or prospect not by carnal imagination, but by spiritual illumination, for it is by faith that we "see" Him who is invisible (Heb 11:27)—faith being the "evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1), making its proper object evident and present unto them that do believe. Such a sight of God upon *such* a "throne" cannot but thrill the soul. Therefore are we exhorted, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16).

Thirdly, and drawn from the last quoted Scripture, freedom and delight in prayer are stimulated by the consciousness that God is, through Jesus Christ, willing and ready to dispense grace and mercy to suppliant sinners. There is no reluctance in Him which we have to overcome. He is more ready to give than we are to receive. So He is represented in Isaiah 30:18, "And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you." Yes, He waits to be sought unto; waits for faith to lay hold of His readiness to bless. His ear is ever opened to the cries of the righteous. Then, "Let us draw near with a true heart in *full assurance of faith*" (Heb 10:22), and "In *every thing* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God," and we shall find that peace which passes all understanding guarding our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phi 4:6-7).

SERVICE

Our present subject follows logically upon the theme of our last paper, for we are saved to serve, as was adumbrated of old in connection with God's earthly peoples, "And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me" (Exo 8:1). Pharaoh was a type of Satan, and the bondage of Egypt of our "serving divers lusts" (Ti 3:3). Israel's exodus from Egypt and their entering into covenant with JEHOVAH at Sinai (Exo 24:3-8) illustrates the experience of conversion, when a rebel against God throws down the weapons of his warfare and gives himself up to be ruled by His will. Salvation, then, is a change of masters.

There are but two masters, and they divide the world between them—sin and God. Every man serves one of them, but no man can *serve* both. Every man serves either sin or righteousness, God or the devil, giving his time and strength to one or the other. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit" (Rom 8:5). There is no middle or neutral state. Both of these services are entered by consent, "Know ye not, that to whom ye *yield yourselves* servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom 6:16). It is true there are degrees in this, some yielding up themselves more completely and entirely than others. Nevertheless, the service which the regenerate render to righteousness is quite voluntary.

The service of sin must be abandoned before the service of God can be entered, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God" (Rom 6:22). That order is unchangeable. By nature, we are not in subjection to God, for man is "born like a wild ass's colt" (Job 11:12). As they contemplate their unregenerate days, the Lord's people sorrowfully confess, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to *his own way*" (Isa 53:6). Yes, that is the quintessence of sin—the determination to please ourselves. Thus it was at the beginning. Our first parents chafed at the divine restraint, and took matters into their own hands. But by grace, all this is altered. The language of a quickened soul is, "Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?" (Act 9:6).

True conversion is a being brought into subjection to God. First, the conscience is convicted of insubordination to God, and we are made to tremble for having so long and so grievously defied Him. His claims are now recognized and felt, and there is a broken-hearted repentance for having disregarded those claims. Second, there is a bending of our wills, a subduing of the fleshly principle within, and a being made desirous for God to rule us (Psa 110:3). Self-love, self-will, and self-

righteousness receive their death wounds. Third, there is wrought in the heart a readiness to submit to God's way of salvation (Rom 10:3), so that we come as empty-handed beggars to receive out of the fullness of His grace. Fourth, there is a receiving of Christ Jesus as Lord (Col 2:6).

"O LORD our God, other lords beside thee *have had* dominion over us: but by thee only *will we* make mention of thy name" (Isa 26:13). In the past, "lord" self-pleasing, "lord" self-love, and "lord" self-gratification ruled us. But now, these are repudiated. We have become "servants to God," and a servant is one who owns the authority of a superior, who is yielded to the will of his master and lives and labours to promote his interests. The true and normal Christian life consists of being in subjection to God. No longer is a quickened soul determined to have his own way at all costs, but instead, the dominating longing and purpose of his heart is to please and honour the Lord in all things. This is the result of a miraculous work of grace, for "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2Co 5:17).

The best way to discover what is (ideally) signified by being a *servant of God* is to ponder the life of the Lord Jesus. Of Him, it is written, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant" (Phi 2:6-7). And what did that involve? This—being "made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal 4:4). Therefore are we told that, "Christ pleased not himself" (Rom 15:3). As He declared, "For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (Joh 6:38). And again, "I do always those things that please him" (Joh 8:29). That was the character of conduct of the perfect Servant. And, my reader, Christ has left believers "an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1Pe 2:21). Therefore does Christ say unto us, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me" (Mat 11:29). The "yoke" Christ assumed was that of unreserved submission to God's will, and nothing less than that is what He requires from His followers.

We are not Christians at all unless we are servants of God, fully surrendered to His will, walking in obedience to His Word. Alas, Satan is deceiving so many today by leading them to suppose that they are savingly trusting in the "finished work" of Christ, while their hearts remain unchanged and self-will rules their lives. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1Jo 2:4). What could be plainer than that? What a searching and solemn word also is in James 1:22, "Be ye *doers* of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." There are many "hearers" of the Word, regular hearers, diligent hearers, in some respects, very interested hearers, yet, what they hear is not incorporated into the life. It does not regulate their ways. And God says that they who are not *doers* of the Word are "deceiving their own selves." Alas, how many such there are in Christendom today! Those who are not downright hypocrites, but deluded souls. They suppose that because they are so clear on salvation being by

grace alone, they are saved, and that because they sit under the ministry of a man who has “made the Bible a new Book” to them, they are growing in grace. How many imagine that the mere listening to a true servant of God, or reading his writings, is *feeding on the Word*. Not so! We only “feed” on the Word when we personally appropriate, masticate, and assimilate into our lives what we read or hear. Where there is not an increasing conformity of heart and life to God’s Word, then increased condemnation. “And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with *many stripes*” (Luk 12:47).

God has given us His Word not only with the design of instructing us, but for the purpose of *directing* us—to make known what He requires us to do. In the Holy Scriptures, God has revealed the details of that service which He requires from us, and that, as it concerns every aspect and relationship of our lives. The first thing we need is a clear and distinct *knowledge* of our duty, and this entails a lifelong and prayerful searching of the Scriptures. And the first thing God requires of us is a conscientious practice, corresponding to our knowledge. “What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic 6:8). The Lord Jesus affirmed the same thing when He said, “Ye are my friends, if ye *do* whatsoever I command you” (Joh 15:14). Service, then, is a life of obedience, our inward and outward life being regulated by the divine precepts.

The service of God is one of *freedom*, yea, it is the only one where real freedom is to be found. Yet, that is the very opposite of the natural man’s idea. So thoroughly has sin perverted his judgment and blinded his mind, that he calls light darkness and darkness light, bitter sweet and sweet bitter. The unregenerate suppose that to be in subjection to God is the end of all freedom, and taking His yoke upon them is irksome bondage. Contrariwise, they imagine that the more they refuse divine restraints, the greater the liberty. Poor deluded souls! It is the service of sin that tyrannizes and enslaves. It is the one who willingly renders obedience to Him who is “the Lord’s *freeman*” (1Co 7:22). God does not force His people into service, but constrains them by His love, and their language is, “I will walk at *liberty*: for I seek thy precepts” (Psa 119:45). Nothing is more *honourable* than to be a dutiful servant of God, for it entails the smile of approbation from Him who is the King of kings. Nothing is more *pleasant* than to be subject to God’s commands, for it secures His favour and fellowship. What a rich reward is assured those who take His yoke upon them! The Lord Jesus declared, “Where I am, there shall also my servant be” (Joh 12:26). And again, “Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: *for ye serve* the Lord Christ” (Col 3:24). And yet again, “There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall *serve* Him” (Rev 22:3)—*now*, serving Him in the office, the shop, or the kitchen, *then*, serving Him in the courts of the Father’s house above.

REASONING REPUDIATED

“And lean not unto thine own understanding.” (Pro 3:5)

To “lean unto our own understanding” is to trust in our own wisdom. It is to be guided by what the world calls “common sense.” It is to rely upon the dictates of human reason. The objector may reply, “God has endowed me with the reasoning faculty, shall I not use it?” To which, we reply, that the highest act of reason is to bow before the wisdom of God, and be controlled by His unerring Word. But, alas, fallen men, in the pride of their hearts, had rather walk by sight than by faith, “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph 4:18).

The connection between the words of our text, and the first clause in the verse, is not difficult to trace. It forms a supplementary word of warning. It is this very leaning unto our own understanding, or reasoning things out, which so often hinders us from trusting in the Lord with all our hearts. A similar supplementary warning is found in Matthew 21:21, added to, “If ye have faith,” is, “and doubt not,” which shows the danger of unbelief coming in afterwards and preventing the fruits of faith. So, the great obstacle against continued wholehearted trust in the Lord is leaning unto our own understanding.

To lean unto our own understanding is to rest upon a broken reed, for it has been deranged by sin. That is why we need constantly to seek counsel and instruction from the Scriptures, which are given not only to reveal the way to heaven, but also to guide us through this dark world (2Pe 1:9). God’s Word is given to be “a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path” (Psa 119:105), and it is because we have failed to use this divine provision that we have had so many slips and falls. Experience shows that more grace is needed to repudiate our own wisdom than to abandon our own righteousness.

It is both solemn and humbling to see how many of the most eminent saints have failed at this point. Abraham, at the very time he responded to God’s call to leave the land of his birth, instead of fully trusting the Lord to care for his wife as well as himself, leaned unto his own understanding, and instructed her to pose as his sister (Gen 20:13). Jacob, instead of trusting the Lord to make good His promise, relied upon human expediency and trickery. Moses, after God had graciously supplied the cloud to guide them by day and by night (Num 9:18-20), said to Hobab, “We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the LORD hath spoken good concerning Israel. And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and

to my kindred. And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and *thou* mayest be to us instead of eyes” (Num 10:29-31).

The policy of Moses was dictated by natural prudence. Knowing that his father-in-law was thoroughly familiar with the wilderness, he concluded that he would be a suitable and competent guide. It is hard to imagine Moses being so foolish, yet, how often have we acted in a similar fashion! Other examples of this sad failing are often found in what is recorded concerning the twelve apostles. For example, when the Lord first announced to them His approaching death, Peter rebuked Him, saying, “Be it far from thee, Lord” (Mat 16:22). When He bade them give the multitude “to eat,” they said, “Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread?” (Mar 6:37). Yes, the exhortation of our text is much needed by us.

“Lean not unto thine own understanding” *when interpreting the Scriptures*. God’s Word is not addressed to the intellect, but to the conscience and heart. And as soon as we begin reasoning over its contents, we land into a bog of error. The majority, if not all, of the false systems in Christendom are the outcome of the natural mind of men taking up the things of God. People single out certain fragments of Scripture, ignoring or repudiating all else, and, by a process of reasoning, have based thereon their schemes. Some dwell on the fact that God is gracious and that His mercy endures for ever, and from this promise they reason that there can be no eternal punishment for anybody. Others single out the statements, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (Joh 3:16), and “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17), and from these, reason that there cannot be such a thing as God having, from all eternity, chosen or elected certain ones to salvation. On the other hand, some appear to be very zealous of God’s glory and imagine it is sullied when we press the responsibility of man. Because “Salvation is of the LORD” (Jon 2:9), they can see neither need nor warrant for the preacher to urge the ungodly to seek the Saviour. Because repentance and faith are the gifts of God, it seems senseless to hyper-Calvinists to call upon the unregenerate to repent and believe. All of these people are doing the very thing which our text forbids.

“Lean not unto thine own understanding” *by seeking to solve the mysteries of providence*. God has told us that His thoughts and ways are very different from ours (Isa 55:8-9). Yea, that they are “past finding out” (Rom 11:33). When a finite creature attempts to comprehend the Infinite, he is not only guilty of presumptuous sin, but is working against his own well-being. To philosophize about our lot, to reason about our circumstances, is fatal to our rest of soul and peace of heart. We cannot, by searching, find out God. In His Word, God has placed on record example after example to warn us against the folly and futility of reasoning about His providences. Take the case of Jacob. When Joseph seemed lost to him, Simeon had been left behind in Egypt, and request was made for Benjamin to leave too, he said,

“All these things are against me” (Gen 42:36). He was walking by sight, judging things from their outward appearance, reasoning from what he saw. God was left out of his calculation and consideration. As the sequel showed, all those things were, really, working together for his good. What a warning for us! Take the children of Israel after their exodus from Egypt. “When Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?” (Exo 14:10-11). Instead of trusting in the Lord with all their hearts, they leaned unto their own understanding. Once more, consider the apostles after the crucifixion. The death of their Master was the death of their hopes. Why? Because, instead of trusting in the Lord with all their heart, they leaned unto their own understanding! Once again we say, what a warning for us! Ah, Christian readers, when shall we learn that God’s dealings with us are designed to wean *from* leaning unto our own understanding? If it takes us a long time to discover that we have no might of our own, and must draw strength from above, it takes us longer still to realize that we have no wit of our own, and must seek wisdom from on high.

“Lean not unto thine own understanding” *when engaged in the work of the Lord*. Alas, how much failure is there here! How much of the flesh enters into “Christian service”! How frequently worldly methods are employed! How often it is assumed that the end justifies the means! The only “end” which is worthy for any Christian to hold in view is the glory of God, and the only “means” becoming His servants are those which are prescribed in the Scriptures. Implicit confidence in God’s promise that *His* Word shall not return unto Him void, and unquestioning obedience to all *His* arrangements, are what constitute all acceptable service. When Moses built a house for the Lord, though skilled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, he was not permitted to use his own ingenuity, but had to make *all* things according to the pattern shown him in the mount. And this is written for our learning. The teaching of Scripture on the subject of service and the thoughts of many professing Christians thereon differ widely. The Word teaches that the measure in which we glorify God is the measure in which we obey Him. But how many gauge it by *apparent results*! Those preachers who do most visible good in the conversion of souls and the edification of Christians are regarded as having brought most glory to their Master. But *that* is a false standard of measurement. It is walking by sight. It is leaning unto our own understanding. Again, those methods which seem to secure the best returns are almost everywhere looked upon as being most blessed of God, and, therefore, as most pleasing to Him. But the value of any action can be ascertained only through testing it by Scripture.

So many reason backward from effect to cause—the effect is good, therefore, it is supposed the cause must be. God is giving blessing, therefore, He must be pleased. Ah, it is so easy to lean unto our own understanding. Have we forgotten

what happened when Moses was bidden to speak to the rock? Instead of so doing, in his anger, he smote it. In this, he sinned, and God judged him for it. Nevertheless, the water flowed forth! Did *that* “result” prove Moses was in the right? Certainly not! And it is recorded as a solemn warning against our arguing from effect to cause, against reasoning from results. It is so easy to persuade ourselves that we have God’s *approval* because we appear to have His *blessing*. If we leave the path marked out for us in His Word, we may have visible “results,” but we shall not have God’s approval. If we desire the latter, then, we must give constant heed to the divine injunction, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.”

MAY

HID

Numerous are the passages which contain the word, “hid,” and quite varied are their character. Some are of historical interest, others of deep practical importance. There are evil hidings and good ones. Among the former may be mentioned Adam and Eve, hiding themselves from the presence of the Lord (Gen 3:8), Moses hiding the Egyptian in the sand (Exo 2:12), Achan’s hiding of the stolen booty under the ground of his tent (Jos 7:21-22), the servant’s hiding of his talent (Mat 25:18), the Gospel hid to them that are lost by the devil’s blinding their minds (2Co 4:3-4), the wicked hiding in the dens and rocks of the mountains when the great day of wrath of the Lamb comes, desiring to be hid from His face (Rev 6:15-17). Among the latter, we think of the hiding of the babe Moses (Exo 2:3), Moses hiding his face when JEHOVAH appeared unto him at the burning bush (Exo 3:6), the hiding of the two Hebrew spies by Rahab (Jos 2:4-6), which was credited to her account (Jos 6:17), Obadiah hiding the prophets in a cave from the vengeance of Jezebel (1Ki 18:4, 13, and cf. Psa 83:3), the hiding of Joash, the king’s son, for six years in the house of God from the murderous design of Athaliah (2Ki 11:2). Then, there was also the Saviour’s mysterious hiding of Himself from those who were determined to slay Him (Joh 8:59).

Passing by many statements of less importance, let us consider some which relate to the Redeemer. “Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me” (Isa 49:1-2). Here, we have *the hidden Christ*. From the verses that follow, it is quite clear that this is one of the great Messianic prophecies. Most appropriately, it takes the form of a clamant call to the Gentiles to hear the good news which He proclaims. From all eternity, it had been divinely decreed that the

Beloved of the Father should become incarnate, and engage in a mission of mercy unto lost sinners. But, before sin entered the world, that remained a secret hid in God. In the judgment pronounced upon the serpent, announcement was made of the woman's Seed who should bruise his head. Later, other declarations were given concerning His person, His advent, and His work. Yet, even to the favoured Israelites, Christ was hidden behind the types and shadows, concealed though revealed by the ceremonial law.

For four thousand years, Christ was *hid* from human eyes, waiting for the "fulness of time" to come, when He should be "made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal 4:4). Previously called and commissioned by the triune God for His vast undertaking, He was then named before His mother gave Him birth, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins," the angel said unto Joseph (Mat 1:21). "He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword" (Isa 49:2), tells of His being qualified and endowed for His grand mission. "Furnished with everything necessary to fight God's battles against the powers of darkness, to conquer Satan, and to reduce God's revolted subjects to their allegiance by His Word, that is the two-edged sword (Heb 4:12) which comes out of His mouth (Rev 19:15). The convictions of the Word are the arrows that shall be sharp in the hearts of sinners, Psalm 45:5" (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). "In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me" (Isa 49:2), speaks of divine *protection*—His being supernaturally preserved from contamination by sin at His incarnation, through the power of the Highest overshadowing His mother (Luk 1:35), and of His being hid in Egypt during His infancy from the rage of Herod. "In his quiver hath he hid me," probably refers to the long-undisclosed secret that by Christ the Gentiles should be made fellow heirs and of the same body as redeemed Jews (Rom 16:25-26; Eph 3:4-8).

"Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isa 32:1-2). The first part of this chapter describes the character and prosperity of a kingdom upon which the divine favour rests. It is one that is blessed with righteous and just rulers, who use their power not in tyranny for selfish ends, but in benevolence for the public good. Under their benign administration, their subjects are sheltered from many evils and become the recipients of many privileges. But, ultimately, this passage must be regarded as Messianic. Christ is pre-eminently the righteous King, and His government supremely benign. The long-hidden One has come forth at His incarnation into open manifestation. He, who is God the Son, became Man and provided a sure and safe *hiding place for poor sinners* who flee to Him for refuge. In Him, there is effectual shelter from the curse of the Law, from the wrath of God, from the enmity of Satan, and from the dominion of sin. In Him are to be found rest of soul, comfort, refreshment, satisfaction, eternal security. He is the God-man, now crowned with glory and

honour, a Priest upon His throne, the antitypical Melchizedek, not only King of kings, but “King of saints” (Rev 15:3), reigning in and over their hearts.

“And a man” or “that man,” namely, the Messiah of the previous verse (Isa 32:1), “shall be as an hiding place,” because He Himself endured the full storm in the stead of those who flee to Him for shelter. As John Owen (1616-1683) pointed out, “Here are four pressures and troubles mentioned whereunto we may be exposed, and unto all of them is the Man in the promise, the Lord Jesus Christ, suited as a supply from them or against them.” First, the “wind,” in respect of which Christ is a “hiding place.” That is what one would desire when in imminent danger of being blown from a height by a fierce gale. In Matthew 7:25, we have, under the figure of winds beating upon a foundationless house, a representation of graceless professors being overthrown by powerful temptations. Second, a “tempest,” whereunto Christ is a “covert,” or place which offers protection, as the lee shore or harbour does to the storm-tossed mariner. The “tempest” is the wrath of God against sin (Psa 11:6), from which Christ alone delivers (1Th 1:10). Third, “drought,” which produces parched and barren ground, and which is a divine judgment upon a land for sin (Hag 1:11). In reference thereto, Christ is “as rivers of waters,” which is an emblem of the graces and consolations of the Spirit, which proceed from Him as their meritorious source. Fourth, weariness from journeying and working in great heat, from which there is shelter and shade by Christ—rest and new strength accorded to continue on our way.

“In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3). Those treasures are “hid” or laid up for safe custody—like the crown jewels in the Tower of London. This it is which fits Christ to be “the wonderful Counsellor,” the great Prophet of His Church. Even His enemies “marveled” and were nonplussed (Mat 22:22) at His wisdom. Those treasures are available *for* His people to draw upon. They are stored up in Him as the Head, for the use and benefit of His members. Everything needful for their instruction is obtainable from Him; but they are “hid” *from* the proud and those who are wise in their own conceits.

“Your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col 3:3). First, Christ hid in the eternal counsels of God. Second, openly manifested and offering Himself as a hiding-place from God’s wrath. Third, the Depository of all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge for His people to draw upon. Fourth, the Fountain from which proceeds our life and which is invisible unto sight and sense. That life is hid in Christ both in the sense of obscurity and of security. First, the life of *justification* is so. “For ye are dead,” better “ye died,” i.e. legally, when your Substitute died. “And your life” in law, is hid in Christ, consisting of His perfect obedience imputed, “In the Lord have I righteousness” (Isa 45:24). Second, the believer’s life of *grace* is hid in Christ, for the new man is born and nourished from above, fed by the “hidden manna” on high (Rev 2:17). That life proceeds from union with Him, who is the Life, and it is hid because maintained by an invisible power. It is hid, too, under the veil of our natural

life. The Christian lives in a body as do the unregenerate, but they cannot cognize the springs and motives of his actions, “Judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit” (1Pe 4:6), in the secret place of the Most High, in private prayer (Mat 6:6). “The world knoweth us not” (1Jo 3:1).

The *real* “life” of the Christian is one of *faith* (Gal 2:20; Heb 10:38), which is imperceptible to sight and sense, and, therefore, it is, in the main, hid from its possessor also—obscured by his infirmities. The spark of grace is often covered with the ashes of corruption. So, too, when Satan sifts, the chaff is uppermost, and the wheat is not seen. “It doth not yet *appear* what we shall be” (1Jo 3:2), but, “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also *appear* with him in glory” (Col 3:4), which tells us that the Christian’s life of *glory* is not yet revealed. But, it is certain, for his life of justification, grace, and glory is “hid with Christ” in point of eternal security. It is not in his own keeping. It cannot be lost, for it is “hid with Christ in God” by indissoluble union—through Christ, he is one with the Father (Joh 17:21)!

THE POWER OF GOD

“Twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God” (Psa 62:11). In our first article upon this glorious theme, we practically confined our attention to the omnipotence of God as it is seen in and through the old creation. Here, we propose to contemplate the exercise of His might in and on the new creation. That God’s people are much slower to perceive the latter than the former is plain from Ephesians 1:19, where the apostle prayed that the saints might know “*what* is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.” Very striking indeed is this. When Paul speaks of the divine power in creation, he mentions, “His power and Godhead” (Rom 1:20), but when he treats of the work of grace and salvation, he calls it, “exceeding greatness of his power.”

God proportions His power to the nature of His work. The casting out of demons is ascribed to His “finger” (Luk 11:20); His delivering of Israel from Egypt to His “hand” (Exo 13:9); but when the Lord saves a sinner, it is His “holy *arm*” which gets Him the victory (Psa 98:1). It is to be duly noted that the language of Ephesians 1:19 is so couched as to take in the *whole* work of divine grace in and upon the elect. It is not restrained to the past—“who have believed according to,” nor to the

time to come—"the power that shall work in you". But, instead, it is "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward *who believe*." It is the "effectual working" of God's might from the first moment of illumination and conviction till their sanctification and glorification.

So dense is the darkness which has now fallen upon the people (Isa 60:2), that the vast majority of those even in the "churches" deem it by no means a hard thing to become a Christian. They seem to think it is almost as easy to purify a man's heart (Jam 4:8) as it is to wash his hands. That it is as simple a matter to admit the light of divine truth into the soul as it is the morning sun into our chambers by opening the shutters. That it is no more difficult to turn the heart from evil to good, from the world to God, from sin to Christ, than to turn a ship round by the help of the helm. And this, in the face of Christ's emphatic statement, "With men this is impossible" (Mat 19:26).

To mortify the lusts of the flesh (Col 3:5), to be crucified daily to sin (Luk 9:23), to be meek and gentle, patient and kind—in a word, *to be Christ-like*—is a task altogether beyond our powers. It is one on which we would never venture, or, having ventured on, would soon abandon, but that God is pleased to perfect His strength in our weakness, and is "mighty to save" (Isa 63:1). That this may be the more clearly evident to us, we shall now consider some of the features of God's powerful operations in the saving of His people.

1. In Regeneration

Little as real Christians may realize it, a far greater power is put forth by God in the new creation than in the old, in refashioning the soul and conforming it to the image of Christ than in the original making it. There is a greater distance between sin and righteousness, corruption and grace, depravity and holiness, than there is between nothing and something, or nonentity and being. And the greater the distance there is, the greater the power in producing something. The miracle is greater according as the *change* is greater. As it is a more signal display of power to change a dead man to life than a sick man to health, so it is a far more wonderful performance to change unbelief to faith and enmity to love, than simply to create out of nothing. There, we are told, "The gospel of Christ...is *the power of God* unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom 1:16).

The Gospel is the instrument which the Almighty uses when accomplishing the most wondrous and blessed of all His works, i.e. the picking up of wretched worms of the earth and making them "*meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col 1:12). When God formed man out of the dust of the ground, though the dust contributed nothing to the act whereby God made him, it had in it no principle *contrary* to His design. But, in turning the heart of a sinner toward

Himself, there is not only the lack of any principle of assistance from him in this work, but the whole strength of his nature unites to combat the power of divine grace. When the Gospel is presented to the sinner, not only is his understanding completely ignorant of its glorious contents, but the will is utterly perverse against it. Not only is there no desire for Christ, but there is inveterate hostility against Him. Nothing but the almighty power of God can overcome the enmity of the carnal mind. To turn back the ocean from its course would not be such an act of power as to change the turbulent bent of man's wicked heart.

2. In Convicting us of Sin

"For ye were sometimes darkness" (Eph 5:8). Such was the Christian's fearful state before grace laid hold of him. He was not only *in* darkness, but he himself *was* "darkness." He was utterly devoid of a single ray of spiritual light. The "light of reason" of which men boast so much, and the "light of conscience" which others value so highly, were utterly worthless as far as giving any intelligence in the things of God was concerned. It was to this awful fact that Christ referred when He said, "If therefore the light that *is* in thee *be* darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Mat 6:23). Yes, *so* "great" is that darkness that men "call evil good, and good evil...put darkness for light, and light for darkness;...put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isa 5:20). So "great" is that darkness that spiritual things are "foolishness" unto them (1Co 2:14). So "great" is that darkness that they are completely *ignorant of it* (Eph 4:18), and utterly blind to their actual state. Not only is the natural man unable to deliver himself from this darkness, but he has no desire whatever for such deliverance, for being spiritually dead, he has no consciousness of any *need for* deliverance.

It is because of their fearful state that, until the Holy Spirit actually regenerates, *all* who hear the Gospel are totally incapacitated for any *spiritual* understanding of it. The majority who hear it imagine that *they* are already saved, that they are real Christians, and no arguments from the preacher, no power on earth, can ever convince them to the contrary. Tell them, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" (Pro 30:12), and it makes no more impression than does water on a duck's back. Warn them that, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luk 13:3), and they are no more moved than are the rocks by the ocean's spray. No, they suppose that they have nothing to repent of, and know not that *their* repentance needs "to be repented of" (2Co 7:10). They have far too high an opinion of their religious profession to allow that *they* are in any danger of hell. Thus, unless a mighty miracle of grace is wrought within them, unless divine power shatters their complacency, there is no hope at all for them.

For a soul to be *savingly convicted* of sin is a greater wonder than for a putrid fountain to send forth sweet waters. For a soul to be brought to realize that, “*Every* imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,” (Gen 6:5) requires the power of omnipotence to produce. By nature, man is independent, self-sufficient, self-confident. What a miracle of grace has been wrought when he now feels and owns his helplessness! By nature, a man thinks well of himself. What a miracle of grace has been wrought when he acknowledges, “in me...dwelleth no good thing” (Rom 7:18)! By nature, men are “*lovers of themselves*” (2Ti 3:2). What a miracle of grace has been wrought when they *abhor* themselves (Job 42:6)! By nature, man thinks he is doing Christ a favour to espouse His Gospel and patronize His cause. What a miracle of grace has been wrought when he discovers that he is utterly unfit for *His* holy presence, and cries, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luk 5:8). By nature, man is proud of his own abilities, accomplishments, attainments. What a miracle of grace has been wrought when he can truthfully declare, “I count *all* things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus...and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Phi 3:8).

3. In Casting Out the Devil

“The whole world lieth in wickedness” (1Jo 5:19), bewitched, fettered, helpless. As we go over the Gospel narratives, and read of different ones who were possessed of demons, thoughts of pity for the unhappy victims stir our minds, and when we behold the Saviour delivering these wretched creatures, we are full of wonderment and gladness. But does the Christian reader realize that we, too, were once in that same awful plight? Before conversion, we were the slaves of Satan, the devil wrought in us his will (Eph 2:2), and so we walked according to the prince of the power of the air. What ability had we to deliver ourselves? Less than we have to stop the rain from falling or the wind from blowing. A picture of man’s helplessness to deliver himself from Satan’s power is drawn by Christ in Luke 11:21, “When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.” The “strong man” is Satan. His “goods” are the helpless captives.

But blessed be His name, “The Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1Jo 3:8). This, too, was pictured by Christ in the same parable, “But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth the spoils” (Luk 11:22). Christ is mightier than Satan, He overcomes him in the day of His power (Psa 110:3), and emancipates “His own” who are bound (Isa 61:1). He still comes by His Spirit to “set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luk 4:18), therefore is it said of God, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath

translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col 1:13). The Greek word for, “delivered,” signifies freeing by violence, a plucking or snatching out of a power that otherwise would not yield its prey.

4. In Producing Repentance

Man, without Christ, cannot repent, “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance” (Act 5:31). Christ gave it as a “Prince,” and, therefore, to none but His subjects, those who are in His kingdom, in whom He rules. Nothing can draw men to repentance but the regenerating power of Christ, which He exercises at God’s right hand. For the acts of repentance are hatred of sin, sorrow for it, determination to forsake it, and earnest and constant endeavour after its death. But sin is so transcendently dear and delightful to a man out of Christ that nothing but an infinite power can draw him to these acts mentioned. Sin is more precious to an unregenerate soul than anything else in heaven or earth. It is dearer to him than liberty, for he gives himself up to it entirely, and becomes its servant and slave. It is dearer to him than health, strength, time, or riches, for he spends all these upon sin. It is dearer to him than his own soul. Shall a man lose his sins or his soul? Ninety-nine out of a hundred vote for the latter, and lose their souls on that account.

Sin is a man’s self. Just as “I” is the central letter of “sin,” so sin is the centre, the moving-power, the very life of self! Therefore did Christ say, “If any man will come after me, let him *deny himself*” (Mat 16:24). Men are “lovers of their own selves” (2Ti 3:2), which is the same as saying that their hearts are wedded to sin. Man “drinketh iniquity like water” (Job 15:16). He cannot exist without it—he is ever thirsting for it—he must have his fill of it. Now, since man so dotes on sin, what is going to turn his delight into sorrow, his love for it into loathing of it? Nothing, but almighty power!

Here, then, we may mark the folly of those who cherish the delusion that they can repent whenever they get ready to do so. But evangelical repentance is not at the beck and call of the creature. It is the gift of God, “If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (2Ti 2:25). Then, what insanity is it that persuades multitudes to defer the effort to repent till their death-beds? Do they imagine that, when they are so weak that they can no longer turn their bodies, they will have strength to turn their souls from sin? Far sooner could they turn themselves back to perfect physical health. What praise, then, is due to God if He has wrought a saving repentance in us.

5. In Working Faith in His People

Saving faith in Christ is not the simple matter that so many vainly imagine. Countless thousands suppose it is as easy to believe in the Lord Jesus as in Caesar or Napoleon, and the tragic thing is that hundreds of preachers are helping forward this lie. It is as easy to believe on Him as on them in a *natural*, historical, intellectual way, but not so in a spiritual and saving way. I may believe in all the heroes of the past, but such belief effects no change in my life! I may have unshaken confidence in the historicity of George Washington, but does my belief in him abate my love for the world and cause me to hate even the garment spotted by the flesh? A supernatural and saving faith in Christ purifies the life. Is *such* a faith easily attained? No, indeed! Listen to Christ Himself, “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” (Joh 5:44). And again, we read, “They could not believe” (Joh 12:39).

Faith in Christ is receiving Him as He is offered or presented to us by God (Joh 1:12). Now, God presents Christ to us not only as Priest, but as King—not only as Saviour, but as “Prince” (Act 5:31)—note that “Prince” *precedes* “Saviour,” as taking His “yoke” upon us goes before finding “rest” to our souls (Mat 11:29)! Are men as willing for Christ to rule as to save them? Do they pray as earnestly for purity as for pardon? Are they as anxious to be delivered from the *power* of sin as they are from the fires of hell? Do they desire holiness as much as they do heaven? Is the dominion of sin as dreadful to them as its wages? Does the filthiness of sin grieve them as much as the guilt and damnation of it? The man who divides what God has joined together when He offers Christ to us *has not* “received” Him at all.

Faith is the gift of God (Eph 2:8-9). It is wrought in the elect by “the operation of God” (Col 2:12). To bring a sinner from unbelief to saving faith in Christ is a miracle as great and as wondrous as was God’s raising Christ from the dead (Eph 1:19-20). Unbelief is far, far more than entertaining an erroneous conception of God’s way of salvation. It is a species of hatred against Him. So faith in Christ is far more than the mind assenting to all that is said of Him in the Scriptures. The demons do that (Jam 2:19), but it does not save them. Saving faith is not only the heart being weaned from every other object of confidence as the ground of my acceptance before God, but it is also the heart being weaned from every other object that competes with Him for my affections. Saving faith is that “which worketh by love” (Gal 5:6), a love which is evidenced by keeping His commandments (Joh 14:23). But by nature, all men hate His commandments. Therefore, where there is a believing heart which is devoted to Christ, esteeming Him high above self and the world, a mighty miracle of grace has been wrought in the soul.

6. In Communicating a Sense of Pardon

When a soul has been sorely wounded by the “arrows of the Almighty” (Job 6:4), when the ineffable light of the thrice holy God has shone into our dark hearts, revealing their unspeakable filthiness and corruption; when our innumerable iniquities have been made to stare us in the face, until the convicted sinner has been made to realize he is fit only for hell, and sees himself even now on the very brink of it; when he is brought to feel that he has provoked God so sorely that he greatly fears he has sinned beyond all possibility of forgiveness (and unless *your* soul has passed through such experiences, my readers, you have never been born again), then nothing but divine power can raise that soul out of abject despair and create in it a hope of mercy. To lift the stricken sinner above those dark waters that have so terrified him, to bestow the light of comfort as well as the light of conviction into a heart filled with worse than Egyptian darkness, is an act of Omnipotence. God only can heal the heart which He has wounded and speak peace to the raging tempest within.

Men may count up the promises of God and the arguments of peace till they are as old as Methuselah, but it will avail them nothing until a divine hand shall pour in “the balm of Gilead.” The sinner is no more able to *apply to himself* the Word of divine comfort when he is under the terrors of God’s law, and writhing beneath the strokes of God’s convicting Spirit, than he is able to resurrect the mouldering bodies in our cemeteries. To “restore the *joy of salvation*” was in David’s judgment an act of sovereign power equal to that of creating a clean heart (Psa 51:10). All the doctors of divinity put together are as incapable of healing a wounded spirit as are the physicians of medicine of animating a corpse. To silence a tempestuous conscience is a mightier performance than the Saviour’s stilling the stormy winds and raging waves, though it is not to be expected that any will grant the truth of this who are in themselves *strangers* to such an experience. As nothing but infinite power can remove the guilt of sin, so nothing but infinite power can remove the despairing sense of it.

7. In Actually Converting a Soul

“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” (Jer 13:23). No, indeed, though he may paint or cover them over. So, one out of Christ may restrain the outward acts of sin, but he cannot *mortify* the inward principle of it. To turn water into wine was indeed a miracle, but to turn fire into water would be a greater one. To create a man out of the dust of the ground was a work of divine power, but to re-create a man so that a sinner becomes a saint, a lion is changed into a lamb, an enemy transformed into a friend, hatred is melted into love, is a far greater wonder

of Omnipotence. The miracle of conversion, which is effected by the Spirit through the Gospel, is described thus, “For the weapons of our warfare [i.e. the preachers] are not carnal, but mighty *through God* to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2Co 10:4-5).

Well has it been said, “To dispossess a man, then, of his self-esteem and self-sufficiency, to make room for God in the heart where there was none but for sin, as dear to him as himself, to hurl down pride of nature, to make stout imaginations stoop to the cross, to make designs of self-advancement sink under a zeal for the glory of God and an overruling design for His honour, is not to be ascribed to any but to an outstretched arm wielding the sword of the Spirit. To have a heart full of the fear of God, that was just before filled with contempt of His wisdom; to have a hatred of his habitual lustings that had brought him in much sensitive pleasure; to loathe them; to live by faith in and *obedience* to the Redeemer, who before was so heartily under the dominion of Satan and self, is a triumphant act of infinite power that can ‘subdue all things’ to itself” (Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680).

8. In Preserving His People

“Who are kept *by the power of God* through faith...ready to be revealed in the last time” (1Pe 1:5). “Kept *from what*? Ah, what mortal is capable of returning a full answer? A whole article might profitably be devoted to this one aspect of our subject. Kept from the dominion of sin, which still dwells within us. Kept from being drawn out of the narrow way by the enticements of the world. Kept from the horrible heresies, which ensnare thousands on every side. Kept from being overcome by Satan, who always seeks our destruction. Kept from departing from the living God, so that we do not make shipwreck of the faith. Kept from turning His grace into lasciviousness. Weak as water in ourselves, yet, enabled to endure as seeing Him who is invisible. This “is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.”

Sin is a mighty monarch which none of his subjects can withstand. There was more in Adam while innocent to resist sin than in any other since, for sin has an ally within the fallen creature that is ever ready to betray him into temptation from without. But sin had no such advantage over Adam, nevertheless, it overwhelmed him. The non-elect angels were yet better able to withstand sin than Adam was, having a more excellent nature and being nearer to God, yet, sin prevailed against them and threw them out of heaven into hell. Then, what a *mighty* power is required to subdue it! Only He who “led captivity captive” can make His people more than conquerors.

“As the providence of God is a manifestation of His power in a continued creation, so the preservation of grace is a manifestation of His power in a continued regeneration. God’s strength abates and modifies the violence of temptations, His staff supports His people under them, His might defeats the power of Satan. The counterworkings of indwelling corruptions, the reluctancies of the flesh against the breathings of the Spirit, the fallacies of the senses, and the rovings of the mind would quickly stifle and quench grace, if it were not maintained by the same all-powerful blast that first inbreathed it. No less power is seen in perfecting it, than implanting it (2Pe 1:3)—No less in fulfilling the work of faith, than in ingrafting the word of faith (2Th 1:11)” (Stephen Charnock).

The preservation of God’s people in this world greatly glorifies the power of God. To preserve those with so many corruptions within, and so many temptations without, magnifies His ineffable might more than if He were to translate them to heaven the moment they believed. In a world of suffering and sorrow, to preserve the *faith* of His people amid so many and sore testings, trials, buffetings, disappointments, betrayals by friends and professed brethren in Christ, is infinitely more wonderful than if a man should succeed in carrying an unsheltered candle alight across an open moor when a hurricane was blowing. To the glory of God, the writer bears witness that, but for *omnipotent* grace, he had become an infidel years ago as the result of the treatment he had received from those who posed as preachers of the Gospel. Yes, for God to supply strength to His fainting people, and enable them to, “Hold the beginning of their confidence stedfast unto the end” (Heb 3:14), is more marvelous than though He were to keep a fire burning in the midst of the ocean.

How the contemplation of the power of God should deepen our confidence and trust in Him, “Trust ye in the LORD for ever: *for* in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting *strength*” (Isa 26:4). The power of God was the ground of Abraham’s assurance (Heb 5:7). Oh, to bear constantly in mind that, “*God is able* to make all grace abound toward us” (2Co 9:8). Nothing is so calculated to calm the mind, still our fears, and fill us with peace, as faith’s appropriation of God’s sufficiency. “If God be for us, who *can* be against us?” (Rom 8:31). His infallible promise is, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isa 41:10). He who brought a nation through the Red Sea without any ships, and led them across the desert for forty years, where was neither bread nor water, still lives and reigns!

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

5. The Scriptures and Good Works

The truth of God may well be likened to a narrow path skirted on either side by a dangerous and destructive precipice. In other words, it lies between two gulfs of error. The aptness of this figure may be seen in our proneness to sway from one extreme to another. Only the Holy Spirit's enabling can cause us to preserve the balance, failure to do which, inevitably, leads to a fall into error. For "error" is not so much the denial of truth as the perversion of truth, the pitting of one part of it against another. The history of theology forcibly and solemnly illustrates this fact. One generation of men have rightly and earnestly contended for that aspect of truth which was most needed in their day. The next generation, instead of walking therein and moving forward, warred for it, intellectually, as the distinguishing mark of *their* party, and usually, in their defence of what was assaulted, have refused to listen to the balancing truth which often their opponents were insisting upon. The result being that they lost their sense of perspective and emphasized what they believed *out of its scriptural proportions*. Consequently, in the next generation, the true servant of God is called on almost to ignore what was so valuable in their eyes, and emphasize that which they had, if not altogether denied, almost completely lost sight of.

It has been said that, "Rays of light, whether they proceed from the sun, star, or candle, move in perfect straight lines; yet so inferior are our works to God's that the steadiest hand cannot draw a perfectly straight line; nor, with all his skill, has man ever been able to invent an instrument capable of doing a thing apparently so simple" (Thomas Guthrie, 1803-1873). Be this so or not, certain it is that men, left to themselves, have ever found it impossible to keep the even line of truth between what appear to be conflicting doctrines—such as the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man, election by grace and the universal proclamation of the Gospel, the justifying faith of Paul and the justifying works of James. Only too often, where the absolute sovereignty of God has been insisted upon, it has been to the ignoring of man's accountability. And where unconditional election has been held fast, the unfettered preaching of the Gospel to the unsaved has been let slip. So, on the other hand, where human accountability has been upheld and an evangelical ministry been sustained, the sovereignty of God and the truth of election have generally been whittled down or completely ignored.

Many of our readers have witnessed examples which illustrate the truth of what has been said above, but few seem to realize that exactly the same difficulty is experienced when an attempt is made to show the precise relation between faith and good works. If, on the one hand, some have erred in attributing to good works a place which Scripture does not warrant, certain it is that, on the other hand, some have failed to give to good works the province which Scripture assigns them. If, on the one side, it be serious error to ascribe our justification before God to any performances of ours, on the other side, they are equally guilty who deny that good works are necessary in order to our reaching heaven, and allow nothing more than that they are merely evidences or fruits of our justification. We are well aware that we are now (shall we say) treading on thin ice, and running a serious risk of ourselves being charged with heresy. Nevertheless we deem it expedient to seek divine aid in grappling with this difficulty, and then commit the issues thereof to God Himself.

In some quarters, the claims of faith, though not wholly denied, have been disparaged because of a zeal to magnify good works. In other circles, reputed as orthodox (and they are what we now have chiefly in mind), only too rarely are good works assigned their proper place, and far too infrequently are professing Christians urged with apostolic earnestness to maintain them. No doubt, this is due, at times, to a fear of undervaluing faith, and encouraging sinners in the fatal error of trusting to their own doings rather than to and in the righteousness of Christ. But no such apprehensions should hinder a preacher from declaring “all the counsel of God.” If his theme be faith in Christ as the Saviour of the lost, let him fully set forth that truth without any modification, giving to this grace the place which the apostle gave it in his reply to the Philippian jailer (Act 16:31). But if his subject be good works, let him be no less faithful in keeping back nothing which Scripture says thereon. Let him not forget that divine command, “Affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works” (Ti 3:8).

The last quoted Scripture is the most pertinent one for these days of looseness and laxity, of worthless profession, and empty boasting. This expression “good works” is found in the New Testament in the singular or plural number no less than thirty times. Yet, from the rarity with which many preachers, who are esteemed sound in the faith, use, emphasize, and enlarge upon them, many of their hearers would conclude that those words occur but once or twice in all the Bible. Speaking to the Jews on another subject, the Lord said, “What...God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mar 10:9). Now, in Ephesians 2:8-10, God has joined two most vital and blessed things together which ought never to be separated in our hearts and minds, yet, they are most frequently parted in the modern pulpit. How many sermons are preached from the first two of these verses, which so clearly declare salvation to be by grace through faith and not of works. Yet, how seldom are we reminded that the sentence begun in them is only completed in verse 10,

where we are told, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

We began this series of articles by pointing out that the Word of God may be taken up from various motives and read with different designs, but that 11 Timothy 3:16-17 makes known for what these Scriptures are really “profitable,” namely for doctrine or teaching, for reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, and all of these that, “The man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Having dwelt upon its teaching about God and Christ, its reproofs and corrections for sin, its instruction in connection with prayer, let us now consider how these furnish us unto “all good works.” Here is another vital criterion by which an honest soul, with the help of the Holy Spirit, may ascertain whether or not his reading and study of the Word is really benefiting him.

1. We profit from the Word when we are thereby taught *the true place of good works*. “Many persons, in their eagerness to support orthodoxy as a system, speak of salvation by grace and faith in such a manner as to undervalue holiness and a life devoted to God. But there is no ground for this in the Holy Scriptures. The same Gospel that declares salvation to be freely by the grace of God through faith in the blood of Christ, and asserts, in the strongest terms, that sinners are justified by the righteousness of the Saviour imputed to them on their believing in Him, without any respect to works of law, also assures us, that without holiness no man shall see God; that believers are cleansed by the blood of atonement; that their hearts are purified by faith, which works by love, and overcomes the world; and that the grace that brings salvation to all men, teaches those who receive it, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Any fear that the doctrine of grace will suffer from the most strenuous inculcation of good works on a scriptural foundation, betrays an inadequate and greatly defective acquaintance with divine truth, and any tampering with the Scriptures in order to silence their testimony in favour of the fruits of righteousness, as *absolutely necessary* in the Christian, is a perversion and forgery with respect to the Word of God” (A. Carson).

But what force (ask some) has this ordination or command of God unto good works, when, notwithstanding it, though we fail to apply ourselves diligently unto obedience, we shall, nevertheless, be justified by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, and so may be saved without them? Such a senseless objection proceeds from utter ignorance of the believer’s present state and relation unto God. To suppose that the hearts of the regenerate are not as much and as effectually influenced with the authority and commands of God unto obedience, as if they were given in order unto their justification, is to ignore what true faith is, and what are the arguments and motives whereby the minds of Christians are principally affected and constrained. Moreover, it is to lose sight of the inseparable connection which God has made between our justification and our sanctification. To suppose that one

of these may be without the other is to overthrow the whole Gospel. The apostle deals with this very objection in Romans 6:1-3.

2. We profit from the Word when we are thereby taught the *absolute necessity of good works*. If it be written that, “Without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb 9:22) and, “Without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb 11:6), the Scripture of truth also declares, “Follow peace with all men, and *holiness*, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). The life lived by the saints in heaven is but the completion and consummation of that life which, after regeneration, they live here on earth. The difference between the two is not one of kind, but of degree. “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Pro 4:18). If there has been no walking with God down here, there will be no dwelling with God up there. If there has been no real communion with Him in time, there will be none with Him in eternity. Death effects no vital change to the heart. True, at death the reminders of sin are for ever left behind by the saint, but no new nature is then imparted. If then, he did not hate sin and love holiness before death, he certainly will not do so afterwards.

No one really desires to go to hell, though there are few indeed who are willing to forsake that broad road which inevitably leads there. All would like to go to heaven, but who among the multitudes of professing Christians are really willing and determined to walk that narrow way which alone leads thereto? It is at *this* point that we may discern the precise place which good works have in connection with salvation. They do not merit it, yet, they are inseparable from it. They do not procure a title to heaven, yet, they are among the *means* which God has appointed for His people’s getting there. In no sense are good works the procuring cause of eternal life, but they are part of the means (as are the Spirit’s work within us and repentance, faith, and obedience by us) conducing to it. God has appointed the way wherein we must walk in order to our arriving at the inheritance purchased for us by Christ. A life of daily obedience to God is that which alone gives actual *admission* to the enjoyment of what Christ has purchased for His people—admission now by faith, admission at death, or His return in full actuality.

3. We profit from the Word when we are taught thereby *the design of good works*. This is clearly made known in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” It is worthy of our notice that this is the *first* occurrence of the expression, and, as is generally the case, the initial mention of a thing in Scripture intimates its consequent scope and usage. Here we learn that the disciples of Christ are to authenticate their Christian profession by the silent but vocal testimony of their lives (for “light” makes no noise in its “shining”), that men may see (not hear boastings about) their good works, and this, that their Father in heaven maybe glorified. Here, then, is their fundamental design—for the honour of God.

As the contents of Matthew 5:16 are so generally misunderstood and perverted, we add a further thought thereon. Only too commonly the “good works” are confounded with the “light” itself, yet, they are quite distinct, though inseparably connected. The “light” is our *testimony* for Christ, but of what value is this unless the life itself exemplifies it? The “good works” are not for the directing of attention to ourselves, but to Him who has wrought them in us. They are to be of such a character and quality that even the ungodly will know they proceed from some higher source than fallen human nature. Supernatural fruit requires a supernatural root, and as this is recognized, the Husbandman is glorified thereby. Equally significant is the *last* reference to “good works” in Scripture, “Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1Pe 2:12). Thus, the first and final allusions emphasize their design—to glorify God because of His works through His people in this world.

4. We profit from the Word when we are taught thereby *the true nature of good works*. This is something concerning which the unregenerate are in entire ignorance. Judging merely from the external, estimating things only by human standards, they are quite incompetent to determine what works are good in God’s esteem and what are not. Supposing that what men regard as good works God will approve of too, they remain in the darkness of their sin-blinded understandings. Nor can any convince them of their error, till the Holy Spirit quickens them into newness of life, bringing them out of darkness into God’s marvellous light. Then it will appear that only those are good works which are done in obedience to the will of God (Rom 6:16), from a principle of love to Him (Heb 10:24), in the name of Christ (Col 3:17), and to the glory of God by Him (1Co 10:31).

The true nature of “good works” was perfectly exemplified by the Lord Jesus. All that He did was done out of obedience to His Father. He “pleased not himself” (Rom 15:3), but ever performed the bidding of the One who had sent Him (John 6:38). He could say, “I do always those things that please him” (Joh 8:29). There were no limits to Christ’s subjection to the Father’s will. He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi 2:8). So, too, all that He did proceeded from love to the Father and love to His neighbour. Love is the fulfilling of the Law. Without love, compliance with the Law is naught but servile subjection, and that cannot be acceptable to Him who is love. Proof that all Christ’s obedience flowed from love is found in His words, “*I delight to do thy will, O my God*” (Psa 40:8). So, also, all that Christ did had in view the glory of the Father, “Father, glorify *thy* name,” (Joh 12:28) revealed the object constantly before Him.

5. We profit from the Word when we are taught thereby *the true source of good works*. Unregenerate men are capable of performing works which in a natural and civil sense, though not in the spiritual sense, are good. They may do those things which, externally, as to matter and substance of them, are good, such as reading the

Bible, attending the ministry of the Word, giving alms to the poor. Yet, the mainspring of such actions, their lack of godly motive, have no power to perform works in a *spiritual* manner, and, therefore, it is written, “There is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Rom 3:12). Nor are they able to. They are “not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). Hence, even the ploughing of the wicked is sin (Pro 21:4). Nor are believers able to think a good thought or perform a good work of themselves (2Co 3:5). It is God who works in them “both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13).

When the Ethiopian can change his skin, and the leopard his spots, then may they also do good that are accustomed to do evil (Jer 13:23). Men may as soon expect to gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles, as good fruit to grow upon, or good works to be performed by the unregenerate. We have, first, to be “Created in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:10), have His Spirit put within us (Gal 4:6), and His grace implanted in our hearts (Eph 4:7; 1Co 15:10), before there is any capacity for good works. Even then, we can do nothing apart from Christ (Joh 1:5). Often, we have a will to do that which is good, yet, how to perform it we know not (Rom 7:18). This drives us to our knees, begging God to make us “perfect in every good work,” *working in* us “that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ” (Heb 13:21). Thus, we are emptied of self-sufficiency, and brought to realize that all our springs are in God (Psa 87:7), and thus we discover that we can do all things through Christ strengthening us (Phi 4:13).

6. We profit from the Word when we are taught thereby *the great importance of good works*. Condensing as far as possible, “good works” are of great importance because by them God is glorified (Mat 5:16), by them the mouths of those who speak against us are closed (1Pe2:12), by them we evidence the genuineness of our profession of faith (Jam 2:13-17). It is highly expedient that we “*adorn* the doctrine of God our Saviour in *all* things” (Ti 2:10). Nothing brings more honour to Christ than those who bear His name *living* constantly (by His enablement) in a Christ-like way and spirit. It was not without reason that the same Spirit who caused the apostle to preface his statement concerning Christ’s coming into this world to save sinners with, “This is a *faithful saying*,” etc., also moved him to write, “This is a *faithful saying*...that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works” (Ti 3:8). May we, indeed, be “zealous of good works” (Ti 2:14).

7. We profit from the Word when we are taught thereby *the true scope of good works*. This is so comprehensive as to include the discharge of our duties in every relationship in which God has placed us. It is interesting and instructive to note the first “good works” in Holy Writ, namely, the anointing of the Saviour by Mary of Bethany (Mat 26:10; Mark 14:6). Indifferent either to the blame or praise of men, with eyes only for the “chiefest among ten thousand,” she lavished upon Him her precious ointment. Another woman, Dorcas (Act 9:36), is also mentioned as “full of

good works.” After worship comes service, glorifying God among men and benefiting others.

“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work” (Col 1:10). The bringing up (not “dragging” up!) of children, lodging (spiritual) strangers, washing the saints’ feet (ministering to their temporal comforts), and relieving the afflicted (1Ti 5:10) are spoken of as “good works.” Unless our reading and study of the Scriptures is making us better soldiers of Jesus Christ, better citizens of the country in which we sojourn, better members of our earthly homes (kinder, gentler, more unselfish), “thoroughly furnished unto *all* good works,” it is profiting us little or nothing.

THE CONDESCENSION OF CHRIST

Part 1

For the sake of accuracy of thought, a distinction should be drawn between the condescension and the humiliation of Christ, though the majority of writers have confounded them. This distinction is clearly made by the Holy Spirit in Philippians 2:7, 9. First, He “made Himself of no reputation.” Second, He “humbled Himself.” The condescension of God the Son consisted in His assumption of our nature, the Word becoming flesh. His humiliation lay in the consequent abasement and sufferings which He endured in our nature. The assumption of human nature was not, of itself, a part of Christ’s humiliation, for He still retained it in His glorious exaltation. But for God the Son to take into union with Himself a created nature, animated dust, was an act of unparalleled and infinite condescension. May the Holy Spirit graciously awe us, and draw out our hearts in wonderment and worship, as we seek reverently to contemplate this holy mystery.

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” (Phi 2:6, 9). These verses trace the path of the Mediator from highest glory to deepest humiliation, and back again to supremest honour. What a wondrous path was His! And how terrible that this divine description of His path should have been

made the battle-ground of theological contention. At few points has the awful depravity of man's heart been more horribly displayed than by the blasphemies which have been vented upon these verses. We shall not sully these pages by mentioning them, but proceed, as the Holy Spirit enables, to a positive exposition of them.

A glance at the context (Phi 2:1, 5) will at once show that the practical design of the apostle was to exhort Christians unto spiritual fellowship among themselves—to be like-minded, to love one another, to be humble and lowly, to esteem others better than themselves. To enforce this, the example of Christ Jesus our Lord is proposed in the verses we are now to consider. We are bidden to have in us the same mind that was in Him—the mind, spirit, habit, of self-abnegation, the mind of self-sacrifice, and of obedience to God. We must humble ourselves beneath the mighty hand of God if we are to be exalted by Him in due time (1Pe 5:6). To set before us the example of Christ in its most vivid colours, in the most heart-affecting features, the Holy Spirit takes us back to the position which our Mediator occupied in a past eternity, shows us that supreme dignity and glory were His, and, then, reminds us of those unfathomable depths of condescension and humiliation into which He descended for our sakes.

“Who, being in the form of God” (Phi 2:6). First of all, this affirms the absolute Deity of the Son, for no mere creature, no matter how high in the scale of being, could ever be “in the form of God.” Three words are used concerning the Son's relation to the Godhead. First, He subsists in the “form of God.” God is to be seen in Him alone. Second, He is “the *image* of the invisible God” (Col 1:15), which expression tells of His *manifestations* of God *unto us* (cf. 2Co 4:6). Third, He is the “brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person” (Heb 1:3), or, more exactly, the “effulgency [outshining] of his glory and the exact expression of his substance” (Bagster's Interlinear), which perhaps combines both of the concepts suggested by “form” and “image,” namely, that the whole nature of God is in Christ, and that, by Him, God is declared and expressed to us.

“Who, being,” or subsisting (it is hardly correct to speak of a divine person “existing.” He is self-existent, He always *was*) in “the form of God.” “Form” (the Greek word is only found elsewhere in the New Testament in Philippians 2:7 and Mark 16:12) is that which is apparent, and “the form of God” is an expression which seems to denote His visible glory, His displayed majesty, His manifested sovereignty. From eternity, the Son was clothed with all the insignia of Deity, adorned with all divine splendour. “The Word *was* God” (Joh 1:1).

“Thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Phi 2:6). Almost every word in this verse has been made the occasion of contention. Making no pretensions to scholarship, the writer has sufficient confidence in the superintending providence of God to be satisfied that the translators of our Authorized Version were preserved

from any serious mistake on a subject so vitally important. As the first clause of our verse refers to an objective delineation of the divine dignity of the Son, so this second clause affirms His subjective consciousness thereof. The word, “thought,” is the same (in the Greek) as “esteem” in verse 3, except that there the present tense is used, here the aorist, which indicates a definite point in time past. The word rendered, “robbery,” denotes not the spoil or prize, but *the act* of taking the spoil. The Son reckoned not equality with the Father and the Holy Spirit an act of usurpation.

“Thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” This is only the negative way of saying that Christ considered equality with God as that which justly and essentially pertained and belonged to Him. It was His by indisputable right. Christ esteemed such equality as no invasion of another’s prerogative, but regarded Himself as being entitled to all divine honours. Because He held the rank of one of the three co-eternal, co-essential and co-glorious persons of the Godhead, the Son reckoned that His full and perfect equality with the other two was His own unchallengeable portion. In this second clause of verse 6, there is no doubt a latent reference to Satan’s fall. He, though “the anointed cherub” (Eze 28:14), was infinitely below God, yet did he grasp at an equality with Him. To this Isaiah 14:14 refers, “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: I *will be like* the most High.”

However the Greek word for “robbery” be translated, it is evident that the emphatic and vital term of this clause is “equal,” for if that signifies a real and proper equality, then the proof for the absolute deity of the Saviour is irrefragable. How, then, is the exact significance of this term to be determined? Not by having recourse to Homer, or any other heathen writer, but by discovering the meaning of its cognate. If we can fix the precise rendering of the adjective, then we may be sure of the adverb. Now, the adjective is found in Matthew 20:12; Luke 20:36; John 5:18; Acts 11:17; Revelation 21:16; and in each passage, the reference is not to a resemblance or likeness only, but to a *real* and proper equality! Thus, the force of this is parallel with, “I and my Father *are one*” (Joh 10:30).

“My Father is greater than I” (Joh 14:28) must not be allowed to negative John 10:30. There are *no* contradictions in Holy Writ. Each of these passages may be given its *full* force, without there being any conflict between them. The simple and sufficient way to discover their perfect consistency is to remember that Scripture exhibits our Saviour in *two* chief characters—as God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity—as Mediator, the God-man, the Word become flesh. In the former character, He is described as possessing all the perfections of Deity. In the latter, as the Servant of the Godhead. Speaking of Himself according to His essential being, He could unqualifiedly say, “I and my Father are one”—one in essence or nature. Speaking of Himself according to His mediatorial *office*, He could say, “My Father is greater than I”—not essentially, but economically.

Each expression that is used in Philippians 2:6 is expressly designed by the Holy Spirit to magnify the divine dignity of Christ's person. He is the possessor of a glory equal with God's. He possesses unquestioned right to that glory, deeming it no robbery to challenge it. His glory is not an accidental or phenomenal one, but a substantial and essential one, subsisting in the very "form of God." Between that which is infinite and that which is finite, that which is eternal and that which is temporal, He who is the Creator and that which is the creature, it is utterly impossible that there should be *any* equality. "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One" (Isa 40:25) is God's own challenge. Thus, for *any creature* to deem himself "equal with God" would be the highest robbery and supremest blasphemy of which any could ever be guilty.

"But made himself of no reputation" (Phi 2:7). The meaning of these words is explained in those which immediately follow. So far was the Son from tenaciously insisting upon His personal rights as a Member of the blessed Trinity, that He voluntarily relinquished them. He willingly set aside the magnificent distinctions of the Creator to appear in the form of a creature, yea, in the likeness of a fallen apostate. He abdicated His position of supremacy and entered that of servitude. Though equal in majesty and glory with God, He joyfully resigned Himself to the Father's will (Joh 6:38). Incomparable condescension was this. He who was by inherent right in the form of God, suffered His glory to be eclipsed, His honour to be laid in the dust, and Himself to be humbled to a death most shameful.

"And took upon him the form of a servant" (Phi 2:7). In so doing, He did not cease to *be* all that He was before, but He assumed to Himself something He had not previously. There was no change in His divine nature, but the uniting to His divine person of a human nature. "He who is God, can no more be not God, that He who is not God, can be God" (John Owen, 1616-1683). None of Christ's divine attributes were relinquished, for they are as inseparable from His divine person as heat is from fire, or weight is from substance. But His majestic glory was, for a season, obscured by the interposing veil of human flesh. Nor is our last statement negative by John 1:14, "We beheld his glory" (explained by Mat 16:17) is in contrast with the unregenerate masses before whom He appeared as "a root out of a dry ground," having "no form nor comeliness" (Isa 53:2).

It was *God Himself* who was "manifest in flesh" (1Ti 3:16). The One born in Bethlehem's manger was "the mighty God" (Isa 9:6) and heralded as "Christ the Lord" (Luk 2:11). Let there be no uncertainty on this point. Had He been "emptied" of any of His personal excellency, had His divine attributes been laid aside, then His satisfaction or sacrifice *would not* have possessed *infinite* value. The *glory* of His person was not in the slightest degree set aside or diminished when He became incarnate, though it was (in measure) concealed by the lowly form of the servant which He had assumed. Christ was still "equal with God" when He descended to earth. It was "the Lord of glory" (1Co 2:8) whom men crucified!

“And took *upon* him the form of a servant.” *That* was the great condescension, yet is it not possible for us fully to grasp the infinitude of the Son’s stoop. If God “humbled himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth” (Psa 113:6), how much more so actually to *become* “flesh” and be found among the most lowly! He entered into an *office* which placed Him below God (Joh 14:28; 1Co 11:3). He was, for a season, “made lower than the angels” (Heb 2:7). He was “made under the law” (Gal 4:4). He was made lower than the ordinary condition of man, for He was “a reproach of men, and despised of the people” (Psa 22:6).

What point all this gives to, “Let this mind be *in you*, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phi 2:5)! How earnestly should the Christian seek grace to be contented with the lowest place which God and men may assign him—to be ready to perform the meanest service—to be and do *anything* which brings glory to God! Let us be provoked unto humility and lowliness of mind, and thus follow the example which Christ has left us.

SAVING FAITH

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mar 16:16). These are the words of Christ, the risen Christ, and are the last that He uttered ere He left this earth. None more important were ever spoken to the sons of men. They call for our most diligent attention. They are of the greatest possible consequence, for in them are set forth the terms of eternal happiness or misery, life and death, and the conditions of both. Faith is the principal saving grace and unbelief the chief damning sin. The law which threatens death for every sin has already passed sentence of condemnation upon all, because all have sinned. This sentence is so peremptory that it admits of but one exception—all shall be executed if they believe not.

The condition of life as made known by Christ in Mark 16:16 is double—the principal one, faith—the accessory one, baptism. We term it accessory because it is not absolutely necessary to life, as faith is. Proof of this is found in the fact of the omission in the second half of the verse. It is *not*, “he that is not baptized shall be damned,” but “he that believeth not.” Faith is so indispensable that, though one be baptized, yet believeth not, he shall be damned. As we have said above, the sinner is already condemned. The sword of divine justice is drawn even now and waits only to strike the fatal blow. Nothing can divert it but saving faith in Christ. My reader,

continuance in unbelief makes hell as certain as though you were already in it. While you remain in unbelief, you have no hope and are “without God in the world” (Eph 2:12).

Now, if believing be so necessary, and unbelief so dangerous and fatal, it deeply concerns us to *know* what it is *to* believe. It behoves each of us to make the most diligent and thorough inquiry as to the nature of saving faith. The more so because all faith in Christ does not save. Yea, all faith in Christ does not save. Multitudes are deceived upon this vital matter. Thousands of those who sincerely believe that they have received Christ as their personal Saviour, and are resting on His finished work, are building upon a foundation of sand. Vast numbers who have not a doubt that God *has* accepted them in the Beloved, and that they are eternally secure in Christ, will only be awakened from their pleasant dreamings when the cold hand of death lays hold of them. And then it will be too late. Unspeakably solemn is this. Reader, will *that* be your fate? Others, just as sure that they were saved as you are, are now in hell.

1. Its Counterfeits

There are those who have a faith which is so like to that which is saving that they themselves may take it to be the very same, and others, too, may deem it sufficient, yea, even others who have the spirit of discernment. Simon Magus is a case in point. Of him, it is written, “Then Simon himself *believed* also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip” (Act 8:13). Such a faith had he, and so expressed it, that Philip took him to be a Christian, and admitted him to those privileges which are peculiar to them. Yet, a little later, the apostle Peter said to him, “Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God...I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity” (Act 8:21, 23).

A man may believe *all* the truth contained in Scripture, so far as he is acquainted with it, and he may be familiar with far more than are many genuine Christians. He may have studied the Bible for a longer time and so his faith may grasp much which they have not yet reached. As his knowledge may be more extensive, so his faith may be more comprehensive. In this kind of faith, he may go as far as the apostle Paul did when he said, “This I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing *all* things which are written in the law and in the prophets” (Act 24:14). But this is no proof that his faith is saving. An example to the contrary is seen in Agrippa, “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest” (Act 26:27).

Call the above a mere historical faith if you will, yet Scripture also teaches that people may possess a faith which is more than the product of mere nature, which is

of the Holy Spirit, and yet which is a *non-saving* one. This faith which we now allude to has two ingredients which neither education nor self-effort can produce—spiritual light and a divine power moving the mind to assent. Now, a man may have both illumination and inclination from heaven, and yet not be regenerated. We have a solemn proof of this in Hebrews 6:4. There we read of a company of apostates, concerning whom it is said, “It is impossible...to renew them again unto repentance.” Yet of *these* we are told that they were “enlightened,” which means that they not only perceived it, but were inclined toward and embraced it, and both, because they were “partakers of the Holy Spirit.”

People may have divine faith, not only in its originating power, but also in its foundation. The ground of their faith may be the divine testimony, upon which they rest with unshaken confidence. They may give credit to what they believe not only because it appears reasonable or even certain, but because they are fully persuaded it is the Word of Him who cannot lie. To believe the Scriptures on the ground of their being *God’s* Word is a divine faith. Such a faith had the nation of Israel after their wondrous exodus from Egypt and deliverance from the Red Sea. Of them, it is recorded, “The people feared the LORD, and *believed* the LORD, and his servant Moses” (Exo 14:31), yet of the great majority of them, it is said that their carcasses fell in the wilderness, and He swore that they should *not* enter into His rest (Heb 3:17-18).

It is indeed searching and solemn to make a close study of Scripture upon this point and discover how much is said of unsaved people in a way of having faith in the Lord. In Jeremiah 13:11, we find God saying, “For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to *cleave* unto *me* the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD,” and to “cleave” unto God is the same as to “trust” Him, see 11 Kings 18:5-6. Yet of that very same generation, God said, “This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing” (Jer 13:10).

The term “stay” is another word denoting firm trust. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them, but shall *stay* upon the LORD” (Isa 10:20). “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is *stayed* on thee” (Isa 26:3). And yet we find a class of whom it is recorded, “They call themselves of the holy city, and *stay themselves upon* the God of Israel” (Isa 48:2). Who would doubt that *this* was a saving faith? Ah, let us not be too hasty in jumping to conclusions. Of this same people God said, “Thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass” (Isa 48:4).

Again, the term, “*lean*,” is used to denote not only trust, but dependence on the Lord. Of the spouse, it is said, “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness,

leaning upon her beloved?” (Song 8:5). Can it be possible that *such* an expression as this is applied to those who are *unsaved*? Yes, it is, and by none other than God Himself, “Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that *abhor* judgment, and *pervert all* equity....The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they *lean upon the LORD*, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us” (Mic 3:9, 11). So thousands of carnal and worldly people are leaning upon Christ to uphold them, so that they cannot fall into hell, and are confident that no such “evil” can befall *them*. Yet is their confidence a horrible presumption.

To *rest upon* a divine promise with implicit confidence, and that in the face of great discouragement and danger, is surely something which we would not expect to find predicated of a people who were unsaved. Ah, truth *is* stranger than fiction. This very thing is depicted in God’s unerring Word. When Sennacherib and his great army besieged the cities of Judah, Hezekiah said, “Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God” (2Ch 32:7-8). And we are told that “the people *rested themselves upon* the words of Hezekiah.” Hezekiah had spoken the words of God and for the people to rest upon them was to rest on God Himself. Yet, less than fifteen years after, this same people did “worse than the heathen” (2Ch 33:9). Thus, resting upon a promise of God is not, of itself, any proof of regeneration.

To *rely upon* God on the ground of His “covenant” was far more than resting upon a divine promise. Yet unregenerate men may do even this. A case in point is found in Abijah, king of Judah. It is indeed striking to read and weigh what he said in 11 Chronicles 13, when Jeroboam and his hosts came against him. First, he reminded all Israel that the Lord God had given the kingdom to David and his sons for ever “by a *covenant* of salt” (verse 5). Next, he denounced the sins of his adversary (verses 6-9). Then he affirmed the Lord to be “our God” and that He was with him and his people (verses 10-12). But Jeroboam heeded not, but forced the battle upon them. “Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter” “because they *relied upon* the LORD God of their fathers” (verse 18). Yet, of this same Abijah, it is said, “He walked in all the sins of his father,” etc. (1Ki 15:3). Unregenerate men may rely upon Christ, rest on His promise, and plead His covenant.

“The people of Nineveh [who were heathen] *believed* God” (Jon 3:5). This is striking, for the God of heaven was a stranger to them, and His prophet a man whom they knew not—why then should they trust his message? Moreover, it was not a promise, but a threatening, which they believed. How much easier, then, is it for a people now living under the Gospel to apply to themselves a promise, than the heathen a terrible threat! “In applying a threatening we are like to meet with more

opposition, both from within and from without. From within, for a threatening is like a bitter pill, the bitterness of death is in it, no wonder if that hardly goes down. From without, too, for Satan will be ready to raise opposition. He is afraid to see men startled, lest the sense of their misery denounced in the threatening should rouse them up to seek how they may make an escape. He is more sure of them while they are secure, and will labour to keep them off the threatening, lest it should awaken them from dreams of peace and happiness, while they are sleeping in his very jaws.

“But now, in applying a promise, an unregenerate man ordinarily meets no opposition. Not from within, for the promise is all sweetness. The promise of pardon and life is the very marrow, the quintessence, of the Gospel. No wonder if they be ready to swallow it down greedily. And Satan will be so far from opposing, that he will rather encourage and assist one who has no interest in the promise *to* apply it. For this he knows will be the way to fix and settle them in their natural condition. A promise misapplied will be a *seal upon the sepulcher*, making them sure in the grave of sin, wherein they lay dead and rotting. Therefore, if unregenerate men may apply a threatening, which is in these respects more difficult, as appears may be the case of the Ninevites, why may they not be apt to apply [appropriate] a Gospel promise when they are not like to meet with such difficulty and opposition?” (David Clarkson, 1680, for some time co-pastor with John Owen, to whom we are indebted for much of the above).

Another most solemn example of those having faith, but not a saving one, is seen in the stony-ground hearers, of whom Christ said, “which for a while *believed*” (Luk 8:13). Concerning this class, the Lord declared that they hear the Word and with joy receive it (Mat 13:20). How many such have we met and known. Happy souls with radiant faces, exuberant spirits, full of zeal that others too may enter into the bliss which they have found. How difficult it is to distinguish such from genuine Christians—the good-ground hearts. The difference is not apparent. No, it lies *beneath* the surface—they have no *root* in themselves (Mat 13:21). Deep digging has to be done to discover this fact! Have you searched yourself narrowly, my reader, to ascertain whether or not “the root of the matter” (Job 19:28) be in you?

But let us refer now to another case which seems still more incredible. There are those who are willing to take Christ as their Saviour, yet who are most reluctant to submit to Him as their Lord, to be at His command, to be governed by His laws. Yet there are some unregenerate persons who acknowledge Christ as their Lord. Here is the scriptural proof for our assertion. “Many will say to me in that day, *Lord, Lord*, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast our devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mat 7:22-23). There is a *large* class (“many”) who profess subjection to Christ as Lord, and who do many mighty

works in His name—thus a people who can show you their faith by their works—and yet it is not a saving one!

It is impossible to say how far a non-saving faith may go and how very closely it may resemble that faith which is saving. Saving faith has Christ for its object—so has a non-saving faith (Joh 2:23-24). Saving faith is wrought by the Holy Spirit—so also is a non-saving faith (Heb 6:4). Saving faith is produced by the Word of God—so also is a non-saving faith (Mat 13:20-21). Saving faith will make a man prepare for the coming of the Lord—so also will a non-saving faith. Of both the foolish and wise virgins, it is written, “Then *all* those virgins arose, and *trimmed* their lamps” (Mat 25:7). Saving faith is accompanied with joy—so also is a non-saving faith (Mat 13:20).

Perhaps some readers are ready to say that all of this is very unsettling and, if really heeded, most distressing. May God in His mercy grant that this article may have just those very effects on many who read it. If you value your soul, dismiss it not lightly. If there be such a thing (and there *is*) as a faith in Christ which does not save, then how easy it is to be *deceived* about *my* faith! It is not without reason that the Holy Spirit has so plainly cautioned us at this very point. “A deceived heart hath turned him aside” (Isa 44:20). “The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee” (Oba 1:3). “Take heed that *ye* be not deceived” (Luk 21:8). “For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself” (Gal 6:3). At no point does Satan use this cunning and power more tenaciously, and more successfully, than in getting people to believe that they have a saving faith when they have not.

The devil deceives more souls by this one thing than by all his other devices put together. Take this present article as an illustration. How many a Satan-blinded soul will read it and then say, “It does not apply to *me*. I know that *my* faith *is* a saving one!” It is in this way that the devil turns aside the sharp point of God’s convicting Word and secures his captives in their unbelief. He works in them a false sense of security, by persuading them that they *are* safe within the ark, and induces them to ignore the threatenings of the Word and appropriate only its comforting promises. He dissuades them from heeding that most salutary exhortation, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; *prove* your own selves” (2Co 13:5). Oh, my reader, heed that word *now*.

In closing this article, we will endeavour to point out some of the particulars in which this non-saving faith is defective, and wherein it comes short of a faith which does save. First, with many, it is because they are willing for Christ to save them from hell, but are not willing for Him to save them from *self*. They want to be delivered from the wrath to come, but they wish to retain their self-will and self-pleasing. But He will not be dictated unto. You must be saved on *His* terms, or not at all. When Christ *saves*, He saves from *sin*—from its power and pollution, and therefore from its guilt. And the very essence of sin is the determination to have my

own way (Isa 53:6). Where Christ saves, He subdues this spirit of self-will and implants a genuine, a powerful, a lasting, desire and determination to please *Him*.

Again, many are never saved because they wish to divide Christ. They want to take Him as Saviour, but are unwilling to subject themselves unto Him as their Lord. Or if they are prepared to own Him as Lord, it is not as an *absolute* Lord. But this cannot be. Christ will either be Lord of all or He will not be Lord at all. But the vast majority of professing Christians would have Christ's sovereignty limited at certain points. It must not encroach too far upon the liberty which some worldly lust or carnal interest demands. His peace they covet, but His "*yoke*" is unwelcome. Of all such, Christ will yet say, "But these mine enemies, *which would not* that I should *reign over them*, bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luk 19:27).

Again, there are multitudes who are quite ready for Christ to justify them, but not to sanctify. Some kind, some degree, of sanctification they will tolerate, but to be sanctified *wholly*, their "whole spirit and soul and body" (1Th 5:23), they have no relish for. For their hearts to be sanctified, for pride and covetousness to be subdued, would be too much like the plucking out of a right eye. For the constant mortification of *all* their members, they have no taste. For Christ to come to them as a Refiner, to burn up their lusts, consume their dross, to dissolve utterly their old frame of nature, to melt their souls, so as to make them run in a new mould, they like not. To deny self utterly, and take up their cross daily, is a task from which they shrink with abhorrence.

Again, many are willing for Christ to officiate as their Priest, but not for Him to legislate as their King. Ask them, in a general way, if they are ready to do whatsoever Christ requires of them, and they will answer in the affirmative, emphatically, and with confidence. But come to particulars—apply to each one of them those specific commandments and precepts of the Lord which *they* are ignoring, and they will at once cry out, "Legalism!" or "We cannot be perfect in everything." Name nine duties and perhaps they are performing them, but mention a tenth and it at once makes them angry, for you have come too close home to *their* case. After much persuasion, Naaman was induced to bathe in the Jordan, but he was unwilling to abandon the house of Rimmon (2Ki 5:18). Herod heard John gladly and did "many things" (Mar 6:20), but when John referred to Herodias, it touched him to the quick. Many are willing to give up their theatre-going and card-parties, who refuse to go forth unto Christ outside the camp. Others are willing to go outside the camp, yet refuse to *deny* their fleshly and worldly lusts. Reader, if there is a *reserve* in your obedience, you are on the way to hell. Our next article will take up the nature of saving faith.

JUNE

REVEALED

There is a very real sense in which “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” (1Co 2:14). All the blessed realities of Christian experience are entirely hid from his perceptions. He is a stranger to harrowing convictions of sin, the conscious removal of an intolerable load from his conscience, the joy of assured pardon, the blessedness of communion with God, the ceaseless conflict between the flesh and the spirit, the ups and downs of the Christian life. He may have a nominal and notional knowledge thereof, but not an inward and saving acquaintance with them. We may have a traditional cognizance of the same, but not an experiential and affecting realization of them in the soul. Nor is it possible for us to acquire the latter by any industry of our own. Unregenerate persons may, like the Jews of old, have a theory of these things in their heads, so that they can discourse upon and discuss the same, and yet be totally lacking the power of godliness in their affections, so that their character and conduct are radically influenced thereby. Before we can have a spiritual knowledge of divine things, we must, by a miracle of God’s grace and power, be made spiritual persons. Before we are capacitated to discern spiritual things, the veil must be removed from our understanding and we conducted into the light. Spiritual things are disclosed to us and not discovered by us.

First, *God revealed*. God is immutable, incorporeal, pure spirit, and therefore, invisible. He is infinite in His being, and therefore, incomprehensible to the finite creature. He is exalted so high above all, that none by searching can find Him out. In order to be known, He must reveal Himself. This He has been pleased to do in the works of His hands. The existence of the universe proclaims Him. Creation evinces the Creator. The heavens declare His glory and the firmament shows His handiwork. “The invisible things of him [His own perfections] from the creation of

the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Rom 1:20) for their unbelief and atheism. It is because the productions of divine wisdom receive not the thoughtful attention which they call for that men are so little affected and awed by them. We need to heed that exhortation, “Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God” (Job 37:14). If we duly examine the marvellous mechanism of our own bodies, we should be humbled and bowed in adoration before their Author, saying, “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psa 139:14). God is revealed *in* man, for his conscience bears witness that he is accountable to Him. Yet sin has so blinded the human mind that God is a complete stranger to the natural man, and after four thousand years of human history, it had to be recorded, “The world by wisdom knew not God” (1Co 1:21).

Second, *God revealed in and by Christ*. “The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” The One who had been with God from everlasting, who was Himself God, took upon Him our humanity, and became the visible “image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15). By means of the divine incarnation, the infinite became finite, the incorporeal tangible, the incomprehensible cognizable. The One born at Bethlehem was none other than “Immanuel...God with us.” He ceased not to be all that He was previously, but was now clothed with flesh and blood. As the Word, He made God known in audible terms, “I am Alpha and Omega,” He declared (Rev 1:8), spelling out God in human language. As a “word” makes unseen thought objective and apparent, so Christ was “God manifest in flesh” (1Ti 3:16). He has exhibited the attributes of God, displayed His ineffable character, unveiled His heart, so perfectly, that He could say, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (Joh 14:9). It is in and by Him that we may obtain a fuller knowledge of deity, for “The light of the knowledge of the glory of God” shines “in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). In His life of impeccable purity, we behold God’s holiness—in His utter selflessness, God’s benevolence—in His peerless teaching, God’s wisdom—in His unrivalled miracles, God’s power—in His gentleness and meekness, God’s patience—in His love and grace, the outshining of His glory.

Third, *Christ is revealed objectively in the Gospel* for faith’s acceptance. That salvation of which the prophets inquired and searched diligently, and which the angels desired to look into, is now openly proclaimed. Therein are the glorious perfections of the Redeemer’s person, His official relations, His mediatorial work, all that He did for lost sinners, freely proclaimed. Blessed is it to be informed that God’s so great salvation, “At the first began to be spoken by the Lord,” and that it has been confirmed to us by those who actually heard Him (Heb 2:3). In other words, the triune God valued the Gospel so highly that He revealed it first to and by His incarnate Son, for in all things He must have the pre-eminence. Of such vital and vast importance is the Gospel that the whole of the first New Testament epistle is devoted to a doctrinal exposition and practical application of it—as its opening

verse indicates, for the key is always hung upon the door in the Scriptures. Immediately after the introduction, the thesis of Romans is stated, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom 1:16-17). In the Gospel, a discovery is made of the way of justification, of how those who have broken the Law may be justly pronounced righteous by God (Rom 3:21-31; 4:3-8, 22, 24; 5:1, 17-18), which is the first great and glorious benefit that the believing sinner receives through Christ, and which is the foundation of all other benefits.

Fourth, *Christ is revealed subjectively by the Spirit*. The Gospel exhibits the manifold wisdom of God, the marvels of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ, the bliss of celestial glory. Yet, plainly as these are published, the Gospel is a “mystery” (1Co 2:7; Col 1:27), and none but the regenerate are acquainted with its secret, which is “Christ *in you* the hope of glory”—to which all the unregenerate are total strangers. Many are well informed as to the contents of the Gospel, who know nothing of its riches and glory—just as a child and a jeweler may both admire a valuable pearl and call it by the same name, yet the former has no real conception of its worth and excellence. One may acquire an accurate idea of the Gospel through hearsay or study, and have but “the form of knowledge” (Rom 2:20), and not an experiential acquaintance therewith—there is a greater difference between the two than there is in seeing the picture of a person and having intimate intercourse with him. Neither learning nor labour can impart a spiritual insight into the things of God. If they are to be effectual unto the saving of the soul, the Holy Spirit must teach us (Joh 14:26). None but He can write God’s Law upon the heart, stamp God’s image upon the soul, and sanctify through the truth. There must be a divine application to the inward man of both the Law and the Gospel if the will is to be moved.

It is the blessed Spirit who convicts the conscience of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, filling it with terror and anguish at its enormity and heinousness. He it is who convinces us of the utter futility of trying to save ourselves, and makes us realize that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the esteem of God. He it is who reveals to the soul the suitability and sufficiency of Christ to meet our dire needs, and communicates faith to lay hold of Him. He it is who forms Christ in us (Gal 4:19), for Christ in the flesh (incarnate), Christ in the Gospel (objectively considered), will profit not unless He be formed in the soul. He teaches the believer many things, but His supreme subject is Christ (Joh 16:14). He presses Christ’s claims upon us, exalts His person, makes Him supremely attractive to the heart. Many things in nature are very beautiful, but when the sun shines on them, we appreciate their splendour all the more. Thus it is when we are enabled to behold Christ by the light of the Spirit’s teaching. There must be not only a knowledge of

spiritual things, but a spiritual knowledge of the same. The light which we have of them must be answerable to the things themselves. We must see them in God's light (Psa 36:9). As the things themselves are spiritual, they must be opened to us by the Spirit.

Fifth, *the divine will revealed*. "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may *do* all the words of this law" (Deu 29:29). Instead of obtruding into what God has been pleased to conceal from us, we are to fix our attention upon what He has made known about the obedience He requires from us. His Word is not given to gratify our curiosity, still less to wrangle over, but for the ordering of our lives, to reduce it to practice. Not a few things in God's counsels and dealings appear to us mysterious, much in prophecy obscure, but the path of duty is clearly marked out. God has kept back nothing that would be profitable to us. All our study of it will be of no avail unless we be "doers of the word" (Jam 1:22).

THE GLORIFIED MEDIATOR

The law had "a shadow of good things to come" (Heb 10:1). A beautiful illustration and exemplification of this is found in the closing verses of Exodus 34, in which we behold Moses descending from the mount with radiant face. The key to our present portion is found in noting the exact position that it occupies in this book of redemption. It comes after the legal covenant which Jehovah had made with Israel. It comes before the actual setting up of the tabernacle and the Shekinah-glory filling it. As we shall see, our passage is interpreted for us in 11 Corinthians 3. What we have here in Exodus 34 supplies both a comparison and a contrast with the new dispensation, the dispensation of the Spirit, of grace, of life more abundant. But before that dispensation was inaugurated, God saw fit that man should be fully tested under Law, and that for the purpose of demonstrating what he is as a fallen and sinful creature.

Man's trial under the Mosaic economy demonstrated two things. First, that he is "ungodly." Second, that he is "without strength" (Rom 5:6). But these are negative things. In Romans 8:7, a third feature of man's terrible state is mentioned, namely, that he is "enmity against God." This was made manifest when God's Son became incarnate and tabernacled for thirty-three years on this earth. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (Joh 1:11). Not only so, but He was "despised

and rejected of men” (Isa 53:3). Nay, more, they hated Him, hated Him “without a cause” (Joh 15:25). Nor would their hatred be appeased till they had condemned Him to a malefactor’s death and nailed Him to the accursed cross. And let it be remembered, that it was not merely the Jews who put to death the Lord of glory, but the Gentiles also. Therefore did the Lord say, when looking forward to His death, “Now is the judgment of this *world*” (Joh 12:31)—not of Israel only. There the probation or testing of man ended.

Man is not now under probation. He is under condemnation. “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Rom 3:10-12). Man is not on trial. He is a culprit under sentence. No pleading will avail. No excuses will be accepted. The present issue between God and the sinner is, Will man bow to God’s righteous verdict?

This is where the gospel meets us. It comes to us as to those who are already “lost,” as to those who are “ungodly,” “without strength,” “enmity against God.” It announces to us the amazing *grace* of God—the only hope for poor sinners. But that grace will not be welcomed until the sinner bows to the sentence of God against him. That is why both repentance and faith are demanded from the sinner. These two must not be separated. Paul preached “Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 20:21). Repentance is the sinner’s acknowledgment of that sentence of condemnation under which he lies. Faith is the acceptance of the grace and mercy which are extended to him through Christ. Repentance is not the turning over of a new leaf and the vowing that I will mend my ways, rather is it a setting to my seal that God is true when He tells me that I am “*without strength*,” that in myself my case is hopeless, that I am no more able to “do better next time” than I am to create a world. Not until this is really believed (not as the result of my experience, but on the authority of God’s holy Word) shall I really turn to Christ and welcome Him—not as a Helper, but as a *Saviour*.

As it was dispensationally, so it is experimentally. There must be “a ministration of death” (2Co 3:7) before there is a “ministration of spirit” or life (2Co 3:8). There must be “the ministration of condemnation” before “the ministration of righteousness” (2Co 3:9). Ah, a “*ministration* of condemnation and death” falls strangely upon our ears, does it not? A “ministration of *grace*” we can understand, but a “ministration of condemnation” is not so easy to grasp. But this latter was man’s first *need*. It must be shown what he is in himself—a hopeless wreck, utterly incapable of meeting the righteous requirements of a holy God—before he is ready to be a debtor to mercy alone. We repeat. As it was dispensationally, so it is experimentally. It was to this (his own experience) that the apostle Paul referred when he said, “For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died” (Rom 7:9). In his unregenerate days, he was, in his

own estimation, “alive,” yet it was “*without* the law,” i.e. apart from meeting its demands. “But when the commandment came,” when the Holy Spirit wrought within him, when the Word of God came in power to his heart, then “sin revived,” that is, he was made aware of his awful condition, and then he “died” to his self-righteous complacency. He saw that, in himself, his case was hopeless. Yes, the appearing of the glorified mediator comes not before, but after, the legal covenant.

“And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments” (Exo 34:28). Our passage abounds in comparisons and contrasts. The “forty days” here at once recalls to mind the “forty days” mentioned in Matthew 4:2. Here it was Moses. There it was Christ. Here it was Moses on the mount. There it was Christ in the wilderness. Here it was Moses favoured with a glorious revelation from God. There it was Christ being tempted of the Devil. Here it was Moses receiving the Law, at the mouth of JEHOVAH. There it was Christ being assailed by the devil to repudiate that Law. We scarcely know which is the greater wonder of the two—that a sinful worm of the earth was raised to such a height of honour as to be permitted to spend a season in the presence of the great JEHOVAH, or that the Lord of glory should stoop so low as to be for six weeks with the foul fiend.

“And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him” (Exo 34:29). Very blessed is it to compare and contrast this second descent of Moses from the mount with that which is before us in the thirty-second chapter. There we see the face of Moses diffused with anger (Exo 32:19). Here he comes down with countenance radiant. There he beheld a people engaged in idolatry, here he returns to a people abashed. There we behold him dashing the tables of stone to the ground (Exo 32:19). Here he deposits them in the ark (Deu 10:5).

“And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him” (Exo 34:29). This also reminds us of a New Testament episode, which is very similar, yet vastly dissimilar. It was on the mount that the face of Moses was made radiant, and it was on the mount that our Lord was transfigured. But the glory of Moses was only a reflected one, whereas that of Christ was inherent. The shining of Moses’ face was the consequence of his being brought into the immediate presence of the glory of JEHOVAH. The transfiguration of Christ was the outshining of His own personal glory. The radiance of Moses was confined to his face, but of Christ we read, “His raiment was white as the light” (Mat 17:2). Moses *knew not* that the skin of his face shone. Christ did, as is evident from His words, “Tell the vision to no man” (Mat 17:9).

This twenty-ninth verse brings out, most blessedly, what is the certain consequence of intimate communion with the Lord, and that in a twofold way. First, no soul can enjoy real fellowship with the all-glorious God without being affected thereby, and that to a marked degree. Moses had been absorbed in the communications received and in contemplating the glory of Him who spoke with him; and his own person caught and retained some of the beams of that glory. So it is still. As we read in Psalm 34:5, “They looked upon Him, and their faces were radiant” (R.V.). It is communion with the Lord that conforms us to His image. We shall not be more Christlike till we walk more frequently and more closely with Him. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are *changed* into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:18).

The second consequence of real communion with God is that we shall be less occupied with our wretched selves. Though the face of Moses shone with “a light not seen on land or sea,” he wist it not. This illustrates a vital difference between self-righteous Pharisaism and true godliness. The former produces complacency and pride, the latter leads to self-abnegation and humility. The Pharisee (and there are many of his tribe still on earth) boasts of his attainments, advertises his imaginary spirituality, and thanks God that he is not as other men. But the one who, by grace, enjoys much fellowship with the Lord learns of Him who was “meek and lowly in heart” (Mat 11:29), and says, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory” (Psa 115:1). Being engaged with the beauty of the Lord, he is delivered from self-occupation, and therefore is unconscious of the very fruit of the Spirit which is being brought forth in him. But though *he* is not aware of his increasing conformity to Christ, *others* are.

“And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him” (Exo 34:30). This shows us the third effect of communion with God. Though the individual himself is unconscious of the glory manifested through him, others are cognizant of it. Thus it was when two of Christ’s apostles stood before the Jewish Sanhedrin, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, *that they had been with Jesus*” (Act 4:13). Ah, we cannot keep company very long with the Holy One without His impress being left upon us. The man who is thoroughly devoted to the Lord needs not to wear some badge or button in his coat-lapel, nor to proclaim with his lips that he is “living a life of victory.” It is still true that actions speak louder than words.

“And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of His face shone; and they were *afraid* to come nigh him” (Exo 34:30). The typical meaning of this is given in 11 Corinthians 3:7, “But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel *could not*

stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance.” Concerning this, another has said: “Why, then, were they afraid to come near him? Because the very glory that shone upon his face searched their hearts and consciences—being what they were, sinners, and unable of themselves to meet even the smallest requirements of the covenant which had now been inaugurated. It was of necessity a ‘ministration’ of condemnation and death, for it required a righteousness from them which they could not render, and, inasmuch as they must fail in the rendering it, would pronounce their condemnation, and bring them under the penalty of transgression, which was death. The glory which they thus beheld upon the face of Moses was the expression to them of the holiness of God—that holiness which sought from them conformity to its own standards, and which would vindicate the breaches of that covenant which had now been established. They were, therefore, afraid because they knew in their inmost souls that they could not stand before Him from whose presence Moses had come” (Edward Dennett, 1831-1914).

Typically, the covenant which JEHOVAH made with Moses and Israel at Sinai, and the tables of stone on which were engraved the Ten Commandments, foreshadowed that new covenant which He will yet make with Israel in a coming day, “For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God” (Eze 36:24-28). “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah....After those days, said the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it *in their hearts*....And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD” (Jer 31:31-34).

Spiritually, this is made good for Christians even now. Under the gracious operations of the Spirit of God, *our hearts* have been made plastic and receptive. It is to this fact that Paul refers at the beginning of 11 Corinthians 3, “The saints at Corinth had been manifested to be Christ’s epistle ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on stone tables, but on fleshy tables of the heart. Their hearts being made impressionable by divine working, Christ could write upon them, using Paul as a pen, and making every mark in the power of the Spirit of God. But what is written is the knowledge of God as revealed through the Mediator in the grace of the new covenant, so that it might be true in the hearts of the saints—‘They shall all know me,’ Then Paul goes on to speak of himself as

made competent by God to be a new covenant ministry, ‘not of the letter, but of the spirit,’” (C. A. Coates, 1862-1945).

“And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai. And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face” (Exo 34:31-33). Ah, does not this explain their fear as they beheld the shining of Moses’ face. Note *what* was in his hands! He carried the two tables of stone on which were written the ten words of the Law, the “ministration of condemnation.” The nearer the light of the glory came, while it was connected with the righteous claims of God upon them, the more cause they had to fear. That holy Law condemned them, for man in the flesh could not meet its claims. “However blessed it was *typically*, it was *literally* a ministry of death, for Moses was not a quickening spirit, nor could he give his spirit to the people, nor could the glory of his face bring them into conformity with himself as the mediator. Hence, the veil had to be on his face” (C. A. Coates).

The dispensational interpretation of this is given in 11 Corinthians 3:13, “And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look *to the end* of that which is abolished.” Here the apostle is treating of Judaism as an economy. Owing to their blindness spiritually, Israel were unable to discern the deep significance of the ministry of Moses, the purpose of God behind it, that which all the types and shadows pointed forward to. The “*end*” of 11 Corinthians 3:13 is parallel with Romans 10:4, “For Christ is *the end* of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” “The veil on Israel’s heart is self-sufficiency, which makes them still refuse to submit to God’s righteousness. But when Israel’s heart turns to the Lord, the veil will be taken away. What a wonderful chapter Exodus 34 will be to them then! For they will see that *Christ* is the spirit of it all! What they will see, we are privileged to see now. All this had an ‘end’ on which *we* can, through infinite grace, fix our eyes. The ‘end’ was the glory of the Lord as the Mediator of the new covenant. He has come out of death and gone up on high, and the glory of all that God is in grace is shining in His face” (C. A. Coates).

“But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him” (Exo 34:34-35). Moses unveiled in the presence of the Lord is a beautiful type of the believer of this dispensation. The Christian beholds the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ (2Co 4:6). Therefore, instead of being stricken with fear, he approaches with boldness. God’s law *cannot* condemn him, for its every demand has been fully met and satisfied by his Substitute. Hence,

instead of trembling before the glory of God, we “*rejoice* in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2).

“There is no veil now either on *His* face or *our* hearts. He makes those who believe on Him to *live* in the knowledge of God, and in response to God, for He is the quickening Spirit. And He gives His Spirit to those who believe. We have the Spirit of the glorious Man in whose face the glory of God shines. Is it not surpassingly wonderful? One has to ask sometimes, ‘Do we really believe it?’ But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit (2Co 3:18). If we had not His Spirit, we should have no liberty to look on the glory of the Lord, or to see Him as the Spirit of these marvellous types. But we have liberty to look on it all, and there is transforming power in it. Saints under new-covenant ministry are transfigured.

“This is the ‘surpassing glory’ which could not be seen or known until it shone in the face of Him of whom Moses in Exodus 34 is so distinctly a type. The whole typical system was temporary, but its ‘spirit’ abides, for *Christ* was righteousness, and all is abiding. The ministry of the new covenant subsists and abounds in glory” (C. A. Coates).

As a sort of appendix to this article, we shall proffer, for the sake of those who may value it, an outline of the apostle’s argument in 11 Corinthians 3. The authority of Paul’s apostleship had been called into question by certain Judaizers. In the first verses of this chapter, he appeals to the Corinthians themselves as the proof of his God-commissioned and God-blessed ministry. In verse 6, he defines the *character* of his ministry, and this for the purpose of showing its superiority over that of his enemies. He and his fellow gospellers were “ministers of the *new* testament” or covenant. A series of contrasts is then drawn between the two covenants, that is between Judaism and Christianity. That which pertained to the former is called “the letter,” that relating to the new “the spirit”; i.e. the one was mainly concerned with that which was external, the other was largely internal—the one slew, the other gave life—this was one of the leading differences between the Law and the gospel.

In what follows, the apostle, while allowing that the Law was glorious, shows that the gospel is still more glorious. The old covenant was a “ministration of death,” for the Law could only condemn. Therefore, though a glory was connected with it, yet was it such that man in the flesh could not behold (verse 7). Then how much more excellent would be, must be, the glory of the new covenant, seeing that it was “a ministration of the spirit” (verse 8)—compare verse 3 for proof of this. If there was a glory connected with that which “concluded all under sin” (Gal 3:22), much more glorious must be that ministration which announced a righteousness which is “unto all and upon all them that believe” (Rom 3:22). It is more glorious to pardon than to condemn, to give life than to destroy (2Co 3:9). The glory of the

former covenant, therefore, pales into nothingness before the latter (2Co 3:10). This is further seen from the fact that Judaism is “done away,” whereas Christianity “remaineth” (2Co 3:11)—compare Hebrews 8:7-8.

At verse 12, the apostle draws still another contrast between the two economies, namely, the plainness or perspicuity over against the obscurity and ambiguity of their respective ministries (2Co 3:12-15). The apostle used “great plainness of speech,” whereas the teaching of the ceremonial law was by means of shadows and symbols. Moreover, the minds of the Israelites were blinded, so that there was a veil over their ears, and therefore, when the writings of Moses were read, they were incapable of looking beyond the type to the Antitype. This veil remains upon them unto this day, and will continue until they turn unto the Lord (2Co 3:15-16). *Literally*, the covenant of Sinai was a ministration of condemnation and death, and the glory of it had to be veiled. But it had an “end” (2Co 3:13), upon which Israel could not fix their eyes. They will see that “end” in a coming day, but in the meantime, *we* are permitted to read the old covenant without a veil, and to see that *Christ* is the “spirit” of it all, and that it had in view that which could only have its fulfilment under new covenant conditions, namely, God’s glory secured in and by the Mediator.

The language of 11 Corinthians 3:17 is involved in some obscurity, “Now the Lord is that Spirit.” This does not mean that Christ is the Holy Spirit. The “Spirit” here is the same as in 11 Corinthians 3:6—“not of the letter, but of the spirit,” cf. Romans 7:6. The Mosaic system is called “the letter” because it was purely objective. It possessed no inward principle or power. But the gospel deals with the heart, and supplies the spiritual power (Rom 1:16). Moreover, *Christ* is the spirit, the life, the heart and centre of all the ritual and ceremonialism of Judaism. *He* is the key to the Old Testament, for, “In the volume of the book” (Psa 40:7), it is written of Him. So also Christ is the spirit and life of Christianity. He is “a quickening spirit” (1Co 15:45). And “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2Co 3:17). Apart from Christ, the sinner, be he Jew or Gentile, is in a state of bondage. He is the slave of sin and the captive of the devil. But where the Son makes free, He frees indeed (Joh 8:32).

Finally, the apostle contrasts the two *glories*, the glory connected with the old covenant—the shining on Moses’ face at the giving of the Law (when the covenant was made)—with the glory of the new covenant, in the person of Christ. “But we all, with open [unveiled] face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:18). Note here, first, “*we all*.” Moses alone beheld the glory of the Lord in the mount. Every Christian now beholds it. Second, “with open face,” with freedom and with confidence, whereas Israel were afraid to gaze on the radiant and majestic face of Moses. Third, we are “changed into the same image.” The law had no power to convert or purify, but the ministry of the gospel, under the

operation of the Spirit, *has* a transforming power. Those who are saved by it, those who are occupied with Christ, as set forth in the Word (the “mirror”), are, little by little, conformed to His image. Ultimately, when we “see him as he is” (1Jo 3:2), we shall be “like him”—full, perfectly, eternally.

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

6. The Scriptures and Obedience

All professing Christians are agreed, in theory at least, that it is the bounden duty of those who bear His name to honour and glorify Christ in this world. But as to *how* this is to be done, as to what He requires from us to this end, there is wide difference of opinion. Many suppose that honouring Christ simply means to join some “church,” take part in and support its various activities. Others think that honouring Christ means to speak of Him to others and be diligently engaged in “personal work.” Others seem to imagine that honouring Christ signifies little more than making liberal financial contributions to His cause. Few indeed realize that Christ is honoured only as we *live holily* unto Him and that by walking in subjection to His revealed will. Few indeed really believe that word, “Behold, *to obey* is better than sacrifice, and *to hearken* than the fat of rams” (1Sa 15:22).

We are not Christians at all unless we have fully surrendered to and “received Christ Jesus *the Lord*” (Col 2:6). Oh, dear reader, we would plead with you to ponder that statement diligently. Satan is deceiving so many today by leading them to suppose that they are savingly trusting in “the finished work” of Christ while their hearts remain unchanged and self still rules their lives. Listen to God’s word, “Salvation is far from the wicked; *for they seek not* thy statutes” (Psa 119:155). Do you really *seek* His “statutes”? Do you diligently search His Word to discover what He has commanded? “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1Jo 2:4). What could be plainer than that?

“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say?” (Luk 6:46). Reality in life, not glowing words from the lips, is what Christ requires. What a searching and solemn word is that in James 1:22, “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”! There are many “hearers” of the Word, regular hearers, reverent hearers, interested hearers, but alas, what they hear is not *incorporated* into the life. It does not regulate their way. And *God* says that they who are not *doers* of the Word are deceiving their own selves!

Alas, how many such there are in Christendom today. They are not downright hypocrites, but deluded. They suppose that, because they are so clear upon salvation by grace alone, *they* are saved. They suppose that, because they sit under the ministry of a man who has “made the Bible a new book” to them, they have grown in grace. They suppose that, because their store of biblical knowledge has increased, they are more spiritual. They suppose that the mere listening to a servant of God or reading his writings is *feeding* on the Word. Not so! We “feed” on the Word only when we personally appropriate, masticate, *and assimilate into our lives* what we hear or read. Where there is not an increasing conformity of heart and life to God’s Word, then increased knowledge will only bring increased condemnation! “And that servant, which *knew* his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither *did* according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes” (Luk 12:47).

“Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2Ti 3:7). This is one of the prominent characteristics of the “perilous times” in which we are now living. People hear one preacher after another, attend this conference and that conference, read book after book on biblical subjects, and yet never attain unto a vital and practical acquaintance with the truth, so as to have an impression of its power and efficacy on the soul. There is such a thing as spiritual *dropsy* and multitudes are suffering from it. The more they hear, the more they want to. They drink in sermons and addresses with avidity, but their lives are unchanged. They are puffed up with their knowledge, not humbled into the dust before God. The faith of God’s elect is “the acknowledging [in the life] of the truth which is *after godliness*” (Ti 1:1), but to this, the vast majority are total strangers.

God has given us His Word not only with the design of instructing us, but for the purpose of *directing* us—to make known what He requires us to *do*. The first thing *we* need is a clear and distinct *knowledge* of our duty, and the first thing *God* demands of us is a conscientious *practice* of it, corresponding to our knowledge. “What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic 6:8). “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecc 12:13). The Lord Jesus affirmed the same thing when He said, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (Joh 15:14).

1. Now man profits from the Word as he discovers *God’s demands upon him*. His undeviating demands, for *He* changes not. It is a great and grievous mistake to suppose that, in this present dispensation, God has *lowered* His demands, for that would necessarily imply that His previous demand was a harsh and unrighteous one. Not so. “The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom 7:12). The sum of God’s demands is, “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deu 6:5), and the Lord Jesus repeated it in Matthew 22:37. The apostle Paul enforced the same when he wrote, “If any man *love not* the Lord Jesus, let him be *Anathema*” (1Co 16:22).

To proceed a step farther. 2. A man profits from the Word when he discovers how entirely and how sinfully he has *failed to meet* God’s demands. And let us point out, for the benefit of any who may take issue with the last paragraph, that no man can see what a sinner he is, how infinitely short he has fallen of measuring up to God’s standard, until he has a clear sight of the exalted demands of God upon him! Just in proportion as preachers *lower* God’s standard of what He requires from every human being, to that extent will their hearers obtain an inadequate and faulty conception of their sinfulness, and so the less will they perceive their need of an almighty Saviour! But once a soul really perceives *what are* God’s demands upon him, and how completely and constantly he has failed to render Him His due, then does he recognize what a desperate situation he is in. The Law must be preached before any are ready for the gospel.

To proceed farther. 3. A man profits from the Word when he is taught therefrom that God, in His infinite grace, has fully *provided for* His people’s meeting His own demands. At this point, too, practically all present-day preaching is seriously defective. There is being given forth what may loosely be termed a “half gospel,” but which in reality is virtually *a denial* of the true gospel. Christ is brought in, yet only as a sort of make-weight. That Christ has vicariously met every demand of God, upon all who believe upon Him, is blessedly true, yet it is only a part of the truth. The Lord Jesus has not only vicariously satisfied for His people the requirements of God’s righteousness, but He has also secured that *they* shall *personally* satisfy them too. Christ has procured the Holy Spirit to make good in them what the Redeemer wrought for them.

The grand and glorious miracle of salvation is that the saved are *regenerated*. A transforming work is wrought within them. Their understandings are illuminated, their hearts are changed, their wills are renewed. They are made “new creatures in Christ Jesus” (2Co 5:17). God refers to this miracle of grace thus: “I will put my *laws* into their mind, and write them in their hearts” (Heb 8:10). The heart is now inclined to God’s law. A disposition has been communicated to it which *answers* to its demands. There is a sincere desire to perform it. And thus the quickened soul is able to say, “When thou saidst, *Seek ye* my face; my heart said unto thee, thy face, LORD, *will I seek*” (Psa 27:8).

Christ not only rendered a perfect obedience unto the Law for the justification of His believing people, but He also merited for them those supplies of His Spirit which were essential unto their sanctification, and which alone could transform carnal creatures and enable them to render acceptable obedience unto God. Though Christ died for the “ungodly” (Rom 5:6), though He *finds* them ungodly (Rom 4:5) when He justifies them, yet He *leaves them not* in that abominable state. On the contrary, He effectually teaches them, by His

Spirit, to *deny* ungodliness and worldly lusts (Ti 2:12). Just as weight cannot be separated from a stone, or heat from fire, so cannot justification and sanctification.

When God really pardons a sinner in the court of his conscience, under the sense of that amazing grace, the heart is purified, the life is rectified, and the whole man is sanctified. Christ “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us *from* all iniquity, and *purify* unto himself a peculiar people [not “careless about” but], zealous of good works” (Ti 2:14). Just as a substance and its properties, causes and their necessary effects, are inseparably connected, so are a saving faith *and* conscientious obedience unto God. Hence, we read of “the obedience *of* faith” (Rom 16:26).

Said the Lord Jesus, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, *he it is that loveth me*” (Joh 14:21). Not in the Old Testament, the Gospels or the epistles does God own anyone as a lover of Him save he who keeps *His* commandments. Love is something more than sentiment or emotion. It is a principle of action, and it expresses itself in something more than honeyed expressions, namely, by deeds which please the object loved. “For this is the love of God, that we *keep* his commandments” (1Jo 5:3). Oh, my reader, you are deceiving yourself if you think you love God and yet have no deep desire and make no real effort to walk obediently before Him.

But what is *obedience to God*? It is far more than a mechanical performance of certain duties. I may have been brought up by Christian parents, and under them acquired certain moral habits, and yet my abstaining from taking the Lord’s name in vain, and being guiltless of stealing, may be no *obedience* to the third and eighth commandments. Again, obedience to God is far more than conforming to the conduct of His people. I may board in a home where the Sabbath is strictly observed, and out of respect for them, or because I think it is a good and wise course to rest one day in seven, I may refrain from all unnecessary labour on that day, and yet not keep the fourth commandment at all! Obedience is not only subjection to an external law, but it is the surrendering of my will to the authority of another. Thus, obedience to God is the heart’s recognition of His lordship, of His right to command, and my duty to comply. It is the complete subjection of the soul to the blessed yoke of Christ.

That obedience which God requires can proceed only from a heart which *loves* Him. “Whatsoever ye do, do it *heartily*, as to the Lord” (Col 3:23). That obedience which springs from a dread of punishment is servile. That obedience which is performed in order to procure favours from God is selfish and carnal. But spiritual and acceptable obedience is cheerfully given. It is the heart’s free response to and gratitude for the unmerited regard and love of God for us.

4. Now we profit from the Word when we not only see it is our bounden duty to obey God, but when there is wrought in us *a love for* His commandments. The “blessed” man is the one whose “*delight* is in the law of the LORD” (Psa 1:2). And again, we read, “Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments” (Psa 112:1). It affords a real test for our hearts to face honestly the questions, “Do I really value His “commandments” as much as I do His *promises*? Ought I not to do so?” Assuredly, for the one proceed as truly from *His love* as do the other. The heart’s compliance with the voice of Christ is the foundation of all practical holiness.

Here again, we would earnestly and lovingly beg the reader to attend closely to this detail. Any man who supposes that he is saved and yet has no genuine love for God’s commandment is deceiving himself. Said the Psalmist, “O how love I thy law!” (Psa 119:97). And again, “Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold” (Psa 119:127). Should someone object that *that* was under the Old Testament, we ask, “Do you intimate that the Holy Spirit produces *less* a change in the hearts of those whom He now regenerates than He did of old?” But a New Testament saint also placed on record, “I *delight* in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom 7:22). And, my reader, unless *your heart delights* in the “law of God” there is something radically wrong with you. Yea, it is greatly to be feared that you are spiritually dead.

5. A man profits from the Word when his heart and will are yielded to *all* God’s commandments. Partial obedience is no obedience at all. A holy mind declines whatsoever God forbids, and chooses to practise all He requires, without any exception. If our minds submit not unto God in all His commandments, we submit not to *His* authority in anything He enjoins. If we do not approve of our duty in its *full* extent, we are greatly mistaken if we imagine that we have any *liking* unto *any* part of it. A person who has no principle of holiness in him may yet be disinclined to many vices and be pleased to practise many virtues, as he perceives the

former are unfit actions and the latter are, in themselves, comely actions, but his disapprobation of vice and approbation of virtue arise not from any disposition to *submit to the will of God*.

True spiritual obedience is *impartial*. A renewed heart does not pick and choose from God's commandments. The man who does so is not performing *God's* will, but his own! Make no mistake upon this point, if we do not sincerely desire to please God in *all* things, then we do not truly wish to do so in anything. Self must be denied, not merely some of the things which may be craved, but self itself! A willful allowance of *any* known sin breaks the whole law (Jam 2:10-11). "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments" (Psa 119:6). Said the Lord Jesus, "Ye are my friends, if ye do *whatsoever* I command you" (Joh 15:14). If I am not His friend, than I must be His *enemy*, for there is no other alternative—see Luke 19:27.

6. We profit from the Word when the soul is moved to *pray earnestly for enabling grace*. In regeneration, the Holy Spirit communicates a nature which is fitted for obedience according to the Word. The heart has been won by God. There is now a deep and sincere desire to please Him. But the new nature possesses no inherent power, and the old nature or "flesh" strives against it, and the devil opposes. Thus, the Christian exclaims, "For to will *is* present with me: but how to *perform* that which is good I find not" (Rom 7:18). This does not mean that he is the slave of sin, as he was before conversion, but it means that he finds not how *fully* to realize his spiritual aspirations. Therefore does he pray, "*Make me to go* in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight" (Psa 119:35). And again, "Order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me" (Psa 119:133).

Here we would reply to a question which the above paragraphs have probably raised in many minds. Are you affirming that God requires *perfect* obedience from us in this life? We answer, Yes, God will not set any lower standard before us than that (see 1 Peter 1:15). Then, does the real Christian measure up to that standard? Yes and no. Yes, *in his heart*, and it is at *that* which God looks (1Sa 16:7). In his heart, every regenerated person has a real love for God's commandments, and genuinely *desires* to keep all of them completely. It is in *this* sense, and this alone, that the Christian is experimentally "perfect." The word "perfect," both in the Old Testament (Job 1:1 and Psalm 37:37) and in the New Testament (Phi 3:15), means upright, sincere, in contrast with hypocritical.

"LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble" (Psa 10:17). The "desires" of the saint are the language of his soul, and the promise is, "He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him" (Psa 145:19). The Christian's desire is to obey God in all things, to be completely conformed to the image of Christ. But this will only be realized in the resurrection. Meanwhile, God, for Christ's sake, graciously accepts the will for the deed (1Pe2:5). He knows our hearts and sees in His child a genuine love for and a sincere desire *to keep* all His commandments, and accepts the fervent longing and cordial endeavour in lieu of an exact performance (2Co 8:12). But let none who are living in willful disobedience draw false peace and pervert to their own destruction what has just been said for the comfort of those who *are* heartily desirous of seeking to please God in all the details of their lives.

If any ask, "How am I to know that *my* 'desires' are really those of a regenerate soul?" We answer, "Saving grace is the communication to the heart of an habitual *disposition unto* holy acts." The "desires" of the reader are to be tested thus, Are they constant and continuous, or only by fits and starts? Are they earnest and serious, so that you really hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Mat 5:6) and pant "after God" (Psa 42:1)? Are they operative and efficacious? Many desire to escape from hell, yet their desires are not sufficiently strong to bring them to hate and turn from that which must inevitably bring them to hell, namely, willfully sinning against God. Many desire to go to heaven, but not so that they enter upon and follow that "narrow way" which alone leads thereto. True spiritual "desires" *use* the means of grace and spare no pains to realize them, and continue prayerfully pressing forward unto the mark set before them.

7. We profit from the Word when we are, even now, *enjoying the reward of obedience*. "Godliness is profitable unto all things" (1Ti 4:8). By obedience, we purify our souls (1Pe 1:22). By obedience, we obtain the ear of God (1Jo 3:22), as disobedience is a barrier to our prayers (Isa 59:2; Jer 5:25). By obedience, we obtain precious and intimate manifestations of Christ unto the soul (Joh 14:21). As we tread the path of wisdom (complete subjection to God), we discover that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Pro 3:17). "His commandments are *not* grievous" (1Jo 5:3), and "in keeping of them there is great reward" (Psa 19:11).

THE CONDESCENSION OF CHRIST

Part 2

In this article, we propose to continue our exposition of Philippians 2:6-7. Our reason for doing so is twofold. First, the vital importance of what is there revealed. A right understanding of that passage is essential if we are to interpret it so as to honour the person of Christ. In order to do this, there must be a correct apprehension of the precise character of our Lord's condescension, wherein it did not and wherein it did consist. A mistake at this point inevitably produces a concept which is derogatory to His glory. Second, we are constrained to continue our contemplation of this wondrous and blessed subject because such awful errors upon it have been vigorously propagated during the last two or three generations, mainly under what is known as the "Kenosis theory." As far as possible, we shall avoid technicalities.

"Who, being in the form of God" (Phi 2:6). The verb which is here used proves that it is no transient thing which is in view. The Son subsists in "the form of God" eternally. The same construction is found in John 1:18, "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him"—words denoting the Son's unique relation to the Father, the verb again affirming an *abiding* relationship. It is *not* that He "was" in the bosom of the Father, and left it, but that He is *there always* in that intimate filial relationship. Incarnation did not change this, though on earth He still subsisted in heaven—"who is" in John 3:13, is the same Greek verb.

"Thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Phi 2:6). This was His personal right as the eternal Son—oneness in authority and dominion, oneness in lordship and dignity, was that to which JEHOVAH'S "fellow" (Zec 13:7) was justly entitled. Thus, by combining the two expressions, we learn that the "form of God" has reference to the divine essence as *clothed with* glory and majesty. As the "form of a servant," in the next verse, was no mere phantasm, but a subjective and objective reality, so Christ's being in "the form of God" denotes that He was from all eternity true God, adorned with divine splendour and majesty.

"But [or "nevertheless," as in Romans 5:14] made himself of no reputation" (Phi 2:7). In the light of what immediately follows, these words also fix to a certainty the force of the terms used at the close of verse 6, proving that Christ was *really* "equal with God." Had that *not* been the case, had the Son been in His own essential person in any way inferior to the Father, then, it had been *no* act of self-abnegation in declining to *display* for a time that equality, nor could what He did have been set

before us as an example (Phi 2:5). It would be a strange recommendation of lowliness to say that a mere creature (no matter how high in the scale of being) grasped not at “equality with God”!

“But made himself of no reputation” (Phi 2:7), or “but himself emptied.” What is meant by this is clearly signified in what immediately follows. He laid aside the robes of His incomprehensible glory, divested Himself of His incommunicable honours. In other words, when He entered upon His mediatorial state, instead of acting in the grand capacity of a universal sovereign, He “took upon him the form of a servant” (Phi 2:7). And even *this* “form” was not like unto that of those ministering spirits whose very duty is dignity itself; but, stooping far below the nature of angels, He assumed a body of animated dust, and was “made in the likeness of men”—after the similitude of those inferior and depraved creatures who had revolted against God. Wondrous, amazing condescension was this!

To understand by “made himself of no reputation” (Phi 2:7), that He “emptied himself of his divine attributes” is horrible blasphemy. In such a case, He would not have been “*God* manifest in flesh” (1Ti 3:16). How the Spirit has anticipated and refuted this error by affirming that the virgin’s Son should be called, “Immanuel...*God* with us” (Mat 1:23)! Nor is it correct to say that He suspended “the exercise of His inherent omnipotence and omniscience.” For a careful reading of the four Gospels reveals the fact that every essential attribute of Deity was evidenced by the Lord Jesus Christ during the days of His humiliation. That, in two or three passages, some of His miraculous works are attributed to the Spirit and some to the Father, no more proves that they were not wrought by His *own* divine power than His resurrection being ascribed to the Father and the Spirit disproves John 10:18! Instead, we behold a blessed co-operation and fellowship of the eternal Three!

If all the remaining terms of this passage (Phi 2:5-11) be properly weighed, there should be no difficulty in arriving at the right understanding of the “made himself of no reputation.” For example, notice the one thing emphasized in verse 8. It is not that He became either “feeble” or “fallible,” but “obedient”—*that* required neither the relinquishing nor the suspending of His omnipotence and omniscience, but it did require the abnegation of dominion and sovereignty! Again, does not the particular character of His *reward* intimate the nature of His “emptying”? God’s response to the Son’s perfect obedience is seen in two things—the *position* accorded Him, and all creatures yet owning Him as “Lord.”

“But made himself of no reputation” (Phi 2:7). This was in order to His becoming “a servant,” but *that* did not in any wise necessitate or require either the “emptying” or “suspending” of His divine wisdom or power. From being Lord of all, He descended to the place of obedience, though He still remained the “Lord of glory,” as 1 Corinthians 2:8 clearly proves, yet His *external* habit and appearance

was that of “a man of sorrows.” In His person, He remained *all* that He was previously, but in the new position He entered, His glory was outwardly obscured. He entered the sphere of servitude, yet without the slightest injury to His Godhead.

He “made himself of no reputation” (Phi 2:7) *must* be understood relatively and not absolutely. The Son could not part with His essential perfections. “Neither by any thing that He did, nor any thing that He suffered, nor any condition He underwent, did He really forgo, nor was it possible that He should do so, any thing of His divine glory. He was no less Son when He died, than when He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead” (John Owen, 1616-1683). If it still be replied that He emptied Himself of His divine glory, we answer, In these two senses only—with respect to His infinite condescension in the *position* which He took, and with respect to the *manifestation* of Himself here in this world.

It was in the taking *upon* Him of “the form of a *servant*” (Phi 2:7) that His unparalleled condescension consisted. It was in *that* that He “made himself of no reputation.” Thus, in comparison with the *positional* glory which he had in “the *form* of God,” wherein He was “equal with God,” He “emptied” Himself. The Word’s becoming “flesh” was unspeakable, inconceivable condescension. Moreover, it is to be steadily borne in mind that in becoming flesh, He did not immediately take to heaven that human nature which He had assumed, but first became a *servant* in it, a “servant” to God, to do His will, and that in the most difficult service that was ever performed in this world. In that service, too, He “made himself of no reputation.” The work He did was stupendous and honourable, but the manner in which it was accomplished exposed Him to the scorn of the world.

Moreover, in that servant-work which the Son of God performed, He not only subjected Himself to the will of God, but He did so to the fullest possible degree. He “became obedient unto death” (Phi 2:8). Had He only become man, and as God-man had sat on the throne governing the world, *that* had been infinite condescension. And had He, as the God-man, *served* at all, that had been amazing self-abnegation. But that He did not stop short of this—that He did not ascend to heaven from the mount of transfiguration, that He should actually enter the portals of *death* itself, ought truly to fill us with deep admiration and wonderment.

Finally, that He, the Prince and Author of life, should not only become “obedient unto death” but that He should die “the death of *the cross*” (Phi 2:8) ought indeed completely to overwhelm our hearts, and bring us to His feet as adoring worshippers. When we try to think of *what* that “death of the cross” was in itself—the Holy One of God nailed to a felon’s gibbet, the Lord of glory stripped naked, exposed to the contempt of a jeering crowd, the true light now opposed by “the power of darkness” (Eph 6:12), the One who is “God blessed for ever” (Rom

9:5) now “made a curse” (Gal 3:13), the sword of divine justice smiting Him, the full penalty of His people’s sins being exacted of Him—ah, the apprehension of this (however feeble), my fellow Christians, must indeed fill us with “wonder, love, and praise.” In all these things did the Beloved of the Father lay aside the privilege of His infinite dignity.

The *manifestation* of His essential and personal glory was indeed eclipsed while the Son tabernacled for thirty-three years in this dark world. His perfect equality with God was hidden by the veil of flesh which He had taken upon Him. Therefore, as He was on the eve of completely accomplishing the work which had been committed to Him, He prayed, “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory [His *displayed lordship*] which I had with thee before the world was” (Joh 17:5)—let that visible outshining of My personal dignity, which has been concealed by My abasement, wherein I descended for the suffering of death, be again conspicuously displayed. The Father’s response to this is seen in Philippians 2:9-10, which will come before us (D.V.) in a later paper.

SAVING FAITH

2. Its Nature

“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness” (Pro 30:12). A great many suppose that such a verse as this applies only to those who are trusting in something other than Christ for their acceptance before God, such as people who are relying upon baptism, church membership or their own moral and religious performances. But it is a great mistake to limit such Scriptures unto the class just mentioned. Such a verse as, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death,” (Pro 14:12) has a far wider application than merely to those who are resting on something of or from themselves to secure a title to everlasting bliss. Equally wrong is it to imagine that the only *deceived* souls are they who have no faith in Christ.

There is in Christendom today a very large number of people who have been taught that nothing the sinner can do will ever merit the esteem of God. They have been informed, and rightly so, that the highest moral achievements of the natural man are only “filthy rags” (Isa 64:6) in the sight of the thrice holy God. They have heard quoted so often such passages as, “By grace are ye saved through faith; and

that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8-9), and “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Ti 3:5), that they have become thoroughly convinced that heaven cannot be attained by any doing of the creature. Further, they have been told so often that *Christ alone* can save any sinner that this has become a settled article in their creed, from which neither man nor devil can shake them. So far, so good.

That large company to whom we are now referring have also been taught that, while Christ is the only way unto the Father, yet He becomes so only as faith is personally exercised in and upon Him, that He becomes our Saviour only when we believe on Him. During the last twenty-five years, almost the whole emphasis of “Gospel preaching” has been thrown upon faith in Christ, and evangelistic efforts have been almost entirely confined to getting people to “believe” on the Lord Jesus. Apparently there has been great success. Thousands upon thousands have responded—have, as they suppose, accepted Christ as their own personal Saviour. Yet we wish to point out here that it is as serious an error to suppose that all who “believe in Christ” are saved as it is to conclude that only those are deceived (and are described in Proverbs 14:12 and 30:12) who have no faith in Christ.

No one can read the New Testament attentively without discovering that there *is* a “believing” in Christ *which does not save*. In John 8:30, we are told, “As he spake these words, many *believed* on him.” Mark carefully, it is not said “many believe *in* him.” But “many believed *on* him.” Nevertheless, one does not have to read much farther on in the chapter to discover that those very people were unregenerate and unsaved souls. In John 8:44, we find the Lord telling these very “believers” that *they* were of their father the devil, and in John 8:59, we find them taking up stones to cast at Him. This has presented a difficulty unto some, yet it ought not. They created their own difficulty, by supposing that faith in Christ necessarily saves. It does not. There *is* a faith in Christ which saves, and there is also a faith in Christ which *does not* save.

“Among the chief rulers also many *believed on him*” (Joh 12:42). Were, then, those men saved? Many preachers and evangelists, as well as tens of thousands of their blinded dupes, would answer, “Most assuredly.” But let us note what immediately follows here, “but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (Joh 12:42-43). Will any of our readers now say that those men were *saved*? If so, it is clear proof that you are utter strangers to any saving work of God in your own souls. Men who are afraid to hazard for Christ’s sake the loss of their worldly positions, temporal interests, personal reputations, or anything else that is dear to them, are yet in their sins—no matter how they may be trusting in Christ’s finished work to take them to heaven.

Probably most of our readers have been brought up under the teaching that there are only two classes of people in this world, believers and unbelievers. But such a classification is most misleading and is utterly erroneous. God's Word divides earth's inhabitants into *three* classes, "Give none offence, neither to [1] the Jews, nor [2] to the Gentiles, nor [3] to the church of God" (1Co 10:32). It was so during Old Testament times, more noticeably so from the days of Moses onwards. There were first the "Gentile" or heathen nations, outside the commonwealth of Israel, which formed by far the largest class. Corresponding with that class, today, are the countless millions of modern heathen, who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." Second, there was the nation of Israel, which has to be subdivided into two groups, for, as Romans 9:6 declares, "They are *not* all Israel, which are of Israel." By far the larger portion of the nation of Israel were only the nominal people of God, in outward relation to Him. Corresponding with this class is the great mass of professors bearing the name of Christ. Third, there was the spiritual remnant of Israel, whose calling, hope and inheritance were heavenly. Corresponding to them this day are the genuine Christians, God's "*little flock*" (Luk 12:32).

The same threefold division among men is plainly discernible throughout John's Gospel. First, there were the hardened leaders of the nation, the scribes and Pharisees, priests and elders. From start to finish, they were openly opposed to Christ, and neither His blessed teaching nor His wondrous works had any melting effects upon them. Second, there were the common people who "heard him gladly" (Mar 12:37), a great many of whom are said to have "believed on him" (see Joh 2:23; 7:31; 8:30; 10:42; 12:44; 12:11), but concerning whom there is nothing to show that they were saved. They were not outwardly opposed to Christ, but they never yielded their hearts to Him. They were impressed by His divine credentials, yet were easily offended (Joh 6:66). Third, there was the insignificant handful who "received him" (Joh 1:12) into their hearts and lives, received Him as their Lord and Saviour.

The same three classes are clearly discernible (to anointed eyes) in the world today. First, there are the vast multitudes who make no profession at all, who see nothing in Christ that they should desire Him. People who are deaf to every appeal and who make little attempt to conceal their hatred of the Lord Jesus. Second, there is that large company who are attracted by Christ in a natural way. So far from being openly antagonistic to Him and His cause, they are found among His followers. Having been taught much of the truth, they "believe in Christ," just as children reared by conscientious Mohammedans believe firmly and devoutly in Mohammed. Having received much of instruction concerning the virtues of Christ's precious blood, they trust in its merits to deliver them from the wrath to come, and yet there is nothing in their daily lives to show that they are *new* creatures in Christ Jesus! Third, there are the "few" (Mat 7:13-14) who deny themselves, take up the

cross daily, and follow a despised and rejected Christ in the path of loving and unreserved obedience unto God.

Yes, there is a faith in Christ which saves, but there is a faith in Christ which does not save. From this statement probably few will dissent, yet many will be inclined to weaken it by saying that the faith in Christ which does not save is merely a historical faith, or where there is a believing *about* Christ instead of a believing *in* Him. Not so. That there are those who mistake a historical faith about Christ for a saving faith in Christ we do not deny. But what we would here emphasize is the solemn fact that there are *also* some who have *more* than a historical faith, more than a mere head-knowledge about Him, who yet have a faith which comes short of being a quickening and saving one. Not only are there some with this non-saving faith, but today there are vast numbers of such all around us. They are people who furnish the antitypes of those to which we called attention in the last article—who were represented and illustrated in Old Testament times by those who believed in, rested on, leaned upon, relied upon the Lord, but who were, nevertheless, unsaved souls.

What, then, does saving faith consist of? In seeking to answer this question, our present object is to supply not only a scriptural definition, but one which, at the same time, differentiates it from a non-saving faith. Nor is this any easy task, for the two things often have much in common. That faith in Christ which does not save has in it more than one element or ingredient of that faith which *does* vitally unite the soul to Him. Those pitfalls which the writer must now seek to avoid are undue discouraging of real saints, on the one hand, by raising the standard higher than Scripture has raised it, and encouraging unregenerate professors, on the other hand, by so lowering the standard as to include them. We do not wish to withhold from the people of God their legitimate portion, nor do we want to commit the sin of taking the children's bread and casting it to the dogs. May the Holy Spirit Himself deign to guide us into the truth.

Much error would be avoided on this subject if due care were taken to frame a scriptural definition of *unbelief*. Again and again in Scripture, we find believing and not believing placed in antithesis, and we are afforded much help toward arriving at a correct conception of the real nature of saving faith when we obtain a right understanding of the character of unbelief. It will at once be discovered that saving faith is far more than a hearty assenting unto what God's Word sets before us, when we perceive that unbelief is much more than an error of judgment or a failure to assent unto the truth. Scripture depicts unbelief as a virulent and violent *principle of opposition to God*. Unbelief has both a passive and active, a negative and positive side, and therefore, the Greek noun is rendered both by "unbelief" (Rom 11:20; Heb 4:6, 11), and "disobedience" (Eph 2:2; 5:6) and the verb by "believed not" (Heb 3:18; 11:31) and "obey not" (1Pe 3:1; 4:17). A few concrete examples will make this plainer.

Take first the case of Adam. There was something more than a mere negative failing to believe God's solemn threat that, in the day he should eat of the forbidden fruit, he would surely die—by one man's *disobedience* many were made sinners (Rom 5:12). Nor did the heinousness of our first parent's sin consist in listening to the lie of the serpent, for 1 Timothy 2:14 expressly declares, "Adam *was not* deceived." No, he was determined to have his own way, no matter what God had prohibited and threatened. Thus, the very first case of unbelief in human history consisted not only in negatively failing to take to heart what God has so clearly and so solemnly said, but also in a deliberate defiance of and rebellion against Him.

Take the case of Israel in the wilderness. Concerning them it is said, "They could not enter in [the promised land] because of unbelief" (Heb 3:19). Now, exactly what do those words signify? Do they mean that Canaan was missed by them because of their failure to appropriate the promise of God? Yes, for a "promise" of entering in was "left" them, but it was not "mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb 4:1-2)—God had declared that the seed of Abraham should inherit that land which flowed with milk and honey, and it was the privilege of that generation which was delivered from Egypt to lay hold of and apply that promise to themselves. But they did not. Yet that is not all! There was something far worse. There was another element in their unbelief which is usually lost sight of nowadays—they were openly disobedient against God. When the spies brought back a sample of the goodly grapes, and Joshua urged them to go up and possess the land, they would not. Accordingly, Moses declared, "Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but *rebelled* against the commandment of the LORD your God" (Deu 1:26). Ah, *there* is the positive side of their unbelief. They were self-willed, disobedient, defiant.

Consider now the case of that generation of Israel which was in Palestine when the Lord Jesus appeared among them as "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God" (Rom 15:8). John 1:11 informs us, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not," which the next verse defines as "they believed" Him not. But is that all? Were they guilty of nothing more than a failure to assent to His teaching and trust to His person? Nay, verily, that was merely the *negative* side of their unbelief? Positively, they "hated" Him (Joh 15:25), and would "not come to" Him (Joh 5:40). His holy demands suited not their fleshly desires, and therefore, they said, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luk 19:14). Thus, their unbelief, too, consisted in the spirit of self-will and open defiance, a determination to please themselves at all costs.

Unbelief is not simply an infirmity of fallen human nature, it is a heinous crime. Scripture everywhere attributes it to love of sin, obstinacy of will, hardness of heart. Unbelief has its root in a depraved nature, in a mind which is enmity against God. Love of sin is the immediate cause of unbelief, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their

deeds were evil” (Joh 3:19). “The light of the Gospel is brought unto a place or people. They come so near it as to discover its end or tendency, but as soon as they find that it aims to part them and their sins, they will have no more to do with it. They like not the terms of the Gospel, and so perish in and for their iniquities” (John Owen). If the *Gospel* were more clearly and faithfully preached, fewer would profess to believe it!

Saving faith, then, is the opposite of damning belief. Both issue from the heart that is alienated from God, which is in a state of rebellion against Him—saving faith from a heart which is reconciled to Him and so has ceased to fight against Him. Thus, an essential element or ingredient in saving faith is a yielding to the authority of God, a submitting of myself to His rule. It is very much more than my understanding assenting and my will consenting to the fact that Christ is a Saviour for sinners, and that He stands ready to receive all who trust Him. To be received by Christ, I must not only come to Him renouncing all my own righteousness (Rom 10:3), as an empty-handed beggar (Mat 19:21), but I must also forsake my self-will and rebellion against Him (Psa 32:3-5; Pro 28:13). Should an insurrectionist and seditionist come to an earthly king seeking his sovereign favour and pardon, then, obviously, the very law of his coming to him for forgiveness requires that he should come on his knees, laying aside his hostility. So it is with a sinner who really comes savingly to Christ for pardon. It is against the law of faith to do otherwise.

Saving faith is a genuine *coming to Christ* (Mat 11:28; Joh 6:37; etc.). But let us take care that we do not miss the clear and inevitable implication of this term. If I say, “I *come* to the U.S.A.” then I necessarily indicate that I *left* some other country to get here. Thus it is in “coming” to Christ. Something has to be left. Coming to Christ not only involves the abandoning of every false object of confidence, it also includes and entails the forsaking of all other competitors for my heart. “For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now *returned* unto the shepherd and bishop of your *souls*” (1Pe 2:25). And what is meant by, “Ye *were* [note the past tense—they are no longer doing so] as sheep going *astray*”? (Isa 53:6 tells us, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to *his own way*.”) Ah, *that* is what must be forsaken before we can truly “come” to Christ—that course of self-will must be abandoned. The prodigal son could not *come* to his father while he remained in the far country. Dear reader, if you are still following a course of self-pleasing, you are only deceiving yourself if you think you have come to Christ.

Nor is the brief definition, which we have given above of what it means really to “come” to Christ, any forced or novel one of our own. In his book, *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*, John Bunyan (1628-1688) wrote, “Coming to Christ is attended with an honest and sincere forsaking all for Him [here he quotes Luke 14:26-27]. By these and like expressions elsewhere, Christ describeth the true comer. He is one that casteth all behind his back. There are a great many pretended comers to Jesus Christ in the world. They are much like the man you read of in

Matthew 21:30, that said to his father's bidding, 'I go, sir: and went not.' When Christ calls by His Gospel, they say, 'I come, Sir,' but they still abide by their pleasure and carnal delight." C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892), in his sermon on John 6:44, said, "Coming to Christ embraces in it repentance, self-abnegation, and faith in the Lord Jesus, and so sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of those great steps of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnest prayers to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of His Gospel." In his sermon on John 6:37, he says, "To come to Christ signifies to turn from sin and to trust in Him. Coming to Christ is a leaving of all false confidences, a renouncing of all love to sin, and a looking to Jesus as the solitary pillar of our confidence and hope."

Saving faith consists of the complete surrender of my whole being and life to the claims of God upon me, "But first gave their own selves to the Lord" (2Co 8:5).

It is the unreserved acceptance of Christ as my absolute Lord, bowing to His will and receiving His yoke. Possibly someone may object, "Then why are Christians exhorted as they are in Romans 12:1?" We answer, All such exhortations are simply a calling on them to *continue as they began*, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him" (Col 2:6). Yes, mark it well that Christ is "received" as *Lord*. Oh, how far, far below the New Testament standard is this modern way of begging sinners to receive Christ as their own personal "Saviour." If the reader will consult his concordance, he will find that in *every passage*, where the two titles are found together, it is *always* "Lord and Saviour, and never vice versa. See Luke 1:46-47; 11 Peter 1:11; 2:20; 3:18.

Until the ungodly are sensible of the exceeding sinfulness of their vile course of self-will and self-pleasing, until they are genuinely broken down and penitent over it before God, until they are willing to forsake the world for Christ, until they have resolved to come under His government, for such to depend upon Him for pardon and life is not faith, but blatant presumption. It is but to add insult to injury. And for any such to take His holy name upon their polluted lips, and profess to be His followers, is the most terrible blasphemy, and comes perilously nigh to committing that sin for which there is no forgiveness. Alas, alas, that modern evangelism is encouraging and producing just such hideous and Christ-dishonouring monstrosities.

Saving faith is a believing on Christ with the *heart*, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Rom 10:9-10). There is no such thing as a saving *faith* in Christ where there is no real *love* for Him, and by "real love" we mean a love which is evidenced by *obedience*. Christ acknowledges none to be His friends save those who do whatsoever He commands them (Joh 15:14). As unbelief is a species of rebellion,

so saving faith is a complete subjection to God. Hence, we read of “the obedience of faith” (Rom 16:26). Saving faith is to the soul what health is to the body. It is a mighty principle of operation, full of life, ever working, bringing forth fruit after its own kind.

FOLLOWING CHRIST

“He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Joh 8:12). How easy it is to *read* these words, but how difficult it is to put them truly into practice! It is much, very much, to be thankful for if the Holy Spirit has wrought a real desire in the heart of the reader *to* “follow” Christ, for such a desire surely cannot be within multitudes of those who bear His name and with their lips sing His praises. Daily does the Christian need to beseech God to *strengthen* this desire until it actually becomes the uppermost longing of his soul and the dominant purpose of his life.

It is much, very much, to be thankful for when the Holy Spirit makes us to realize that, of ourselves, we are *unable* to carry out that desire *and* “follow” Christ. As He Himself tells us, “Without *me* ye can do nothing” (Joh 15:5). This fact ought deeply to humble us as we are made to feel our inability to do that which is right, and should for ever remove all pride and boasting from us. We are apt to think that this inability is merely a “weakness” or lack of strength. But in reality, it is *sin* within us, the “flesh,” that awful and depraved nature with which we were born into this world.

“The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). While that “enmity” receives its death-blow at regeneration, it is not altogether dead in the Christian. At times, the remainder of this “enmity” slumbers, and Satan seeks to delude us into thinking it is completely slain, thus taking us off our guard. No, the “flesh” remains in us to the end of our earthly course, and its unchanging tendency is to draw us away *from* “following” Christ. How this should make us “abhor” ourselves (Job 42:6), that there is that in us, that which is part and parcel of our very being, which is *opposed* to Christ!

Now, to “follow” Christ is to *take* His “yoke” upon us (Mat 11:29). It is to enlist under the banner of the “Captain” of our salvation. It is to yield completely to His lordship. It is to obey His commandments, and thus truly *serve* Him. It is to seek and do only those things which are pleasing in His sight. For this, divine strength is

needed. “*Draw me*” (Song 1:4) must be our daily prayer. Only as we “receive” from *His* fullness (Joh 1:16) are we enabled to follow “the example” which He has left us.

As we *are* thus enabled *to* “follow” Him, we shall “not walk in darkness” (1Jo 1:6). No, we shall be in fellowship with Him who is “the true light.” Nor must we be dismayed because we do not fully enter into this blessed experience all at once, “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth *more and more* unto the perfect day” (Pro 4:18). The way to get more strength and light is to *use* what has already been given us.

To “follow” Christ is to tread the path of divine blessing. True, it is a narrow path, and oftentimes a lonesome one, for “few” (Mat 7:14) there are who tread it. It is sometimes a rough and thorny path, yet God has provided shoes for our feet (Luk 15:22; Eph 6:15). Yet it is also a most blessed path. It is there we *enjoy* the Lord’s accompanying presence. It is there we are favoured with the rich *compensations* given to those who turn their backs on self-pleasing and the world.

JULY

A PERSONAL WORD

From the beginning of STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, it has been the custom of the late Editor to give a little message of a more or less intimate nature at this time of year. It has fallen to me to finish and bring to a close the magazine. Therefore, it seems an attempt should be made to send forth a word for this last time. An attempt is all it can be, for what can I say? It is all the harder since it falls at the first anniversary of his being taken home to glory. Oh, what a year it has been. A year of sorrow and loneliness. A year of thankfulness and rejoicing. A year of marvel, truly. There is no word which so suitably expresses my experience throughout the year than, “I was brought low, and he helped me” (Psa 116:6). Going through the waters of bereavement brings one into the depths, but how wonderful that, “When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee” (Isa 43:2), and as “The angel of my presence shall go before thee” (Exo 33:14). I have been marvelously helped to go on from day to day. Without His help, I could not have borne it. When He has taken from us “the desire of our eyes” (Eze 24:16) and life does not seem worth living, He has such a wonderful way in giving His cordial—the bitter is caused to bring forth sweetness.

In the December issue of the magazine, I committed myself to carry on throughout 1953. Mr. Pink left everything in such wonderful order that it was an easy task. There were funds to meet the needs for 1952 and a nice little balance to begin 1953. He kept the account in our joint names so that each could draw upon it in an emergency. But the Solicitor took the whole of the fund for probate, leaving me with an overdraft after paying the November and December invoice. So, “I was brought low” (Psa 116:6)—very low indeed. Yet when January and February invoice came to hand, there was not only sufficient to meet it, but also to meet the binder’s invoice and a balance again in hand. Did He help me? “Marvellous are thy

works, and that my soul knoweth right well” (Psa 139:14). So, for the magazine and the unworthy and undeserving instrument, I do thankfully own “He helped me” (Psa 116:6).

Just here, I would like to add a further word. As Mr. Pink was free with you, it makes it easier for me. Since he retired from the ministry to give himself wholly to writing, we have lived on the interest of his father’s bequest to him. He never paid insurance, so drew no benefit. He could not, for he felt he was not entitled to the provision made for tradesmen, especially since he was getting what met our needs. God willing, I shall receive the same during my lifetime, but the complicating difficulties in making transference to me have taken very long. But since the “God of Jacob is our refuge,” STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES and I have been carried honourably through. Mr. Pink has repeatedly informed you that we never touched so much as a penny from STUDIES’ funds for ourselves before he retired from the ministry or since.

No less wonderful is it to relate that near the middle of December, “I was brought low” when stricken in my body—never strong at best—and lay prostrate for a time with no feeling whatever in my right side from head to foot. It came on insensibly while sitting in my chair after typing the last article—“The Manna, a Type of Christ.” Upon reading it through, I put the sheets on the table and attempted to rise, but found I was helpless. Many things played their part in bringing this about, no doubt, but to me it was most wonderful that the Lord in His goodness put me to bed to rest, for rest I could not. He took everything from me—grief, worry, and corruptions—into His own loving hands, leaving me without a care in peace and quietness to rest. I trust I can say to God’s glory that, before this trouble came upon me, He had for some days, particularly that night, while reading through the above-mentioned article, graciously filled me with His holy presence, which was a great strength and comfort during those critical days which followed. “His way is in the deep, and his footsteps are not known” (Psa 77:19)—to carnal sense, but faith perceives them as it hears His voice, “*Follow thou me.*” Oh, the wonder that He never requires His people to go along a path He has not first trodden.

Oh, how “He helped me.” Alone in the world, a widow, broken-hearted, helpless, and near death, He gave me the kindest of kind hearts and hands to minister unto me night and day and take over the care of STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES during those weeks. Royalty could not have had more untiring and faithful attendance from physician, nurse, and friends than I was privileged to receive. Why, oh, why me? “There is nothing in me that can merit esteem, or give my Redeemer delight. ‘Tis even so, Father! I ever must sing. For so it seemed good in Thy sight.” It was at this time that the Lord turned the hearts of many of His dear people to pray for me. To me, it has all been too wonderful for words. Some felt I was in “dire” need and prayed with more earnestness—they knew not what for, but it was sufficient to realize the Lord knew and is ever mindful of the needs of His

people. "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord! Who can show forth all His praise?" Oh, what wonder that He should be pleased to put me on the hearts of His people, the highest honour this side of glory. From a heart filled with gratitude, I would humbly thank one and all who ministered unto me and who had thoughts of me during my prostration and since. From the depths of my being I desire to praise Him for restoring me to a goodly measure of strength.

The evening of life has come. The shadows are gathering round. Oh, that His presence may so light the path before that it may shine more and more unto the perfect day. "And He shall be as the light of the morning. When the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds: as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain" (2Sa 23:4). Meanwhile, I seek to go on in weakness desiring a like experience with Jacob. "And the sun rose upon him, and he halted on his thigh." Oh, that "The Sun of righteousness would arise with healing in His wings" and all the maladies inherent to nature caused by sin and corruption shall be for ever cured. Then, we shall regard the "halt" as lightly as Jacob appears to have done. He knew what it meant to be "alone with God." He knew "the path which no vulture's eye hath seen." He knew what conflict was, for he had a night of combat with the Angel.

I trust I have not been too tedious and wearisome. I have written freely as I would have spoken individually—from the heart looking forward to eternity. If spared, I do trust you who have been accustomed to write personal letters all these years will think upon me in my loneliness and write from time to time. I dare not let my mind think of *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES* coming to an end—or perhaps I should say closing down. I seek to go on from day to day knowing that He, who helped me in the hardest of all, will graciously help me in this also. It is good to recall the happy years in which we were privileged to "send portions unto those for whom nothing was prepared." How blessed to know that He changes not. He is "The same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." All things change here and come to an end. He remains—to help.

God willing, a final word will be a brief annual letter in December. I leave other things for it. I feel the readers would like to know that Mr. Pink's works can be had from the publisher in U.S.A.—Mr. I. C. Herendeen, Swengel (Union Co.), Pennsylvania. Mr. Pink wrote many works other than *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES*. The publisher is going ahead to print Hebrews in book form—probably be on sale next year. Will readers in Britain kindly communicate with me if they desire Hebrews or any of Mr. Pink's works? God willing, I hope to supply all who wish his works. VERA E. PINK.

SAVING FAITH

3. Its Difficulty

Some of our readers will probably be surprised to hear about the *difficulty* of saving faith. On almost every side today, it is being taught, even by men styled orthodox and “fundamentalists,” that getting saved is an exceedingly simple affair. So long as a person believes John 3:16 and “rests on it,” or “accepts Christ as his personal Saviour,” that is *all* that is needed. It is often said that there is nothing left for the sinner to do but direct his faith toward the right object. Just as a man trusts his bank or a wife her husband, let him exercise the same faculty of faith and trust in Christ. So widely has this idea been received that, for anyone now to condemn, it is to court being branded as a heretic. Notwithstanding, the writer here unhesitatingly denounces it as a most God-insulting lie of the devil. A natural faith is sufficient for trusting a human object; but a supernatural faith is required to trust savingly in a divine object.

While observing the methods employed by present-day “evangelists” and “personal workers,” we are made to wonder what place the Holy Spirit has in their thoughts. Certainly they entertain the most degrading conception of the miracle of grace which He performs when He moves a human heart to surrender truly unto the Lord Jesus. Alas, in these degenerate times, few have any idea that saving faith *is* a miraculous thing. Instead, it is now almost universally supposed that saving faith is nothing more than an act of the human will, which any man is capable of performing. All that is needed is to bring before a sinner a few verses of Scripture which describe his lost condition, one or two which contain the word “believe,” and then a little persuasion for him to “accept Christ,” and the thing is done. And the awful thing is that so very, very few see anything wrong with this—blind to the fact that such a process is only the devil’s drug to lull thousands into a false peace.

So, many have been *argued into* believing that they are saved. In reality, their “faith” sprang from nothing better than a superficial process of logic. Some “personal worker” addresses a man who has no concern whatever for the glory of God and no realization of his terrible hostility against Him. Anxious to “win another soul to Christ,” he pulls out his New Testament and reads to him 1 Timothy 1:15. The worker says, “You are a sinner,” and his man assenting, he is at once informed, “Then that verse includes *you*.” Next, John 3:16 is read, and the question is asked, “Whom does the word ‘Whosoever’ include?” The question is repeated until the poor victim answers, “You, me, and everybody.” Then he is asked, “Will you

believe it? Believe that God loves you, that Christ died for you?” If the answer is, “Yes,” he is at once assured that he is now saved. Ah, my reader, if *this* is how you were “saved,” then it was with “*enticing* words of man’s wisdom” and *your* “faith” stands only “in the wisdom of men” (1Co 2:4-5) and not in the power of God!

Multitudes seem to think that it is about as easy for a sinner to purify his heart (Jam 4:8) as it is to wash his hand—to admit the searching and flesh-withering light of divine truth into the soul, as the morning sun into his room by pulling up the blinds—to turn from idols to God, from the world to Christ, from sin to holiness, as to turn a ship right round by the help of her helm. Oh, my reader, be not deceived on this vital matter. To mortify the lusts of the flesh, to be crucified unto the world, to overcome the devil, to die daily unto sin and live unto righteousness, to be meek and lowly in heart, trustful and obedient, pious and patient, faithful and uncompromising, loving and gentle—in a word, to be a Christian, *to be Christ-like*, is a task far, far beyond the poor resources of fallen human nature.

It is because a generation has arisen which is ignorant of the *real nature* of saving faith that they deem it such a simple thing. It is because so very few have any scriptural conception of *the character* of God’s great salvation that the delusions referred to above are so widely received. It is because so very few realize *what* they need saving from that the popular “evangel” (?) of the hour is so eagerly accepted. Once it is seen that saving faith consists of very much more than believing that “Christ died for me,” that it involves and entails the complete surrender of my heart and life to His government, few will imagine that they possess it. Once it is seen that God’s salvation is not only a legal but also an experimental thing, that it not only justifies but regenerates and sanctifies, fewer will suppose they are its participants. Once it is seen that Christ came here to save His people not only from hell, but from sin, from self-will and self-pleasing, then fewer will desire His salvation.

The Lord Jesus did not teach that saving faith was a simple matter. Far from it! Instead of declaring that the saving of the soul was an easy thing, which many would participate in, He said, “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Mat 7:14). The only path which leads to heaven is a hard and laborious one. “We must through *much tribulation* enter into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22). An entrance into that path calls for the utmost endeavours of soul—“*Strive* to enter in at the strait gate” (Luk 13:24).

After the young ruler had departed from Christ, sorrowing, the Lord turned to His disciples and said, “How *hard* is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a *rich* man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Mar 10:24-25). What place is given to such a passage as this in the theology (if “theology” it is fit to be called) which is being taught in the “Bible institutes” to those seeking to qualify for evangelistic and

personal work? None at all. According to their views, it is just as easy for a millionaire to be saved as it is for a pauper, since *all* that either has to do is “rest on the finished work of Christ.” But those who are wallowing in wealth think not of God, “According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me!” (Hos 13:6).

When the disciples heard these words of Christ’s, “They were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?” (Mar 10:26). Had our moderns heard them, they had soon set their fears at rest, and assured them that anybody and everybody could be saved, if they believed on the Lord Jesus. But not so did Christ reassure them. Instead, He immediately added, “With men it is *impossible*, but not with God” (Mar 10:27). Of himself, the fallen sinner can no more repent evangelically, believe in Christ savingly, come to Him effectually, than he can create a world. “With men it is impossible,” rules out of court all special pleading for the power of man’s will. Nothing but a *miracle of grace* can lead to the saving of any sinner.

And *why* is it impossible for the natural man to exercise saving faith? Let the answer be drawn from the case of this young ruler. He departed from Christ sorrowing, “for he had great possessions.” He was wrapped up in them. They were his idols. His heart was chained to the things of earth. The demands of Christ were too exacting—to part with all and follow Him was more than flesh and blood could endure. Reader, what are *your* idols? To him the Lord said, “One thing thou lackest.” What was it? A yielding to the imperative requirements of Christ, a heart surrendered to God. When the soul is stuffed with the dregs of earth, there is no room for the impressions of heaven. When a man is satisfied with carnal riches, he has no desire for spiritual riches.

The same sad truth is brought out again in Christ’s parable of the “great supper” (Luk 14:16). The feast of divine grace is spread, and through the Gospel, a general call is given for men to come and partake of it. And what is the response? This, “They all with one consent began to make excuse” (Luk 14:18). And why should they? Because they were more interested in other things! Their hearts were set upon land (verse 18), oxen (verse 19), domestic comforts (verse 20). People are willing to “accept Christ” on their own terms, but not on His. What His terms *are* is made known in the same chapter—giving Him the supreme place in our affections (verse 26), the crucifixion of self (verse 27), the abandoning of every idol (verse 33). Therefore did He ask, “Which of you, intending to build a tower [figure of a hard task, of setting the affections on things *above*], sitteth not down first, and *counteth the cost*?” (Luk 14:28).

“How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” (Joh 5:44). Do these words picture the exercise of saving faith as the simple matter, which so many deem it? The word,

“honour,” here signifies approbation or praise. While those Jews were making it their chief aim to win and hold the good opinion of each other, and were indifferent to the approval of God, it was impossible that they should come to Christ. It is the same now, “Whomsoever therefore will be [desires and is determined to be] a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jam 4:4). To come to Christ effectually, to believe on Him savingly, involves turning our backs upon the world, alienating ourselves from the esteem of our godless (or religious) fellows, and identifying ourselves with the despised and rejected One. It involves bowing to His yoke, surrendering to His lordship, and living henceforth for *His* glory. And *that* is no small task.

“*Labour* not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you” (Joh 6:27). Does this language imply that the obtaining of eternal life is a simple matter? It does not. Far from it. It denotes that a man must be in deadly earnest, subordinating all other interests in his quest for it, and be prepared to put forth strenuous endeavours and overcome formidable difficulties. Then, does this verse teach salvation by works, by self-efforts? No, and yes. No, in the sense that anything we do can *merit* salvation—eternal life is a “gift.” Yes, in the sense that whole-hearted seeking after salvation and a diligent use of the prescribed means of grace are demanded of us. Nowhere in Scripture is there any promise to the dilatory. Compare Hebrews 4:11.

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Joh 6:44). Plainly does this language give the lie to the popular theory of the day that it lies within the power of man’s will to be saved any time he chooses to be. Flatly does this verse contradict the flesh-pleasing and creature-honouring idea that anyone can receive Christ as his Saviour the moment he decides to do so. The reason why the natural man cannot come to Christ till the Father “draw” him is because he is the bondsman of sin (Joh 8:34), serving divers lusts (Ti 3:3), the captive of the devil (2Ti 2:26). Almighty power must break his chains and open the prison doors (Luk 4:18) ere he *can* come to Christ. Can one who loves darkness and hates the light reverse the process? No, no more than a man who has a diseased foot or poisoned hand can heal it by an effort of will. Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? No more can they do good who are accustomed to do evil (Jer 13:23).

“And if the righteous with difficulty is saved, the ungodly and sinner where shall they appear?” (1Pe 4:18, Bagster’s Interlinear). Matthew Henry (1662-1714) said, “It is as much as the best can do to secure the salvation of their souls. There are so many sufferings, temptations, and difficulties to be overcome, so many sins to be mortified. The gate is so strait, and the way so narrow, that it is as much as the righteous man can do to be saved. Let the absolute necessity of salvation balance the difficulty of it. Consider your difficulties are the greatest at first. God offers His grace and help. The contest will not last long. Be but faithful to the death and God

will give you the crown of life (Rev 2:10).” So also John Lillie (1812-1867), “After all that God has done by sending His Son, and the Son by the Holy Spirit, it is only with difficulty, exceeding difficulty, that the work of saving the righteous advances to its consummation. The entrance into the kingdom lies through much tribulation—through fightings without and fears within—through the world’s seductions and its frowns—through the utter weakness and continual failures of the flesh, and the many fiery darts of Satan.”

Here, then, are the reasons why saving faith is so difficult to put forth. 1. By nature, men are entirely ignorant of its real character, and therefore are easily deceived by Satan’s plausible substitutes for it. But even when they are scripturally informed thereon, they either sorrowfully turn their backs on Christ, as did the rich young ruler when he learned His terms of discipleship, or they hypocritically profess what they do not possess. 2. The power of self-love reigns supreme within, and to *deny* self is too great a demand upon the unregenerate. 3. The love of the world and the approbation of their friends stands in the way of a complete surrender to Christ. 4. The demands of God that He should be loved with *all* the heart and that we should be “holy in all manner of conversation” (1Pe 1:15) repels the carnal. 5. Bearing the reproach of Christ, being hated by the religious world (Joh 15:18), suffering persecution for righteousness’ sake, is something which mere flesh and blood shrinks from. 6. The humbling of ourselves before God, penitently confessing *all* our self-will, is something which an unbroken heart revolts against. 7. To fight the good fight of faith (1Ti 6:12) and overcome the devil (1Jo 2:13) is too arduous an undertaking for those who love their own ease.

Multitudes desire to be saved from hell (the natural instinct of *self*-preservation) who are quite willing to be saved from *sin*. Yes, there are tens of thousands who have been deluded into thinking that they have “accepted Christ as their Saviour,” whose lives show plainly that they *reject* Him as their Lord. For a sinner to obtain the pardon of God, he must “*forsake* his way” (Isa 55:7). No man can turn *to God* until he turns *from idols* (1Th 1:9). Thus insisted the Lord Jesus, “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luk 14:33).

The terrible thing is that so many preachers today, under the pretence of magnifying the grace of God, have represented Christ as the Minister of *sin*; as One who has, through His atoning sacrifice, procured an indulgence for men to continue gratifying their fleshly and worldly lusts. Provided a man professes to believe in the virgin birth and vicarious death of Christ, and claims to be resting upon Him alone for salvation, he may pass for a real Christian almost anywhere today, even though his daily life may be no different from that of the moral worldling who makes no profession at all. The devil is chloroforming thousands into hell by this very delusion. The Lord Jesus asks, “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say?” (Luk 6:46), and insists, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord,

Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Mat 7:21).

The hardest task before most of us is not to learn, but to unlearn. Many of God’s own children have drunk so deeply of the sweetened poison of Satan that it is by no means easy to get it out of their systems. And while it remains in them, it stupefies their understanding. So much is this the case that, the first time one of them reads an article like this, it is apt to strike him as an open attack upon the sufficiency of Christ’s finished work, as though we were here teaching that the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb needed to be plussed by something from the creature. Not so. Nothing but the merits of Immanuel can ever give any sinner title to stand before the ineffably holy God. But what we are now contending for is, “*When* does God impute to any sinner the righteousness of Christ?” Certainly not while he is opposed to Him!

Moreover, we do not honour the work of Christ until we correctly define *what* that work was designed to effect. The Lord of glory did not come here and die to procure the pardon of our sins, and take us to heaven, while our hearts still remain cleaving to the earth. No, He came here to prepare a way to heaven (Joh 10:4; 14:4; Heb 10:20-22; 1Pe 2:21), to call men into that way, that by His precepts and promises, His example and Spirit, He might form and fashion their souls to that glorious state and make them willing to abandon all things for it. He lived and died so that His Spirit should come and quicken the dead sinners into newness of life, make them new creatures in Himself, and cause them to sojourn in this world as those who are not of it, as those whose hearts have already departed from it. Christ did not come here to render a change of heart, repentance, faith, personal holiness, loving God supremely, and obeying Him unreservedly, as unnecessary, or salvation as possible *without* them. How passing strange that any suppose He did!

Ah, my reader, it becomes a searching test for each of our hearts to face honestly the question, “Is *this* what I really long for?” As John Bunyan (1628-1688) asked (in his, *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved*), “What are thy desires? Wouldest thou be saved? Wouldest thou be saved with a *thorough* salvation? Wouldest thou be saved from guilt, and from filth too? Wouldest thou be the *servant* of the Saviour? Art thou indeed weary of the service of thy old master, the devil, sin, and the world? And have these desires put thy soul to flight? Doest thou fly to Him that is a Saviour from the wrath to come, for life? If these be thy desires, and if they be unfeigned, fear not.”

“Many people think that when we preach salvation, we mean salvation from going to hell. We do mean that, but we mean a great deal more. We preach salvation from *sin*. We say that Christ is able to save a man, and we mean by that that He is able to save him from sin and to make him holy, to make him a new man. No person has any right to say, ‘I am saved,’ while he continues in sin as he did before. How can you be saved from sin while you are living in it? A man that is

drowning cannot say he is saved from the water while he is sinking in it. A man that is frost-bitten cannot say, with any truth, that he is saved from the cold while he is stiffened in the wintry blast. No, man, Christ did not come to save thee *in* thy sins, but to save thee *from* thy sins, not to make the disease so that it should not kill thee, but to let it remain in itself mortal, and, nevertheless, to remove it from thee and thee from it. Christ Jesus came, then, to heal us from the plague of sin, to touch us with His hand, and say, ‘I will, be thou clean’” (C. H. Spurgeon, on Mat 9:12, 1834-1892).

They, who do not yearn after holiness of heart and righteousness of life, are only deceiving themselves when they suppose they desire to be saved by Christ. The plain fact is, all that is wanted by so many today is merely a soothing portion for their conscience, which will enable them to go on comfortably in a course of self-pleasing, which will permit them to continue their worldly ways without the fear of eternal punishment. Human nature is the same the world over; that wretched instinct which causes multitudes to believe that paying a papist priest a few dollars procures forgiveness of all their past sins, and an “indulgence” for future ones, moves other multitudes to devour greedily the lie that, with an unbroken and impenitent heart, by a mere act of the will, they may “believe in Christ,” and thereby obtain not only God’s pardon for past sins but an “eternal security,” no matter what they do or do not do in the future.

Oh, my reader, be not deceived. God frees none from the condemnation but those “which are *in Christ Jesus*” (Rom 8:1), and “If any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*: old things are [*not* “ought to be”] passed away; behold, *all things are* become new (2Co 5:17). Saving faith makes a sinner come to Christ with a real soul-thirst, that he may drink of the living water, even of His sanctifying Spirit (Joh 7:38-39). To love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to pray for them that despitefully use us, is very far from being easy, yet *this* is only one part of the task which Christ assigns unto those who would be *His* disciples. *He* acted thus, and He has left us an example, that we should follow His steps. And *His* “salvation,” in its *present* application, consists of revealing to our hearts the imperative need for our measuring up to His high and holy standard, with a realization of our own utter powerlessness so to do, and creating within us an intense hunger and thirst after such personal righteousness, and a daily turning unto Him and trustful supplication for needed grace and strength.

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

7. The Scriptures and the World

Not a little is written to the Christian in the New Testament about “the world” and his attitude towards it. Its real nature is plainly defined and the believer is solemnly warned against it. God’s holy Word is a light from heaven, shining here “in a dark place” (2Pe 1:19). Its divine rays exhibit things in their true colours, penetrating and exposing the false veneer and glamour by which many objects are cloaked. That world upon which so much labour is bestowed and money spent, and which is so highly extolled and admired by its blinded dupes, is declared to be “the enemy of God” (Jam 4:4). Therefore are His children forbidden to be “conformed” (Rom 12:2) to it and to have their affections set upon it.

The present phase of our subject is by no means the least important of those that have already been before us, and the serious reader will do well to seek divine grace to measure himself or herself by it. One of the exhortations which God has addressed to His children is, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may *grow* thereby” (1Pe 2:2), and it behoves each one of them honestly and diligently to examine himself so as to discover whether or not this be the case with him. Nor are we to be content with an increase of mere head-knowledge of Scripture. What we need to be most concerned about is our *practical* growth, our experimental conformity to the image of Christ. And one point at which we may test ourselves is, “Does my reading and study of God’s Word make me less worldly?”

1. We profit from the Word when our eyes are opened to *discern the true character of the world*. One of the poets wrote, “God’s in His heaven—all’s right with the world.” From one standpoint, that is blessedly true, but from another, it is radically wrong, for, “The whole world lieth in wickedness” (1Jo 5:19). But it is only as the heart is supernaturally enlightened by the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to perceive that that which is highly esteemed among men is really “abomination in the sight of God” (Luk 16:15). It is much to be thankful for when the soul is able to see that the “world” is a gigantic fraud, a hollow bauble, a vile thing, which must one day be burned up.

Before we go farther, let us define that “world” which the Christian is forbidden to love. There are few words found upon the pages of Holy Writ used with a greater variety of meanings than this one. Yet careful attention to the context will usually determine its scope. The “world” is a system or order of things, complete in itself.

No foreign element is suffered to intrude, or if it does, it is speedily accommodated or assimilated to itself. The “world” is fallen human nature acting itself out in the human family, fashioning the framework of human society in accord with its own tendencies. It is the organized kingdom of the “carnal mind” which is “enmity against God” and which is “*not* subject to *the law* of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). Wherever the “carnal mind” is, there is “the world”—so that worldliness is the world without God.

2. We profit from the Word when we learn that the world is *an enemy to be resisted and overcome*. The Christian is bidden to “Fight the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12), which implies that there are foes to be met and vanquished. As there is the Holy Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—so also is there an evil trinity—the flesh, the world, and the devil. The child of God is called unto a mortal combat with them. “Mortal” we say, for either they will destroy him or he will get the victory over them. Settle it, then, in your mind, my reader, that the world is a deadly enemy, and if you do not vanquish it in your heart, then you are no child of God, for it is written, “For whatsoever is born of God *overcometh* the world” (1Jo 5:4).

Out of many, the following reasons may be given as to why the world *must* be “overcome.” First, all its alluring objects tend to divert the attention and alienate the affections of the soul from God—necessarily so, for it is the tendency of things seen to turn the heart away from things unseen. Second, the spirit of the world is diametrically opposed to the Spirit of Christ, therefore did the apostle write, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God” (1Co 2:12). The Son of God came into the world, but “The world knew Him not” (Joh 1:10), therefore did its “princes” and rulers crucify Him (1Co 2:8). Third, its concerns and cares are hostile to a devout and heavenly life. Christians, like the rest of mankind, are required by God to labour six days in the week. But while so employed, they need to be constantly on their guard, lest covetous *interests* govern them rather than the performance of *duty*.

“This is the victory that *overcometh* the world, even our faith” (1Jo 5:4). Naught but a God-given faith *can* overcome the world. But as the heart is occupied with invisible, yet eternal realities, it is delivered from the corrupting influence of worldly objects. The eyes of faith discern the things of sense in their real colours, and see that they are empty and vain, and not worthy to be compared with the great and glorious objects of eternity. A felt sense of the perfections and presence of God makes the world appear less than nothing. When the Christian views the divine Redeemer dying for his sins, living to intercede for his perseverance, reigning and overruling things for his final salvation, he exclaims, “There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.”

And how is it with *you*, dear reader? You may cordially assent to what has just been said in the last paragraph, but how is it with you *actually*? Do the things, which are so highly valued by the unregenerate, charm and enthrall you? Take away from the worldling those things in which he delights, and he is wretched. Is this so with you? Or, are your *present* joy and satisfaction found in objects which can *never* be taken from you? Treat not these questions lightly, we beseech you, but ponder them seriously in the presence of God. The *honest* answer to them will be an index to the real state of your soul, and will indicate whether or not you are deceived into supposing yourself to be “a new creature in Christ Jesus.”

3. We profit from the Word when we learn that Christ died *to deliver us from* “this present evil world” (Gal 1:4). The Son of God came here not only to “fulfil” the requirements of the law (Mat 5:17), to “destroy the works of the devil” (1Jo 3:8), to deliver us “from the wrath to come” (1Th 1:10), to save us from our sins (Mat 1:21), but also to free us from the bondage of this world, to deliver the soul from its enthralling influence. This was foreshadowed of old in God’s dealings with Israel. They were slaves in Egypt, and “Egypt” is a figure of the world. They were in cruel bondage, spending their time in “making bricks” for Pharaoh. They were unable to free themselves. But JEHOVAH, by His mighty power, emancipated them, and brought them forth out of the “iron furnace” (Deu 4:20). Thus does Christ with His own. He breaks the power of the world over their hearts. He makes them independent of it, that they neither court its favours nor fear its frowns.

Christ gave Himself a sacrifice for the sins of His people that, in consequence thereof, they might be delivered from the damning power and governing influence of all that is evil in this present world—from Satan, who is its prince—from the lusts which predominate in it—from the vain conversation of the men who belong to it. Now the Holy Spirit, indwelling the saints, co-operates with Christ in this blessed work. He turns their thoughts and affections away from earthly things to heavenly. By the working of His power, He frees from the demoralizing influence which surrounds us, and conforms to the heavenly standard. And as the Christian grows in grace, he recognizes this, and acts accordingly. He *seeks* yet fuller deliverance from this “present *evil* world” (Gal 1:4), and begs God to free him from it completely. That which once charmed him now nauseates. He longs for the time when he shall be taken out of this scene where his blessed Lord is so grievously dishonoured.

4. We profit from the Word when our *hearts are weaned from it*. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1Jo 2:15). “What the stumbling-block is to the traveler in the way, the weight to the runner, the lime twigs to the bird in its flight, so is the love of the world to a Christian in his course—either wholly diverting him from, greatly enticing him in, or forcibly turning him out of it” (Nathanael Hardy, 1618-1670). The truth is that until the heart be purged from this corruption, the ear will be deaf to divine instruction. Not until we are lifted above

the things of time and sense can we be subdued unto obedience to God. Heavenly truth glides off a carnal mind as water from a spherical body.

The world has turned its back upon Christ, and though His name is professed in many places, yet will it have nothing to do with Him. All the desires and designs of worldlings are for the gratification of *self*. Let their aims and pursuits be as varied as they may, self being supreme, everything is subordinated to the pleasing thereof. Now, Christians are in the world, and cannot get out of it. They have to live their Lord's appointed time in it. While here, they have to earn their living, support their families, and attend to their worldly business. But they are forbidden to *love* the world, as though it could make them happy. Their "treasure" and "portion" are to be found elsewhere.

The world appeals to every instinct of fallen man. It contains a thousand objects to charm him. They attract his attention. The attention creates a desire for and love of them, and insensibly, yet surely, they make deeper and deeper impressions on his heart. It has the same fatal influence on *all* classes. But attractive and appealing as its varied objects may be, all the pursuits and pleasures of the world are designed and adopted to promote the happiness of *this life only*—therefore, "What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" The Christian is taught by the Spirit, and through His presenting of Christ before the soul, his thoughts are diverted from the world. Just as a little child will readily drop a dirty object when something more pleasing is offered to it, so the heart, which is in communion with God, will say, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord...and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phi 3:8).

5. We profit from the Word when we *walk in separation from* the world. "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (Jam 4:4). Such a verse as this ought to search every one of us through and through, and make us tremble. How can I fraternize with or seek my pleasure in that which condemned the Son of God? If I do, that at once identifies me with His enemies. Oh, my reader, make no mistake upon this point. It is written, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1Jo 2:15).

Of old, it was said of the people of God that they "shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Num 23:9). Surely the disparity of character and conduct, the desires and pursuits, which distinguish the regenerate from the unregenerate *must* separate the one from the other. We who profess to have our citizenship in another world, to be guided by another Spirit, to be directed by another rule, and to be journeying to another country, cannot go arm in arm with those who *despise* all such things! Then let everything in and about us exhibit the

character of Christian *pilgrims*. May we indeed be “men wondered at” (Zec 3:8) because “*not conformed to this world*” (Rom 12:2).

6. We profit from the Word when we *evoke the hatred of* the world. What pains are taken in the world to save appearances and keep up a seemly and good state! Its conventionalities and civilities, its courtesies and charities, are so many contrivances to give an air of respectability to it. So too its churches and cathedrals, its priests and prelates, are needed to gloss over the corruption which seethes beneath the surface. And to make good weight, “Christianity” is added, and the holy name of Christ is taken upon the lips of thousands of those who have never taken *His* “yoke” upon them. Of them, God says, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Mat 15:8).

And what is to be the attitude of all real Christians toward such? The answer of Scripture is plain, “From such turn away” (2Ti 3:5), “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2Co 6:17). And what will follow when this divine command is obeyed? Why, then we shall prove the truth of those words of Christ’s, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world *hateth* you” (Joh 15:19). Which “world” is specifically in view here? Let the previous verse answer, “If the world hate you, ye know it hated me before it hated you.” What “world” hated Christ and hounded Him to death? The *religious* world, those who pretended to be most zealous for God’s glory. So it is now. Let the Christian turn his back upon a Christ-dishonouring Christendom, and his fiercest foes and most relentless and unscrupulous enemies will be those who claim to be Christians themselves! But “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you...for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad” (Mat 5:11-12). Ah, my brother, it is a healthy sign, a sure mark that you are profiting from the Word, when the religious world hates you. But if, on the other hand, you still have a “good standing” in the “churches” or “assemblies,” there is grave reason to fear that you love the praise of men more than that of God!

7. We profit from the Word when we are *elevated above* the world. First, above its *customs and fashions*. The worldling is a slave to the prevailing habits and styles of the day. Not so the one who is walking with God. His chief concern is to be “conformed to the image of his Son.” Second, above its *cares and sorrows*. Of old, it was said of the saints that they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had “in heaven a better and an enduring substance” (Heb 10:34). Third, above its *temptations*. What attraction has the glare and glitter of the world for those who are “delighting themselves in the Lord”? None whatever. Fourth, above its *opinions and approvals*. Have you learned to be independent of and defy the world? If your whole heart is set upon pleasing God, you will be quite unconcerned about the frowns of the godless.

Now, my reader, do you really wish to measure yourself by the contents of this article? Then, seek honest answers to the following questions. First, what are the objects before your mind in times of recreation? What do your thoughts most run upon? Second, what are the objects of your *choice*? When you have to decide how to spend an evening or the Sabbath afternoon, *what* do you select? Third, which occasions you the most sorrow, the loss of earthly things, or lack of communion with God? Which causes greater grief (or chagrin), the spoiling of your plans, or the coldness of your heart to Christ? Fourth, what is your favourite topic of conversation? Do you hanker after the news of the day, or to meet with those who talk of the “altogether lovely” One? Fifth, do your “good intentions” materialize, or are they nothing but empty dreams? Are you spending more or less time than formerly on your knees? Is the Word sweeter to your taste, or has your soul lost its relish for it?

COMING TO CHRIST

Part 1

By way of introduction, let us bring before the readers the following Scriptures. (1) “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life” (Joh 5:40). (2) “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mat 11:28). (3) “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Joh 6:44). (4) “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (Joh 6:37). (5) “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luk 14:26-27). (6) “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious” (1Pe 2:4). (7) “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25).

The first of these passages applies to every unregenerate man and woman on this earth. While he is in a state of nature, no man can come to Christ. Though all

excellencies both divine and human are found in the Lord Jesus, though He is “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16), yet the fallen sons of Adam see in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. They may be well instructed in “the doctrine of Christ,” they may believe unhesitatingly all that Scripture affirms concerning Him, they may frequently take His name upon their lips, profess to be resting on His finished work, sing His praises, yet their *hearts* are far from Him. The things of this world have the first place in their affections. The gratifying of self is their dominant concern. They surrender not their lives to Him. He is too holy to suit their love of sin. His claims are too exacting to suit their selfish hearts. His terms of discipleship are too severe to suit their fleshly ways. They *will not* yield to His lordship—true alike with each one of us till God performs a miracle of grace upon our hearts.

The second passage contains a gracious invitation, made by the compassionate Saviour, to a particular class of sinners. The “all” is at once qualified, clearly and definitely, by the words which immediately follow it. The character of those to whom this loving word belongs is clearly defined. It is those who “labour” and are “heavy laden.” Most clearly, then, it applies not to the vast majority of our light-hearted, gay-hearted, pleasure-seeking fellows, who have no regard for God’s glory and no concern about their eternal welfare. No, the word for such poor creatures is rather, “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, for all these things God *will* bring thee into judgment” (Ecc 11:9). But to those who have “labored” hard to keep the law and please God, who are “heavy laden” with a felt sense of their utter inability to meet His requirements, and who long to be delivered from the power and pollution of sin, Christ says, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest” (Mat 11:28).

The third passage quoted above at once tells us that, “coming to Christ,” is *not* the easy matter so many imagine it, nor so simple a thing as most preachers represent it to be. Instead of its so being, the incarnate Son of God positively declares that such an act is utterly impossible to a fallen and depraved creature unless and until divine power is brought to bear upon him. A most pride-humbling, flesh-withering, man-abasing word is this. “Coming to Christ” is a far, far different thing from raising your hand to be prayed for by some Protestant “priest,” coming forward, and taking some cheap-jack evangelist’s hand, signing some “decision” card, uniting with some “church,” or any other of the “many inventions” (Ecc 7:29) of man. Before anyone can or will “come to Christ,” the understanding must be enlightened, the heart must be supernaturally changed, the stubborn will must be supernaturally broken.

The fourth passage is also one that is unpalatable to the carnal mind, yet is it a precious portion unto the Spirit-taught children of God. It sets forth the blessed truth of unconditional election, or the discriminating grace of God. It speaks of a favoured people whom the Father gives to His Son. It declares that every one of that

blessed company shall come to Christ—neither the effects of their fall in Adam, the power of indwelling sin, the hatred and untiring efforts of Satan, nor the deceptive delusions of blind preachers, will be able finally to hinder them—when God’s appointed hour arrives, each of His elect is delivered from the power and darkness and is translated into the kingdom of His dear Son. It announces that each such one who comes to Christ, no matter how unworthy and vile he be in himself, no matter how black and long the awful catalogue of his sins, He will by no means despise or fail to welcome him, and under no circumstances will He ever cast him off.

The fifth passage is one that makes known the terms on which alone Christ is willing to receive sinners. Here, the uncompromising claims of His holiness are set out. He must be crowned Lord of all, or He will not be Lord at all. There must be the complete heart-renunciation of all that stands in competition with Him. He will brook no rival. All that pertains to “the flesh,” whether found in a loved one or in self, has to be hated. The “cross” is the badge of Christian discipleship—not a golden one worn on the body, but the principle of self-denial and self-sacrifice ruling the heart. How evident is it, then, that a mighty, supernatural, divine work of grace *must* be wrought in the human heart if any man will even *desire* to meet such terms!

The sixth passage tells us that the Christian is to *continue as he began*. We are to “come to Christ” not once and for all, but frequently, daily. He is the only One who can minister unto our needs, and to Him we must constantly turn for the supply of them. In our felt emptiness, we must draw from His fullness (Joh 1:16). In our weakness, we must turn to Him for strength. In our ignorance, we must apply to Him for wisdom. In our falls into sin, we must seek afresh His cleansing. *All* that we need for time and eternity is stored up in Him—refreshment when we are weary (Isa 40:31), healing of body when we are sick (Exo 15:26), comfort when we are sad (1Pe 5:7), deliverance when we are tempted (Heb 2:18). If we have wandered away from Him, left our first love, then the remedy is to “repent, and do the *first* works” (Rev 2:5). That is, cast ourselves upon Him anew, come just as we did the first time we came to Him—as unworthy, self-confessed sinners, seeking His mercy and forgiveness.

The seventh passage assures us of the eternal security of those who do come. Christ saves “unto the uttermost” or “for evermore” those who come unto God by Him. He is not of one mind today and of another tomorrow. No, He is “the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Heb 13:8). “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (Joh 13:1), and “He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Inasmuch as *His* prayers are effectual, for He declares that the Father hears Him “always” (Joh 11:42), none whose name is indelibly stamped on the heart of our great High Priest can ever perish. Hallelujah!

Having thus sought to introduce some of the leading aspects of the subject which is to engage our attention, we now propose to enter into some detail as the Spirit of truth is pleased to grant us His much-needed assistance.

I. Obstacles in coming to Christ

Under this head, we shall try to show *why* the natural man is *unable* to come to Christ.” 1. Let us again quote John 6:44, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” The reason why this is such a “hard saying,” even unto thousands who profess to be Christians, is that they utterly fail to realize the terrible havoc which the fall has wrought, and, it is greatly to be feared, because they are themselves strangers to “the plague” of their own hearts (1Ki 8:38). Surely if the Spirit had ever awakened them from the sleep of spiritual death, and given them to see something of the dreadful state they were in by nature, and they had been brought to feel that the carnal mind *in them* was “enmity against God” (Rom 8:7), then they would no longer cavil against this solemn word of Christ’s. But the spiritually dead can neither see nor feel spiritually.

Wherein lies the total inability of the natural man? It is *not in the lack of the necessary facilities*. This needs to be plainly insisted upon, otherwise fallen man would cease to be a responsible creature. Fearful as were the effects of the fall, they deprived man of none of the faculties with which God originally endowed him. True it is that the coming of sin took away from man all power to use those faculties aright, that is, to employ them for the glory of his Maker. Nevertheless, fallen man possesses identically the same threefold nature of spirit and soul and body, as he did before the fall. No part of man’s being was annihilated, though each part was defiled and corrupted by sin. True, man died spiritually, but death is not extinction of being. Spiritual death is *alienation from God* (Eph 4:18). The spiritually dead one is very much alive and active in the service of Satan.

No, the inability of fallen man to “come to Christ” lies in no physical or mental defect. He has the same feet to take him unto a place where the Gospel is preached as he has to walk with to a picture-show. He has the same eyes with which to read the Holy Scriptures as he has to read the world’s newspapers. He has the same lips and voice for calling upon God as he now uses in idle talk or foolish song. So too he has the same mental faculties for pondering the things of God and the concerns of eternity as he now uses so diligently in connection with his business. It is because of this that man is “without excuse.” It is the *misuse* of the faculties with which the Creator has endowed him that increases man’s guilt. Let every servant of God see to it that those things are constantly pressed upon his unsaved hearers.

2. We have to search deeper in order to find the seat of man’s spiritual impotency. His inability lies *in his corrupt nature*. Through Adam’s fall, and

through our own sin, our nature has become so debased and depraved that it is impossible for any man to “come to Christ,” to “love him and serve him,” to esteem Him more highly than all the world put together and submit to His rule, until the Spirit of God renews him, and implants a new nature. A bitter fountain cannot send forth sweet waters, nor an evil tree produce good fruit. Let us try to make this still clearer by an illustration. It is the *nature* of a vulture to feed upon carrion. True, it has the same bodily members to feed upon the wholesome grain the hens do, but it lacks the disposition and relish for it. It is the nature of a sow to wallow in the mire. True, it has the same legs as a sheep to conduct it to the meadow, but it lacks the desire for the green pastures. So it is with unregenerate man. He has the same physical and mental faculties as the regenerate have for the things and service of God, but he has no love for them.

“Adam...begat a son in his own likeness, after his image” (Gen 5:3). What an awful contrast is found here with that which we read two verses before, “God created man, in the likeness of God made he him.” In the interval, Adam had fallen, and a fallen parent could beget only a fallen child, transmitting unto him his own depravity. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” (Job 14:4). Therefore do we find the sweet singer of Israel declaring, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psa 51:5). Though, later, grace made him the man after God’s own heart, yet by nature, David (as we) was a mass of iniquity and sin. How early does this corruption of nature appear in children. “Even a child is known by his doings” (Pro 20:11), the evil bias of its heart is soon manifested—pride, self-will, vanity, lying, averseness to good, are the bitter fruits which quickly appear on the tender but vitiated twig.

3. The inability of the natural man to “come to Christ” lies in *the complete darkness of his understanding*. This leading faculty of the soul has been despoiled of its primitive glory, and covered over with confusion. Both mind and conscience are defiled, “There is none that understandeth” (Rom 3:11). Solemnly did the apostle remind the saints, “Ye were sometimes darkness” (Eph 5:8), not merely “in darkness,” but “darkness” itself. “Sin has closed the windows of the soul. Darkness is over all the region. It is the land of darkness and shadow of death, where the light is as darkness. The prince of darkness reigns there and nothing but the works of darkness are framed there. We are born spiritually blind and cannot be restored without a miracle of grace. This is thy case whoever thou art, that art not born again” (Thomas Boston, 1676-1732). “They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge” (Jer 4:22).

“The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). There is in the unregenerate *an opposition* to spiritual things and an aversion against them. God has made a revelation of His will unto sinners touching the way of salvation, yet they will not walk therein. They hear that Christ alone is able to save, yet they refuse to part with those things that hinder

their coming to Him. They hear that it is sin which slays the soul, and yet they cherish it in their bosoms. They heed not the threatenings of God. Men believe that fire will burn them, and are at great pains to avoid it. Yet they show by their actions that they regard the everlasting burnings as a mere scarecrow. The divine commandments are “holy, just and good,” but men hate them, and observe them only so far as their respectability among men is promoted.

4. The inability of the natural man to “come to Christ” lies in *the complete corruption of his affections*. “Man as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything above spiritual things. If ye want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere—there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which doth not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is Christ Jesus so little beloved? Why are even His professed followers so cold in their affections to Him? Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate, and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the fall, that man should love sin better than righteousness, and the ways of this world better than the ways of God.” (C. H. Spurgeon, sermon on John 6:44).

The affections of the unrenewed man are wholly depraved and distempered. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and *desperately wicked*” (Jer 17:9). Solemnly did the Lord Jesus affirm that the affections of fallen man are a mother of abominations, “For from within [not from the devil], out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness” (Mar 7:21-22). The natural man’s affections are wretchedly misplaced. He is a spiritual monster. His heart is where his feet should be, fixed on the earth. His heels are lifted up against heaven, which his heart should be set on, Acts 9:5. His face is towards hell, his back towards heaven, and therefore, God calls to him to turn. He joys in what he ought to mourn for, and mourns for what he should rejoice in, glories in his shame, and is ashamed of his glory, abhors what he should desire, and desires what he should abhor, Pro 2:13-15 (from Thomas Boston’s *Fourfold State*, 1676-1732).

5. The inability of the natural man to “come to Christ” lies in *the total perversity of his will*. “‘Oh,’ said the Arminian, ‘men may be saved if they will.’ We reply, ‘My dear sir, we all believe that, but it is just the, *if they will*, that is the difficulty.’ We assert that no man *will* come to Christ unless he be drawn. Nay, *we* do not assert it, but *Christ* Himself declares it, ‘Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life’

(Joh 5:40). And as long as that, ‘Ye will not come,’ stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will. It is strange how people, when talking about free will, talk of things which they do not at all understand. ‘Now,’ says one, ‘I believe men can be saved if they will.’ My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the Gospel of Christ? We declare, upon scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human being will ever be constrained towards Christ” (C. H. Spurgeon).

“Now here is a threefold cord against heaven and holiness, not easily to be broken—a blind man, a perverse will, and disorderly, distempered affections. The mind, swelled with self-conceit, says the man should not stoop. The will, opposite to the will of God, says he will not. And the corrupt affections rising against the Lord, in defence of the corrupt will, says he shall not. Thus, the poor creature stands out against God and goodness, till a day of power come, in which he is made a new creature” (T. Boston). Perhaps some readers are inclined to say, “Such teaching as this is calculated to discourage sinners and drive them to despair.” Our answer is, first, that it is according to God’s Word! Second, oh that it may please Him to use this article to drive some to despair of all help from themselves. Third, it makes manifest the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit’s working with such depraved and spiritually helpless creatures, if they are ever to come savingly to Christ. And until this is clearly perceived, *His* aid will never be *really* sought in earnest!

HEART WORK

Part 1

“Do you think you came into this world to spend your whole time and strength in your employments, your trades, your pleasures, unto the satisfaction of the will of the flesh and of the mind? Have you time enough to eat, to drink, to sleep, and talk unprofitably—it may be corruptly—in all sorts of unnecessary societies, but have not enough time to live unto God, in the very essentials of that life? Alas, you came into the world under this law, ‘It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the

judgment' (Heb 9:27), and the end (purpose) why your life is here granted unto you is that you may be prepared for that judgment. If this be neglected, if the principal part of your time be not improved with respect unto this end, you will yet fall under the sentence of it unto eternity" (John Owen, 1616-1683).

Multitudes seem to be running, but few "pressing toward the mark" (Phi 3:14). Many talk about salvation, but few experience the joy of it. There is much of the form of godliness, but little of the power of it. Oh, how rare it is to find any who know anything experimentally of the power that separates from the world, delivers from self, defends from Satan, makes sin to be hated, Christ to be loved, truth to be prized, and error and evil to be departed from. Where shall we find those who are denying self, taking up their cross daily, and following Christ in the path of obedience? Where are they who hail reproach, welcome shame, and endure persecution? Where are they who are truly getting prayer *answered* daily, on whose behalf God is showing Himself strong? Something is radically wrong somewhere. Yes, and as surely as the beating of the pulse is an index to the state of our most vital physical organ, so the lives of professing Christians make it unmistakably evident that their *hearts* are diseased!

"The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (2Ch 16:9). Ah, do not the opening words indicate that those with "perfect" hearts are few and far between, that they are hard to locate? Surely it does, and it has ever been the case. David cried, "Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men" (Psa 12:1). The Lord Jesus had to lament, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought" (Isa 49:4). The apostle Paul declared, "I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phi 2:20-21). "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2Ti 1:15). And things are neither better nor worse today. But, my reader, instead of talking about the "apostasy of Christendom," instead of being occupied with the empty profession all around us, what about your own hearts? Is *your* heart "perfect"? If so, even in these so-called "hard times," God is "showing himself strong" in your behalf. That is, He is working miracles for you, and ministering to you in a way that He is not to the empty professors. But if God is not so doing, then *your* heart is *not* "perfect" toward Him, and it is high time for you to take stock and get down to serious soul business.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out if it are the issues of life" (Pro 4:23). The pains which multitudes have taken in religion are but lost labour. Like the Pharisees of old, they have been tithing anise and mint and cumin, but neglecting the weightier matters. Many have a zeal, but it is not according to knowledge. They are active, but their energies are misdirected. They have wrought "many wonderful works," but they are rejected of God. Why? Because their employments are self-selected or man-appointed, while the one great task which God has assigned is left

unattended to. All outward actions are worthless while our hearts be not right with God. He will not so much as hear our prayers while we regard iniquity in our hearts (Psa 66:18)! Let us, then, endeavour further to point out what is signified by this supremely important exhortation.

To “keep” the heart signifies *to have the conscience exercised about all things*. In numbers of passages, “heart” and “conscience” signify one and the same things—see 1 Samuel 24:5; 2 Samuel 24:10; 1 John 3:21, etc. The apostle Paul declared, “Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Act 24:16), and herein he sets before us an example which we need to emulate. After the most careful and diligent manner, we must strive to keep the conscience free from all offence in the discharge of every duty that God requires, and in rendering to every man what is due him. Though this is never perfectly attained in this life, every regenerate soul has a real concern for such a state of conscience. “A good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly” (Heb 13:18) is worth far more than rubies.

This is to be something more than an empty wish which gets us nowhere. The apostle said, “Herein do I *exercise* myself” (Act 24:16). It was a matter of deep concern to him and one to which he assiduously applied himself. He labored hard in seeing to it that his conscience did not flatter, deceiving and misleading him. He was conscientious over both his outer and inner life, so that his conscience accused and condemned him not. He was more careful not to offend his conscience than he was to displease his dearest friend. He made it his daily business to live by this rule, abstaining from many a thing into which natural inclination drew him, and performing many a duty which the ease-loving flesh would shirk. He steadily maintained a care not to break the law of love toward either God or man. And, when conscious of failure, he saw to it that by renewed acts of repentance and faith (in confession), each offence was removed from his conscience, instead of allowing guilt to accumulate thereon.

“Now the end of the commandment is charity [love] out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1Ti 1:5). The “commandment” is the same as the “holy commandment” of 2 Peter 2:21, namely, the Gospel, as including the moral law, which enjoined perfect love both to God and to our neighbour. The “end” or design—that which is enjoined and whose accomplishment is prompted thereby—is *love*. But spiritual “love” can proceed only from “a pure heart,” that is, one which has been renewed by grace, and thereby delivered from enmity against God (Rom 8:7), and hatred against man (Ti 3:3), and cleansed from the love and pollution of sin. Spiritual “love” can proceed only out of a “good conscience,” that is, a conscience which has been made tender and active by grace, which has been purged by the blood of Christ, and which sedulously avoids all that defiles it and draws away from God. Its possessor being influenced to act conscientiously in the

whole of his conduct. It is solemn to note that those who “put away” a good conscience soon make “shipwreck of the faith” (1Ti 1:19).

To “keep” the heart means to “*set the LORD alway before*” us (Psa 16:8). Some may object that those words spoke, prophetically, of the Lord Jesus. True, but remember He has “left us an example *that we should follow* his steps.” What, then, is it to “set the LORD alway before” us? It means to remember that we must render to Him a full account of our stewardship, and to let this fact constantly influence us. It means that we are ever to have *His* honour and glory in view, living not to please ourselves, but acting according to His revealed will. It means that we should strive, especially, to have *God* before our souls whenever we engage in any religious exercises. The omniscient One will not be imposed upon by outward forms or empty word. They who worship Him “*must* worship him in spirit and in truth” (Joh 4:24). “Seek ye my face.” Oh to respond with David, “*My heart* said unto thee, thy face, LORD, will I seek” (Psa 27:8).

“The well is seldom so full that water will, at first pumping, flow forth, neither is the heart commonly so spiritual—even after our best care in our worldly converse—as to pour itself into God’s bosom freely, without something to raise and elevate it. Yea, often the springs of grace lie so low, that pumping only will not fetch the heart up to a praying frame, but arguments must be poured into the soul before the affections rise” (William Gurnall, 1617-1679). Does not this explain why, after saying, “Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name,” the Psalmist *added*, “Bless the LORD, O my soul” (Psa 103:1-2)?

Ah, note well those words, dear reader, “Bless the LORD, O my *soul*,” and not merely by the lips. David dreaded lest, while the outward was awake, his inner man should be asleep. Are you equally careful as to this? David labored so that no dullness and drowsiness should steal over his faculties. Therefore did he add, “*And all that is within me*, bless his holy name”—understanding, conscience, affections, and will. Oh that we may not be guilty of that awful sin about which Christ complained, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth; *but their heart is far from me*” (Mat 15:8). Again, we would note the repetition in verse 2, “Bless the LORD, O my *soul*” (Psa 103:2). How this shows us that we need to bestir ourselves repeatedly when about to approach the Majesty on high, seeking with all our might to throw off the spirit of sloth, formality, and hypocrisy.

Of old, God’s servant complained, “There is none that calleth upon thy name, that *stirreth up himself* to take hold of thee” (Isa 64:7). Are we any better, my friends? Do *we* really bestir ourselves to “take hold” of God? We shall never be like Jacob—successful “wrestlers” with Him—until we do. There is little wonder that so few obtain answers to their petitions unto the throne of grace. It is not simply prayer, but “the effectual *fervent* prayer of a righteous man that availeth much” (Jam 5:16). Before seeking to approach the Most High, we need to “prepare” our

heart (Job 11:13), and beg God to “strengthen” it (Psa 27:14), so that we may trust in Him with all our hearts (Pro 3:5), love Him with all our hearts (Mat 22:37), and praise Him with the whole heart (Psa 9:1).

Oh, the frightful impiety which is now to be witnessed on almost every side, of heedlessly rushing into the holy presence of God (or rather going through the form of doing so), and gabbling off the first things that come to mind. And all of us are more affected by this evil spirit than we imagine, for “evil communications corrupt good manners” (1Co 15:33). We need definitely to seek grace and fight against so grievously insulting God. We need to fix our minds steadily on the august perfections of God, reminding ourselves of *who* it is we are about to approach. We need to seek deliverance from that half-hearted, ill-conceived, careless, and indifferent worship which is offered by so many. We need to ponder God’s grace and goodness unto us, and lay hold of His encouraging promises, that our affections may be inflamed, and our souls brought into that gracious temper which is suited unto Him to whom we owe our all.

But we need diligently to watch our hearts not only when about to approach God in prayer or worship, but also when turning to His holy Word. All ordinances, helps, and means of grace are but empty shells unless we meet with God in them, and for that, He must be sought, “Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jer 29:13). We are not at all likely to obtain any more soul profit from reading of the Scriptures than we are from the perusal of men’s writings if we approach them in the same spirit as we do human books. God’s Word is addressed unto the conscience, and it is only as we strive to have our hearts suitably affected by what we read therein that we may justly expect to be helped spiritually.

God has bidden us, “My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: bind them continually upon thine heart” (Pro 6:20-21). And again, “Keep my commandments, and live: and my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart” (Pro 7:2-3). This cannot be done by reading the Bible for a few minutes, and then an hour later, forgetting what has been read. Shame on us that we should treat God’s Word so lightly! No, we must “meditate therein day and night” (Psa 1:2). Unless we do so, we shall never be able to say, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psa 119:11), nor shall we be able to say, “I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always” (Psa 119: 112).

To “keep” the heart signifies *attending diligently to its progress or decay in holiness*. What health is to the body, holiness is to the soul. “I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search” (Psa 77:6). This is absolutely essential if a healthy spiritual life is to be maintained. A part of each day should be set aside for the study of the heart and the cultivation of its faculties. The more this is done, the less difficulty shall we experience in knowing *what* to pray for! Shame

on us that we are so diligent in thinking about and caring for our bodies, while the state of our souls is so rarely inquired after! Emulate the example of Hezekiah, who “humbled himself for the pride of his heart” (2Ch 32:26). Peter’s heart was lifted up with self-confidence. His fall was preceded by “a haughty spirit.”

It is *in the heart* that all backsliding begins. Observe closely your affections, and see whether God or the world is gaining ground in them. Watch whether you experience increasing profit and pleasure in reading God’s Word, or whether you have to force yourself to it in order to discharge a duty. Observe the same thing in connection with prayer—whether you are finding increased or decreased liberty in pouring out your heart to God—whether you are having more freedom in so doing, or whether it is becoming an irksome task. Examine well your spiritual graces, and ascertain whether your faith be in lively exercise, feeding upon the precepts and promises of God—whether your hope is lively, anticipating the glorious future—whether your love be fervent or cold—whether patience, meekness, self-control be greater or less.

To “keep” the heart signifies *to store it well with pure and holy things*. As the most effective way of getting a child willingly to drop some dirty trifle is to proffer it an apple or orange, so the best security for the soul against the allurements of Satan is to have it engaged with a lovelier and more satisfying object. A heart which is filled and engaged with good is best protected against evil. Note well the order in Philippians 4:6-8. “Be anxious for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these things*.” The heart which casts all its care upon God is well guarded from anxiety by His peace; but a pure atmosphere must be breathed if the soul is to be kept healthy, and that is best promoted by thinking about wholesome, lovely, and praise-provoking things.

Commune frequently with Christ. Dwell upon His loveliness, stay in the sunshine of His presence, refresh your soul with those gifts and graces He is ever ready to bestow, and you shall have in yourself “a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (Joh 4:14). “Were our affections filled, taken up, and possessed with these things [the beauty of God and the glory of Christ], as it is our duty that they should be, and as it is our happiness when they are, what access could sin—with its painted pleasures, with its sugared poisons, with its envenomed baits—have upon our souls? How we should loathe all its proposals, and say unto them, Get you hence as an abominable thing” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

THE SUPREMACY OF GOD

In one of his letters of Erasmus, Luther said, “Your thoughts of God are too human.” Probably that renowned scholar resented such a rebuke, the more so since it proceeded from a miner’s son, nevertheless, it was thoroughly deserved. We too, though having no standing among the religious leaders of this degenerate age, prefer the same charge against the vast majority of the preachers of our day, and against those who, instead of searching the Scriptures for themselves, lazily accept their teachings. The most dishonouring and degrading conceptions of the rule and reign of the Almighty are now held almost everywhere. To countless thousands, even among those professing to be Christians, the God of Scripture is quite unknown.

Of old, God complained to an apostate Israel, “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether as thyself” (Psa 50:21). Such must now be His indictment against the apostate Christendom. Men imagine that the Most High is moved by sentiment, rather than actuated by principle. They suppose that His omnipotency is such an idle fiction that Satan is thwarting His designs on every side. They think that if He has formed any plan or purpose at all, then, it must be like theirs, constantly subject to change. They openly declare that whatever power He possesses must be restricted, lest He invade the citadel of man’s “free will” and reduce him to a “machine.” They lower the all-efficacious atonement, which has actually redeemed everyone for whom it was made, to a mere “remedy,” which sin-sick souls may use if they feel disposed to, and then enervate the invincible work of the Holy Spirit to an “offer” of the Gospel which sinners may accept or reject as they please.

The supremacy of the true and living God might well be argued from the infinite distance which separates the mightiest creatures from the almighty Creator. He is the Potter, they are but the clay in His hands, to be moulded into vessels of honour, or to be dashed into pieces (Psa 2:9) as He pleases. Were all the denizens of heaven and all the inhabitants of earth to combine in open revolt against Him, it would occasion Him no uneasiness, and would have less effect upon His eternal and unassailable throne than has the spray of the Mediterranean’s waves upon the towering rocks of Gibraltar. So puerile and powerless is the creature to affect the Most High that Scripture itself tells us that when the Gentile heads unite with apostate Israel to defy Jehovah and His Christ, “He that sitteth in the heavens shall *laugh*” (Psa 2:4).

The absolute and universal supremacy of God is plainly and positively affirmed in many Scriptures. “Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth

is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all...and thou reignest over all” (1Ch 29:11-12)—note “reignest” now, not “will do so in the millennium.” “O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? And rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none [not even the devil himself] is able to withstand thee?” (2Ch 20:6). Before Him, presidents and popes, kings and emperors, are less than grasshoppers.

“But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, *even that* he doeth” (Job 23:13). Ah, my reader, the God of Scripture is no make-believe monarch, no mere imaginary sovereign, but King of kings, and Lord of lords. “I know that thou canst do every thing, and that *no* thought of thine can be hindered” (Job 42:2, margin), or as another translator, “no purpose of thine can be frustrated.” All that He has designed, He does. All that He has decreed, He perfects. All that He has promised, He performs. “But our God is in the heavens: He hath done *whatsoever* he hath pleased” (Psa 115:3). And why has He? Because, “There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD” (Pro 21:30).

God’s supremacy over the works of His hands is vividly depicted in Scripture. Inanimate matter, irrational creatures, all perform their Maker’s bidding. At His pleasure, the Red Sea divided and its waters stood up as walls (Exo 14), the earth opened her mouth, and guilty rebels went down alive into the pit (Num 16). When He so ordered, the sun stood still (Jos 10), and on another occasion, went *backward* ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz (Isa 38:8). To exemplify His supremacy, He made ravens carry food to Elijah (1Ki 17), iron to swim on top of the waters (2Ki 6:5-6), lions to be tame when Daniel was cast into their den (Dan 6), fire to burn not when the three Hebrews were flung into its flames (Dan 3). Thus, “Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places” (Psa 135:6).

The absolute and universal supremacy of God is affirmed with equal plainness and positiveness in the New Testament. There we are told that God “worketh *all* things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph 1:11)—the Greek for “worketh” means “to work effectually.” For this reason, we read, “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom 11:36). Men may boast that they are free agents, with wills of their own, and are at liberty to do as they please, but Scripture says to those who boast, “We will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell...Ye ought to say, *if the Lord* will” (Jam 4:13, 15)!

Here then is a sure resting-place for the heart. Our lives are neither the product of blind fate nor the result of capricious chance, but every detail of them was ordained from all eternity, and is now ordered by the living and reigning God. Not a hair of our heads can be touched without His permission. “A man’s heart deviseth

his way: *but the LORD* directeth his steps” (Pro 16:9). What assurance, what strength, what comfort this should give the real Christian! “My times are in *thy* hand” (Psa 31:15). Then, let me “*rest in the LORD*, and wait patiently for him” (Psa 37:7).

AUGUST

NO MORE

There are a number of deeply interesting and most important passages in which those two words are found, several of which are misunderstood by many of the Lord's own people. Some of them are most blessed and precious, others unspeakably solemn and awesome. For example, how comforting is the divine assurance contained in the first occurrence of them, "And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall *no more become a flood* to destroy all flesh" (Gen 9:15). That was said over four thousand years ago, and each generation of mankind since then has witnessed the verity of it. Equally assuring is the promise given in connection with the last reference, "And there shall be *no more curse*" (Rev 22:3), but, instead, perpetual blessing for the new earth. But in between those passages are others that tell us, "Many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (Joh 6:66). "Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews" (Joh 11:54). "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth *no more sacrifice* for sins" (Heb 10:26). But we turn now unto those verses which more directly concern the believer.

We begin with the following one, not only because it is of first importance, but because it lays a foundation for all that follows, "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead *dieth no more*; death hath no more dominion over him" (Rom 6:9). That declaration is profoundly mysterious, unspeakably solemn, yet inexpressibly blessed. It is brought in for the purpose of confirming what had been affirmed in the foregoing verse—that since believers legally died with Christ, they must also share in His resurrection life. Death once had "dominion" over the Prince of life! It did so because He was its lawful captive. He had taken the place of His guilty people, was bearing their sins, and therefore received the full wages of them. How absolutely awe-inspiring to behold the Lord of glory in the jaws of death! But blessed be

God, that is the case no more. Having fully discharged the awful debt of His Church, the Law had no further claims upon Him. Its penalty had been met, justice had been satisfied, God glorified. Therefore, we read, “Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was *not possible* that he should be holden of it” (Act 2:24)—Divine righteousness had been traduced if the sepulcher had continued to retain that blessed One. The design of His death being accomplished, He was freed, and is “alive for evermore” (Rev 1:18). Nor has death any “dominion” over those who are in Christ. He has secured for them a perfect and inalienable standing before God in grace and glory.

“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am *no more worthy* to be called thy son” (Luk 15:18-19). Whatever be the true interpretation of the passage, we are certainly warranted at least to apply those words to the case of one who has been quickened and convicted by the Spirit. First, there is a frank and contrite acknowledgment of sin, for, as Matthew Henry (1662-1714) truly remarked, “The confession of sin is required and insisted upon as a necessary condition of peace and pardon.” Second, there is an honest avowal of the heinousness of his case, mentioning the aggravations thereof. So far from attempting to extenuate his highhanded crimes, their enormity is emphasized. That which renders sin so abominable is that it is against *God*—the abuse of His goodness, contempt of His authority, despising of His holiness. Third, there is a condemning of himself, utter abasement, a feeling sense of his worthlessness. He perceives he can merit nothing good at the hands of Deity, but must cast himself on His grace and mercy. He is deeply conscious of his unfitness and vileness that he is deserving only of hell.

“I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I *remember no more*” (Heb 8:12). That is what God says unto all who truly take the place of the penitent prodigal. The word which is here rendered “merciful” means *propitious*, for it is not the exercise of absolute mercy apart from any satisfaction having been rendered unto justice, but the showing of clemency on the ground of an atoning sacrifice. Christ died in order to render God propitious (Heb 2:17, Greek), and it is in and through the Surety that He bestows forgiveness. Just as long as the sinner rejects Christ, he is under the curse, but as soon as he contritely receives Him by faith, he enters into all the blessings of the new covenant. He is completely delivered from under guilt, and henceforth God acts as though He had wholly forgotten, for as Judge He will never bring up those sins to pass sentence upon them. He is entirely absolved. Christ has cancelled his guilt, fully and finally, and before God. The Law can no longer prefer any charge against him. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1), that is, they are as guiltless as though they had never sinned. When the heart rests on God’s I will “remember no more,” then there is “no more conscience of sins” (Heb

10:2)—the terrifying sense of them is removed, and we no longer dread God’s judgment upon them.

“Ye are *no more strangers* and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph 2:19). Like almost everything in the preceding verses, this one contains a double allusion—a dispensational and experiential. There is an obvious reference here to what had been said in Ephesians 2:12, “That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” Then it is said, “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Eph 2:13). As that “far off” and “made nigh” included *both* the separation and then the union of Gentile and Jew, *and* of men and God, so the terms of verse 18 have a twofold scope. They, who had previously been excluded from the earthly Jerusalem, are come with a gracious welcome to the heavenly Jerusalem, to find their names enrolled among the firstborn sons of God (Heb 12:22-23). Gentile believers enjoy equal privileges with Jewish believers, for they have been brought into “the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16), made joint members of the body of Christ. But more. By nature, we were strangers to God Himself. We neither knew Him nor wished to do so—“Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways” (Job 21:14) was the language of our hearts. But when we were renewed and received, the atonement enmity was slain, and God in Christ adored, and we enjoy familiar intercourse with Him. Formerly, we were “foreigners” to the saints, though we mixed with them, we were not of one heart with them, but now, we love them. Previously, we were cut off from the holy angels, but are now fellow citizens with them and they minister to us.

“Neither do I condemn thee: go, and *sin no more*” (Joh 8:11). In the above passages, we have viewed some of the benefits and privileges of the saint. Here we have that which is addressed to his responsibility. Observe well the *order* of it—not as the legalist would put it, “Sin no more, and I will not condemn thee,” but rather, Christ deals with a soul in “grace” and then the application of “truth” to the heart. Note too the perfect *balance* of it—not a bare, “Neither do I condemn thee,” and nothing more, as the libertine desires, but the added, “Sin no more,” to protect the interests of holiness. The Gospel sets before us a standard of conduct no less perfect than that of the Law. No indulging of the flesh is permitted, no self-pleasing tolerated. Pardon places us under additional obligations to cease doing evil. “Awake to righteousness, and sin not” (1Co 15:34) is the rule set before us. The One who has redeemed us requires to be obeyed as Lord. The command is peremptory and unqualified. Sin must not be regarded as the natural element of life, nor is commission considered as inevitable. It is not, “Sin as little as possible,” but, “Sin not at all,”—rather is it to be hated, resisted, and forsaken. There must be a thorough watchfulness over our ways and a resolute determination to live to God’s glory. Reformation is the best evidence of gratitude. Turn the precept into earnest

prayer. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. Let the love of Christ constrain you to holy living.

“Now then it is *no more I that do it*, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Rom 7:17). The context supplies a vivid description of the fierce and ceaseless conflict which is waged between the two natures in the Christian, and which, in varying degrees of perception, is verified in the experience of every saint. By regeneration, the prevailing disposition and desire of the believer is to be fully conformed to the divine will, but (despite his having been delivered from the dominion of sin) his corruptions prevent the attainment of his longings and efforts, so that he daily fails in the doing of the good he essays, and is lured into that which he hates and seeks to avoid. Thus, in the eyes of Him who knows the heart, it is not the believer as such who is the guilty agent, but rather the enemy and traitor who lurks in his soul, and therefore, the guilt is not imputed to him unto condemnation, for the gracious tenor of the new covenant accepts the willingness of the spirit and has provided pardon for the weakness of the flesh. The “no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me,” traces the actions back to *their source*, and makes known their real cause, as is the case in 1 Corinthians 15:10 and Galatians 2:20.

SAVING FAITH

4. Its Communication

From the human viewpoint, things are now in a bad state in the world. But from the spiritual viewpoint, things are in a far worse state in the religious realm. Sad is it to see the anti-Christian cults flourishing on every side, but far more grievous is it, for those who are taught of God, to discover that much of the so-called, “Gospel,” which is now being preached in many “fundamentalist churches” and “gospel halls,” is but a satanic delusion. The devil knows that his captives are quite secure while the grace of God and the finished work of Christ are “faithfully” proclaimed to them, so long as the only way in which sinners *receive* the saving virtues of the atonement is unfaithfully concealed. While God’s peremptory and unchanging demand for repentance is left out, while Christ’s own terms of discipleship (i.e. how to become a Christian, Act 11:26) in Luke 14: 26-27, 33 are withheld, and while saving faith is frittered down to a mere act of the will, blind laymen will continue to be led by blind preachers, only for both to fall into the ditch.

Things are far, far worse even in the “orthodox” sections of Christendom than the majority of God’s own children are aware. Things are rotten even at the very foundation, for with very rare exceptions, *God’s* way of salvation is no longer being taught. Tens of thousands are “ever learning” points in prophecy, the meaning of the types, the significance of the numerals, how to divide the “dispensations,” who are, nevertheless, “never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2Ti 3:7) of salvation itself—unable, because unwilling to pay the price (Pro 23:23), which is a full surrender to God Himself. As far as the writer understands the present situation, it seems to him that what is needed today is to press upon the serious attention of professing Christians such questions as: *When* is it that God *applies* to a sinner the virtues of Christ’s finished work? *What is it* that I am called upon to do in order to appropriate to myself the efficacy of Christ’s atonement? What is it that gives me an actual entrance into the good of His redemption?

The questions formulated above are only three different ways of framing the same inquiry. Now, the popular answer which is being returned to them is, “Nothing more is required from any sinner than that he simply *believe on* the Lord Jesus Christ.” In the preceding articles of this series, we have sought to show that such a reply is misleading, inadequate, faulty, and that, because it ignores all the other Scriptures which set forth what God requires from the sinner—it leaves out of account God’s demand for repentance (with all that that involves and includes), and Christ’s clearly defined terms of discipleship in Luke 14. To restrict ourselves to any one Scripture term of a subject, or set of passages using that term, results in an erroneous conception of it. They who limit their ideas of regeneration, to the one figure of the new birth, lapse into serious error upon it. So they, who limit their thoughts on how to be saved to the one word “believe,” are easily misled. Diligent care needs to be taken to collect *all* that Scripture teaches on any subject, if we are to have a properly balanced and accurate view thereof.

To be more specific, in Romans 10:13, we read, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Now does this mean that all who have, with their lips, cried unto the Lord, who have in the name of Christ besought God to have mercy on them, have been saved by Him? They who reply in the affirmative are only deceived by the mere sound of words, as the deluded Romanist is when he contends for Christ’s bodily presence in the bread, because He said, “This *is* my body.” And how are we to show the papist is misled? Why, by comparing Scripture *with Scripture*. So here. The writer well remembers being on a ship in a terrible storm off the coast of Newfoundland. All the hatches were battened down, and for three days, no passenger was allowed on the decks. Reports from the stewards were disquieting. Strong men paled. As the winds increased and the ship rolled worse and worse, scores of men and women were heard calling upon the name of the Lord. Did He save them? A day or two later, when the weather changed, those same men and women were drinking, cursing, card-playing!

Perhaps someone asks, “But does not Romans 10:13 say what it means?” Certainly it does, but no verse of Scripture yields its meaning to lazy people. Christ Himself tells us that there are many who call Him, “Lord,” to whom He will say, “Depart from me” (Mat 7:22-23). Then, what is to be done with Romans 10:13? Why, diligently compare it with *all* other passages which make known what the sinner must do ere God will save him. If nothing more than the fear of death or horror of hell prompts the sinner to call upon the Lord, he might just as well call upon the trees. The Almighty is not at the beck and call of any rebel who, when he is terrified, sues for mercy. “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination” (Pro 28:9)! “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and *forsaketh them* shall have mercy” (Pro 28:13). The only “calling upon his name” which the Lord heeds is that which issues from a broken, penitent, sin-hating heart, which thirsts after holiness.

The same principle applies to Acts 16:31 and all similar texts, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved.” To a casual reader, that seems a very simple matter, yet a closer pondering of those words should discover that more is involved than at first sight appears. Note that the apostles did not merely tell the Philippian jailer to, “Rest on the finished work of Christ,” or “Trust in his atoning sacrifice.” Instead, it was a *Person* that was set before him. Again, it was not simply, “Believe on the Saviour,” but “*the Lord Jesus Christ.*” John 1:12 shows plainly that to “believe” is to “receive,” and to be saved, a sinner must receive One, who is not only Saviour, but “Lord,” yea, who must be received *as* “Lord” *before* He becomes the Saviour of that person. And to receive “Christ Jesus *the Lord*” (Col 2:6) necessarily involves the renouncing of our own sinful lordship, the throwing down of the weapons of our warfare against Him, and the submitting to His yoke and rule. And before any human rebel is brought to do *that*, a miracle of divine grace has to be wrought within him. And this brings us more immediately to the present aspect of our theme.

Saving faith is not a native product of the human heart, but a spiritual grace communicated from on high. “It is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8). It is “of the operation of God” (Col 2:12). It is by “the power of God” (1Co 2:5). A most remarkable passage on this subject is found in Ephesians 1:16-20. There we find the apostle Paul praying that the saints should have the eyes of their understanding enlightened, that they might know “what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.” Not the strong power of God, or the greatness of it, but the “exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward.” Note, too, the standard of comparison—We “believe *according to* the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.”

God put forth His “*mighty power*” when He resurrected Christ. There was a mighty power seeking to hinder, even Satan and all his hosts. There was a mighty

difficulty to be overcome, even the vanquishing of the grace. There was a mighty result to be achieved, even the bringing to life of One who was dead. None but God Himself was equal to a miracle so stupendous. Strictly analogous is that miracle of grace which issues in saving faith. The devil employs all his arts and power to retain his captive. The sinner is dead in trespasses and sins, and can no more quicken himself than he can create a world. His heart is bound fast with the grave-clothes of worldly and fleshly lusts, and only omnipotence can raise it into communion with God. Well may every true servant of the Lord emulate the apostle Paul and pray earnestly that God *will* enlighten His people concerning this wonder of wonders, so that instead of attributing their faith to an exercise of their own will, they may freely ascribe all the honour and glory unto Him, to whom alone it justly belongs.

If only the professing Christians of this untoward generation could begin to obtain some adequate conception of the *real condition* of every man by nature, they might be less inclined to cavil against the teaching that nothing short of a miracle of grace can ever qualify any sinner to believe unto the saving of his soul. If they could only see that the heart's attitude towards God, of the most refined and moral, is not a whit different from that of the most vulgar and vicious. That he who is most kind and benevolent toward his fellow creatures has no more real desire after Christ than has the most selfish and brutal. Then it would be evident that divine power must operate to change the heart. Divine power was needed to create, but much greater power is required to regenerate a soul. Creation is only the bringing of something out of nothing, but regeneration is the transforming, not only of an unlovely object, but of one that *resists*, with all its might, the gracious designs of the heavenly Potter.

It is not simply that the Holy Spirit approaches a heart, in which there is no love for God, but He finds it filled with enmity against Him, and incapable of being subject to His Law (Rom 8:7). True, the individual himself may be quite unconscious of this terrible fact, yea, ready indignantly to deny it. But that is easily accounted for. If he has heard of little or nothing but the love, the grace, the mercy, the goodness of God, it would indeed be surprising if he hated *Him*. But once the *God of Scripture* is made known to him in the power of the Spirit, once he is made to realize that God is the Governor of this world, demanding unqualified submission to all His laws, that He is inflexibly just, and “will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo 34:7; Num 14:18), that He is sovereign, and loves whom He pleases and hates whom He wills, that so far from being an easy-going, indulgent Creator, who winks at the follies of His creatures, He is ineffably holy, so that His righteous wrath burns against all the workers of iniquity—then will people be conscious of indwelling enmity surging up against Him. And nothing but the almighty power of the Spirit can overcome that enmity and bring any rebel truly to love the God of Holy Writ.

Rightly did Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) the Puritan say, “A wolf will sooner marry a lamb, or a lamb a wolf, than ever a carnal heart will be subject to the Law

of God, which was the ancient husband of it (Rom 7:6). It is the turning of one contrary into another. To turn water into wine, there is some kind of symbolizing, yet that is a miracle. But to turn a wolf into a lamb, to turn fire into water, is a yet greater miracle. Between nothing and something there is an infinite distance, but between sin and grace there is a greater distance than can be between nothing and the highest angel in heaven....To destroy the power of sin in a man's soul is as great a work as to take away the guilt of sin. It is easier to say to a blind man, 'See,' and to a lame man, 'Walk,' than to say to a man that lies under the power of sin, 'Live, be holy,' for there is that that will not be subject."

In 2 Corinthians 10:4, the apostle describes the character of that work in which the true servants of Christ are engaged. It is a conflict with the forces of Satan. The weapons of their warfare are "not carnal"—as well might modern soldiers go forth equipped with only wooden swords and paper shields as preachers think to liberate the devil's captives by means of human learning, worldly methods, touching anecdotes, attractive singing, and so on. No, "their weapons" are the "word of God" and "all prayer" (Eph 6:17-18), and even these are only mighty "through God," that is, by His direct and special blessing of them to particular souls. In what follows, a description is given of where the might of God is seen, namely, in the powerful *opposition* which it meets with and vanquishes—"to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Herein lies the power of God, when He is pleased thus to put it forth in the saving of a sinner. The heart of that sinner is fortified against Him. It is steeled against His holy demands, His righteous claims. It is determined not to submit to His Law, nor to abandon those idols which it prohibits. That haughty rebel has made up his mind that he *will not* turn away from the delights of this world and the pleasure of sin and give God the supreme place in his affections. But God has determined to overcome his sinful opposition and transform him into a loving and loyal subject. The figure here used is that of a besieged town—the heart. Its "strongholds"—the reigning power of fleshly and worldly lusts—are "pulled down." Self-will is broken, pride is subdued, and the defiant rebel is made a willing captive to "the obedience of Christ"! "Mighty through God" points to this miracle of grace.

There is one other detail pointed by the analogy drawn in Ephesians 1:19-20, which exemplifies the mighty power of God, namely "and set him [Christ] at his own right hand in the heavenly places." The members of Christ's mystical body are predestinated to be conformed to the glorious image of their glorified Head—in measure, now, perfectly, in the day to come. The ascension of Christ was contrary to *nature*, being opposed by the law of gravitation. But the power of God overcame that opposition, and translated His resurrected Son bodily into heaven. In like

manner, His grace produces in His people that which is contrary to nature, overcoming the opposition of the flesh, and drawing their hearts unto things above. How we would marvel if we saw a man extend his arms and suddenly leave the earth, soaring upward into the sky. Yet still more wonderful is it when we behold the power of the Spirit causing a sinful creature to rise above temptations, worldliness, and sin, and breathe the atmosphere of heaven—when a human soul is made to disdain the things of earth and find its satisfaction in things above.

The historical order in connection with the Head in Ephesians 1:19-20 is also the experimental order with regard to the members of His body. Before setting His Son at His own right hand in the heavenlies, God raised Him from the dead. So, before the Holy Spirit fixes the heart of a sinner upon Christ, He first quickens him into newness of life. There must be *life* before there can be sight, believing, or good works performed. One who is physically dead is incapable of doing anything. So he, who is spiritually dead, is incapable of any spiritual exercises. First, the giving of life unto dead Lazarus, then, the removing of the grave-clothes which bound him hand and foot. God must regenerate before there can be a “new creature in Christ Jesus.” The washing of a child follows its birth.

When spiritual life has been communicated to the soul, that individual is now able to see things in their true colours. In God’s light, he sees light (Psa 36:9). He is now given to perceive (by the Holy Spirit) what a lifelong rebel he has been against his Creator and Benefactor. That, instead of making God’s will his rule, he has gone his own way. That, instead of having before him God’s glory, he has sought only to please and gratify self. Even though he may have been preserved from all the grosser outward forms of wickedness, he now recognizes that he is a spiritual leper, a vile and polluted creature, utterly unfit to draw near, still less to dwell with Him, who is ineffably holy. And such an apprehension makes him feel that *his* case is hopeless.

There is a vast difference between hearing or reading of what conviction of sin is and being made to feel it in the depths of one’s own soul. Multitudes are acquainted with the theory who are total strangers to the experience of it. One may read of the sad effects of war, and may agree that they are indeed dreadful. But when the enemy is at one’s own door, plundering his goods, firing his home, slaying his dear ones, he is far more sensible of the miseries of war than ever he was (or could be) previously. So an unbeliever may hear of what a dreadful state the sinner is in before God, and how terrible will be the sufferings of hell, but when the Spirit brings home to his own heart its actual condition, and makes him feel the heat of God’s wrath in his own conscience, he is ready to sink with dismay and despair. Reader, do *you* know anything of such an experience?

Only thus is any soul prepared truly to appreciate Christ. They that are whole need not a physician. The one who has been savingly convicted is made to realize

that none but the Lord Jesus can heal one so desperately diseased by sin—that He alone can impart that spiritual health (holiness) which will enable him to run in the way of God’s commandments—that nothing but His precious blood can atone for the sins of the past and naught but His all-sufficient grace can meet the pressing needs of the present and future. Thus, there must be discerning faith before there is coming faith. The Father “draws” to the Son (Joh 6:44) by imparting to the mind a deep realization of our desperate need of Christ, by giving to the heart a real sense of the inestimable worth of Him, and by causing the will to receive Him on His own terms.

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

8. The Scriptures and the Promises

The divine promises make known the good pleasure of God’s will unto His people, to bestow upon them the riches of His grace. They are the outward testifications of His heart, who from all eternity loves them and foreappointed all things for them and concerning them. In the person and work of His Son, God has made an all-sufficient provision for their complete salvation, both for time and for eternity. To the intent that they might have a true, clear, and spiritual knowledge of the same, it has pleased the Lord to set it before them in the exceeding great and precious promises, which are scattered up and down in the Scriptures as so many stars in the glorious firmament of grace, by which they may be assured of the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning them, and take sanctuary in Him accordingly. And through this medium have real communion with Him in His grace and mercy at all times, no matter what their case or circumstances may be.

The divine promises are so many declarations to bestow some good or remove some ill. As such, they are a most blessed making known and manifesting of God’s love to His people. There are three steps in connection with God’s love—first, His inward purpose to exercise it, and the last, the real execution of that purpose. But in between, there is the gracious *making known* of that purpose to the beneficiaries of it. While love is concealed, we cannot be comforted therewith. Now, God, who is “love,” not only loves His own, and will not only show His love fully to them in due time, but in the interim, He will have us *informed* of His benevolent designs, that we may sweetly rest in His love, and stretch ourselves comfortably upon His

sure promises. There we are able to say, “How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them” (Psa 139:17).

In 2 Peter 1:4, the divine promises are spoken of as “exceeding great and precious.” As C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) pointed out, “Greatness and preciousness seldom go together, but in this instance, they are united in an exceeding degree.” When Jehovah is pleased to open His mouth and reveal His heart, He does so in a manner worthy of Himself, in words of superlative power and richness. To quote again the beloved London pastor, “They come from a great God. They come to great sinners. They work for us great results, and deal with great matters.” While the natural intellect is capable of perceiving much of their greatness, only the renewed heart can taste their ineffable preciousness, and say with David, “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth” (Psa 119:103).

1. We profit from the Word when we perceive *to whom the promises belong*. They are available only to those who are in Christ. “For all the promises of God *in him* [the Lord Jesus] are yea, and in him Amen” (2Co 1:20). There can be no intercourse between the thrice holy God and sinful creatures except through a Mediator who has satisfied Him on their behalf. Therefore must that Mediator receive from God all good for His people, and they must have it at second hand through Him. A sinner might just as well petition a tree as call upon God for mercy while he despises and rejects Christ.

Both the promises and the things promised are made over to the Lord Jesus and conveyed unto the saints from Him. “This is *the* [chief and grandest] promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (1Jo 2:25), and as the same epistle tells us, “This life is in his Son” (1Jo 5:11). This being so, what good can they, who are not yet in Christ, have by the promises? None at all. A man out of Christ is out of the favour of God, yea, he is under His wrath. The divine threatenings, and not the promises, are *his* portion. Solemn, solemn consideration is it that those who are “without Christ” are “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and *strangers* from the covenants of promise, having *no* hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). Only “the children of God” are “the children of the promise” (Rom 9:8). Make sure, my reader, that you are one of them.

How terrible, then, is the blindness and how great is the sin of those preachers who indiscriminately apply the divine promises unto the saved and unsaved alike! They are not only taking “the children’s bread” and casting it to the “dogs,” but they are “handling the word of God deceitfully” (2Co 4:2), and beguiling immortal souls. And they who listen to and heed them are little less guilty, for God holds all responsible to search the Scriptures for themselves, and test whatever they read or hear by that unerring standard. If they are too lazy to do so, and prefer blindly to follow their blind guides, then their blood is on their own heads. Truth has to be

“bought” (Pro 23:23), and those who are unwilling to pay the price must go without it.

2. We profit from the Word when we *labour to make our own the promises of God*. To do this, we must first take the trouble to become really acquainted with them. It is surprising how many promises there are in Scripture which the saints know nothing about, the more so, seeing that *they* are the peculiar treasure of believers, the substance of faith’s heritage lying in them. True, Christians are already the recipients of wondrous blessings, yet the capital of their wealth, the bulk of their estate, is only prospective. They have already received an “earnest,” but the better part of what Christ has purchased for them lies yet in the promise of God. How diligent, then, should they be in studying His testamentary will, familiarizing themselves with the good things which the Spirit “hath revealed” (1Co 2:10), and seeking to take an inventory of their spiritual treasures.

Not only must I search the Scriptures to find out what has been made over to me by the everlasting covenant, but I need also to meditate upon the promises, to turn them over and over in my mind, and cry unto the Lord for spiritual understanding of them. The bee would not extract any honey from the flowers as long as he only gazed upon them. Nor will the Christian derive any real comfort and strength from the divine promises until his faith lays hold of and penetrates to the heart of them. God has given no assurance that the dilatory shall be fed, but He has declared, “The soul of the diligent shall be made fat” (Pro 13:4). Therefore did Christ say, “*Labour* not for the meat which perisheth, but *for* that meat which endureth unto everlasting life” (Joh 6:27). It is only as the promises are stored up in our minds that the Spirit brings them to remembrance at those fainting seasons when we most need them.

3. We profit from the Word when we *recognize the blessed scope of God’s promises*. “A sort of affectation prevents some Christians from seeking religion as if its sphere lay among the commonplaces of daily life. It is to them transcendental and dreamy—rather a creation of pious fiction, and for the life which is to be. But they totally forget that true godliness hath the promise of the life which now is, as well as that which is to come. To them it would seem almost profanation to pray about the small matters of which daily life is made up. Perhaps they will be startled, if I venture to suggest, that this should make the question the reality of their faith. If it cannot bring them help in the little troubles of life, will it support them in the greater trials of death?” (C. H. Spurgeon).

“Godliness is profitable unto all things, having *promise* of the life that *now* is, and of that which is to come” (1Ti 4:8). Reader, do you really believe this, that the promises of God cover *every* aspect and particular of your daily life? Or have the “Dispensationalists” deluded you into supposing that the Old Testament belongs only to fleshly Jews, and that “*our promises*” respect spiritual and not material blessings? How many a Christian has derived comfort from, “I will never leave

thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5)? Well, that is a quotation from Joshua 1:5! So too, 2 Corinthians 7:1, speaks of “*having these promises*,” yet one of them referred to in 2 Corinthians 6:16 is taken from the book of Leviticus (Lev 26:24)!

Perhaps someone asks, “But where am I to draw the line? Which of the Old Testament promises rightfully belong to me?” We answer that Psalm 84:11 declares, “The LORD will give grace and glory: *no* good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” *If* you are really walking “uprightly,” you are entitled to appropriate that blessed promise and count upon the Lord giving you whatever “good thing” is truly required by you. “My God shall supply *all* your need” (Phi 4:19). If then there is a promise anywhere in His Word which just fits your present case and situation, make it your own as suited to your “need.” Steadfastly resist every attempt of Satan to rob you of any portion of your Father’s Word.

4. We profit from the Word when we *make a proper discrimination between the promises of God*. Many of the Lord’s people are frequently guilty of spiritual theft, by which we mean that they appropriate to themselves something to which they are not entitled, but which belongs to another. “Certain covenant engagements, made with the Lord Jesus Christ, as to His elect and redeemed ones, are altogether without condition so far as we are concerned. But many other wealthy words of the Lord contain stipulations which must be carefully regarded, or we shall not obtain the blessing. One part of my reader’s diligent search must be directed toward this most important point. God will keep His promise to thee, only see thou to it that the way in which He conditions His engagement is carefully observed by thee. Only when we fulfil the requirements of a conditional promise can we expect that promise to be fulfilled to us” (C. H. Spurgeon).

Many of the divine promises are addressed to particular characters, or, more correctly, speaking to particular graces. For example, in Psalm 25:9, the Lord declares that He will “guide in judgment” the *meek*. But if I am out of communion with Him, if I am following a course of self-will, if my heart is haughty, then, I am not justified in taking unto myself the comfort of this verse. Again, in John 15:7, the Lord tells us, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” But if I am not in experimental communion with Him, if His commands are not regulating my conduct, then, my prayers will remain unanswered. While God’s promises proceed from pure grace, yet it ever needs to be remembered that grace reigns “through righteousness” (Rom 5:21) and never sets aside human responsibility. If I ignore the laws of health, I must not be surprised that sickness prevents me enjoying many of God’s temporal mercies. In like manner, if I neglect His precepts, I have myself to blame if I fail to receive the fulfilment of many of His promises.

Let none suppose that by His promises God has obligated Himself to ignore the requirements of His holiness. He never exercises one of His perfections at the expense of another. And let none imagine that God would be magnifying the sacrificial work of Christ were He to bestow its fruits upon impenitent and careless souls. There is a *balance* of truth to be preserved here. Alas, that it is now so frequently lost, and that, under the pretence of exalting divine grace, men are really “turning it into lasciviousness.” How often one hears quoted, “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee” (Psa 50:15). But that verse begins with “And,” and the preceding clause is, “*Pay thy vows* unto the Most High!” Again, how frequently is, “I will guide thee with mine eye” (Psa 32:8) seized by people who pay no attention to the context! But *that* is God’s promise to one who has confessed his “transgression” unto the Lord (Psa 32:5). If, then, I have *unconfessed* sin on my conscience, and have leaned on an arm of flesh or sought help from my fellows, instead of waiting only on God (Psa 62:5), then I have no right to count upon the Lord’s guiding me with His eye—which necessarily presupposes that I am walking in close communion with Him, for I cannot see the eye of another while at a distance from him.

5. We profit from the Word when we are enabled to make God’s promises our *support and stay*. This is one reason why God has given them to us, not only to manifest His love by making known His benevolent designs, but also to comfort our hearts and develop our faith. Had God so pleased, He could have bestowed His blessings without giving us notice of His purpose. The Lord might have given us all the mercies we need without pledging Himself to do so. But in that case, we could not have been believers. Faith without a promise would be a foot without ground to stand upon. Our tender Father planned that we should enjoy His gifts twice over—first by faith, and then by fruition. By this means, He wisely weans our hearts away from things seen and perishing, and draws them onward and upward to those things which are spiritual and eternal.

If there were no promises, there would not only be no faith, but no hope either. For what is hope but the *expectation* of the things which God has declared He will give us? Faith looks to the Word promising, hope looks to the performance thereof. Thus it was with Abraham, “Who against hope believed in hope...and being not weak in faith, he considered not his body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb; he staggered not...through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Rom 4:18, 20). Thus it was with Moses, “Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Heb 11:26). Thus it was with Paul, “I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me” (Act 27:25). Is it so with you, dear reader? Are the promises of Him, who cannot lie, the resting-place of your poor heart?

6. We profit from the Word when we *patiently await the fulfilment of God's promises*. God promised Abraham a son, but waited many years for the performance of it. Simeon had a promise that he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ (Luk 2:26), yet it was not made good till he had one foot in the grave. There is often a long and hard winter between the sowing-time of prayer and the reaping of the answer. The Lord Jesus Himself has not yet received a full answer to the prayer He made in John 17, nineteen hundred years ago. Many of the best of God's promises to His people will not receive their richest accomplishment until they are in glory. He, who has all eternity at His disposal, needs not to hurry. God often makes us tarry so that patience may have "her perfect work" (Jam 1:4), yet let us not distrust Him. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come" (Hab 2:3).

"These all died in faith, not having received the [fulfilment of the] promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them" (Heb 11:13). Here is comprehended the whole work of faith—knowledge, trust, loving adherence. The "afar off" refers to the things promised. Those they "saw" with the mind, discerning the substance behind the shadow, discovering in them the wisdom of and goodness of God. They were "persuaded." They doubted not, but were assured of their participation in them and knew they would not disappoint them. "Embraced them" expresses their delight and veneration, the heart cleaving to them with love and cordially welcoming and entertaining them. The promises were the comfort and the stay of their souls in all their wanderings, temptations, and sufferings.

Various ends are accomplished by God in delaying His execution of the promises. Not only is faith put to the proof, so that its genuineness may the more clearly appear, not only is patience developed, and hope given opportunity for exercise, but submission to the divine will is fostered, "The weaning process is not accomplished. We are still hankering after the comforts which the Lord intends us for ever to outgrow. Abraham made a great feast when his son Isaac was weaned; and, peradventure, our heavenly Father will do the same with us. Lie down, proud heart. Quit thine idols; forsake thy fond doings; and the promised peace will come unto thee" (C. H. Spurgeon).

7. We profit from the Word when we *make a right use of the promises*. First, in our dealings with God Himself. When we approach unto His throne, it should be to plead one of His promises. They are to form not only the foundation for our faith to rest upon, but also the substance of our requests. We must ask according to God's will if we are to be heard, and His will is revealed in those good things which He has declared He will bestow upon us. Thus we are to lay hold of His pledged assurances, spread them before Him, and say, "Do as thou hast said" (2Sa 7:25). Observe how Jacob pleaded the promise in Genesis 32:12; Moses in Exodus 32:13;

David in Psalm 119:58; Solomon in 1 Kings 8:25; and do thou, my Christian reader, likewise.

Second, in the life we live in the world. In Hebrews 11:13, we not only read of the patriarchs discerning, trusting, and embracing the divine promises, but we are also informed of the *effects* which they produced upon them, “And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth,” which means they made a public avowal of their faith. They acknowledged (and by their conduct demonstrated) that their interests were not in the things of this world. They had a satisfying portion in the promises they had appropriated. Their hearts were set upon things above. For where a man’s heart is, there will his treasure be also.

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1). That is the effect they should produce in us, and *will*, if faith really lays hold of them. “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: *that* by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2Pe 1:4). Now, the Gospel and the precious promises, being graciously bestowed and powerfully applied, have an influence on purity of heart and behaviour, and teach men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly. Such are the powerful effects of Gospel promises under the divine influence, as to make men inwardly partakers of the divine nature, and outwardly to abstain from and avoid the prevailing corruptions and vices of the times.

COMING TO CHRIST

Part 2

There are some souls greatly distressed and puzzled to know exactly what is signified by, “Coming to Christ.” They have read and heard the words often, and perhaps many a preacher has bidden them to, “Come to Him,” yet without giving a scriptural explanation of what that term connotes. Such as have been awakened by the Spirit, shown their woeful condition, convicted of their high-handed and life-long rebellion against God, and brought to realize their dire need of Christ, and who are truly anxious to come savingly to Him, have found it a task altogether beyond their powers. Their cry is, “Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might

come even to his seat!” (Job 23:3). True, there are not many who pass through such an experience, for *God’s* “flock” is but a “little” one (Luk 12:32). True, the vast majority of professing Christians claim that *they* found “Coming to Christ” a very simple matter. But in the clear light of John 6:44, we must assure you, dear reader, that if *you* found “Coming to Christ” to be easy, then it is proof you have *never* come to Him at all in a spiritual and saving way.

What, then, is meant by “Coming to Christ”? First, and negatively, let it be pointed out that it is *not* an act which we perform by any of our bodily members. This is so obvious that there should be no need for us to make the statement. But in these awful days of spiritual ignorance and the carnal perversion of the holy things of God, explanation of the most elementary truths and terms is really required. When so many precious souls have been deluded into thinking that a going forward to a “Mourner’s bench” or “Penitent form,” or the taking of some preacher’s hand, is the same thing as coming to Christ, we dare not pass over the defining of this apparently simple term, nor ignore the need for pointing out what it does not signify.

Second, the word, “Come,” when used in this connection, is a *metaphorical* one. That is to say, a word which expresses an act of the body is transferred to the soul, to denote its act. To “Come to Christ” signifies the movement of a Spirit-enlightened mind toward the Lord Jesus—as Prophet, to be instructed by Him—as Priest, whose atonement and intercession are to be relied upon—as King, to be ruled by Him. Coming to Christ implies a turning of our back upon the world, and a turning unto Him as our only Hope and Portion. It is a going out of self so as to rest no longer on anything in self. It is the abandoning of every idol and of all other dependencies, the heart going out to Him in loving submission and trustful confidence. It is the will surrendering to Him as Lord, ready to accept His yoke, take up the cross, and follow Him without reserve.

To “Come to Christ” is the turning of the whole soul unto a whole Christ in the exercise of divine grace upon him. It is the mind, heart, and will being supernaturally drawn to Him, so as to trust, love, and serve Him. “It is the duty and interest of weary and heavy-laden sinners to ‘Come to Christ’—renouncing all those things which stand in opposition to Him, or in competition with Him, we must accept Him as our Physician and Advocate, and give up ourselves to His conduct and government, freely willing to be saved by Him, in His own way, and on His own terms” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Ere proceeding farther, we would earnestly beg each reader prayerfully and carefully to test and measure himself or herself by what has been said in this and the preceding paragraph. Take nothing for granted. As you value your soul, seek divine help to make sure that you have *truly* “Come to Christ.”

Now a popish “christ” is a christ of *wood*, and a false preacher’s “christ” is a christ of *words*, but Christ Jesus, our Lord, is “the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6). The Christ of God fills heaven and earth. He is the One by whom all things exist and consist. He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having all power, dominion and might. He is made higher than the heavens, and unto Him all principalities and powers are subject. At His presence, both the earth and the heavens shall yet flee away. Such a Christ is not to be offered or proffered, sold or given, by sinful men. He is the unspeakable Gift of the Father to as many as He has ordained to eternal life, and none others. This Christ, this Gift of the Father, is supernaturally revealed and applied to the heirs of salvation by the Holy Spirit, when, where, and as He pleases; and not when, where, and how men please.

In the preceding article, we dwelt at length upon those words in John 6:44, “No man can come unto me,” seeking to show the nature of the fallen creature’s spiritual impotence, or why it is that the unregenerate are unable to come to Christ in a spiritual and saving way. Let us now ponder the remainder of our Lord’s sentence, “Except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” Of what does that “drawing” consist? We answer, first, that just as our “Coming to Christ” does not refer to any bodily action, so this divine “drawing” respects not the employment of any external force. Second, it signifies a powerful impulse put forth by the Holy Spirit with the elect, whereby their native impotence for performing spiritual actions is overcome, and an ability for the same is imparted. It is this secret and effectual operation of the Spirit, upon the human soul, that enables and causes it to come to Christ. This brings us to our next division.

II. With our understandings

1. *A knowledge of Christ is essential.* There can be no movement towards an unknown object. No one can obey a command until he is acquainted with its terms. A prop must be seen before it will be rested on. We must have some acquaintance with a person before he will either be trusted or loved. This principle is so obvious that it needs arguing no further. Apply it to the case in hand, the subject before us. The knowledge of Christ must of necessity precede our believing on Him or our coming to Him. “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” (Rom 10:14). “He that cometh to God *must* believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6). None can come to Christ while they are ignorant about Him. As it was in the old creation, so it is in the new. God first says, “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3).

2. *This knowledge of Christ comes to the mind from the Holy Scriptures.* Nothing can be known of Him save that which God has been pleased to reveal concerning Him in the Word of truth. It is there alone that the “true doctrine of Christ” (2Jo 1:9) is found. Therefore did our Lord give commandment, “Search the Scriptures...they are they which testify of me” (Joh 5:39). When He berated the two disciples for their slowness of heart to believe, we are told that, “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luk 24:27). The divine oracles are designated, “the word of Christ,” (Col 3:16) because He is the substance of them. Where the Scriptures have not gone, Christ is unknown. Clear proof is this that an acquaintance with Him cannot be gained apart from their inspired testimony.

3. *A theoretical knowledge of Christ is not sufficient.* Upon this point, we must dilate at greater length, for much ignorance concerning it prevails today. A head knowledge about Christ is very frequently mistaken for a heart-acquaintance with Him. But orthodoxy is not salvation. A carnal judgment about Christ, a mere intellectual knowledge of Him, will never bring a dead sinner to His feet. There must be a living experience—God’s word and work meeting together in the soul, renewing the understanding. As 1 Corinthians 13:2 so plainly and solemnly warns us, I may have the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, yet if I have not love, I am nothing, Just as a blind man may, through labour and diligence, acquire an accurate theoretical or notional conception of many subjects and objects which he never saw, so the natural man may by religious education and personal effort obtain a sound doctrinal knowledge of the person and work of Christ, without having any spiritual or vital acquaintance with Him.

Not every kind of knowledge, even of God’s truth and His Christ, is effectual and saving. There is a *form* of knowledge, as well as of godliness, which is destitute of power—“Which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law” (Rom 2:20). The reference is to the Jews, who were instructed in the Scriptures, and considered themselves well qualified to teach others, yet the truth had not been written on their hearts by the Holy Spirit. A “*form of knowledge*” signifies that there was a model of it in their brains, so that they were able to discourse freely and fluently upon the things of God, yet were they without the life of God in their souls. Oh, how many have a knowledge *of* salvation, yet not a knowledge *unto* salvation, as the apostle distinguishes it in 2 Timothy 3:15—such a knowledge as the latter must be imparted to the soul by the miracle-working operation of the Holy Spirit.

“They proceed from evil to evil, and *they know not me*, saith the LORD” (Jer 9:3). Of whom was this spoken—of the heathen who were without any written revelation from Him? *No*, of Israel, who had His law in their hands, His Temple in their midst, His prophets speaking to them. They had been favoured with many and wondrous manifestations of His majesty, holiness, power, and mercy; yet though they had much intellectual knowledge of Him, they were strangers to Him

spiritually. So it was when the Son of God became incarnate. How much *natural* light they had concerning Him. They witnessed His perfect life, saw His wondrous miracles, heard His matchless teaching, were frequently in His immediate presence. Yet, though the light showed in the darkness, “The darkness comprehended it not” (Joh 1:5). So it is today. Reader, you may be a diligent student of the New Testament, be thoroughly acquainted with the Old Testament types and prophecies, believe all that the Scriptures say concerning Christ, and earnestly teach them to others, and yet be yourself a stranger to Him spiritually.

“Except a man be born again, he cannot *see* the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:3), which means that the unregenerate are utterly incapable of discerning the things of God spiritually. True, they may “see” them in a natural way. They may investigate and even admire them theoretically, but receive them in an experimental and vital way, they cannot. As this distinction is of such great importance, and yet so little known today, let us endeavour to illustrate it. Imagine a man who has never heard any music. Others tell him of its beauty and charm, and he decides to make a careful study of it. That man might thoroughly familiarize himself with the art of music, learn all the rules of that art, so that he understood the proportions and harmony of it. But what a different thing is that from listening to a grand oratorio—the ear now taking in what before the mind knew only the theory of! Still greater is the difference between a natural and a spiritual knowledge of divine things.

The apostle declared, “We speak the word of God in a mystery” (1Co 2:7). He did not only affirm that it is a mystery in itself, but that it is still spoken “*in* a mystery.” And why is this? Because the unregenerate, even where it is spoken in their hearing, yea, when it is clearly apprehended by them in a notional way, neither know nor apprehend the mystery that is still in it. Proverbs 9:10 declares that, “The knowledge of the holy is understanding.” There is no true understanding of divine things except the “knowledge of the holy.” Every real Christian has a knowledge of divine things, a personal, experimental, vital knowledge of them, which no carnal man possesses, or can obtain, no matter how diligently he studies them. If I have seen the picture of a man, I have an image in my mind of that man according to his picture. But if I see the man himself, how different is the image of him which is then formed in my mind! Far greater still is the difference between Christ made known in the Scriptures and Christ “revealed *in me*” (Gal 1:16).

4. *There must be a spiritual and supernatural knowledge of Christ imparted by the Holy Spirit.* This is in view of 1 John 5:20, “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath *given us an understanding*, that we may know him that is true.” The faculty must be suited to the object or subject known. The natural understanding is capable of taking in Christ and knowing Him in a natural way, but we must be “renewed in the spirit of our mind” (Eph 4:23) before we can know Christ in a spiritual way. There must be a supernatural work of grace wrought upon the mind by the Holy Spirit before there can be any inward and spiritual apprehension of the

supernatural and spiritual person of Christ. That is the true and saving knowledge of Christ which fires the affections, sanctifies the will, and raises up the mind to a spiritual fixation on the Rock of ages. It is *this* knowledge of Him which is “life eternal” (Joh 17:3). It is *this* knowledge which produces faith in Christ, love for Him, submission to Him. It is *this* knowledge which causes the soul truthfully and joyously to exclaim, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psa 73:25).

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Joh 6:44). It is by the secret and effectual operation of the Spirit that the Father brings each of His elect to a saving knowledge of Christ. These operations of the Spirit begin by His enlightening the understanding, renewing the mind. Observe carefully the order in Ezekiel 37:14, “And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live...*then* shall ye *know* that I the Lord have spoken it.” No sinner ever comes to Christ until the Holy Spirit first comes to him! And no sinner will savingly believe on Christ until the Spirit has communicated faith to him (Eph 2:8; col 2:12). And even then, faith is an eye to *discern* Christ before it is a foot to *approach* Him. There can be no act without an object, and there can be no exercising of faith upon Christ till Christ is seen in His excellency, sufficiency, and suitability to poor sinners. “That he may know *and* believe me” (Isa 43:10) is the order. “They that *know* thy name will [not “ought to”] put their trust in thee” (Psa 9:10). But again, we say that knowledge must be a spiritual and miraculous one imparted by the Spirit.

The Spirit Himself, and not merely a preacher, must take of the things of Christ and show them unto the heart. It is only in *God’s* “light” that we truly “*see* light” (Psa 36:9). The opening of his eyes preceded the conversion of the sinner from Satan unto God (Act 26:18). The light of the sun is seen breaking out at the dawn of day, before its heat is felt. It is those who “see” the Son with a supernaturally enlightened understanding who “believe” on Him with a spiritual and saving faith (Joh 6:40). We *behold* as in a mirror the glory of the Lord before we are *changed* into *His* very image (2Co 3:18). Note the order in Romans 3:11, “There is none that understandeth” goes before, “There is none that seeketh after God.” The Spirit must shed His light upon the understanding, which light conveys the actual image of spiritual things in a spiritual way to the mind, forming them on the soul, much as a sensitive photographic plate receives the light from the images to which it is exposed. *This* is the “*demonstration* of the Spirit and of *power*” (1Co 2:4).

5. *How is this spiritual and vital knowledge to be known from a mere theoretical and notional one?* By its effects. Unto the Thessalonians Paul wrote, “For our gospel came not unto you in *word only*, but *also in power*, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance” (1Th 1:5), which is partly explained in the next verse, “Having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.” The Spirit had given that Word in efficacy which no logic, rhetoric or persuasive power of men could give it. It had smitten the conscience, torn open the wounds which sin

had made, exposed its festering sores. It had pierced them even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. It had slain their good opinion of themselves. It had made them feel the wrath of God burning against them. It had caused them seriously to question if such wretches could possibly find mercy at the hands of the holy God. It had communicated faith to look upon the great Physician of souls. It had given a joy such as this poor world knows nothing of.

The light which the Spirit imparts to the understanding is full of efficacy, whereas that which men acquire through their study is not so. Ordinary and strong mineral waters are alike in colour, but differ much in their taste and virtue. A carnal man may acquire a theoretical knowledge of all that a spiritual man knows vitally, yet is he “barren” and “unfruitful” in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2Pe 1:8). The light he has is ineffectual, for it does not purify his heart, renew his will, or transform his life. The head-knowledge of divine truth, which is all that multitudes of present-day professing Christians possess, has no more influence upon their walk unto practical godliness than though it was stored up in some other man’s brains. The light which the Spirit gives humbles and abases its recipient. The knowledge which is acquired by education and personal efforts puffs up and fills with carnal deceit.

A spiritual and saving knowledge of Christ always constrains the soul unto loving obedience. No sooner did the light of Christ shine into Paul’s heart than he at once asked, “Lord, what wilt thou have me do?” (Act 9:6). Of the Colossians, the apostle declared, “The Gospel which is come unto you...bringeth forth fruit...since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth” or “in reality” (Col 1:5-6). But a mere intellectual knowledge of the truth is “held in *unrighteousness*” (Rom 1:18). Its possessors are zealous to argue and cavil about it, and look down with contempt upon all who are not as wise as they. Yet the *lives* of these frequently put them to shame. A saving knowledge of Christ so endears Him to the soul that all else is esteemed as dung in comparison with His excellency. The light of His glory has cast a complete eclipse over all that is in the world. But a mere doctrinal knowledge of Christ produces no such effects. While its possessors may loudly sing His praises, their hearts are still coveting and eagerly pursuing the things of time and sense.

The natural man may know the truth of the things of God, but not the things themselves. He may thoroughly understand the Scriptures in the letter of them, but not in their spirit. He may discourse of them in a sound and orthodox manner, but in no other way than one can *talk* of honey and vinegar who never tasted the sweetness of the one or the sourness of the other. There are hundreds of preachers who have accurate notions of spiritual things, but who see and taste not the things themselves which are wrapt in the words of truth, “Understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (1Ti 1:7). Just as an astronomer who makes a life study of the stars knows their names, their positions and varying magnitudes, yet receives no

more personal and special influence from them than do other men, so it is with those who study the Scriptures but are not supernaturally and savingly enlightened by the Spirit. Oh, my reader, has the “Day Star arisen *in your heart*” (2Pe 1:19)?

HEART WORK

Part 2

As well might a poor man expect to be rich in this world without industry, or a weak man to become strong and healthy without food and exercise, as a Christian to be rich in faith and strong in the Lord without earnest endeavour and diligent effort. It is true that all our labours amount to nothing unless the Lord blesses them (Psa 127:1), as it also is that apart from Him, we can do nothing (Joh 15:5). Nevertheless, God places no premium upon sloth, and has promised that, “The soul of the diligent shall be made fat” (Pro 13:4). A farmer may be fully persuaded of his own helplessness to make his fields productive. He may realize that their fertility is dependent upon the sovereign will of God, and he may also be a firm believer in the efficacy of prayer. But unless he discharges *his own duty*, *his barns will be empty*. So it is spiritually.

God has not called His people to be drones, nor to maintain an attitude of passiveness. No, He bids them work, toil, labour. The sad thing is that so many of them are engaged in the wrong task, or, at least, giving most of their attention to that which is incidental, and neglecting that which is essential and fundamental. “Keep thy heart with all diligence” (Pro 4:23). *This* is the great task which God has assigned unto each of His children. But oh, how sadly is the heart neglected! Of all their concerns and possessions, the *least* diligence is used by the vast majority of professing Christians in the keeping of their hearts. As long as they safeguard their other interests—their reputations, their bodies, their positions in the world—the heart may be left to take its own course.

As the heart in our physical body is the centre and fountain of life, because from it blood circulates into every part, conveying with it either health or disease, so it is with us spiritually. If our heart be the residence of impiety, pride, avarice, malice, impure lusts, then the whole current of our lives will largely be tainted with these vices. If they are admitted there and prevail for a season, then our character and conduct will be proportionately affected. Therefore, the citadel of the heart needs

above all things to be well guarded, that it may not be seized by those numerous and watchful assailants which are ever attacking it. This spring needs to be well protected that its waters be not poisoned.

The man is what his heart is. If *this* be dead to God, then nothing in him is alive. If *this* be right with God, all will be right. As the mainspring of a watch sets all its wheels and parts in motion, so as a man “thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Pro 23:7). If the heart be right, the actions will be. As a man’s heart is, such is his state now and will be hereafter. If it be regenerated and sanctified, there will be a life of faith and holiness in this world, and everlasting life will be enjoyed in the world to come. Therefore, “Rather look to the cleansing of thine heart, than to the cleansing of thy well; rather look to the feeding of thine heart, than to the feeding of thy flock; rather look to the defending of thine heart, than to the defending of thine house; rather look to the keeping of thine heart, than to the keeping of thy money” (Peter Moffat, 1570).

“Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23). The “heart” is here put for our whole inner being, the “hidden man of the heart” (1Pe 3:4). It is that which controls and gives character to all that we do. To “keep”—garrison or guard—the heart or soul is the great work which God has assigned us. The enablement is His, but the duty is ours. We are to keep the imagination from vanity, the understanding from error, the will from perverseness, the conscience clear of guilt, the affections from being inordinate and set on evil objects, the mind from being employed on worthless or vile subjects—the whole from being possessed by Satan. This is the work to which God has called us.

Rightly did the Puritan John Flavel (1630-1691) say, “The keeping and right managing of the heart in every condition is the great business of a Christian’s life.” Now to “keep” the heart right implies that it has been *set right*. Thus it was at regeneration, when it was given a new spiritual bent. True conversion is the heart turning from Satan’s control to God’s, from sin to holiness, from the world to Christ. To *keep* the heart right signifies the constant care and diligence of the renewed to preserve his soul in that holy frame to which grace has reduced it and daily strives to hold it. “Hereupon do all events depend—the heart being kept, the whole course of our life here will be according to the mind of God, and the end of it will be the enjoyment of Him hereafter. This being neglected, life will be lost, both here as unto obedience, and hereafter as to glory” (John Owen [1616-1683] in *Causes of Apostasy*).

1. To “keep” the heart means *striving to shut out from it all that is opposed to God*. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1Jo 5:21). God is a jealous God and will brook no rival. He claims the throne of our hearts, and requires to be loved by us supremely. When we perceive our affections being inordinately drawn out unto any earthly object, we are to fight against it, and “resist the devil.” When Paul

said, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be *brought under the power* of any" (1Co 6:12), he signified that he was keeping his heart diligently, that he was jealous lest *things* should gain that esteem and place in his soul which was due alone unto the Lord. A very small object placed immediately before the eye is sufficient to shut out the light of the sun, and trifling things, taken up by the affections, may soon sever communion with the Holy One.

Before regeneration, our hearts were deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked (Jer 17:9). That was because the evil principle, the "flesh," had complete dominion over them. But inasmuch as "the flesh" remains in us after conversion, and is constantly striving for the mastery over "the spirit," the Christian needs to exercise a constant watchful jealousy over his heart, mindful of its readiness to be imposed upon, and its proneness unto a compliance with temptations. All the avenues to the heart need to be carefully guarded so that nothing hurtful enters therein, particularly against vain thoughts and imaginations, and especially in those seasons when they are apt to gain an advantage. For if injurious thoughts are suffered to gain an inroad into the mind, if we accustom ourselves to give them entertainment, then in vain shall we hope to be "spiritually minded" (Rom 8:6). All such thoughts are only making provision to fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

Thus, for the Christian to "keep" his heart with all diligence means for him to pay close attention to the direction in which his affections are moving, to discover whether the things of the world are gaining a firmer and fuller hold over him or whether they are increasingly losing their charm for him. God has exhorted us, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col 3:2), and the heeding of this injunction calls for constant examination of the heart to discover whether or not it is becoming more and more dead unto this deceitful and perishing world, and whether heavenly things are those in which we find our chief and greatest delight. "Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart" (Deu 4:9).

2. To "keep" the heart means *striving to bring it into conformity with the Word*. We are not to rest content until an actual image of its pure and holy teachings is stamped upon it. Alas, so many today are just *playing* with the solemn realities of God, allowing them to flit across their fancy, but never embracing and making them their own. Why is it, dear reader, that those solemn impressions you had when hearing a searching sermon or reading a searching article so quickly faded away? Why did not those holy feelings and aspirations which were stirred within you last? Why have they borne no fruit? Was it not because you failed to see that your heart was duly affected by them? You failed to "hold fast" that which you had "received and heard" (Rev 3:3), and in consequence, your heart became absorbed again in

“the care of this life” or “the deceitfulness of riches,” and thus the Word was choked.

It is not enough to hear or read a powerful message from one of God’s servants, and to be deeply interested and stirred by it. If there be no diligent effort on your part, then it will be said that, “Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away” (Hos 6:4). What, then, is required? This—Earnest and persevering prayer that God will fasten the message in your soul as a nail in a sure place, so that the devil himself cannot catch it away. What is required? This—“Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” (Luk 2:19). Things which are not duly pondered are soon forgotten. Meditation stands to reading as mastication does to eating. What is required? This—That you promptly put into practice what you have learned, walk according to the light God has given, or it will quickly be taken from you (Luk 8:18).

Not only must the outward actions be regulated by the Word, but the heart must also be conformed thereto. It is not enough to abstain from the act of adultery, the inward lust must be mortified too (Mat 5:28). God not only takes note of and keeps a record of all our external conduct, but He “weigheth the spirits” (Pro 16:2). Not only so, He requires *us* to scrutinize the springs from which our actions proceed, to examine our motives, to ponder *the spirit* in which we act. God requires truth—that is sincerity, reality—in “the inward parts” (Psa 51:6). Therefore does He command us, “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.”

3. To “keep” the heart means *to preserve it tender unto sin*. The unregenerate man makes little or no distinction between sin and crime—as long as he keeps within the law of the land, and maintains a reputation for respectability among his fellows, he is, generally speaking, quite satisfied with himself. But it is far otherwise with one who has been born again. He has been awakened to the fact that he has to do with *God* and must yet render a full account unto Him. He makes conscience of a hundred things which the unconverted never trouble themselves about. When the Holy Spirit first convicted him, he was made to feel that his whole life had been one of rebellion against God, of pleasing himself. The consciousness of this pierced him to the quick. His inward anguish far exceeded any pains of body or sorrow occasioned by temporal losses. He saw himself to be a spiritual leper, and hated himself for it, and mourned bitterly before God. He cried, “Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psa 51:9-10).

Now, it is the duty of the Christian, and part of the task, which God has set him, to see to it that this sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin be not lost. He is to labour daily that his heart be duly affected by the heinousness of self-will and self-love. He is steadfastly to resist every effort of Satan to make him pity himself, think lightly of wrongdoing, or excuse himself in the same. He is to live in the constant

realization that the eye of God is ever upon him, so that when tempted, he will say with Joseph, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen 39:9). He is to view sin in the light of the cross, daily reminding himself that it was *his* iniquities which caused the Lord of glory to be made a curse for him—employing the dying love of Christ as a motive why he must not allow himself in anything that is contrary to the holiness and obedience which the Saviour asks from all His redeemed.

Ah, my Christian reader, it is no child’s play to “keep the heart with all diligence.” The easy-going religion of our day will never take its devotees (or rather its *victims*!) to heaven. The question has been asked, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or *who* shall stand in His holy place?” and plainly has the question been answered by God Himself, “He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart,” etc. (Psa 24:3-4). Equally plain is the teaching of the New Testament, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for *they* shall see God” (Mat 5:8). A “pure heart” is one that hates sin, which makes conscience of sin, which grieves over it, which strives against it. A “pure heart” is one that seeks to keep undefiled the temple of the Holy Spirit, the dwelling-place of Christ (Eph 3:17).

4. To “keep” the heart means *to look diligently after its cleansing*. Perhaps some of our readers often find themselves sorrowfully crying, “Oh, the vileness of my heart!” Thank God if He *has* discovered this to you. If such be so, and you really feel it, it is clear proof that He has made you to differ from the multitudes of blindly indifferent professing Christians all around you. But, dear friend, there is no sufficient reason why your “heart” should *continue* to be vile. You might lament that your garden was overgrown with weeds and filled with rubbish, but need it remain so? We speak not now of your sinful *nature*, the incurable and unchangeable “flesh” which still indwells you, but of your “*heart*,” which God bids you “keep.” You *are* responsible to purge your mind of vain imaginations, your soul of unlawful affections, your conscience of guilt.

But, alas, you say, “I have no control over such things. They come unbidden and I am powerless to prevent them.” So the devil would have you believe! Revert again to the analogy of your garden. Do not the weeds spring up unbidden? Do not the slugs and other pests seek to prey upon the plants? What, then? Do you merely bewail your helplessness? No, you resist them, and take means to keep them under. Thieves enter houses uninvited, but whose fault is it if the doors and windows be left unfastened? Oh, heed not the seductive lullabies of Satan. God says, “Purify your hearts, ye double minded” (Jam 4:8)—that is, one mind for Him, and another for self! one for holiness, and another for the pleasures of sin.

But *how* am I to “purify” my heart? By vomiting up the foul things taken into it, shamefacedly owning them before God, repudiating them, turning from them with loathing. And it is written, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive

us our sins, and to *cleanse* us from all unrighteousness.” By daily renewing our exercise of repentance, and *such* repentance as is spoken of in 2 Corinthians 7:11, “For behold this selfsame thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.” By the daily exercise of faith (Act 15:9), appropriating afresh the cleansing blood of Christ, bathing every night in that “fountain” which has been opened “for sin and uncleanness” (Zec 13:1). By treading the path of God’s commandments, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit” (1Pe 1:22).

We close this article by pointing out what is obvious to every Christian reader, namely that such a task calls for divine aid. Help and grace need to be earnestly and definitely sought of the Holy Spirit each day. We should bow before God, and in all simplicity say, “Lord, Thou requires me to keep my heart with all diligence, and I feel utterly incompetent for such a task. Such a work lies altogether beyond my poor feeble powers. Therefore, I humbly ask Thee, in the name of Christ, graciously to grant unto me supernatural strength to do as Thou hast bidden me. Lord, work in me both to will and to do of Thy good pleasure.”

GREAT FAITH

Luke 7:8

“For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it” (Luk 7:8). Do you see what he was doing? He was casting himself upon the Lordship of Christ. Divine grace had so wondrously opened his eyes that he realized he was standing in the presence of the One who said, “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3) and there was light. He said, “Let the earth bring forth” (Gen 1:11) and it brought forth. And He had only to say concerning his servant, “Be healed,” and he knew that he would be healed. He realized that he was standing in the presence of the Lord of creation, the One who had absolute control over all the powers of nature. As Matthew 8:8 puts it, “Speak the word only and my servant shall be healed.” “When Jesus heard these things, he marveled” (Mat 8:10), and as dear old Spurgeon used to put it, “What a marvel it was that the Son of God should marvel.” “He marveled.” It is the only time in the New Testament that we

ever read that Christ marveled at anyone. And turning about He said unto the people that followed Him, “I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” (Mat 8:10).

There is one other instance recorded in the four Gospels where Christ spoke of someone having great faith. I am not going to tell you where it is. There is one other person mentioned in the Gospels who had great faith—only two persons in the Gospels. Will you remember the law of contrast and comparison? Just look up those two passages and work out the details. You will find a series of very striking comparisons and contrasts between them. Many times in the New Testament, we find Christ saying, “O ye of little faith” (Mat 6:30; 16:8; 8:26) Only twice did He acknowledge the greatness of faith.

I am afraid that there are many who have a very erroneous idea of what great faith is. Some of you think that doing a work like George Muller did, that nothing short of that, is great faith. Or going out to the ends of the earth to a foreign country with no guarantee behind you, and trusting in the Lord supplying your needs when you get there is great faith, and nothing else is as great faith. Now, you are wrong, absolutely wrong, and I am very anxious to put you right for the comfort of your own hearts. Great faith, in the light of this incident in this passage here, is first a realization of the Lordship of Christ. That is what great faith is, it is a realization of the Lordship, the absolute sufficiency, the almighty power, of Christ, who only has to speak and it is done.

Second, great faith is evidenced by a lowly submission to Him, an implicit confidence in His word. “Speak the word only” (Mat 8:8). That is how great faith expresses itself. Listen! Thirdly, great faith is accompanied by great humility, and if you do not have the one, you certainly do not have the other. The man Christ said had great faith is the man who felt that he was not even worthy to approach unto Him. That is the great faith man of the Bible. Great faith is not expressed always in great deeds as men count them. That is a false standard of measurement and that is why I want to disabuse your minds. Some of you little ones in Christ, some of you whom God has made to feel your littleness, have no hope of ever attaining unto great faith. That is because you have a wrong conception of what great faith is. The man of great faith is the man who has been made to realize his own nothingness. That is great faith and Christ says so. It was said to the man who said, “I am not worthy even to come unto you” (Luk 7:7). The Lord said he had got great faith. Great faith is accompanied by great humility. The last thing is that great faith expresses itself in making requests from Christ and counting on Him to grant them.

SEPTEMBER

MUCH MORE

Whereas the Bible is far from being a philosophical treatise, there is nothing in it which is contrary to real wisdom. Though there be not a little in it which far transcends the grasp of the finite mind, none of its teaching is opposed unto the principles of sound reasoning. In one passage, the Lord Himself says, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isa 1:18), and frequently does He make use of logical arguments when addressing the children of men. Thus, He employed Old Testament prophecy to demonstrate the excuselessness of the Jews’ skepticism concerning His Messiahship (Joh 5:39, 46), and on the same ground, rebuked the unbelief of His disciples (Luk 24:25-26). So too, He appealed to His miraculous works as furnishing incontrovertible proof that He was sent of God (Joh 10:25; 14:11). In like manner, His apostles frequently drew logical inferences from established principles. “If children, then heirs” (Rom 8:17)—since the former be a fact, the latter necessarily follows. If we meekly submitted when the fathers of our bodies chastised us, “Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits” when He disciplines us? (Heb 12:9). Further examples are contained in what follows.

“Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not *much more* clothe you, O ye of little faith?” (Mat 6:30). Christ is rebuking those who were absorbed by the trifles of this world, who gave more anxious thought to the obtaining of material things than to spiritual and eternal ones, who were more concerned about the garbing of the outward man than with the adorning of the inner one. By a simple process of logic, the Master demonstrated the utter unreasonableness of distrustful worry in connection with the supply of temporal necessities. His argument is drawn inferentially from the greater to the less. God has given us our lives, our bodies, and the life is vastly superior to meat and the body to raiment. His direct appeal is made

to the workings of providence—If God bestows such care upon the short-lived and comparatively worthless herbage of the field, then, He certainly will not neglect those who are destined for immortality and eternal happiness. God evidences His care of the former by clothing it with vegetation—Therefore, He may assuredly be counted upon to provide clothing for our bodies. Thus, anxiety about the supply of material needs betrays paucity of faith. It is the evil fruit of distrusting God’s goodness.

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, *how much more* shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Mat 7:11). There is a double contrast here—first, between an earthly parent and God—second, between their respective characters. If the former allows not his little ones to starve, but instead freely ministers to their needs, then certainly God will respond to the cries of His own children. They were but the begetters of our bodies, He the maker of our souls. Their resources are very limited, His are infinite. What abundant evidence God has given the Christian that He *is* his loving heavenly Father! By the sending of His Son, the gift of His Spirit, the bestowal of eternal life, His erection of the throne of grace, appointing of the Mediator, the innumerable promises He has made, all exclude the idea that He will turn a deaf ear unto their requests. But more, our parents were “evil,” whereas God is essentially good. The principal emphasis lies there. If they who by nature are corrupt and filled with selfishness could find in their hearts to bestow things needful on their offspring, then, how safely may He who has nothing in Him to check His benignity be relied upon. He is an ocean of all blessedness, which is ever seeking an outlet to communicate itself to those whom He has loved, chosen, and made His sons and daughters. What encouragement is there here for praying souls!

Romans 5 is the “much more” chapter of the New Testament, the words occurring therein five times. Their force is so self-evident that they call for little comment. If God so loved us when we were guilty sinners as to give Christ to die for us, He surely will not pour His wrath upon us now that we have been justified by Christ’s blood (Rom 5:8-9). If God would do so much for His enemies, what will He not do for His friends? Since the death of Christ accomplished so much, His resurrection will have greater potency. If, when we had no love for God, Christ’s death procured His favour, much more will His mediation on high deliver us from our sins as Christians (Rom 5:10). If God righteously willed that the first Adam should ruin the many, then, it is to be expected that the last Adam will ransom many, especially when we set over against the crime of the one the merits of the Other (Rom 5:15). If death came upon us as a judicial infliction for an offence in which we did not actively participate, assuredly we shall share in the reward of righteousness which is voluntarily received by faith (Rom 5:17). As life is greater than death, so grace exceeds sin (Rom 5:20). “The grace of God has proved itself

much more efficacious in the production of good, than sin in the production of evil” (Charles Hodge, 1797-1878).

“For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, *much more* doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory...For if that which is done away was glorious, *much more* that which remaineth is glorious” (2Co 3:9, 11). In this chapter, the superiority of Christianity over Judaism is clearly shown. The enemies of Paul were challenging his authority as a servant of Christ, and in his vindication, the apostle used the occasion to evince how greatly the ministry of the new covenant excelled that of the old. The one was but preparatory and introductory to the other, a temporary arrangement which was to give place unto that which is permanent. All the splendour of the Mosaic ritual has long since passed away, but the glory of the Gospel abides and its blessed effects will last for ever. Though the giving of the law and the dispensation connected therewith was glorious, for the whole thereof bore the unmistakable stamp of divinity, yet since it left every transgressor under the curse, it was, therefore (abstractedly considered), a ministry of condemnation and death. But the ministry of the new covenant is much more glorious, for it reveals how sinners may be constituted righteous before God through faith in Christ, secures and communicates the sanctifying Spirit to those who believe, and assures of eternal life. There the law was written on tables of stone, but now upon renewed hearts. Judaism was for one nation, the Gospel for all. Under the former, the perfections of God were viewed through figures and emblems, under the latter, they shine forth openly in the face of Jesus Christ.

“For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; *how much more* shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works?” (Heb 9:13-14). The thrice holy Jehovah dwelt in Israel’s midst, and enforced the claims of His purity by requiring those, who approached as worshippers, to do so in a meet condition, lest His displeasure be visited upon their pollutions. Accordingly, provision was made for the symbolical satisfying of His justice and the removal of their carnal defilement. Thereby was a disqualification removed from those who were about to enter the sacred courts. Now, if the blood and ashes of beasts, under the ordinance of God, availed unto an external and temporary justification and sanctification of the flesh—that is, the typical putting away of both the guilt and defilement of sin—how much more must the precious blood of Christ, appointed and accepted by God, effectually and eternally cleanse the souls of those to whom it is divinely applied and give title of access into heaven itself. The blood of animals possessed no intrinsic value and owed its efficacy solely to God’s appointment. But that of Christ was invested with the infinite excellence of His divine person and is “precious” in itself (1Pe 1:19).

“See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, *much more* shall not we escape, if we turn away from him

that speaketh from heaven” (Heb 12:25). This presents another of the many contrasts drawn between Judaism and Christianity. The speaker is, in each of these instances, the same. The difference was in the *mouthpieces* which He employed—the former were men, the “prophets,” the latter was in and by His Son (Heb 1:1-2). That indicated the relative importance of the two economies—the one was religion for the earth and a temporary arrangement—the other was a revelation of a heavenly calling and inheritance, and concerned eternal relations and realities. And it was by “the Lord from heaven” that its grand secrets were disclosed. Now, the greater the privileges enjoyed, the more is required from us (Luk 12:48). The clearer the light given, the fuller the response demanded. Therefore, failure to meet increased obligations incurs deeper guilt and involves heavier punishment (Heb 2:2-3; 10:28-29). Condemnation and penalty will be proportioned to the condescension despised and the favour rejected. The recompense of the one was temporary. The doom of the other will be eternal.

SAVING FAITH

5. Its Evidences

The great majority of those who read this article will, doubtless, be they who profess to be in possession of a saving faith. To all such, we would put the questions: Where is your proof? What effects has it produced in you? A tree is known by its fruits, and a fountain by the waters which issue from it, so the nature of your faith may be ascertained by a careful examination of what it is bringing forth. We say “*a careful examination*,” for as all fruit is not fit for eating nor all water for drinking, so all works are not the effects of a faith which saves. Reformation is not regeneration, and a changed life does not always indicate a changed heart. Have you been saved from a dislike of God’s commandments and a disrelish of His holiness? Have you been saved from pride, covetousness, murmuring? Have you been delivered from the love of this world, from the fear of man, from the reigning power of every sin?

The heart of fallen man is thoroughly depraved, its thoughts and imaginations being only evil continually (Gen 6:5). It is full of corrupt desires and affections, which exert themselves and influence man in all he does. Now, the Gospel comes into direct opposition with these selfish lusts and corrupt affections, both in the root

and in the fruit of them (Ti 2:11-12). There is no greater duty that the Gospel urges upon our souls than the mortifying and destroying of them, and this indispensably, if we intend to be made partakers of its promises (Rom 8:13; Col 3:5, 8). Hence, the first real work of faith is to cleanse the soul from these pollutions, and therefore, we read, “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24). Mark well, it is not that they “ought to” do so, but that they *have actually*, in some measure or degree.

It is one thing really to *think* we believe a thing, it is quite another actually to do so. So fickle is the human heart that, even in natural things, men know not their own minds. In temporal affairs, what a man really believes is best ascertained by his practice. Suppose I meet a traveler in a narrow gorge and tell him that just ahead is an impassable river, and that the bridge across it is rotten. If he declines to turn back, am I not warranted in concluding that he does not believe me? Or if a physician tells me a certain disease holds me in its grip, and that in a short time it will prove fatal if I do not use a prescribed remedy which is sure to heal, would he not be justified in inferring that I did not trust his judgment were he to see me, not only ignoring his directions, but following a contrary course? Likewise, to believe there is a hell and yet run unto it, to believe that sin continued in will damn and yet live in it—to what purpose is it to boast of *such* a faith?

Now, from what was before us in the last article, it should be plain beyond all room for doubt that when God imparts saving faith to a soul, radical and real effects will follow. One cannot be raised from the dead without there being a consequent walking in newness of life. One cannot be the subject of a miracle of grace being wrought in the heart without a noticeable change being apparent to all who know him. Where a supernatural root has been implanted, supernatural fruit must issue therefrom. Not that sinless perfection is attained in this life, nor that the evil principle, the flesh, is eradicated from our beings, or even purified. Nevertheless, there is now a yearning after perfection, there is a spirit resisting the flesh, there is a striving against sin. And more, there is a growing in grace and a *pressing forward* along the “narrow way” which leads to heaven.

One serious error so widely propagated today in “orthodox” circles, and which is responsible for so many souls being deceived, is the seemingly Christ-honouring doctrine that it is “His blood which *alone* saves any sinner.” Ah, Satan is very clever. He knows exactly what bait to use for every place in which he fishes. Many a company would indignantly resent a preacher’s telling them that getting baptized and eating the Lord’s Supper were God’s appointed means for saving the soul. Yet most of these same people will readily accept the lie that it is *only* by the blood of Christ we can be saved. That is true Godwards, but it is not true manwards. The work of the Spirit in us is *equally* essential as the work of Christ for us. Let the reader carefully ponder the whole of Titus 3:5.

Salvation is twofold. It is both legal and experimental, and consists of justification and sanctification. Moreover, I owe my salvation not only to the Son, but to all three persons in the Godhead. Alas, how little is this realized today, and how little is it preached. First and primarily, I owe my salvation to God the Father, who ordained and planned it, and who chose me unto salvation (2Th 2:13). In Titus 3:4, it is the Father who is denominated, “God our Saviour.” Secondly and meritoriously, I owe my salvation to the obedience and sacrifice of God the Son incarnate, who performed as my Sponsor everything which the Law required, and satisfied all its demands upon me. Thirdly and efficaciously, I owe my salvation to the regenerating, sanctifying, and preserving operations of the Spirit. Note that *His* work is made just as prominent in Luke 15:8-10, as is the Shepherd’s in Luke 15:4-7! As Titus 3:5 so plainly affirms, God “*saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,*” and it is the presence of *His* “fruit” in my heart and life which furnishes the immediate evidence of my salvation.

“With the heart man believeth unto righteousness” (Rom 10:10). Thus it is the heart which we must first examine in order to discover evidences of the presence of a saving faith. And first, God’s Word speaks of “*purifying* their hearts by faith” (Act 15:9). Of old, the Lord said, “O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from the wickedness, that thou mayest be saved” (Jer 4:14). A heart that is being purified by faith (cf. 1Pe 1:22) is one fixed upon a pure Object. It drinks from a pure fountain, delights in a pure Law (Rom 7:22), and looks forward to spending eternity with a pure Saviour (1Jo 3:3). It loathes all that is foul and filthy—spiritually as well as morally—yea, hates the very garment spotted by the flesh (Jude 1:23). Contrariwise, it loves all that is holy, lovely, and Christlike.

The pure in heart shall see God (Mat 5:8). Heart purity is absolutely essential to fit us for dwelling in that place into which there shall in no wise enter anything “that defileth, neither worketh abomination” (Rev 21:27). Perhaps a little fuller definition is called for. Purifying the heart by faith consists of, first, the purifying of the understanding, by the shining in of divine light, so as to cleanse it from error. Second, the purifying of the conscience, so as to cleanse it from guilt. Third, the purifying of the will, so as to cleanse it from self-will and self-seeking. Fourth, the purifying of the affections, so as to cleanse them from the love of all that is evil. In Scripture, the “heart” includes all these four faculties. A deliberate purpose to continue in any one sin cannot consist with a pure heart.

Again, saving faith is always evidenced by a *humble* heart. Faith lays the soul low, for it discovers its own vileness, emptiness, impotency. It realizes its former sinfulness and present unworthiness. It is conscious of its weaknesses and wants, its carnality and corruptions. Nothing more exalts Christ than faith, and nothing more debases a man. In order to magnify the riches of His grace, God has selected faith as the fittest instrument, and this, because it is that which causes us to go entirely out from ourselves unto Him. Faith, realizing we are nothing but sin and wretchedness,

comes unto Christ as an empty-handed beggar to receive all from Him. Faith empties a man of self-conceit, self-confidence, and self-righteousness, and makes him seem nothing, that Christ may be all in all. The strongest faith is always accompanied by the greatest humility, accounting self the greatest of sinners, and unworthy of the least favour (see Mat 8:8-10).

Again, saving faith is always found in a *tender* heart. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Eze 36:26). An unregenerate heart is hard as a stone, full of pride and presumption. It is quite unmoved by the sufferings of Christ, in the sense that they act as no deterrent against self-will and self-pleasing. But the real Christian *is* moved by the love of Christ and says, “How can I sin against His dying love for me?” When overtaken by a fault, there is passionate relenting and bitter mourning. Oh, my reader, do *you* know what it is to be melted before God, for you to be heart-broken with anguish over sinning against and grieving such a Saviour? Ah, it is not the absence of sin, but the grieving over it, which distinguishes the child of God from empty professors.

Another characteristic of saving faith is that it, “worketh by love” (Gal 5:6). It is not inactive, but energetic. That faith which is “of the operation of God” (Col 2:12) is a mighty principle of power, diffusing spiritual energy to all the faculties of the soul and enlisting them in the service of God. Faith is a principle of life, by which the Christian lives unto God; a principle of motion by which he walks to heaven along the highway of holiness; a principle of strength, by which he opposes the flesh, the world, and the devil. “Faith in the heart of a Christian is like the salt that was thrown into the corrupt fountain that made the naughty waters good and the barren land fruitful. Hence it is that there followeth an alteration of life and conversation, and so bringeth forth fruit accordingly, ‘A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good fruit,’ which treasure is faith” (John Bunyan in *Christian Behaviour*, 1628-1688).

Where a saving faith is rooted in the heart, it grows up and spreads itself in all the branches of obedience, and is filled with the fruits of righteousness. It makes its possessor act for God, and thereby evidences that it is a living thing and not merely a lifeless theory. Even a newborn infant, though it cannot walk and work as a grown man, breathes and cries, moves and sucks, and thereby shows it is alive. So with the one who has been born again—there is a breathing unto God, a crying after Him, a moving toward Him, a clinging to Him. But the infant does not long remain a babe. There is growth, increasing strength, enlarged activity. Nor does the Christian remain stationary. He goes “from strength to strength” (Psa 84:7).

But observe carefully, faith not only “worketh,” but it “worketh *by love*.” It is at this point that the “works” of the Christian differ from those of the mere religionist.

“The papist works that he may merit heaven. The Pharisee works that he may be applauded, that he may be seen of men, that he may have a good esteem with them. The slave works lest he should be beaten, lest he should be damned. The formalist works that he may stop the mouth of conscience, that will be accusing him, if he do nothing. The ordinary professor works because it is a shame to do nothing, where so much is professed. But the true believer works because he *loves*. This is the principal, if not the only motive that sets him a-work. If there were no other motive within or without him, yet would he be working for God, acting for Christ, because he loves Him. It is like fire in his bones” (David Clarkson, 1621-1686).

Saving faith is ever accompanied by *an obedient walk*. “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1Jo 2:3-4). Make no mistake upon this point. Infinite as are the merits of Christ’s sacrifice, mighty as is the potency of His priestly intercession, yet they avail not for any who continue in the path of disobedience. He acknowledges none to be His disciples save them who do homage to Him as their Lord. “Too many professors pacify themselves with the idea that they possess imputed righteousness, while they are indifferent to the sanctifying work of the Spirit. They refuse to put on the garment of obedience. They reject the white linen which is the righteousness of the saints. They thus reveal their self-will, their enmity to God, and their non-submission to His Son. Such men may talk what they will about justification by faith and salvation by grace, but they are rebels at heart. They have not on the wedding-dress any more than the self-righteous, whom they so eagerly condemn. The fact is, if we wish for the blessings of grace, we must in our hearts submit to the *rules* of grace, without picking and choosing” (Charles H. Spurgeon on, “The wedding garment,” 1834-1892).

Once more—Saving faith is *precious*, for, like gold, it will endure trial (1Pe 1:7). A genuine Christian fears no test. He is willing, yea, wishes to be tried by God Himself. He cries, “Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Psa 26:2). Therefore is he willing for his faith to be tried by others, for he shuns not the touchstone of Holy Writ. He frequently tries himself, for where so much is at stake, he must be *sure*. He is anxious to know the worst as well as the best. That preaching pleases him best which is most searching and discriminating. He is loath to be deluded with vain hopes. He would not be flattered into a high conceit of his spiritual state without grounds. When challenged, he complies with the apostle’s advice in 2 Corinthians 13:5.

Herein does the real Christian differ from the formalist. The presumptuous professor is filled with pride, and, having a high opinion of himself, is quite sure that *he* has been saved by Christ. He disdains any searching tests, and considers self-examination to be highly injurious and destructive of faith. That preaching pleases him best which keeps at a respectable distance, which comes not near his

conscience, which makes no scrutiny of his heart. To preach to him of the finished work of Christ and the eternal security of all who believe in Him strengthens his false peace and feeds his carnal confidence. Should a real servant of God seek to convince him that his hope is a delusion, and his confidence presumptuous, he would regard him as an enemy, as Satan seeking to fill him with doubts. There is more hope of a murderer being saved than of *his* being disillusioned.

Another characteristic of saving faith is that it gives the heart victory over all the vanities and vexations of things below. “For whatsoever is born of God *overcometh the world*: and this is the victory that *overcometh the world*, even our faith” (1Jo 5:4). Observe that this is not an ideal after which the Christian strives, but an actuality of present experience. In this, the saint is conformed to his Head, “Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world” (Joh 16:33). Christ overcame it for His people, and now He overcomes it in them. He opens their eyes to see the hollowness and worthlessness of the best which this world has to offer, and weans their hearts from it by satisfying them with spiritual things. So little does the world attract the genuine child of God that he longs for the time to come when God shall take him out of it.

Alas, that so very few of those now bearing the name of Christ have any real experimental acquaintance with these things. Alas, that so many are deceived by a faith which is not a saving one. “He only is a Christian who *lives for Christ*. Many persons think they can be Christians on easier terms than these. They think it is enough to trust in Christ while they do not live for Him. But the Bible teaches us that if we are partakers of Christ’s death, we are also partakers of His life. If we have any such appreciation of His love in dying for us as to lead us to confide in the merits of His death, *we shall be* constrained to consecrate our lives to His service. And this is the only evidence of the genuineness of our faith” (Charles Hodge on 2 Corinthians 5:15, 1797-1878).

Reader, are the things mentioned above actualized in your own experience? If they are not, how worthless and wicked is your profession! “It is, therefore, exceedingly absurd for any to pretend that they have a good heart while they live a wicked life, or do not bring forth the fruit of universal holiness in their practice. Men that live in the ways of sin, and yet flatter themselves that they shall go to heaven, expecting to be received hereafter as holy persons, without a holy practice, act as though they expected to make a fool of their Judge—which is implied in what the apostle says (speaking of men’s doing good works and living a holy life, thereby exhibiting evidence of their title to everlasting life). ‘Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap’ (Gal 6:7). As much as to say, ‘Do not deceive yourselves with an expectation of reaping life everlasting hereafter, if you do not sow to the Spirit here. It is in vain to think that God will be made a fool of by you’” (Jonathan Edwards in *Religious Affections*, 1703-1758).

That which Christ requires from His disciples is that they should magnify and glorify Him in this world and that by living holily to Him and suffering patiently for Him. Nothing is as honouring to Christ as that those who bear His name should, by their holy obedience, make manifest the power of His love over their hearts and lives. Contrariwise, nothing is so great a reproach to Him, nothing more dishonours Him, than that those who are living to please self, and who are conformed to this world, should cloak their wickedness under His holy name. A Christian is one who has taken Christ for his example in all things. Then how great the insult which is done Him by those claiming to be Christians whose daily lives show they have no respect for His godly example. They are a stench in His nostrils. They are a cause of grievous sorrow to His real disciples. They are the greatest hindrance of all to the progress of His cause on earth, and they shall yet find that the hottest places in hell have been reserved for them. Oh, that they would either abandon their course of self-pleasing or drop the profession of that name which is above every name.

Should the Lord be pleased to use this article in shattering the false confidence of some deluded souls, and should they earnestly inquire how they are to obtain a genuine and saving faith, we answer, "Use the means which God has prescribed." When faith be His gift, He gives it in His own way. And if we desire to receive it, then, we must put ourselves in that way wherein He is wont to communicate it. Faith is the work of God, but He works it not immediately, but through the channels of His appointed means. The means prescribed cannot effect faith of themselves. They are no further effectual than as instruments in the hands of Him who is the principal cause. Though He has not tied Himself to them, yet He has confined us. Though He be free, yet the means are necessary to us.

The first means is *prayer*, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you" (Eze 36:26). Here is a gracious promise, but in what way will He accomplish it and similar ones? Listen, "Thus saith the LORD God: I will yet for this *be enquired of* by the house of Israel, to do it for them" (Eze 36:37). Cry earnestly to God for a new heart, for His regenerating Spirit, for the gift of saving faith. Prayer is a universal duty. Though an unbeliever sin in praying (as in everything else), it is not a sin for him to pray.

The second means is the *written Word* heard (Joh 17:20; 1Co 3:5) or read (2Ti 3:15). Said David, "I will never forget thy precepts: for *with them* thou hast quickened me" (Psa 119:93). The Scriptures are the Word of God, through them He speaks. Then read them—asking Him to speak life, power, deliverance, peace, to your heart. May the Lord deign to add His blessing.

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

9. The Scriptures and Joy

The ungodly are ever seeking after joy, but they find it not. They busy and weary themselves in the pursuit of it, yet all in vain. Their hearts being turned from the Lord, they look downward for joy, where it is not—rejecting the substance, they diligently run after the shadow, only to be mocked by it. It is the sovereign decree of heaven that nothing can make sinners truly happy but God in Christ—but this, they will not believe, and therefore, they go from creature to creature, from one broken cistern to another, inquiring where is the best joy to be found. Each worldly thing which attracts them says, “It is found in me,” but each disappoints. Nevertheless, they go on seeking it afresh today in the very thing which deceived them yesterday. If after many trials, they discover the emptiness of one creature comfort, then, they turn to another, only to verify our Lord’s word, “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again” (Joh 4:13).

Going now to the other extreme—There are some Christians who suppose it is sinful to rejoice. No doubt many of our readers will be surprised to hear this, but let them be thankful they have been brought up in sunnier surroundings, and bear with us while we labour with those less favoured. Some have been taught—largely by implication and example, rather than by plain inculcation—that it is their duty to be gloomy. They imagine that feelings of joy are produced by the devil appearing as an angel of light. They conclude that it is well-nigh a species of wickedness to be happy in such a world of sin as we are in. They think it presumptuous to rejoice in the knowledge of sins forgiven, and if they see young Christians so doing, they tell them it will not be long before they are floundering in the Slough of Despond. To all such, we tenderly urge the prayerful pondering of the remainder of this article.

“Rejoice evermore” (1Th 5:16). It surely cannot be unsafe to do what God has commanded us. The Lord has placed no embargo on rejoicing. No, it is Satan who strives to make us hang up our harps. There is no precept in Scripture bidding us, “Grieve in the Lord always: and again I say, Grieve”; but there is an exhortation which bids us, “Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright” (Psa 33:1). Reader, if you be a real Christian (and it is high time you tested yourself by Scripture and made sure of the point), then Christ is yours, all that is in Him is yours. He bids you, “Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink *abundantly*, O beloved” (Song 5:1). The only sin you may commit against His banquet of love is to

stint yourself. “Let your soul delight itself *in fatness*” (Isa 55:2) is spoken not to those already in heaven, but to saints still on earth. This leads us to say that:

1. We profit from the Word when we perceive that *joy is a duty*.

“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phi 4:4). The Holy Spirit here speaks of rejoicing as a personal, present, and permanent duty for the people of God to carry out. The Lord has not left it to our option whether we should be glad or sad, but has made happiness an obligation. Not to rejoice is a sin of omission. Next time you meet with a radiant Christian, do not chide him, ye dwellers in Doubting Castle, but chide yourselves. Instead of being ready to call into question the divine spring of his mirth, judge yourself for your doleful state.

It is not a carnal joy which we are here urging, by which we mean a joy which comes from carnal sources. It is useless to seek joy in earthly riches, for frequently they take unto themselves wings and fly away. Some seek their joy in the family circle, but that remains entire for only a few years at most. No, if we are to “Rejoice evermore,” it must be in an object that lasts for evermore. Nor is it a fanatical joy we have reference to. There are some with an excitable nature who are happy only when they are half out of their minds, but terrible is the reaction. No, it is an intelligent, steady, heart delight in God Himself. Every attribute of God, when contemplated by faith, will make the heart sing. Every doctrine of the Gospel, when truly apprehended, will call forth gladness and praise.

Joy is a matter of Christian duty. Perhaps the reader is ready to exclaim, “My emotions of joy and sorrow are not under my control. I cannot help being glad or sad as circumstances dictate.” But we repeat, “Rejoice in the Lord” is a divine command, and to a large extent, obedience to it lies in one’s own power. I am responsible to control my emotions. True, I cannot help being sorrowful in the presence of sorrowful thoughts, but I can refuse to let my mind dwell upon them. I can pour out my heart for relief unto the Lord, and cast my burden upon Him. I can seek grace to meditate upon His goodness, His promises, the glorious future awaiting me. I have to decide whether I will go and stand in the light or hide among the shadows. Not to rejoice in the Lord is more than a misfortune, it is a fault which needs to be confessed and forsaken.

2. We profit from the Word when we *learn the secret of true joy*.

That secret is revealed in 1 John 1:3-4, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” Ah, when we consider the littleness of our fellowship with God, the shallowness of it, it is not to be wondered at that so many Christians are

comparatively joyless. We sometimes sing, “Oh happy day that fixed my choice on Thee my Saviour and my God! Well may this glowing heart rejoice and tell its raptures all abroad.” Yes, but if that happiness is to be maintained, there must be a continued steadfast occupation of the heart and mind with Christ. It is only where there is much faith and consequent love that there is much joy.

“Rejoice *in the Lord* always” (Phi 4:4). There is no other object in which we can rejoice “always.” Everything else varies and is inconstant. What pleases us today may pall on us tomorrow. But God is always the same, to be enjoyed in seasons of adversity, as much as in seasons of prosperity. As an aid to this, the very next verse says, “Let your *moderation* be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand” (Phi 4:5). Be temperate in connection with all temporal things. Do not be taken with them when they seem most pleasing, nor troubled when displeasing. Be not exalted when the world smiles upon you, nor dejected when it scowls. Maintain a stoical indifference to outward comforts. Why be so occupied with them when *the Lord Himself* “is at hand”? If persecution be violent, if temporal losses be heavy, the Lord is “a very *present* help in trouble” (Psa 46:1)—ready to support and succour those who cast themselves upon Him. He will care for you, so “be anxious for nothing” (Phi 4:6). Worldlings are haunted with carking cares, but the Christian should not be.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (Joh 15:11). As these precious words of Christ are pondered by the mind and treasured in the heart, they cannot but produce joy. A rejoicing heart comes from an increasing knowledge of and love for the truth as it is in Jesus. “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jer 15:16). Yes, it is by feeding and feasting upon the words of the Lord that the soul is made fat, and we are made to sing and make melody in our hearts unto Him.

“Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy” (Psa 43:4). As Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) well said, “With what exultation should believers draw near unto Christ, who is the antitype of the altar! Clearer light should give a greater intensity of desire. It was not the altar as such that the Psalmist cared for, for he was no believer in the heathenism of ritualism. His soul desired spiritual fellowship, fellowship with God Himself in very deed. What are all the rites of religion unless the Lord be in them, what, indeed, but empty shells and dry husks? Note the holy rapture with which David regards his Lord! He is not his joy alone, but his *exceeding* joy—not the fountain of joy, the giver of joy, or the maintainer of joy, but *the joy itself*. The margin hath it, ‘The gladness of my joy,’ i.e. the soul, the essence, the very bowels of my joy.”

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither fruit be in the vines: the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off

from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice *in the LORD*, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab 3:17-18). Ah, that is something of which the worldling knows nothing. Alas, that it is an experience to which so many professing Christians are strangers. It is in God that the fount of spiritual and everlasting joy originates. From Him it all flows forth. This was acknowledged of old by the Church when it said, “All my springs are in thee” (Psa 87:7). Happy the soul who has been truly taught this secret.

3. We profit from the Word when we are taught *the great value of joy*.

Joy is to the soul what wings are to the bird, enabling us to soar above the dregs of earth. This is brought out plainly in Nehemiah 8:10, “The joy of the LORD is *your strength*.” The days of Nehemiah marked a turning-point in the history of Israel. A remnant had been freed from Babylon and returned to Palestine. The Law, long ignored by the captives, was now to be established again as the rule of the newly formed commonwealth. There had come a remembrance of the many sins of the past, and tears not unnaturally mingled with the thankfulness that they were again a nation, having a divine worship and a divine law in their midst. Their leader, knowing full well that if the spirit of the people began to flag they could not face and conquer the difficulties of their position, said unto them, “This day is holy unto the LORD: this feast we are keeping is a day of devout worship; therefore, mourn not, neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10).

Confession of sin, and mourning over the same, have their place, and communion with God cannot be maintained without them. Nevertheless, when true repentance has been exercised, and things put right with God, we must forget “those things which are behind” and reach forth unto “those things which are before” (Phi 3:13). And we can only press forward with alacrity as our hearts are joyful. How heavy the steps of him who approaches the place where a loved one lies cold in death! How energetic his movements as he goes forth to meet his bride! Lamentation unfits for the battles of life. Where there is despair, there is no longer power for obedience. If there be no joy, there can be no worship.

My dear readers, there are tasks needing to be performed, service to others requiring to be rendered, temptations to be overcome, battles to be fought, and we are only experimentally fitted for them as our hearts are rejoicing in the Lord. If our souls are resting in Christ, if our hearts be filled with a tranquil gladness, work will be easy, duties pleasant, sorrow bearable, endurance possible. Neither contrite remembrance of past failures nor vehement resolutions will carry us through. If the arm is to smite with vigour, it must smite at the bidding of a light heart. Of the Saviour Himself, it is recorded, “Who for the *joy that was set before him* endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb 12:2).

4. We profit from the Word when we attend to *the root of joy*.

The spring of joy is faith, “Now the God of hope fill you with all peace and joy in believing” (Rom 15:13). There is a wondrous provision in the Gospel, both by what it takes from us and what it brings to us, to give a calm and settled glow to the Christian’s heart. It takes away the load of guilt by speaking peace to the stricken conscience. It removes the dread of God and the terror of death which weighs on the soul while it is under condemnation. It gives us God Himself as the portion of our hearts, as the Object of our communion. The Gospel works joy, because the soul is at rest in God. But these blessings become our own only by personal appropriation. Faith must *receive* them, and when it does so, the heart is filled with peace and joy. And the secret of *sustained* joy is to keep the channel open, to continue as we began. It is *unbelief* which clogs the channel. If there be but little heat around the bulb of the thermometer, no wonder that the mercury marks so low a degree. If there is a weak faith, joy cannot be strong. Daily do we need to pray for a *fresh* realization of the preciousness of the Gospel, a fresh appropriation of its blessed contents, and then there will be a renewing of our joy.

5. We profit from the Word when we are *careful to maintain* our joy.

“Joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17) is altogether different from a natural buoyancy of spirit. It is the product of the Comforter dwelling in the hearts and bodies, revealing Christ to us, answering all our need for pardon and cleansing, and so setting us at peace with God, and forming Christ in us, so that He reigns in our souls, subduing us to His control. There are no circumstances of trial and temptation in which we may refrain from it, for the command is, “Rejoice in the Lord *always*” (Phi 4:4). He who gave this command knows all about the dark side of our lives, the sins and sorrows which beset us, the “much tribulation” through which we must enter the kingdom of God. Natural hilarity leaves the woes of our earthly lot out of reckoning. It soon relaxes in presence of life’s hardships. It cannot survive the loss of friends or health. But the joy to which we are exhorted is not limited to any set of circumstances or type of temperament, nor does it fluctuate with our varying moods and fortunes.

Nature may assert itself in the subjects of it, as even Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus. Nevertheless, they can exclaim with Paul, “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2Co 6:10). The Christian may be loaded with heavy responsibilities, his life may have a series of reverses, his plans may be thwarted, and his hopes blighted, the grave may close over the loved ones who gave his earthly life its cheer and sweetness, and yet under all his disappointments and sorrows, his Lord still bids him, “Rejoice.” Behold the apostles in Philippi’s prison, in the innermost dungeon,

with feet fast in the stocks, and backs bleeding and smarting from the terrible scouring they had received. How were they occupied? In grumbling and growling, in asking what they had done to deserve such treatment? No, “At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and *sang* praises unto God” (Act 16:25). Ah, there was no sin in their lives, they were walking obediently, and so the Holy Spirit was free to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto their hearts, so that they were filled to overflowing. If we are to maintain our joy, we must keep from grieving the Holy Spirit.

When Christ is supreme in the heart, joy fills it. When He is Lord of every desire, the source of every motive, the subjugator of every lust, then will joy fill the heart and praise ascend from the lips. The possession of this involves taking up the cross every hour of the day. God has so ordered it that we cannot have the one without the other. Self-sacrifice, the cutting off of a right hand, the plucking out of a right eye, are the avenues through which the Spirit enters the soul, bringing with Him the joys of God’s approving smile and the assurance of His love and abiding presence. Much also depends upon the spirit in which we enter the world each day. If we expect people to pet and pamper us, disappointment will make us fretful. If we desire our pride to be ministered unto, we are dejected when it is not. The secret of happiness is forgetting self and seeking to minister unto the happiness of others. “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” so it is a happier thing to minister unto others than to be ministered unto.

6. We profit from the Word when we are sedulous *in avoiding the hindrances to joy.*

Why is it that so many Christians have so little joy? Are they not all born children of the light and of the day? This term, “light,” which is so often used in Scripture to describe to us the nature of God, our relations to Him, and our future destiny, is most suggestive of joy and gladness. What other thing in nature is as beneficent and beautiful as the light. “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1Jo 1:5). Ah, it is only as we walk with God, in the light, that the heart can truly be joyous. It is the deliberate allowance of things which mar our fellowship with Him that chills and darkens our souls. It is the indulgence of the flesh, the fraternizing with the world, the entering of forbidden paths, which blight our spiritual lives and make us cheerless.

David had to cry, “Restore unto me *the joy of thy salvation*” (Psa 51:12). He had grown lax and self-indulgent. Temptation presented itself and he had no power to resist. He yielded, and one sin led to another. He was a backslider, out of touch with God. Unconfessed sin lay heavy on his conscience. Oh, my brethren and sisters, if we are to be kept from such a fall, if we are not to lose our joy, then self must be

denied, the affections and lusts of the flesh crucified. We must ever be on our watch against temptation. We must spend much time upon our knees. We must drink frequently from the fountain of living water. We must be out and out for the Lord.

7. We profit from the Word when we diligently *preserve the balance between sorrow and joy.*

If the Christian faith has a marked adaptation to produce joy, it has an almost equal design and tendency to produce sorrow—a sorrow that is solemn, manly, noble. “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2Co 6:10) is the rule of the Christian’s life. If faith casts its light upon our condition, our nature, our sins, sadness must be one of the effects. There is nothing more contemptible in itself, and there is no surer mark of a superficial character and trivial round of occupation, than unshaded gladness that rests on no deep foundations of quiet, patient grief—grief, because I know what I am and what I ought to be; grief because I look out on the world and see hell’s fire burning at the back of mirth and laughter, and know *what* it is that men are hurrying to.

Ah, He who is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows (Psa 45:7) was also “the man *of sorrows* and acquainted with grief” (Isa 53:3). And both of these characters are (in measure) repeated in the operations of His Gospel upon every heart that really receives it. And if by the fears it removes from us, and the hopes it breathes into us, and the fellowship into which it introduces us, we are anointed with the oil of gladness; on the other hand, by the sense of our own vileness which it teaches us, by the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, there is infused a sadness which finds expression in, “O wretched man that I am?” (Rom 7:24). These two are not contradictory, but complementary. The Lamb must be eaten with “bitter herbs” (Exo 12:8).

HEART WORK

Part 3

“Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1Sa 16:7). How prone we are to be occupied with that which is evanescent, rather

than with the things that abide. How ready to gauge things by our senses, instead of by our rational powers. How easily we are deceived by that which is on the surface, forgetting that true beauty lies within. How slow we are to adopt God's way of estimating. Instead of being attracted by comeliness of physical features, we should value moral qualities and spiritual graces. Instead of spending so much care, time, and money on the adorning of the body, we ought to devote our best attention to the developing and directing of the faculties of our souls. Alas, the vast majority of our fellows live as though they had no souls, and the average professing Christian gives little serious thought to the same.

Yes, the Lord "looketh on the heart." He sees its thoughts and intents, knows its desires and designs, beholds its motives and motions, and deals with us accordingly. The Lord discerns what qualities are in our hearts—what holiness and righteousness, what wisdom and prudence, what justice and integrity, what mercy and kindness. When such graces are lively and flourishing, then is fulfilled that verse, "My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies" (Song 6:2). God esteems nothing so highly as holy faith, unfeigned love, and filial fear. In His sight, a "meek and quiet spirit" is of "great price" (1Pe 3:4).

The sincerity of our profession largely depends upon the care and conscience we have in keeping our hearts. A very searching example of this is found in 2 Kings 10:31, "But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart." Those words are more solemn because of what is said of him in the previous verse, "And the LORD said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according unto all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel" (2Ki 10:30). Jehu was partial in his reformation, which showed his heart was not right with God. He abhorred the worship of Baal, which Ahab had fostered, but he tolerated the golden calves which Jeroboam had set up. He failed to put away all the evil.

Ah, my reader, true conversion is not only turning away from gross sin, it is the heart forsaking *all* sin. There must be no reserve, for God will not allow any idol, nor must we. Jehu went so far, but he stopped short of the vital point. He put away evil, but he did not do that which was good. He heeded not the law of the Lord to walk in it "*with all his heart*." It is greatly to be feared that those who are heedless are graceless, for where the principle of holiness is planted in the heart, it makes its possessor circumspect and desirous of pleasing God in all things—not from servile fear, but from grateful love—not by constraint, but freely—not occasionally, but constantly.

"Keep thine heart with all diligence" (Pro 4:23). Guard it jealously as the dwelling place of Him to whom you have given it. Guard it with the utmost

vigilance, for not only is there the enemy without seeking entrance, but there is a traitor within desirous of dominion. The Hebrew for, “with all diligence,” literally rendered is, “above all.” Above all the concerns of our outward life, for, careful as we should be as to that, it is before the eyes of men, whereas the heart is the object of *God’s* holy gaze. Then, “keep” or preserve it more sedulously than your reputation, your body, your estate, your money. With all earnestness and prayer, labour that no evil desire prevails or abides there, avoiding all that excites lust, feeds pride, or stirs up anger, crushing the first emotions of such evils as you would the brood of a scorpion.

Many people place great expectations in varied circumstances and conditions. One thinks he could serve God much better if he were more prospered temporally; another, if he passed through the refining effects of poverty and affliction. One thinks his spirituality would be promoted if he could be more retired and solitary; another, if only he could have more society and Christian fellowship. But, my reader, the only way to serve God better is to be content with the place in which He has put you, and therein, *get a better heart!* We shall never enter into the advantages of any situation, nor overcome the disadvantages of any condition, until we fix and water the root of them in ourselves. “Make the tree good, *and* his fruit good” (Mat 12:33). Get the heart right, and you will soon be superior unto all “circumstances.”

“But how can I get my heart right? Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?” (Jer 13:23). Answer: You are creating your own difficulty by confounding “heart” with “nature.” They are quite distinct. It is important to recognize this, for many are confused thereon. There has been such an undue emphasis upon the “two natures in the Christian” that often it has been lost sight of that the Christian is *a person* over and above his two natures. The Scriptures make the distinction clear enough. For example, God does not bid us keep our “nature,” but He does our “hearts.” We do not believe with our “nature,” but we do with our “hearts” (Rom 10:10). God never tells us to “rend” our nature (Joe 2:13), “circumcise” our nature (Deu 30:6) or “purify” our nature (Jam 4:8), but He does our “hearts”! The “heart” is the very centre of our responsibility, and to deny that we are to improve and keep it is to repudiate human accountability.

It is the devil who seeks to persuade people that they are not responsible for the state of their hearts, and may no more change them than they can the stars in their courses. And the “flesh” within finds such a lie very agreeable to its case. But he who has been regenerated by the sovereign grace of God cannot, with the Scriptures before him, give heed unto any such delusion. While he has to deplore how sadly neglected is the great task which God has set before him, while he has to bemoan his wretched failure to make his heart what it ought to be, nevertheless, he wants to do better. And after his duty has been pressed upon him, he will daily seek grace better to discharge his duty, and instead of being totally discouraged by the

difficulty and greatness of the work required, he will cry the more fervently to the Holy Spirit for His enablement.

The Christian who means business will labour to have a “willing” heart (Exo 35:5), which acts spontaneously and gladly, not of necessity; a “perfect” heart (1Ch 29:9), sincere, genuine, upright; a “tender” heart (2Ch 34:27), yielding and pliable, the opposite of hard and stubborn; a “broken” heart (Psa 34:18), sorrowing over all failure and sin; a “united” heart (Psa 86:11), all the affections centred on God; an “enlarged” heart (Psa 119:32), delighting in *every* part of Scripture and loving all God’s people; a “sound” heart (Pro 14:30), right in doctrine and practice; a “merry” heart (Pro 15:15), rejoicing in the Lord always; a “pure” heart (Mat 5:8), hating all evil; an “honest and good heart” (Luk 8:15), free from guile and hypocrisy, willing to be searched through and through by the Word; a “single” heart (Eph 6:5), desiring only God’s glory; a “true” heart (Heb 10:22), genuine in all its dealings with God.

The duty of keeping the heart with the utmost diligence is binding upon the Christian at all times. There is no period or condition of life in which he may be excused from this work. Nevertheless, there are distinctive seasons, critical hours, which call for more than a common vigilance over the heart. And it is a few of these which we would now contemplate, seeking help from above to point out some of the most effectual aids unto the right accomplishment of the task God has assigned us. General principles are always needful and beneficial, yet details have to be furnished if we are to know how to apply them in particular circumstances. It is this lack of definiteness which constitutes one of the most glaring defects in so much modern ministry.

1. *In times of prosperity.* When providence smiles upon us and bestows temporal gifts with a lavish hand, then has the Christian urgent reason to keep his heart with all diligence. For that is the time we are apt to grow careless, proud, earthly. Therefore was Israel cautioned of old, “And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildest not, and houses full of good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not: when thou shalt have eaten and be full: *then beware* lest thou forget the LORD” (Deu 6:10-12). Alas that they heeded not that exhortation.

Many are the warnings furnished in Scripture. Of Uzziah, it is recorded, “When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction” (2Ch 26:16). To the king of Tyre, God said, “Thine heart is lifted up, because of thy riches” (Eze 28:5). Of Israel, we read, “And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted

themselves in thy great goodness. *Nevertheless* they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee” (Neh 9:25-26). And again, “Of their silver and their gold have they made them idols” (Hos 8:4).

Sad indeed are the above passages, the more so because we have seen such a tragic repetition of them in our own days. Oh, the earthly-mindedness which prevailed, the indulging of the flesh, the sinful extravagance, which were seen among professing Christians while “times were good!” How practical godliness waned, how the denying of self disappeared, how covetousness, pleasure, and wantonness possessed the great majority of those calling themselves the people of God. Yet great as was their sin, far greater was that of most of the preachers, who, instead of warning, admonishing, rebuking, and setting before their people an example of sobriety and thrift, criminally remained silent upon the crying sins of their hearers, and themselves encouraged the reckless spending of money and the indulgence of worldly lusts. How, then, is the Christian to keep his heart from these things in times of prosperity?

First, by seriously pondering the dangerous and ensnaring temptations which attend a prosperous condition, for very, very few of those who live in the prosperity and pleasures of this world escape eternal perdition. “It is easier [said Christ] for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 19:24). What multitudes have been carried to hell in the cushioned chariots of earthly wealth and ease, while a comparative handful have been shipped to heaven by the rod of affliction. Remember, too, that many of the Lord’s own people have sadly deteriorated in seasons of worldly success. When Israel was in a low condition in the wilderness, then were they “holiness unto the Lord” (Jer 2:3). But when fed in the fat pastures of Canaan, they said, “We are lords; we will come no more unto thee” (Jer 2:31).

Second, diligently seek grace to heed that word, “If riches increase, set not your heart upon them” (Psa 62:10). Those riches may be given to try you. Not only are they most uncertain things, often taking to themselves wings and flying swiftly away, but at best, they cannot satisfy the soul, and only perish with the using. Remember that God values no man a jot more for these things. He esteems us by inward graces, and not by outward possessions. “In every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Act 10:35). Third, urge upon your soul the consideration of that awful day of reckoning, wherein according to our receipt of mercies, so shall be our accountings of them, “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luk 12:48). Each of us must yet give an account of our stewardship.

2. *In times of adversity.* When providence frowns upon us, overturning our cherished plans, and blasting our outward comforts, then has the Christian urgent

need to look to his heart, and keep it with all diligence from replying against God or fainting under His hand. Job was a mirror of patience, yet his heart was discomposed by trouble. Jonah was a man of God, yet he was peevish under trial. When the food supplies gave out in the wilderness, they who had been miraculously delivered from Egypt, and who sang Jehovah's praises so heartily at the Red Sea, murmured and rebelled. It takes much grace to keep the heart calm amid the storms of life, to keep the spirit sweet when there is much to embitter the flesh, and to say, "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21). Yet this is a Christian duty!

To help thereunto, first consider, fellow Christian, that despite these cross providences God is still faithfully carrying out the great design of electing love upon the souls of His people, and orders these very afflictions as means sanctified to that end. Nothing happens by chance, but all by divine counsel (Eph 1:11), and therefore, it is that, "All things work together *for good* to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28). Ah, beloved, it will wonderfully calm your troubled breast and sustain your fainting heart to rest upon that blessed fact. The poor worldling may say, "The bottom has dropped out of everything," but not so the saint, for the eternal God is *his* refuge, and underneath him are still the "everlasting arms" (Deu 33:27).

It is ignorance or forgetfulness of God's loving designs which makes us so prone to chafe under His providential dealings. If faith were more in exercise, we should "count it all joy" when we fall into divers temptations, or trials (Jam 1:2). Why so? Because we should discern that those very trials were sent to wean our hearts from this empty world, to tear down pride and carnal security, to refine us. If, then, my Father has a design of love unto my soul, do I well to be angry with Him? Later, if not now, you will see that those bitter disappointments were blessings in disguise, and will exclaim, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted" (Psa 119:71).

OWNERSHIP OWNED

"In all thy ways acknowledge him" (Pro 3:6)

We are frequently the losers through failure to observe the *order* in which *divine* truth is set before us. For example, how obvious is the progression to be observed in, and how necessary it is that we should lay to heart, the fourfold injunction of

Psalm 37:3-7. First, “Trust in the LORD, and do good” (verse 3); second, “Delight thyself also in the LORD” (verse 4); third, “Commit thy way unto the LORD” (verse 5); fourth, “Rest in the LORD” (verse 7). So it is in the book from which our text is taken. These “proverbs” are not so many maxims strung together at random, but instead, they are presented according to a divine plan. And the more they are prayerfully pondered, the more will the wisdom and love which lie behind their arrangement be perceived by the anointed eye. Proverbs 3:5-6 is a case in point.

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart” (Pro 3:5). This comes first because it is the primary duty. With *this*, everything else is vain. “Trust” in His lovingkindness. Can He who is love withhold anything which is really for your good? “Trust” in His wondrous power. Is anything too hard for the Almighty? No matter how critical your situation, “Trust in the LORD.” “Trust” in His unchanging faithfulness. Has He not promised? Then will He not perform? Has He not said? Then will He not also do it?

“And lean not unto thine own understanding” (Pro 3:5). This comes next to put us on our guard concerning the principal enemy of faith. Just as we cannot serve *two* masters, so we cannot trust in the Lord and lean unto our own understanding. It is a word of warning against the inveterate tendency of our evil hearts. To rely upon our own wisdom, to follow the dictates of common sense, is the chief obstacle in our way against wholehearted trust in the Lord.

Then comes the word, “In all thy ways acknowledge him” (Pro 3:6). This goes much farther than trusting in the Lord with all the heart, though, of necessity, it must be preceded by that. Unless our hearts are completely occupied with God, the acknowledgment of Him in our outward ways will be nothing more than a perfunctory performance, which is of no value in His sight. That which the Lord requires and desires is the obedience of love. Confidence in the Lord is now to be translated into conformity to His will. Our “ways,” that is, all the details of our walk, are to make manifest our unreserved trust in the Lord. To “acknowledge” the Lord in all our ways signifies:

1. *Seek His permission for everything you do.* Dare we be so presumptuous as to act *without* leave? We are but creatures. He is God. We are but servants. He is our Lord and Master. We are but purchased property. He is our Redeemer, “Ye are not your own” (1Co 6:19). Therefore, we are not free to please ourselves, but under deepest obligation to be in subjection to the divine will. God’s leave should be *asked* even when a thing is lawful and right. A striking illustration of this is furnished in the prayer which Christ taught His disciples, and that so many have been puzzled by it only reveals the wicked independence of our hearts. We refer to the clause, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Numbers of times has the inquiry been put to us, “How can I sincerely ask this, when bread for the day is already at hand?” Let us draw a homely analogy. Here are cakes and tarts in the pantry. Shall a

child enter and help itself? Not if it has been properly brought up. Though the food is there, it should first ask mother's permission before taking any. In like manner, God requires that we first ask of Him, "*Give us this day our daily bread*" (Mat 6:11), lest like thieves we take without His leave.

2. *Seek His guidance in every undertaking.* Not to do so is to act in a spirit of independence, which is as the worldling does. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts" (Psa 10:4). The clear implication of this is that God *ought to be* in all his thoughts, and that it is through pride that He is not. No matter how great or how small the undertaking may be, divine guidance should be definitely sought. "In *every thing* by prayer and supplication" (Phi 4:6). It is only as we so act that God's lordship is owned by us in a practical way and He is really honoured.

We are not only to "Trust in the Lord," count upon Him, but also to "acknowledge Him," seek His direction and help. Has not Christ, here as everywhere, left us an example? "I have set the LORD always before me" (Psa 16:8) was His confession. Ah, fellow Christians, is there any wonder that so many of our "ways" have turned out so disastrously? Let us daily seek grace to heed this word, "In all thy ways acknowledge him."

3. *Seek His glory in everything.* That this also must be regarded as being included within the scope of the word "acknowledge" is clear from 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Ah, if only we did so, how very different many of our "ways" would be! If we more frequently paused and inquired, "Will *this* be to God's glory?" we should be withheld from much sinning and saved from much foolishness, with all the painful consequences. Yet, right here, we need to give diligent heed to the clause preceding our text, "Lean not unto thine own understanding" has a close connection with what follows, as well as with that which goes before. God has not left *us* to decide and determine *what* will be to His "glory." No, in His loving-kindness He has supplied us with an unerring standard by which everything may be tested, namely His Word.

4. *Seek His blessing upon everything.* Surely *this* is what the Christian desires above everything else. Without it, temporal prosperity, the approval and applause of our fellows, or the fleeting pleasure anything may bring you, is worse than worthless. But what right have we to expect God's blessing if we have not prayerfully sought it? Note how in Deuteronomy 14:29; 15:10, 18, the Lord's blessing is promised to those who *have* acknowledged Him in their ways by carrying out His revealed will. What business worries, domestic heartaches, social disappointments, and spiritual failures had been spared us had we but sought God's permission, God's guidance, God's glory, God's blessing on everything! The past is beyond recall. For the present, "Consider your ways" (Hag 1:5).

Let us now observe that the Scriptures record examples of how men of God “acknowledged” Him in the manner indicated above. First, behold how David, on two occasions, sought the Lord’s *permission* concerning his actions, “And David enquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop?” (1Sa 30:8). “And it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up” (2Sa 2:1).

Second, in the case of Abraham’s servant, we have a blessed illustration of one who sought divine *guidance* on his undertaking, “And the servant...arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water. And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water: and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink: and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also, let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac: and thereby shall I know that thou hast showed kindness unto my master” (Gen 24:10-14).

Third, the outstanding case of one who sought God’s *glory* was His incarnate Son, “Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee” (Joh 17:1)—this ever actuated Him. Fourth, in Romans 1:10, we find the apostle Paul seeking God’s *blessing* on his journey.

On the other hand, Scripture mentions not a few instances where the Lord’s people *failed* to “acknowledge” Him in all their ways, and records the disastrous consequences which attended their self-will. After Abraham had entered Canaan, “There was a famine in the land,” sent, no doubt, to chasten and to test him. But, alas, as is so often the case with us, he failed. Instead of seeking guidance from the Lord, he “went down into Egypt to sojourn there” (Gen 12:10). Ultimately, he was delivered, but for many years after he reaped an unpleasant harvest through Hagar, whom he acquired in Egypt. Concerning the Gideonites who deceived Israel, it is written, “And the men took of their victuals, and *asked not counsel* at the mouth of the LORD. And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them” (Jos 9:14-15). The sequel shows that they became a thorn in Israel’s side. These things are written for our learning.

“In all thy ways acknowledge him” (Pro 3:6). This precept applies to the arrangements of the home, our business affairs, our social life, our church relations, our service for Christ. And our obedience thereto determines the measure in which our lives are pleasing to God, glorifying to Him, and really blessed by Him. Then, let us, more earnestly, daily seek grace to conform to it in everything.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR

Part 1 – Ephesians 6:10-18

In the passage which is to be before us, the apostle gathers up the whole previous subject of the epistle into an urgent reminder of the solemn conditions under which the Christian's life is lived. By a graphic figure, he shows that the Christian's life is lived on the battlefield, for we are not only pilgrims but soldiers. We are not only in a foreign country, but in the enemy's land. Though the redemption which Christ has purchased for His people be free and full, yet between the beginning of its application to us and the final consummation of it, there is a terrible and protracted conflict through which we have to pass. This is not merely a figure of speech, but a grim reality. Though salvation is free, yet it is not obtained without great effort. The fight to which God's children are called in this life is one in which Christians themselves receive many sore wounds and thousands of professors are slain. Now, as we shall see in the verses which follow, the apostle warns us that the conflict has to do with more than human foes. The enemies we have to meet are superhuman ones, and therefore, in order to fight successfully against them, we need supernatural strength.

We must remember that the Christian belongs to the spiritual realm as well as the natural, and so he has spiritual as well as natural foes. Hence, he needs spiritual strength as well as physical. Therefore, the apostle begins here by saying, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph 6:10). The word, "finally," denotes that the apostle had reached his closing exhortation, and the words, "be strong," link up with what immediately precedes as well as with what now follows. Some of you will remember that the whole of the fifth chapter and the opening verses of the sixth chapter are filled with exhortations, and in order for the Christian to obey them, he needs to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

"Finally, my brethren [after all the Christian duties I have set before you in the previous verses], be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." The words, "be strong," mean to muster strength for the conflict, and be strong "in the Lord," signifies that we must seek that strength from the only source from which we can obtain it. Note carefully, it is not, "be strong *from* the Lord," nor is it, "be strengthened *by* the Lord." No, it is, "be strong *in* the Lord." Perhaps you will get the thought if I use this analogy. Just as a thumb that is amputated is useless, and just as a branch cut off from the vine withers, so a Christian whose fellowship with

the Lord has been broken is in a strengthless, fruitless, useless state. Thus, “be strong in the Lord” means, first of all, see to it that you maintain a live practical relationship to and remain in constant communion with the Lord. It is deeply important that we should, ere we proceed farther, grasp the exhortation found in verse 10, otherwise there will be no strength for the conflict.

“Be strong in the Lord, *and* in the power of his might.” At first sight, there seems to be a needless repetition there, but it is not so. A soldier not only needs strength of body, he also needs *courage*, and that is what is in view in verse 10—the last clause brings in the thought of boldness. “Be strong”—in faith, in hope, in wisdom, in patience, in fortitude, in every Christian grace. To be strong in grace is to be weak in sin. It is vitally essential to remember that we need to have our strength and courage renewed daily. Be strong in the Lord—seek His strength at the beginning of each day. God does not impart strength to us wholesale. He will not give us strength on Monday morning to last through the week. No, there has to be the renewing of our strength and that strength has to be drawn from the Lord by the actings of faith, appropriating from *His* “fulness.”

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph 6:11). Our first need is to stir up ourselves to *resist* temptation by a believing reliance upon God’s all-sufficient grace. That is, obtaining from Him the strength which will enable us to go forth and fight against the foe. Our second greatest need is to be *well armed* for the conflict into which we must daily enter. *This* is the relation between verses 10 and 11. “Be strong in the Lord,” and, “Put on the whole armour of God.” First, stir up yourselves to resist temptation, seeking strength at the beginning of the day for the conflict. Then, see to it that you take unto yourselves, put on, the whole armour of God.

The Christian is engaged *in a warfare*. There is a fight before him, hence, armour is urgently needed. It is impossible for us to stand against the wiles of the devil unless we avail ourselves of the provision which God has made for enabling us to stand. Observe that it is called the “armour *of God*.” Just as the strength we need comes not from ourselves, but must be supplied by the Lord, so our means of defence lie not in our own powers and faculties, but only as they are quickened by God. It is called the “armour of God” because *He* both provides and bestows it, for we have none of our own. And yet, while this armour is of God’s providing and bestowing, *we* have to put it on! God does not fit it on us. He places it before us, and it is *our* responsibility, duty, task, to *put on* the whole armour of God.

Now, it is very important that we should recognize that this term “armour” is a figurative one, a metaphor, and refers not to something which is material or carnal. It is a figurative expression denoting the Christian’s *graces*, and when we are told to “put on” the armour, it simply means we are to call into exercise and action our graces. Those who wish to approve themselves of being in possession of grace must

see to it that they have all the graces of a saint. “Put on the whole armour of God, that [in order that] ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” There is no standing against him if we are not armoured. On the other hand, there is no failing and falling before him if our graces are healthy and active.

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12). The opening, “For,” has the force of “because” The apostle is advancing a reason, which virtually amounts to an argument, so as to enforce the exhortation just given. Because we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, not against puny human enemies no stronger than ourselves, but against the powers and rulers of the darkness of this world, the panoply of God is essential. That is brought in to emphasize the terribleness of the conflict before us. It is no imaginary one, and no ordinary foes we have to meet, but spiritual, superhuman, invisible ones. Those enemies seek to destroy faith and produce doubt. They seek to destroy hope and produce despair. They seek to destroy humility and produce pride. They seek to destroy peace and produce bitterness and malice. They seek to prevent our enjoyment of heavenly things by getting us unduly occupied with earthly things. Their attack is not upon the body, but upon the soul.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph 6:13). The opening, “Wherefore,” means that, in view of the fact that we wrestle against these powerful, superhuman, invisible foes, who hate us with a deadly hatred and are seeking to destroy us, therefore, appropriate and use the provision which God has made, so that we may stand and withstand. The first clause of verse 13 explains the opening words of verse 11. Verse 11 says, “Put on,” make use of all proper weapons for repulsing the attacks, and verse 13 says, “Take unto you the whole armour of God.” We, “Put on,” by taking it, “unto us,” that is by appropriation, by making it our own. “That ye may be able to withstand.” To *withstand* is the opposite of yielding, of being tripped up, thrown down, by the devil’s temptations. It means that we stand our ground, resist the devil. “That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” The “*stand*” is the opposite of a slothful sleep or a cowardly flight.

I want you to notice that we are not told to *advance*. We are only ordered to “*stand*.” God has not called His people to an aggressive war upon Satan, to invade his territory, and seek to wrest from him what is his. He has told us to occupy the ground which He has allotted us. I want you to see what would have been implied had this verse said, “Take unto you the whole armour of God, and advance upon the devil, storm his strongholds, liberate his prisoners.” But not so. The Lord has given no charge or commission to the rank and file of His people to engage in what is now called, “Personal work,” “Soulwinning,” “Rescuing the perishing.” All such

feverish activities of the flesh, as we now behold in the religious world, find no place in this divine exhortation. This is the third time in these verses that the Spirit of God has repeated that word “stand”—not advance, not rush hither and thither, like a crazy person. “Stand therefore” is *all* God has told us to do in our conflict with the devil.

“Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.” Now that brings before us the first of the seven pieces of the Christian’s armour mentioned in this passage. First, let me warn you against the carnalization of this word, thinking of something that is external, visible, or tangible. The figure of the “girdle” is taken from a well-known custom in oriental countries, where the people all wear long, flowing outer garments reaching to the feet, which would impede the actions when walking, working, or fighting. The first thing a person does there when about to be active is to gird up around his waist that outer garment which trails to the ground. When the garment is not girded and hangs down, it indicates that the person is at rest. To, “gird up,” is therefore the opposite of sloth and ease. Be girdled about with a girdle of truth. I believe there is a double reference or meaning here in the word, “truth.” But first of all, I want to take up *what* it is that we need to “gird.”

The breastplate is for the heart, the helmet for the head. What, then, is the “girdle” for? In that form from which the figure is borrowed, the reference is to *the waist* or loins. But what does that metaphor denote? Plainly the centre or mainspring of all our activities. And what is that? Obviously, *the mind* is the mainspring of action. First, the thought and then, the carrying out of it. 1 Peter 1:13 helps us here, “Gird up the loins *of your mind*.” “Let yours loins be girt about with truth.” It is not so much our embracing the truth as the truth embracing us. Thus, the spiritual reference is to *the holding in and regulation of the thoughts of the mind*. The mind, “girded up,” means a mind which is disciplined. The opposite of one where the thoughts are allowed to run loose and wild. Again, the “loins” are the place of strength, so is the mind. If we allow our thoughts and imaginations to run wild, we will have no communion with God, and no power against Satan.

“Having your loins girt about with truth.” I think the word, “truth,” has reference, in the first place, to the Word of God. “Thy word is *truth*” (Joh 17:17). *That* is what must regulate the mind, control the thoughts, subdue the imaginations. There must be a knowledge of, faith in, love for, subjection to, God’s Word. “Stand, therefore, having your loins [your mind] girt about with *truth*.” Now that suggests to us the characteristic quality of the adversary against whom we are called upon to arm. Satan is a liar and we can only meet him with the truth. Satan prevails over ignorance by means of guile or deceit, but he has no power over those whose minds are regulated by the truth of God.

I think the word, “truth,” here has a second meaning. Take for example Psalm 51:6, God “desireth truth in the inward parts.” “Truth” there signifies reality,

sincerity. Truth is the opposite of hypocrisy, pretence, unreality. That is why the girdle of truth comes first, because *it*, being lacking, everything else is vain and useless. The strength of every grace lies in *the sincerity* of it. In 1 Timothy 1:5, we read, “faith unfeigned,” which means true, genuine, real faith, in contrast with a faith which is only theoretical, notional, lifeless, inoperative—a faith which utterly withers before the fires of testing.

The girdle of truth (corresponding to the military belt of the warrior) signifies, then, the mind being regulated by real sincerity, and this alone will protect us against Satan’s temptations unto slackness and guile and hypocrisy. Only as this is “put on” by us shall we be able to “*stand* against the wiles of the devil.” To “stand” is to “resist,” that he does not throw us down.

OCTOBER

THE SOLITARINESS OF GOD

The title of this article is perhaps not sufficiently explicit to indicate its theme. This is partly due to the fact that so few today are accustomed to meditate upon the personal perfections of God. Comparatively few of those who occasionally read the Bible are aware of the awe-inspiring and worship-provoking grandeur of the divine character. That God is great in wisdom, wondrous in power, yet full of mercy, is assumed by many to be almost common knowledge, but to entertain anything approaching an adequate conception of His being, His nature, His attributes, as these are revealed in Holy Scripture, is something which very, very few people, in these degenerate times, have attained unto. God is solitary in His excellency. “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Exo 15:11).

“In the beginning, God” (Gen 1:1). There was a time, if “time” it could be called, when God, in the unity of His nature (though subsisting equally in three divine Persons), dwelt all alone. “In the beginning, God.” There was no heaven, where His glory is now particularly manifested. There was no earth to engage His attention. There were no angels to hymn His praises. There was no universe to be upheld by the word of His power. There was nothing, no one, but God—and that not for a day, a year, or an age, but “from everlasting.” During a past eternity, God was alone; self-contained, self-sufficient, self-satisfied, in need of nothing. Had a universe, had angels, had human beings been necessary to Him in any way, they also had been called into existence from all eternity. The creating of them, when He did, added nothing to God essentially. He changes not (Mal 3:6), therefore, His essential glory can be neither augmented nor diminished.

God was under no constraint, no obligation, no necessity to create. That He chose to do so was purely a sovereign act on His part, caused by nothing outside Himself, determined by nothing but His own good pleasure—for He “worketh all

things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph 1:11). That He did create was simply for His *manifestative* glory. Do some of our readers imagine that we have gone beyond what Scripture warrants? Then our appeal shall be to the law and the testimony, “Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever; and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted *above all blessing* and praise” (Neh 9:5). God is no gainer even from our worship. He was in no need of that external glory of His grace which arises from His redeemed, for He is glorious enough in Himself without that. What was it that moved Him to predestinate His elect to the praise of the glory of His grace? It was, as Ephesians 1:5 tells us, “According to the good pleasure of His will.”

We are well aware that the high ground we are here treading is new and strange to almost all of our readers, for that reason, it is well to move slowly. Let our appeal again be to the Scriptures. At the end of Romans 11, where the apostle brings to a close his long argument on salvation by pure and sovereign grace, he asks, “For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?” (Rom 11:34-35). The force of this is—It is impossible to bring the Almighty under obligation to the creature. God gains nothing from us. “If thou be righteous, what givest thou *him*? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art; and thy righteousness may profit the son of man” (Job 35:7-8), but it certainly cannot affect God, who is all-blessed *in Himself*. “When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants” (Luk 17:10)—our obedience has profited nothing.

Nay, we go farther: our Lord Jesus Christ added nothing to God in His essential being and glory, either by what He did or suffered. True, blessedly and gloriously true, He *manifested* that glory of God *to us*, but He added naught to God. He Himself expressly declares so, and there is no appeal from His words, “My goodness extendeth not to thee” (Psa 16:2). The whole of that psalm is a psalm of Christ. Christ’s goodness or righteousness reached unto His saints in the earth (Psa 16:3), but God was high above and beyond it all, God only is “the Blessed One” (Mar 14:61, Gr.).

It is perfectly true that God is both honoured and dishonoured by men, not in His essential being, but in His official character. It is equally true that God has been “glorified” by creation, by providence, and by redemption. This we do not and dare not dispute for a moment. But all of this has to do with His manifestative glory and the recognition of it by us. Yet, had God so pleased, He might have continued alone for all eternity, *without making known* His glory unto creatures. Whether He should do so or not was determined solely by His own will. He was perfectly blessed in Himself before the first creature was called into being. And what are all the creatures of His hands *unto Him* even now? Let Scripture again make answer, “Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of

the balance; behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as *nothing*; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" (Isa 40:15-18). *That* is the God of Scripture. Alas, He is still "the *unknown* God" (Act 17:23) to the heedless multitudes. "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers: that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: that bringeth the princes to nothing: he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity" (Isa 40:22-23). How vastly different is the God of Scripture from the "god" of the average pulpit!

Nor is the testimony of the New Testament any different from that of the Old—how could it be seeing that both have one and the same Author? There too we read, "Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and *only* potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords: who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen" (1Ti 6:15-16). Such a One is to be revered, worshipped, adored. He *is* solitary in His majesty, unique in His excellency, peerless in His perfections. He sustains all, but is Himself independent of all. He gives to all, but is enriched by none.

Such a God cannot be found out by searching; He can be known only as He is *revealed* to the heart by the Holy Spirit through the Word. It is true that creation demonstrates a Creator, and that, so plainly, men are "without excuse," yet we still have to say with Job, "Lo, these are parts of his ways; but *how little* a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?" (Job 26:14). The so-called argument from design, by well-meaning "apologists," has, we believe, done much more harm than good, for it has attempted to bring down the great God to the level of finite comprehension and thereby has lost sight of His solitary excellence.

Analogy has been drawn between a savage finding a watch upon the sands, and from a close examination of it, he infers a watchmaker. So far so good. But attempt to go farther. Suppose that savage sits down on the sand and endeavours to form to himself a conception of this watchmaker, his personal affections and manners, his disposition, acquirements, and moral character—all that goes to make up a personality. Could he ever think or reason out a real man—*the* man who made the watch—so that he could say, "I am acquainted with him"? It seems trifling to ask such questions, but is the eternal and infinite God so much more within the grasp of human reason? No, indeed, the God of Scripture can be known only by those to whom He *makes Himself known*.

Nor is God known by the intellect. "God is a Spirit" (Joh 4:24), and therefore can only be known spiritually. But fallen man is not spiritual, he is carnal. He is

dead to all that is spiritual. Unless he is born again, supernaturally brought from death unto life, miraculously translated out of darkness into light, he cannot even see the things of God (Joh 3:3), still less apprehend them (1Co 2:14). The Holy Spirit has to shine in our hearts (not intellects) in order to give us “the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). And even that spiritual knowledge is but fragmentary. The regenerated soul has to *grow* in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus (2Pe 3:18).

The principal prayer and aim of Christians should be that we “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and *increasing* in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10).

THE MANNA

Exodus 16

The food which God has provided for His people is His own blessed Word. But “the word” is used both of the Scriptures and of the Lord Jesus Christ. The two are most intimately related. “In the volume of the book,” said Christ, “it is written of me” (Psa 40:7), and again, “Search the scriptures...they are they which testify of me” (Joh 5:39). Almost everything that can be postulated of the one can be predicated of the other. But the chief value of the written Word is to set forth the perfections and bring us into communion with the incarnate Word. It is only as we feed upon *Christ* Himself that we truly feed upon the written Word. Therefore, in this article, we shall confine our attention to the manna typifying the person and perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Beneath many a figure and behind innumerable shadows and symbols, the anointed eye may discern the glories of our blessed Lord. It should be our chief delight, as we read the Old Testament Scriptures prayerfully, to search for that which foreshadows Him of whom, “Moses and the prophets did write” (Joh 1:45). All doubt is removed as to whether or not the manna pointed to the incarnate Son by His own words in John 6:32-33. There we find the Saviour saying, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven...For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” May the Spirit of God now condescend to open our sin-blinded eyes as we earnestly desire to behold “wondrous things” (Psa 119:18) out of His perfect Law.

1. *The glory of the Lord was seen with the giving of the manna.* “And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, *the glory* of the LORD appeared in the cloud” (Exo 16:10). This is very striking indeed. It is the *first time* we read of the appearing of “the glory of the LORD,” not only in connection with Israel, but in Scripture. Marvellously accurate is this detail of our type. Not until the Son of God became incarnate was “the glory of the LORD” fully revealed. But when the eternal Word became flesh and tabernacled among men, then, as the beloved apostle declares, “We beheld his *glory, the glory* as of the only-begotten of the Father” (Joh 1:14). The “glory of God” is seen “*in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2Co 4:6).

2. *The manna came down from heaven.* “Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you” (Exo 16:4). The manna was not a product of this earth. It grew neither in the wilderness nor in Egypt. It was neither produced by human efforts nor manufactured by human skill. It descended from God. It was a gift from heaven come down to earth. So our Lord Jesus was no native product of this earth. As we read in Ephesians 4:10, “He that *descended* is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens.” The first man (Adam) was of the earth, earthly; but the second Man (Jesus Christ) was “the Lord from heaven” (1Co 15:48).

3. *The manna was a free gift from God.* “And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat” (Exo 16:15). No charge was made for this manna. It was neither a wage to be earned nor a prize to be won, but was a token of God’s grace and love. No payment was demanded for it. It was without money and without price. “For God so loved the world, that *he gave his only begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Joh 3:16). Let us join with the apostle in saying, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (2Co 9:15).

4. *The manna came right down where the Israelites were.* The Israelites were in immediate danger of starving to death, but as we have seen, God graciously made provision to supply their need, and now we would notice that no long journey had to be taken in order to secure that which would satisfy their hunger—the manna fell all around the camp. “And in the morning the dew lay *round about the host*. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing” (Exo 16:13-14). Here we have foreshadowed the blessed fact that, to the sinner conscious of his need and anxious to meet the Saviour, God says, “Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? [that is to bring Christ down from above]; or, Who shall descend into the deep? [that is to bring Christ again from the dead]. But what saith it? *The word is nigh thee*” (Rom 10:6-8). And out of this very nearness springs the sinner’s responsibility. All around each tent lay the manna. Something had to be done with it. It must either be gathered or trodden

underfoot! Sinner, what are you doing with the Christ of God? Remember His searching words, “He that is not with me is against me” (Mat 12:30).

5. *The manna must be gathered by each individual.* “This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it *every man* according to his eating” (Exo 16:16). It is so spiritually. Receiving Christ (Joh 1:12) is a personal matter. No one can believe for another. There is no salvation by proxy. The Gospel of Christ is, “The power of God unto salvation to *every one that believeth*” (Rom 1:16), and “He that believeth not shall be damned” (Mar 16:16). Saving faith is that act whereby each awakened sinner appropriates Christ unto himself. It is true that Christ loved the Church as a whole, and gave Himself for it (Eph 5:25), but it is also the happy privilege of each member of that Church to say with the apostle Paul, “Who loved *me* and gave himself for *me*” (Gal 2:20). Have you, dear reader, believed on the Lord Jesus Christ?

6. *The manna met a daily need.* “Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate *every day*” (Exo 16:4). The manna which they gathered today would not suffice for tomorrow. They needed to obtain a fresh supply each day. It is just here that so many of the Lord’s people fail. We, too, need to feed upon Christ “*every day*.” Just as in the physical realm, the food which I ate yesterday will not nourish me today, so my past experiences and attainments will not meet the exigencies of the present. Christ must be kept constantly before the heart. “Give us day by day our *daily bread*” should be the prayer of every child of God.

7. *The manna was despised by those who were not the Lord’s people.* “And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting, and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely: the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: but now our soul is dried away; there is nothing left at all, beside this manna, before our eyes” (Num 11:4-6). How these words remind us of the language of Isaiah 53:2—“And when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men.” The sin-blinded eyes of the natural man are incapable of perceiving the attractiveness of the Lord Jesus, His wondrous perfections, he is unable to discern. So, too, he sees not his deep need and how Christ alone is able to meet that need. Hence, he neither comes to Christ nor desires Him.

8. *The manna fell upon the dew, not upon the dust of the ground.* “And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell *upon it*” (Num 11:9). Everything in the Scriptures has a spiritual meaning and application. What, then, is the significance of the above? Genesis 3:19 throws light on this passage—“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” These words were spoken to fallen man and called attention to the corruption which sin had worked in him. “Dust,” here

and onwards, speaks of *fallen humanity*! Now the manna *fell* not upon “the dust” but upon the dew. How clearly this foreshadowed the uniqueness and incorruptibility of our Lord’s humanity! The Word became flesh, but in His humanity the Lord Jesus shared not our corrupt nature. He took upon Him the form of a servant, but the body which was prepared for Him (Heb 10:5) belonged not to the “dust” of this earth. Before He was born, the angel announced unto His mother “The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that *holy thing* which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luk 1:35).

9. *The manna was white in colour.* We read in Exodus 16:31, “And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, *white*.” This speaks of the spotless purity of our Lord as manifested outwardly in His daily walk. He “knew no sin” (2Co 5:21). “He was without sin” (Heb 4:15). “He did no sin” (1Pe 2:22). He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, *separate from sinners*” (Heb 7:26). In 1 Peter 1:19, we are told that He was a lamb “without blemish and without spot,” the former expression referring to the absence of outward pollution, the latter to the absence of inward defect. In His walk through this scene of corruption, He contracted no defilement. He only could touch the leper without becoming contaminated. He was without “spot,” pure white.

10. *The manna was sweet to the taste.* “And the taste of it was like wafers of honey” (verse 31). We need to go to the Song of Solomon for the interpretation of this. There we read, “As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was *sweet* to my taste” (Song 2:3). And again, “His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as *sweet* flowers; his lips like lilies, dropping *sweet* smelling myrrh....His mouth is *most sweet*: yea, he is altogether lovely” (Song 5:13-16). The Lord grant that *our* “meditation of him shall be sweet” (Psa 104:34).

11. *The manna was ground and baked.* “And the people went about, and gathered it, and *ground* it in mills, or *beat* it in a mortar, and *baked* it in the pans, and made cakes of it” (Num 11:8). How this speaks to us of the sufferings of our blessed Lord! Such expressions as, “He groaned for their hardness of heart” (Mar 3:5). He “sighed” (Mar 8:12) because of their unbelief. He “wept” over Jerusalem (Luk 19:41), and many others, tell us of the *grinding* of the manna. His treatment at the hands of the Jews and the brutal soldiers in Herod’s judgment-hall show us the *beating* of the manna. On the cross, we behold Him subjected to the fierce fires of God’s wrath. Thus we learn that the manna ground and beaten speaks of Him who was “*bruised* for our iniquities.”

12. *The manna was preserved on the Sabbath.* “And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake today, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that

which remaineth over lay up for you *to be kept unto the morning*. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein” (verses 23-24). On the Sabbath day, the manna was preserved, and in this, too, it speaks of our blessed Lord. He is the only one who was preserved through death. He lay in the tomb on the Sabbath day and was “kept,” for God had said, “Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One *to see corruption*” (Psa 16:10).

13. *The manna was laid up before the Lord*. “And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer of manna therein, and lay it up before the LORD” (verse 33). Concerning the Antitype, we read, “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb 9:24). The golden pot in which manna was preserved tells us how God is glorified in Him whom it foreshadowed. “Although the Son of man is it that gives it to us, although it is humanity here that we know, and humanity in the form in which we shall not find it when we shall reach Him above, yet it is humanity in which God is glorified now, and so He will be glorified in it for ever. We shall find in the One upon the throne in glory, though no longer ‘with a face marred more than any man’s, and a form more than the sons of men’—the very One whose face was marred—the very One whose heart put Him into the sorrow in which we, of necessity, there learned to know Him thus” (Mr. Grant).

14. *The manna is called angels’ food*. We read in Psalm 78:25, “Man did eat *angels’ food*: He sent them meat to the full.” The reference here is to the giving of the manna to Israel in the wilderness. The antitype of this is brought before us in several passages in the last book of Scripture. Christ not only feeds the souls of those of His people who are upon earth, but He also satisfies the hearts of celestial beings. The unfallen angels find their chief delight in feeding upon Christ. They worship Him, they serve Him, and they tell forth His praises.

15. *The manna was given in the night*. It was during the hours of darkness that the manna was sent to the Israelites. It is while they are asleep (picture of man’s helplessness, for men are never so helpless as when asleep) that the bread was given from heaven. So, too, it was when we were in darkness and unbelief, impotent, “without strength” (Rom 5:6), that Christ came to us. Moreover, it will be at the close of this world’s night, when, “The darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people” (Isa 60:2), that the Bread of God shall return and give life to the world.

16. *The manna is now hidden*. In Revelation 2:17, we read, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna.” So, too, Christ, of whom manna continually speaks, is now “hidden.” Unseen by the eye of sense, He remains in heaven till the day when He shall be manifested before all the world. “We shall not only ‘see’ the heavenly manna, but we shall ‘eat’ of it again. Fresher than ever will

be our realization of His love and the perfection of His grace which is manifested to us. It is then in fact, when we come to be there, that we shall have the full enjoyment of all the experiences, which though they be experiences of the wilderness, yet wait for the land to which we are hastening to find their full interpretation and blessing. The meat *endures* to everlasting life. The meat still endures. We are enjoying that which shall be our joy for eternity” (Mr. Grant).

We are conscious that our treatment of this wonderful and precious type is most inadequate and unworthy. But if it leads our fellow believers to a more careful study of the written Word, and to a deeper longing to become better acquainted with the incarnate Word, our feeble efforts will be well repaid.

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

10. The Scriptures and Love

This article brings to a close the present series. In them, we have sought to point out some of the ways by which we may ascertain whether or not our reading and searching of the Scriptures are really being blessed to our souls. Many are deceived on this matter, mistaking an eagerness to acquire knowledge for a spiritual love of the truth (2Th 2:10), and assuming that addition to their store of learning is the same thing as growth in grace. A great deal depends upon the end or aim we have before us when turning to God’s Word. If it be simply to familiarize ourselves with its contents and become better versed in its details, it is likely that the garden of our souls will remain barren. But if with the prayerful desire to be rebuked and corrected by the Word, to be searched by the Spirit, to conform our hearts to its holy requirements, then we may expect a divine blessing.

In the preceding articles, we have endeavoured to single out the vital things by which we may discover what progress we are making in personal godliness. Various criteria have been given, which it becomes both writer and reader honestly to measure himself by. We have pressed such tests as, Am I acquiring a greater hatred of sin, and a practical deliverance from its power and pollution? Am I obtaining a deeper acquaintance with God and His Christ? Is my prayer-life healthier? Are my good works more abundant? Is my obedience fuller and gladder? Am I more separated from the world in my affections and ways? Am I learning to make a right and profitable use of God’s promises, and so delighting myself in Him

that His joy is my daily strength. Unless I can truthfully say that these are (in some measure) my experience, then, it is greatly to be feared that my study of the Scriptures is profiting me little or nothing.

It hardly seems fitting that these articles should be concluded until one has been devoted to the consideration of Christian love. The extent to which this spiritual grace is, or is not, being cultivated and regulated affords another index to the measure in which my perusal of God's Word is helping me spiritually. No one can read the Scriptures with any measure of attention without discovering how much they have to say about love, and therefore, it behoves each one of us prayerfully and carefully to ascertain whether or not his or her love be really a spiritual one, and whether it be in a healthy state and is being exercised aright.

The subject of Christian love is far too comprehensive to consider all its varied phases within the compass of a single paper. Properly, we should begin with contemplating the exercise of our love toward God and His Christ, but as this has been at least touched upon in preceding articles, we shall now waive it. Much, too, might be said about the natural love which we owe to our fellow men, who belong to the same family as we do, but there is less need to write thereon than upon what is now before our mind. Here we propose to confine our attention to spiritual love unto the brethren, the brethren of Christ.

1. We profit from the Word when we perceive *the great importance of Christian love.*

Nowhere is this brought out more emphatically than in 1 Corinthians 13. There the Holy Spirit tells us that (1) though a professing Christian can speak fluently and eloquently upon divine things, and has not love, he is like metal, which, though it makes a noise when struck, is lifeless. (2) That though he can prophesy, understand all mysteries and knowledge, and has faith which brings miracles to pass, but be lacking in love, he is spiritually a nonentity. Yea, (3) that though he be so benevolent as to give all his worldly possessions to feed the poor, and yield his body to a martyr's death, and have not love, it profits him nothing. How high a value is here placed upon love, and how essential for me to make sure I possess it!

Said our Lord, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (Joh 13:35). By Christ's making it the badge of Christian discipleship, we see again the great importance of love. It is an essential test of the genuineness of our profession. We cannot love Christ unless we love His brethren, for they are all bound up in the same "bundle of life" (1Sa 25:29) with Him. Love to those whom He has redeemed is a sure evidence of spiritual and supernatural love to the Lord Jesus Himself. Where the Holy Spirit has wrought a supernatural birth, He will draw forth that nature into exercise, He will produce in the hearts and lives

and conduct of the saints supernatural graces, one of which is loving each other for Christ's sake.

2. We profit from the Word when we learn to detect the *sad perversions of Christian love*.

As water will not rise above its own level, so the natural man is incapable of understanding, still less appreciating, that which is spiritual (1Co 2:14). Therefore, we should not be surprised when unregenerate professors mistake human sentimentality and carnal pleasantries for spiritual love. But sad is it to see some of God's own people living on so low a plane that they confuse human amiability and affability with the queen of the Christian graces. While it is true that spiritual love is characterized by meekness and gentleness, yet is it something very different from and vastly superior to the courtesies and kindnesses of the flesh.

How many a doting father has withheld the rod from his children under the mistaken notion that real affection for them and the chastising of them were incompatible. How many a foolish mother, who disdained all corporal punishment, has boasted that "love" rules in her home. One of the most trying experiences of the writer, in his extensive travels, has been to spend a season in homes where the children had been completely spoilt. It is a wicked perversion of the word "love" to apply it to such moral laxity and parental looseness. But this same pernicious idea rules the minds of many people in other connections and relations. If a servant of God rebukes their fleshly and worldly ways, if he presses the uncompromising claims of God, he is at once charged with being "lacking in love." Oh, how terribly are multitudes deceived by Satan on this important subject!

3. We profit from the Word when we are taught the *true nature of Christian love*.

Christian love is a spiritual grace abiding in the souls of the saints, alongside of faith and hope (1Co 13:13). It is a holy disposition wrought in them when they are regenerated (1Jo 5:1). It is nothing less than the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). It is a righteous principle which seeks the highest good of others. It is the very reverse of that principle of self-love and self-seeking which is in us by nature. It is not only an affectionate regard of all who bear the image of Christ, but also a powerful desire to promote their welfare. It is not a fickle sentiment which is easily offended, but an abiding dynamic which "many waters" of cold indifference or "floods" of disappreciation can neither quench nor drown (Song 8:7). Though coming far short in degree, it is the same in essence as

His of whom we read, “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (Joh 13:1).

There is no safer and surer way of obtaining a right conception of the nature of Christian love than by making thorough study of its perfect exemplification in and by the Lord Jesus. When we say a “thorough study,” we mean taking a comprehensive survey of *all* that is recorded of Him in the four Gospels, and not limiting ourselves to a few favourite passages or incidents. As this is done, we discover that His love was not only benevolent and magnanimous, thoughtful and gentle, unselfish and self-sacrificing, patient and unchanging, but many other elements also entered into it. Love could deny an urgent request (Joh 11:6), rebuke His mother (Joh 2:4), use a whip (Joh 2:15), severely upbraid His doubting disciples (Luk 24:25), and denounce hypocrites (Mat 23:13-33). Love can be stern (Mat 16:23), yea, angry (Mar 3:5). Spiritual love is a *holy* thing. It is faithful to God. It is uncompromising toward all that is evil.

4. We profit from the Word when we discover that Christian love is a *divine communication*.

“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1Jo 3:14). “Love to the brethren is the fruit and effect of a new and supernatural birth, wrought in our souls by the Holy Spirit, as the blessed evidence of our having been chosen in Christ by the divine Father, before the world was. To love Christ and His, and our brethren in Him, is congenial to that divine nature He hath made us the partakers of by His Holy Spirit....This love of the brethren must be a peculiar love, such as none but the regenerate are the subjects of, and which none but they can exercise, or the apostle would not have so particularly mentioned it. It is such as those who have it not, are in a state of unregeneracy. So it follows, ‘He that loveth not his brother abideth in death’” (S. E. Pierce, 1746-1829).

Love for the brethren is far, far more than finding agreeable the society of those whose temperaments are similar to or whose views accord with my own. It pertains not to mere nature, but is a spiritual and supernatural thing. It is the heart being drawn out to those in whom I perceive *something of Christ*. Thus, it is very much more than a party spirit. It embraces all in whom I can see the image of God’s Son. It is, therefore, a loving them for Christ’s sake, for what I see of Christ in them. It is the Holy Spirit within attracting and alluring me with Christ indwelling my brethren and sisters. Thus, real Christian love is not only a divine gift, but is altogether dependent upon God for its invigoration and exercise. We need to pray daily that the Holy Spirit will call forth into action and manifestation, toward both God and His people, that love which He has shed abroad in our hearts.

5. We profit from the Word when we *rightly exercise* Christian love.

This is done not by seeking to please our brethren and ingratiate ourselves in their esteem, but when we truly seek their highest good. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments” (1Jo 5:2). What is the real test of my personal love to God Himself? It is my keeping of His commandments (see Joh 14:15, 21, 24; 15:10, 14). The genuineness and strength of my love to God are not to be measured by my words, nor by the lustiness with which I sing His praises, but by my obedience to His Word. The same principle holds good in my relations with my brethren.

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.” If I am glossing over the faults of my brethren and sisters, if I am walking with them in a course of self-will and self-pleasing, then I am *not* “loving” them. “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him” (Lev 19:17). Love is to be exercised in a divine way, and never at the expense of my failing to love God. In fact, it is only when God has His proper place in my heart that spiritual love can be exercised by me toward my brethren. True spiritual love does not consist in gratifying them, but in pleasing God and helping them, and I can only *help* them in the path of God’s commandments.

Petting and pampering each other is not brotherly love. Exhorting one another to press forward in the race that is set before us, and speaking words (enforced by example of our daily walk) which will encourage them to “look off unto Jesus,” would be much more helpful. Brotherly love is to be a holy thing, and not a fleshly sentiment or a loose indifference as to the path we are treading. God’s “commandments” are expressions of His love, as well as of His authority, and to ignore them, even while seeking to be kindly affectioned one to another, is not “love” at all. The *exercise* of love is to be in strict conformity to the revealed will of God. We are to love “in the truth” (3Jo 1).

6. We profit from the Word when we are taught the *varied manifestations* of Christian love.

To love our brethren and manifest the same in all kinds of ways is our bounden duty. But at no point can we do this more truly and effectually, and with less affectation and ostentation, than by having fellowship with them at the throne of grace. There are brethren and sisters in Christ, in the four corners of the earth, about the details of whose trials and conflicts, temptations and sorrows, I know nothing, yet I can express my love for them, and pour out my heart before God on their behalf, by earnest supplication and intercession. In no other way can the Christian

more manifest his affectionate regard toward his fellow pilgrims than by using all his interests in the Lord Jesus in their behalf, intreating His mercies and favours unto them.

“Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1Jo 3:17-18). Many of God’s people are very poor in this world’s goods. Sometimes they wonder why this is. It is a great trial unto them. One reason why the Lord permits this is that others of His saints may have their compassion drawn out and minister to their temporal needs from the abundance with which God has furnished them. Real love is intensely practical. It considers no office too mean, no task too humbling, where the sufferings of a brother can be relieved. When the Lord of love was here upon earth, He had thought for the bodily hunger of the multitude and the comfort of His disciples’ feet!

But there are some of the Lord’s people so poor that they have very little indeed to share with others. What, then, may they do? Why, make the spiritual concerns of all the saints their own. Interest themselves on their behalf at the throne of grace. We know by our own cases and circumstances what the feelings, sorrows, complaints of other saints must be the subjects of. We know from sad experience how easy it is to give way to a spirit of discontent and murmuring. But we also know how, when we have cried unto the Lord for His quieting hand to be laid upon us, and when He has brought some precious promise to our remembrance, what peace and comfort have come to our heart. Then, let us beg Him to be equally gracious to all His distressed saints. Let us seek to make their burdens our own, and weep with them that weep, as well as rejoice with them that rejoice. Thus shall we express real love for their persons in Christ by intreating their Lord and our Lord to remember them with everlasting kindness.

This is how the Lord Jesus is now manifesting *His* love to His saints, “He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25). He makes their cause and care His own. He is intreating the Father on their behalf. None is forgotten by Him. Every lone sheep is borne upon the heart of the Good Shepherd. Thus, by expressing our love to the brethren in daily prayers for the supply of their varied needs, we are brought into fellowship with our great High Priest. Not only so, but the saints will be endeared to us thereby. Our very praying for them as the beloved of God will increase our love and esteem for them as such. We cannot carry them on our hearts before the throne of grace without cherishing in our own hearts a real affection for them. The best way of overcoming a bitter spirit to a brother who has offended is to be much in prayer for him.

7. We profit from the Word when we are taught the *proper cultivation of Christian love*.

Space will permit us to suggest only one or two rules for this. First, recognizing at the outset that, just as there is much in you (in me) which will severely try the love of the brethren, so there will be not a little in them to test our love. “*Forbearing one another in love*” (Eph 4:2) is a great admonition on this subject which each of us needs to lay to heart. It is surely striking to note that the very first quality of spiritual love named in 1 Corinthians 13 is that it, “*suffereth long*” (verse 4).

Second, the best way to cultivate any virtue or grace is to *exercise* it. Talking and theorizing about it avails nothing, unless it be carried into action. Many are the complaints heard today about the littleness of the love which is being manifested in many places. That is all the more reason why I should seek to set a better example! Suffer not the coldness and unkindness of others to dampen your love, but “*overcome evil with good*” (Rom 12:21). Prayerfully ponder 1 Corinthians 13 at least once a week.

Third, above all, see to it that your own heart basks in the light and warmth of God’s love. Like begets like. The more you are truly occupied with the unwearying, unfailing, unfathomable love of Christ to you, the more will your heart be drawn out in love to those who are His. A beautiful illustration of this is found in the fact that the particular apostle who wrote most upon brotherly love was he who leaned upon the Master’s bosom. The Lord grant all requisite grace to both reader and writer (than whom none more needs to heed them) to observe these rules, to the praise of the glory of His grace, and to the good of His dear people.

COMING TO CHRIST

Part 3

We trust that sufficient has been said in the previous articles to make clear unto every Christian reader that the saving “coming to Christ” of a poor sinner is neither a physical nor a mental act, but is wholly spiritual and supernatural, that that act springs not from human reason or human will-power, but from the secret and

efficacious operations of God the Spirit. We say clear unto “the Christian reader,” for we must not expect the unregenerate to perceive that of which they have no personal experience. The distinction pointed out in the second half of the last article (the whole of which may well be carefully re-read) between a sound intellectual knowledge of Christ and a vital and transforming knowledge of Him, between knowing Christ as He is set forth in the Scriptures and as He is divinely revealed in us (Gal 1:16), is not one which will appeal to the carnal mind. Rather is it one which will be contemptuously rejected. But instead of being surprised at this, we should expect it.

Were our last article sent to the average “fundamentalist” preacher or “Bible teacher,” and a request made for his honest opinion of it, in all probability, he would say that the writer had lapsed into either “mysticism” or “fanaticism.” Just as the religious leaders of Christ’s day rejected His spiritual teaching, so the “champions of orthodoxy,” those who boast so loudly that *they* are faithfully and earnestly contending for the faith, will not receive the humbling and searching messages of Christ’s servants today. The substance of this article would be ridiculed by them. But their very ridicule only serves to demonstrate the solemn truth of 1 Corinthians 2:14, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him.” These words have puzzled some who have thoughtfully pondered them, for they do not seem to square with the patent facts of observation.

We have personally met the most conscienceless men—untruthful, dishonest, not scrupling to use tactics which many a non-professor would scorn—who, nevertheless, ardently proclaimed the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Christ, salvation by grace alone. We have had personal dealings with men whose hearts were filled with covetousness, and whose ways were worldly almost to the last degree, yet who tiraded against “modernism” and “evolutionism,” etc., and “faithfully preached” the virgin birth and the blood of Christ as the sinner’s only hope. That these men are “natural” or “carnal,” that is unregenerate, is plain and unmistakable if we measure them by the infallible rule of Holy Writ; it would be not only a contradiction in terms, but *blasphemy*, to say such had been made by God, “new creatures in Christ.” Nevertheless, so far from the foundation truths of Scripture being “foolishness” unto these unregenerate characters, they warmly endorse and ardently propagate them.

But what has been said above *does not* clash, in the slightest degree, with 1 Corinthians 2:14, when that verse be rightly read and understood. Let it be carefully noted that it does not say the “things *of God* are foolishness” unto the natural man. Had it done so, the writer had been at a complete loss to explain it. No, it declares that the “things *of the Spirit of God*” are foolishness, and what has been said above only serves to illustrate the minute accuracy of this verse. The “things of God” these men profess to believe. The “things of Christ” they appear valiantly to champion, but the “things of *the Spirit of God*,” they are personal strangers unto. And

therefore, when His secret and mysterious work upon the souls of God's elect is pressed upon them, they appear to be so much "foolishness" unto them—either "mysticism" or "fanaticism." But to the renewed, it is far otherwise.

The Spirit's supernatural operations in the implanting of faith in God's elect (Col 2:12) produce a "new creation." Salvation by faith is wrought through the Spirit's working effectually with the Gospel. Then it is that He *forms* Christ in the soul (Gal 4:19), and lets in the Object of faith through the eye of faith, a real "image" of Christ being directly stamped upon the newly quickened soul, which quickening has given ability to discern Christ. Thus, Christ is "formed" in the heart, after the manner that an outward object is formed in the eye. When I say that I have a certain man or object in my eye, I do not mean that this man or object is in my eye *locally*—that is impossible. But they are in my eye *objectively*—I *see* them. So when it is said that Christ is "*formed* in us," that Christ is "*in us the hope of glory*" (Col 1:27), it is not to be understood that He, who is now corporeally at the right hand of God, is *locally and substantially* formed in us. No, but that Christ at the right hand of God, the substance and *object* of faith, is by the Spirit let in from above, so that the soul sees Him by the eye of faith, exactly as He is represented in the Word. So Christ is "formed" in us, and thus He "dwells in our hearts by faith" (Eph 3:17).

What we have endeavoured to set forth above is beautifully adumbrated in the lower and visible world. It is indeed striking to discover how much of God's spiritual works are shadowed out in the material realm. If our minds were but more spiritual, and our eyes engaged in a keener lookout, we should find signs and symbols on every side of the invisible realities of God. On a sunshiny day, when a man looks into clear water, he sees there a face (his own), formed by representation, which directly answers to the face outside and above the water. There are not two faces, but one, original and yet represented. But only one face is seen, casting its own single image upon the water. So it is in the soul's history of God's elect, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, *are changed into the same image* from glory to glory, even *as by the Spirit of the Lord*" (2Co 3:18). Oh, that His image in us may be more evident to others. We are now ready to turn to

III. With our affections

"All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me," (Joh 6:37) declared the Lord Jesus. He who, before the foundation of the world, gave the *persons* of His people unto Christ, now gives them, in regeneration, a *heart* for Christ. The "heart"

includes the affections as well as the understanding. In our last article, we pointed out how that no man will (or can) “come to Christ” while ignorant of Him. It is equally true that no man will (or can) “come to Christ” while his affections are alienated from Him. Not only is the understanding of the natural man shrouded in total darkness, but his heart is thoroughly opposed to God. “The carnal mind is enmity (not merely “at enmity,” but “enmity itself”) against God” (Rom 8:7), and “enmity” is something more than a train of hostile thoughts. It is the hatred of the affections themselves. Therefore, when the Holy Spirit makes a man a “new creature in Christ,” He not only renews his understanding, but He radically changes the heart.

When faith gives us a sight of spiritual things, the heart is warmed with love to them. Note the order in Hebrews 11:13, where, in connection with the patriarch’s faith in God’s promises, we are told, “were persuaded of them, and *embraced* them,” which is a term denoting great affection. When the understanding is renewed by the Spirit, then the heart is drawn unto Christ, with a tender desire for Him. When the Holy Spirit is pleased to make known in the soul the wondrous love of Christ to me, then love unto Him is begotten and goes out toward Him in return. Observe the order in 1 John 4:16, “And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” The apostle places knowledge (not intellectual, but spiritual) before faith, and both before a union and communion with divine love. The light and knowledge of Christ and heaven which we have by tradition, education, hearing or reading never fires the affections. But when the love of God is “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:5), what a difference is produced!

Far too little emphasis has been placed upon this aspect of our subject. In proof of this assertion, weigh carefully the following question, Why is it that, “He that *believeth not* shall be damned,” (Mar 16:16) is quoted a hundred times more frequently by preachers and tract-writers than, “If any man *love not* the Lord Jesus, let him be accursed” (1Co 16:22)? If we are properly to preserve the balance of truth, we must note carefully the manner in which the Holy Spirit has rung the changes on “believe” and “love” in the New Testament. Consider the following passages, “All things work together for good to them that [not trust, but] *love* God” (Rom 8:28). “Them that [not only believe, but] *love* Him” (1Co 2:9). “If any man *love* God, the same is known [or approved] of Him” (1Co 8:3). “A crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that [not believe in, but] *love* His appearing” (2Ti 4:8). “The crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that *love* Him” (Jam 1:12). “Heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that *love* Him” (Jam 2:5). “He that *loveth not* knoweth not God; for God is love” (1Jo 4:8).

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Joh 6:44). In our last article, we saw that this “drawing” consists, in part, of the Spirit’s

supernatural enlightenment of the understanding. It also consists in the Spirit's inclining the affections unto Christ. He acts upon sinners agreeably to their nature, not by external force, such as is used on an unwilling animal, but by spiritual influence or power moving their inward faculties. "I drew them with cords of a *man*, with bands of *love*" (Hos 11:4)—by rational conviction of their judgment, by showing them that there is infinitely more goodness and blessedness in Christ than in the creature or the sinful gratification of carnal desires, by winning their hearts to Christ, by communicating to them a powerful sense of His superlative excellency and complete suitability unto all their needs. To them that believe, "He is *precious*" (1Pe 2:7)—so precious that they are willing to part with the world and everything that they may "win Christ" (Phi 3:8).

As was shown at some length in the opening article, the affections of the natural man are alienated from God, wedded to the things of time and sense, so that he will not come to Christ. Though God's servants seek to charm him with the lovely music of the Gospel, like the adder, he closes his ear. It is as the Lord portrayed it in the parable of the great supper, "They all with one consent began to make excuse" (Luk 14:18), one preferring his lands, another his merchandise, another his social recreation. And nothing short of the almighty power and working of the Holy Spirit in the heart can break the spell which sin and Satan have cast over man, and turn his heart from perishing objects to an imperishable one. This He does in God's elect by His secret and invincible operations, sweetly working in and alluring them, by revealing Christ to them in the winsomeness of His persons and the infinite riches of His grace, by letting down His love into their hearts, and by moving them to lay hold of His kind invitations and precious promises.

Most blessedly is this represented to us in, "My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him" (Song 5:4). Here the door of the heart (Act 16:14), or more specifically, the "door of faith" (Act 14:27), is seen shut against Christ, and the object of His love loath and unwilling to rise and open to Him. But, though unwelcome, His love cannot be quenched, and He gently enters (He does not burst the door open!) uninvited. His "hand," opening the "door," is a figure of His efficacious grace removing every obstacle in the heart of His elect (cf. Act 11:21), and winning it to Himself. The effect of His gracious entry, by His Spirit, is seen in the, "and my bowels were moved for him," which is a figure of the stirring of the affections after Him (cf. Isa 63:15; Phile 1:12). For the thoughts of this paragraph, we are indebted to the incomparable commentary of John Gill (1697-1679) on the Song of Solomon.

What a miracle of grace has been wrought when the heart is truly turned from the world unto God, from self unto Christ, from love of sin unto love of holiness! It is this which is the fulfilment of God's covenant promise in Ezekiel 36:26, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." There

is no man who loves money so much, but that he is willing to part with it for that which he values more highly than the sum he parts with to purchase it. The natural man esteems material things more highly than he does spiritual, but the regenerated loves Christ more than all other objects besides, and this because he has been made a “new creature.” It is a spiritual love which binds the heart to Christ.

It is not simply a knowledge of the truth which saves, but a *love* of it which is the essential prerequisite. This is clear from 11 Thessalonians 2:10, “Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” Close attention must be paid unto those words or a wrong conclusion may be drawn. It is not a love *for* the truth, but a love *of* the truth. There are those who have the former, but are destitute of the latter. We have met Russellites, and have boarded with Christadelphians, who put many a real Christian to shame. People, who after a long day’s work, spent the whole evening in diligently studying the Bible. Nor was it to satisfy curiosity. Their zeal had lasted for years. Their Bible was as precious to them as “beads” or “rosary” are to a devout Romanist. So too there is a *natural* “love” for Christ, an ardent devotion for Him, which springs not from a renewed heart. Just as one reared among devout Romanists grows up with a deep veneration and genuine affection for the Virgin, so one carefully trained by Protestant parents, told from infancy that Jesus loves him, grows up with a real, but natural, love for Him.

There may be a historical faith in all the doctrines of Scripture where the power of them is never experienced. There may be a fleshly zeal for portions of God’s truth (as there was in the case of the Pharisees) and yet the heart not be renewed. There may be joyous emotions felt by a superficial reception of the Word (as there was in the stony-ground hearers—Mat 13:20), where the “root of the matter” (Job 19:28) be lacking. Tears may flow freely at the pathetic sight of the suffering Saviour (as with the company of women who bewailed Christ as He journeyed to the cross—Luk 23:27-28), and yet the heart be as hard as the nether millstone toward God. There may be a rejoicing in the light of God’s truth (as was the case with Herod—Mar 6:20), and yet hell never be escaped from.

Since, then, there is a love *for* the truth in contradistinction from a love *of* the truth, and a natural love for Christ, in contrast with a spiritual love of Him, how am I to be sure which mine is? We may distinguish between these “loves” thus. First, the one is partial, the other is impartial. The one esteems the doctrines of Scripture, but not the duties it enjoins—the promises of Scripture, but not the precepts—the blessings of Christ, but not His claims—His priestly office, but not His kingly rule. But not so with the spiritual lover! Second, the one is occasional, the other is regular. The former balks when personal interests are crossed, not so the latter. Third, the one is evanescent and weak, the other lasting and powerful. The former quickly wanes when other delights compete, and prevails not to control the other affections. The latter rules the heart and is strong as death. Fourth, the former betters not its possessor. The latter transforms the life.

That a saving “coming to Christ” *is* the affections being turned to and fixed upon Him may be further demonstrated from the nature of backsliding, which begins with the heart’s departure from Christ. Observe how this is traced to its real source in Revelation 2:4, “Thou hast left [not *lost*] thy first *love*.” The reality and genuineness of our *returning* to Christ are evidenced by the *effects* which the workings of the understanding produce upon the affections. A striking example of this is found in Matthew 26:75, “And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.” That “remembrance” was not merely a historical one, but a gracious one—his heart was melted by it. So it ever is when the Holy Spirit works in and “renews” us. I may recall a past sin without being duly humbled thereby. I may “remember” Christ’s death in a mechanical and speculative way, without the affections being truly moved. It is only as the faculty of our understanding is quickened by the Holy Spirit that the heart is powerfully impressed.

GUIDANCE GUARANTEED

“And he shall direct thy paths” (Pro 3:6)

We come now to what is, in one sense, both the simplest and yet the most difficult clause of Proverbs 3:5-6. Paradoxical as it may sound, it is often the case that the simplest things are the most profound, and the profoundest things the simplest. What is simpler than the Gospel? “Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things” (Act 13:38-39)! And yet what is more profound? Does not the Gospel make known things which even “the angels desire to look into” (1Pe 1:12)? What is more profound than the truth of God’s sovereignty? As we seek to contemplate it, we are made to cry with the Psalmist, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot attain unto it” (Psa 139:6). And yet what is, really, more simple and obvious? If God be *God* then He must be sovereign, high above all, supreme over all.

“And he shall direct thy paths” (Pro 3:6). This *is* the simplest part of our text as a whole, inasmuch as it is a plain and definite assurance given to all who meet and conform to the conditions named in the preceding clauses. This divine promise needs no analyzing or philosophizing about. It is presented for our faith to lay hold

of and our hearts to rest upon. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” is plain enough. It needs to be received and obeyed, not discussed or reasoned about. But that is no plainer than if we, (1) “Trust in the LORD with all our hearts.” If we, (2) “Lean not unto our own understanding.” If we, (3) “Acknowledge the LORD in all our ways.” Then, most assuredly, He *shall* direct our paths.

The *need* for being “directed” by the Lord is real and pressing. The children of Adam are fallen and ruined creatures, “Alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph 4:18). The natural man is like a rudderless ship or a motor-car without a steering wheel. Scripture emphatically affirms, “The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer 10:23). True, it is otherwise with the Christian, for the Spirit of God indwells him, yet the “flesh” is still in him, too, and this world is a “dark place” (2Pe 1:19), a trackless desert. It is not without reason that the Lord’s people are termed “sheep,” for no other creature is so apt to stray or has such a propensity to wander. Of old, God said concerning Israel, “Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet” (Jer 14:10). And this is recorded for our learning and warning.

The Hebrew word for “direct” means “to make straight.” We are living in a world where everything is crooked. Sin has thrown everything out of joint, and in consequence, confusion worse confounded reigns all around us. Even the natural man, who is thoughtful and serious, is often bewildered by the conflicting opinions and theories concerning present-day life. Old standards are forsaken. The ways of our forefathers are looked upon as the product of an ignorant age. This is true of every realm.

How blessed, how comforting, how reassuring is the language of our text to the child of God! If I really desire to please the Lord, He will not allow me to remain in ignorance of His will, “He *shall* direct my paths.” He will make clear to me the course of duty. But remember that this promise is *conditional*. It is given only to those who comply fully with the preceding admonitions. Scripture interprets Scripture. In the New Testament, we have a word parallel to Proverbs 3:5-6, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Joh 8:12). What does it signify to “follow” Christ? First, it means full confidence in Him, for I would not take as guide one I did not trust—trusting Him with all my heart. Second, it means completely resigning myself to His directions—leaning not unto my own understanding. Third, it means unqualified submission to Him—acknowledging Him in all my ways. Then, but only then, have I the divine assurance that I “shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

As another has said, “A believer’s course indicates where he is in his soul, and sooner or later exposes the motives that control him. It is pretty easy to see when a man has the Lord before him. You find him regulated by divine motives, and ordering his ways with reference to the will of God and the interests of Christ. He will not be occupied with guidance, but his whole course will evidence that his steps are ordered by the Lord. On the other hand, if a man be carnal and worldly, it will come out in his ways. He will have no divine judgment about things—no spiritual sensibilities or tastes—and though he may maintain a certain degree of outward correctness, it will be manifest that he is not guided by the Lord. It is in having to do with the Lord that we are enlightened and our spiritual intelligence is developed, so that we are enabled to discern the path that is pleasing to Him. God would guide us, as a rule, by forming our souls in the intelligence of His will, and thus enabling us to exercise a spiritual judgment about things.

“Many would like to have guidance without any reference to their spiritual condition, but this is never the Lord’s way. I have often been amazed at devices to which even converted people will resort in a moment of perplexity. A favourite plan is to open the Bible haphazard or put a pin between the leaves, and read the text which happens to turn up. This savours more of witchcraft and superstition than of godliness. As we go on with the Lord, and become acquainted with His mind, our vision is cleared in a wonderful way” (C. A. Coates, 1862-1945).

Let us seek to add a few more words upon the *conditions* of divine guidance. The word “conditions,” in this connection, would be objected to by some, namely, hyper-Calvinists who deny human responsibility. Restricting themselves to the divine side of things, they have so lost the “balance” of truth that they are really “fatalists.” Confining all their thoughts to the fact that God has, from the beginning, mapped out the whole of our course, they see no need for being *exercised* in heart as to guidance, still less are they aware of “*conditions*” governing it. On the other hand, some are so much occupied with the *human* side of things, and dwell so exclusively upon Christians themselves being responsible for their walk, that divine fore-ordination has little or no place in their thoughts. These people need reminding of such passages as Proverbs 21:1; Romans 11:36; Ephesians 1:11.

Still others are confused when they hear of *both* sides, and are puzzled to know where the sovereignty of God ends and human responsibility begins in relation to our daily walk. Without attempting now to explore this great deep, let us humbly offer two remarks for prayerful consideration. First, whatever of good there is in our lives, unreservedly give God the glory for it. Whatever there is of sin, we must unqualifiedly take the blame unto ourselves. Second, learn to distinguish sharply between God *ordaining* our course, and God directing our paths. God *has* fore-ordained everything that comes to pass, but He does not, by direct agency, bring everything to pass. God has predestined that we should taste the bitter consequences of self-confidence and reap the awful sowings of self-will, in order to wean us from

self and sin. But He does not, personally and immediately, lead us into such things; our own evil lusts are responsible for that.

That there *are* “conditions” which we must meet, if we are to enjoy God’s immediate ordering of our path, is clear not only from Proverbs 3:5-6 and John 8:12, but from many other Scriptures. Take the order of truth brought before us in that familiar twenty-third psalm: “He *leadeth* me beside the still waters,” (verse 2) is preceded by, “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.” There must be an implicit and complete resting in God’s authoritative Word (of which the “green pastures” are the figure) before I can count upon His “leading me.” So again, in the next verse, “He *leadeth* me in the paths of righteousness,” is preceded by, “He *restoreth* my soul.” Not until His grace brings me into right relationship, experimentally, with Himself is the “leading” given. How solemnly searching is this!

Again, in Psalm 25, which reveals so much on the subject of divine guidance, in verse 9 (where we have God’s response to the prayer of verses 4-5), we are told, “The meek [they who are subject to God’s will] will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.” So in verse 12, “What man is he that *feareth* the LORD? Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.” How searching is the verse which immediately precedes that oft-quoted (frequently lightly quoted, we fear) 105th verse in Psalm 119. It is only when, through God’s “precepts,” we get understanding, and by them, are made to hate “every false way,” that God’s Word becomes to us, experimentally, “a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path.”

“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shall go: I will guide thee with mine eye” (Psa 32:8). Here again, we have what is both blessed and searching. A person cannot guide another with his “eye” unless that other is near to him, and unless the eyes of that other are steadfastly fixed upon him. The immediate context (Psa 32:6-7) speaks of subjection and confidence in God. If these be lacking, then we become, “as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle” (verse 9). Even then, the Lord, in His mercy, does not give us up. He keeps His hand on the reins, and uses *circumstances* to check, restrain and guide us. But this is a painful experience, when compared with the blessedness of being “guided by his eye.”

Yes, these *are* “conditions,” if we are to have God’s immediate guidance, and these “conditions” are summed up in Proverbs 3:5-6. If we exercise wholehearted trust in the Lord, lean not unto our own understandings (cease to be controlled or influenced by the dictates of “common sense”), acknowledge Him in *all* our ways (seek His permission, and have before us His glory in everything), then, He *shall* direct our paths. May the Lord, in His abounding grace, work in writer and reader “both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13).

THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR

Part 2 – Ephesians 6:10-18

The second part or piece of the Christian's armour is mentioned in verse 14, "And having on the breastplate of righteousness." First of all, notice the connecting, "And," which intimates that there is a very close relation between the mind being girded with truth and the heart protected with the breastplate of righteousness. All of these seven pieces of armour are *not* so connected, but the "And" here, between the first two, denotes that they are inseparably united. Now, obviously, the breastplate of righteousness is that protection which we need for *the heart*. This verse is closely parallel to Proverbs 4:23, "Keep thine heart with all diligence," understanding by the "heart," the affections and conscience.

As there was a double reference in the word "truth," first to the Word of God and second, to sincerity of spirit, so I believe, there is a double reference here in "the breastplate of *righteousness*." I think it refers both to that righteousness which Christ wrought out for us and that righteousness which the Spirit works in us—both the righteousness which is imputed and the righteousness which is imparted—which is what we need if we are to withstand the attacks of Satan. We might compare 1 Thessalonians 5:8, "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love." I have been quite impressed of late in noting how frequently that word "sober" occurs in the epistles, either in its substantive or verbal form. Soberness is that which should characterize and identify the people of God. It is the opposite of that superficial flightiness which is one of the outstanding marks of worldlings today. It is the opposite of levity, and also of that feverish restlessness of the flesh by which so many are intoxicated religiously and every other way.

This second piece of armour, as I have said, is inseparably connected with the girdle of truth, for sincerity of mind and holiness of heart must go together. To put on the breastplate of righteousness means to maintain the power of holiness over our affections and conscience. A verse that helps us to understand this is Acts 24:16, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and men." There you have an illustration of a man taking unto himself, putting on, the "breastplate of righteousness."

We pass on to the third piece of armour. "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph 6:15). This is perhaps the most difficult of the seven pieces of armour to understand and define, and yet, if we hold fast the first thought, that the Holy Spirit is using a figure of speech here, that the reference

is to that which is internal rather than external, spiritual rather than material, and also that He is following a logical order, there should not be much difficulty in ascertaining what is meant by the sandals of peace. Just as the girdle of truth has to do with the *mind*, the breastplate of righteousness with the *heart*, so the shoes for the feet are a figure of that which concerns the *will*. At first sight, that may sound far-fetched, and yet if we will think for a moment, it should be obvious that what the feet are to the body, the will is to the soul. The feet carry the body from place to place, and the will is that which *directs* the activities of the soul. What the will decides, that is what we *do*.

Now the will is to be regulated by the peace of the Gospel. What is meant by that? This: In becoming reconciled to God and in having good will to our fellows, the Gospel is the means or instrument that God uses. We are told in Psalm 110:3, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” That means far more than that they shall be ready to hearken to and believe the glad tidings of the Gospel. There is brought over into the Gospel substantially everything which was contained in both the moral and ceremonial Law. The Gospel is not only a message of good news, but a divine commandment and rule of conduct. “For the time is come that judgment must [not “shall”—now, not in the future] begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that *obey not* the gospel of God?” (1Pe 4:17).

The Gospel requires us to deny ourselves, take up the cross daily, and follow Christ in the path of unreserved obedience to God. “Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” signifies that you must with alacrity and readiness respond to God’s revealed will. The *peace* of “the gospel” comes from walking in subjection to its terms and by fulfilling the duties which it prescribes. Just so far as we are obedient to it, we experimentally enjoy its peace. Thus, this third piece of armour is for fortifying the will against Satan’s temptations unto self-will and disobedience, and this, by subjection to the Gospel. Just as the feet are the members which convey the body from place to place, so the will directs the soul. And just as the feet must be adequately shod if we are to walk properly and comfortably, so the will must be brought into subjection unto the revealed will of God if we are to enjoy His peace. Let there be that complete surrender daily, the dedicating of ourselves to God, and then we will be impervious unto Satan’s attacks and temptations to disobedience.

You will take notice when we come to the fourth piece of armour that the “and” is lacking. The first three were joined together, for that which is denoted by those figurative terms is inseparably linked together—the mind, the heart, the will. There you have the complete inner man. “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Eph 6:16). I think the words, “Above all,” have a double force. First, literally, understanding them as a preposition of place, meaning over all, shielding as a canopy, protecting the mind,

the heart and the will. There must be faith in exercise if those three parts of our inner being are to be guarded. Second, "Above all" may be taken adverbially, signifying chiefly, pre-eminently, supremely. It is *an essential* thing that you should take the shield of faith, for Hebrews 11:6 tells us, "But without faith it is impossible to please him." Yes, even if there were sincerity, love, and a pliable will, yet without faith, we could not please Him. Therefore, "Above all" take unto you the shield of faith.

Faith is all in all in resisting temptation. We must be fully persuaded of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures if we are to be awed by their precepts and cheered by their encouragements. We will never heed properly the divine warnings or consolations unless we have explicit confidence in their divine authorship. The whole victory is here ascribed to *faith "above all."* It is not by the breastplate, helmet or sword, but by the shield of faith that we are enabled to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. It seems to be a general principle in the Spirit's arrangement of things in Scripture to put the most vital one in the centre. We have seven pieces of armour, and the shield of faith is the fourth. So in Hebrews 6:4-6, we have five things mentioned, and in the middle is "made partakers of the Holy Spirit."

Faith is the life of all the graces. If faith be not in exercise, love, hope, patience cannot be. Here we find faith intended for the defence of the whole man. The shield of the soldier is something he grips, and raises or lowers as it is needed. It is for the protection of his entire person. Now the figure which the Holy Spirit uses here in connection with Satan's attacks is taken from one of the devices of the ancients in their warfare, namely, the use of darts which had been dipped in tar and set on fire, in order to blind their foes. *That* is what lies behind the metaphor of "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." It has in view Satan's efforts to prevent our looking upward! When these darts were in the air, the soldiers had to bow their heads to avoid them, holding their shields above. And Satan is constantly seeking to prevent our looking upward.

The attacks of the devil are likened to "fiery darts," first, because of the *wrath* with which he shoots them. There is intense hatred in Satan against the child of God. Again, the very essence of his temptations is to *inflame* the passions and distress the conscience. He aims to kindle covetousness, to excite worldly ambition, to ignite our lusts. In James 3:6, we read, "The tongue is set on fire of hell"—that means the devil's "fiery darts" have affected it. Thirdly, his temptations are likened unto "fiery darts" because of *the end* to which they lead if not quenched. Should Satan's temptations be followed out to the end, they would land us in the lake of fire. The figure of "darts" denotes that his temptations are swift, noiseless, dangerous.

Now, taking the shield of faith means appropriating the Word and acting on it. The shield is to protect *the whole* person, wherever the attack be made, whether on spirit, or soul, or body. And there is that in the Word which is exactly suited unto each, but *faith* must lay hold of and employ it. Now, in order to use the shield of faith effectually, the Word of Christ needs to dwell in us “richly” (Col 3:16). We must have right to hand a word which is pertinent for the particular temptation presented. For example, if tempted unto covetousness, we must use, “Lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth.” When solicited by evil companions, “If sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” If tempted to harshness, “Be kindly affectioned one to another.” It is because the *details* of Scripture have so little place in our meditations that Satan trips us so frequently.

Like most of the other terms used, “faith” here also has a double signification. The faith which is to be our “shield” is both an objective and a subjective one. It has reference, first, to the Word of God, without the authority of which, is ever binding upon us. It points, secondly, to our confidence in that Word, the heart going out in trustful expectation to the Author of it, and counting upon its efficacy to repulse the devil.

“And take the helmet of salvation” (Eph 6:17). This is the fifth piece of the Christian’s armour. First of all, we may note the link between the fourth and fifth pieces as denoted by the word, “And,” for this helps us to define *what* the “helmet of salvation” is. It is *linked with faith*! Hebrews 11:1 tells us, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for,” and if we compare 1 Thessalonians 5:8, we get a confirmation of that thought, “But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet the *hope* of salvation.” Here in Thessalonians, then, we have “hope” directly connected with “the helmet.” Incidentally, this verse is one of many in the New Testament which puts salvation in the future rather than in the past! Hope always looks forward, having to do with things to come, as Romans 8:25 tells us, “If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” Now faith and hope are inseparable. They are one in birth and one in growth, and we may add, one in decay. If faith languish, hope is listless.

By the helmet of salvation, then, I understand the heart’s expectation of the good things promised, a well-grounded assurance that God *will* make good to His people those things which His Word presents for future accomplishment. We might link up with this 1 John 3:3—Scriptural hope *purifies*. It delivers from discontent and despair. It comforts the heart in the interval of waiting. Satan is unable to get a Christian to commit many of the grosser sins which are common in the world, so he attacks along other lines. Often he seeks to cast a cloud of gloom over the soul or produce anxiety about the future. Despondency is one of his favourite weapons, for he knows well that, “The joy of the Lord” is our “strength” (Neh 8:10), hence, his frequent efforts to dampen our spirits. To repulse these, we are to “Take the helmet

of salvation.” That is, we are to exercise *hope*—anticipate the blissful future, look forward unto the eternal rest awaiting us; look away from earth to heaven!

“And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:17). God has provided His people with an offensive weapon as well as defensive ones. At first sight that may seem to clash with what we said about Christians *not* being called upon to be aggressive against Satan, seeking to invade his territory and wrest it from him. But this verse does not clash to the slightest degree. 11 Corinthians 7:1 gives us the thought, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.” *That* is the active, aggressive side of the Christian’s warfare. We are not only to resist our lusts, but to subdue and overcome them.

It is significant to note *how late* the “sword of the Spirit” is mentioned in this list. Some have thought that it should have come first, but it is not mentioned until the sixth. Why? I believe there is a twofold reason. First, because all the other graces that have been mentioned are necessary to make a right use of the Word. If there is not a sincere mind and a holy heart, we shall only handle the Word dishonestly. If there is not practical righteousness, then we shall only be handling the Word theoretically. If there is not faith and hope, we shall only misuse it. All the Christian graces that are figuratively contemplated under the other pieces of armour must be in exercise *before* we can profitably handle the Word of God. Second, it teaches us that even when the Christian has attained unto the highest point possible in this life, he still needs *the Word*. Even when he has upon him the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, his feet shod with the shoes of the preparation of the Gospel of peace, and has taken unto himself the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation, he still needs the Word!

The last piece of armour is given in verse 18, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” *Prayer* is that which alone gives us the necessary strength *to use* the other pieces of armour! After the Christian has taken unto himself those six pieces, before he is thoroughly furnished to go forth unto battle and fitted for victory, he needs the help of his General. For this, the apostle bids us pray “always,” with all supplication in the Spirit. We are to fight upon our knees! Only prayer can keep alive the different spiritual graces which are figured by the various pieces of armour. “Praying always,” in *every* season—in times of joy as well as sorrow, in days of adversity as well as prosperity. Not only so, but “*Watching thereunto* with all perseverance.” That is one of the essential elements in prevailing prayer—persistence. Watch yourself that you do not let up, become slack or discouraged. Keep on! The eighteenth verse is as though the apostle said, “Forget not to seek unto *the God* of this ‘armour’ and make humble supplication for His assistance; for only He who has given us these arms can enable us to make a successful use of them.” Some have called it the, “All verse.” “Praying always with

all prayer...with all perseverance, and supplication *for all saints*”—think not only of yourself, but also of your fellow soldiers who are engaged in the same conflict!

NOVEMBER

DRIVEN

“Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he *drove* out the man: and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen 3:23-24). Adam had forfeited the favour of his Maker, having revolted from His government and become an enemy to Him by wicked works. He was alienated from God, unfit for His presence under His wrath. As such, he was no longer capable of enjoying Eden, and therefore, the Lord “sent him forth,” that is, ordered him to depart. But he was not willing to leave, and gave further proof of his waywardness by refusing to comply. But the Lord would not be mocked, and drove him out. He was forcibly expelled from paradise, and his return thither effectually barred. Thus, he became an outcast from God, cut off from His fellowship, banished from the place of delight, sent forth a fugitive into the world. That divine act (the last recorded one of God’s in connection with Adam) signified that he was now at a guilty distance from Him, hateful to Him. It was the *visible* proof that the sentence of Genesis 2:17 had been executed, for spiritual death is the severance of the soul from God (Isa 59:2; Luk 15:24). Thus was God’s holy displeasure manifested, while the presence of the cherubims and the flaming sword intimated that the angels were at war with him, and the way of the tree of life shut up. He had committed the unpardonable sin!

“And when the fowls came down upon the carcases, Abram *drove them away*” (Gen 15:11). What a striking contrast with the above! A blessed promise had been made to Abram, and he had believed the same (Gen 15:4-6). A further promise was given, and he desired an external token as an assurance thereof to confirm his faith. Accordingly, he was bidden to prepare a sacrifice so that a solemn compact could be made between them. Having slain the victims according to divine instructions and laid them out in due order, Abram awaited the Lord’s appearing over those

sacrifices to ratify the covenant. Meanwhile, buzzards and vultures scented the bodies and came to devour the flesh. The patriarch was on the alert and chased the birds away, so that the sacrifices should not be marred. A threefold application, at least, may be legitimately made of this incident.

First, it teaches us that faith will be tried while we await the fulfilment of the Lord's promise. Abram had obediently complied with the Lord's orders, and now that he looked to Him to make good His word, opposition was unexpectedly encountered. But he refused to be daunted and resisted those winged enemies. Then, we should be prepared for such testings, and "Let patience have her perfect work" (Jam 1:4). Second, it pictures faith repelling all attacks made upon the atoning sacrifice of Christ. We need to be very much on our guard at this point, for Satan is very active through his teachers of error, seeking to rob believers of some important aspect of the redemptive work of the Saviour. Only the energy of faith can expel the objections of skepticism. Third, it shows how diligently we need to watch against all intrusions on our devotions, especially those vain and wandering thoughts which are so apt upon the most sacred occasions to arise and interrupt the exercise of our graces. "A watchful eye needs to be kept on our spiritual sacrifices, that nothing be suffered to prey upon them and render them unfit for God's acceptance" (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Adopt not the defeatist attitude and say, "Wandering thoughts are inevitable. I cannot prevent them," for it is written, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jam 4:7). "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21)—by the exercise of faith and perseverance in prayer.

"Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. And the shepherds came and *drove them away*: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock" (Exo 2:16-17). In hot and dry countries, because of the great scarcity of water, wells are highly valued, and, being more or less public property, are often the occasion of contention (cf. Gen 21:25; 26:15, 20). In this present instance, we may perceive the wondrous workings of Providence—as appears plainly in the sequel. At that time, Moses was a fugitive from Pharaoh, a stranger in a foreign country, resting at the well. As he witnessed the shepherds' treatment of those women, he might have selfishly reasoned, "This is none of my affair, I will not meddle with their business. Why should I embroil myself in their quarrel?" No, Moses was not one of that class who think only of themselves. Though in personal distress, he forgot his own troubles, and as a lover of justice and a defender of the weak (Exo 2:12-13), he boldly took the part of the wronged ones. He was well repaid for his kindness. The Lord was with him, and single-handed he drove the shepherds away. He was thereby given favour in the eyes of the women's father, and a door was providentially opened which gave him a shelter, a home, and a wife in a strange land. Thus did all things work together for good. We are never the losers by assisting the helpless and vindicating the oppressed.

“The wicked is *driven away* in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death” (Pro 14:32). How unspeakably solemn is the contrast here presented! “It is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb 9:27), but with what vastly different designs does God commission death unto one and to another! To some, death comes as a messenger of mercy, conducting the soul to everlasting peace and joy, but to the majority, it is an officer of justice, summoning to eternal torment and woe. Thus, this verse presents an aspect of death which has little place in the minds of men. It lifts a corner of the veil and permits us to perceive what very few realize—the power of God put forth in ridding the earth of its cumberers. The wicked, in their mad career, are forcibly removed, for they do not leave it willingly. They cling tenaciously to this life, dreading the one to come. But there is no resisting the divine summons, “This night thy soul shall be required of thee” (Luk 12:20). The soul is forced out of the body, driven away from godless friends, earthly possessions, and carnal joys. He is torn away from his only heaven here with all his unrepentant guilt, unprepared to meet his Judge, a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction. “They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away” (Job 21:18).

“The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was *driven from men*, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like birds’ claws” (Dan 4:33). “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Pro 16:18). Most forcibly is that illustrated in the book of Daniel in connection with the king of Babylon. Providence had raised him to a dizzy height (Dan 4:22), and such exaltation had completely turned his head. How few remain humble when prosperity attends their ways! Divine warning had been given the king, space granted for repentance (Dan 4:23, 25), but he improved it not. For a year later, as he walked in the palace, he said, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” (Dan 4:30). While he was thus boasting, the divine threat was executed, and the monarch was driven from the abodes of men into the haunts of the beasts (Dan 4:31-33). But the divine chastisement was blessed to him and his sanity was restored (Dan 4:34-37). But his successor took not the warning to heart and was destroyed (Dan 5:17-30).

“And was *driven of the devil* into the wilderness” (Luk 8:29). One reason why Christ’s miracles of healing are given so prominent a place in the Gospels, and the condition of sufferers is so minutely described, is that they portray His work of salvation in the soul. By nature, *we* are spiritually deaf, dumb, blind, palsied, leprous, dead in sin. The poor demoniac of Mark 5 and Luke 8 also supplies a lurid picture of the unregenerate—under the power of the enemy in its fiercest display, depicting the terrible hold it has on its victims. This one had his dwelling among the tombs—the place of death and corruption. None could bind him—he was lawless

and intractable, shattering bonds both human and divine, breaking asunder every restraint which wisdom devises. He was untamable—neither education nor expostulation could change his nature. He was devil-driven. Those who are under the government of Christ are drawn and led—those under the devil are furiously impelled—“The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest” (Isa 57:20). He was day and night “cutting himself with stones” (Mar 5:5)—what a spectacle of utter misery! Yet Christ delivered him!

“And when he had made a scourge of small cords, *he drove them all out of the temple*” (Joh 2:15). Christ came here on an errand of pure grace, and therefore almost all His miracles were benign in their character. Yet, to show that He is also the Judge, occasional gleams of justice flashed forth from Him, as in the cursing of the barren fig tree and the destruction of the herd of swine. Generally it was the gentleness of the lamb which marked His conduct, but at times, the majesty of the lion was displayed, as in John 2:16 and 18:6. There He manifested His great displeasure at seeing the sacred place so shamefully profaned, and vindicated the honour of His Father.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK

1. In Salvation

In the nineteenth chapter of Acts, we learn that when the apostle Paul came to Ephesus, he asked some disciples of John the Baptist, “Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?” (Act 19:2). And we are told, “They said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit.” Sad to say, history has repeated itself. Without doubt, were the members of hundreds of so-called “churches” (in which modernism and worldliness rule) asked this same question, they would be obliged to return the identical answer. The reason why those disciples at Ephesus knew not about the Holy Spirit was, most probably, because they had been baptized in Judaea by the forerunner of Christ and then had returned to Ephesus in ignorance of what had taken place on the day of Pentecost. But the reason why the members of the average “church” today know nothing about the third Person of the Godhead is that the preachers they sit under are silent concerning Him.

Nor is it very much better with many of the churches still counted as orthodox. Though the Person of the Spirit may not be repudiated, and though His *name* may occasionally be mentioned, yet only on rare occasions is there any definite scriptural teaching given out concerning the offices and operations of the divine Comforter. In the majority of places where the Lord Jesus is still formally acknowledged to be the only Saviour for sinners, the current teaching of the day is that Christ made it possible for me to be saved. As to the Holy Spirit's work *in salvation*, this is very little understood even by professing Christians. The idea now so widely prevailing is that Christ is offered to man's acceptance, and that *he* must "surrender," "Give his heart to Jesus," "Take his stand for Christ," etc., if the blood of the cross is to avail for his sins. Thus, according to this conception, the finished work of Christ, the greatest work of all time, in all the universe, is left contingent on the fickle will of man as to whether it shall be a success or a failure.

Entering now a much narrower circle in Christendom, in places where it is yet owned that the Holy Spirit has a mission and ministry in connection with the preaching of the Gospel, the general idea that prevails even there is that, when the Gospel of Christ is faithfully preached, the Holy Spirit convicts men of sin and reveals to them their need of a Saviour. But beyond this, very few indeed are prepared to go. The theory prevailing in these places is that the sinner has to *co-operate* with the Spirit, that he must *yield to* the Spirit's "striving" or he will not and cannot be saved. But this pernicious and God-insulting theory denies two things. To argue that the natural man is capable of co-operating with the Spirit is to deny that he is "*dead* in trespasses and sins," for a dead man is incapable of doing anything. And to say that the operations of the Spirit in a man's heart and conscience may be resisted and withstood is to deny His omnipotence.

Ere proceeding farther, and in order to clear the way for what is to follow, a few words need to be said on, "My spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen 6:3), and "Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Act 7:51). Now these passages refer to the *external* word of the Spirit—that is to His testimony through the preached Word. 1 Peter 3:18-20 shows that it was the Spirit of Christ *in Noah* who "strove" with the antediluvians, as the patriarch preached to them (2Pe 2:5). So in Acts 7:52, the very next words explain verse 51—"Which of the *prophets* have not your fathers persecuted?" As Nehemiah said, "Many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit *in thy prophets*" (Neh 9:30).

The external work of the Spirit, His testimony through the Scriptures as it falls upon the outward ear of the natural man, is *always* "resisted" and rejected, which only affords solemn and full demonstration of the awful fact that the "carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom 8:7). But what we would now point out is that Scripture reveals another work of the Holy Spirit, a work that is internal, imperceptible, invisible. This work is always *efficacious*. *It is the Spirit's work in salvation*, begun

in the heart at the new birth, continued or sustained throughout the whole course of the Christian's life on earth, and concluded and consummated in heaven. This is what is referred to in Philippians 1:6, "He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it." This is what is in view in Psalm 138:8, "The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me." This work is wrought by the Spirit in each of God's elect and in them alone.

It has been said that, "The part or office of the Holy Spirit in salvation of God's elect consists in *renewing them*. He quickens the heirs of glory with a spiritual life, enlightens their minds to know Christ, reveals Him to them, forms Him in their hearts, and brings them to build all their hopes of eternal glory on Him alone. He sheds abroad the Father's love in their hearts, and gives them a real sense of it. In which experience of His gracious and effectual work in their souls, they are made to say with the Psalmist, 'Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts' (Psa 65:4)."—S. E. Pierce (1746-1829).

One of the delusions of the day is that an evangelical-believing in Christ lies within the power of the unrenewed man, so that by performing what is naively called, "a simple act of faith," he becomes a renewed man. In other words, it is supposed that man is the beginner of his own salvation. *He* takes the first step, and God does the rest. *He* "believes," and then God comes in and saves him. This is nothing but a bald and blank denial of the Spirit's work altogether. If there is one time more than another when the sinner lies in need of the Spirit's power, it is *at the beginning*. "He who denies the need of the Spirit at the *beginning*, cannot believe in His work at the after stages—nay, cannot believe in the need of the Spirit's work at all. The mightiest and most insuperable difficulty lies at the beginning. If the sinner can get over *that* without the Spirit, he can easily get over the rest. If he does not need the Spirit to enable him to believe, he will not need him to enable him to love" (Horatius Bonar, 1808-1889).

They err greatly who think that, *after* the Spirit has done His work in the conscience, it still remains for man to say whether he shall be regenerated or not, whether he shall believe or not. The Spirit of God does not wait for the sinner to exercise his will *to* believe, instead He works in the elect, "*both to will and to do*" (Phi 2:13). Therefore does JEHOVAH declare, "I am found of them that sought me *not*" (Isa 65:1)—quoted by Paul in Romans 10:20. To "believe" in Christ savingly is a supernatural act, the product of supernatural grace. There is no more power in fallen man to believe to the saving of his soul than he has any merits of his own entitling him to the favour of God. Thus, he is dependent on the Spirit for power as on Christ for worthiness. The Spirit's work is to *apply* the redemption which the Lord Jesus purchased for His people, and the children of God owe their salvation to the One as much as to the Other.

In Titus 3:5, the *salvation* of the redeemed is expressly attributed to God the Spirit, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, *by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*” “If it be asked in what sense men can be said to be ‘saved’ by the renewing of the Spirit, when the salvation is in Christ, the answer is obvious. There is a series of truths to which no link can be wanting. We are saved by the divine purpose, for God hath chosen us to salvation. We are saved by the atonement, as the meritorious ground of all. We are saved by faith as the bond of union to Christ. We are saved by grace as contrasted with works done. We are saved by the truth. We are saved by the renewing of the Holy Spirit, as producing faith in the heart” (Professor George Smeaton, 1814-1889).

I. Regeneration is by the Spirit

“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1). The quickening of those who are dead in trespasses is the work of the third Person of the Trinity, “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Joh 3:6). The natural man is spiritually dead. He is alive sinward and worldward, but dead Godward—“alienated from the life of God” (Eph 4:18). If this solemn truth were really believed, there would be an end of controversy on our present subject. A dead man *cannot* “co-operate” with the Spirit, nor can he “accept Christ.” In 11 Corinthians 3:5, we read, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything.” That is said of Christians. If the regenerate have no capacity to “think” spiritually, still less are the unregenerate able to.

“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” (1Co 2:14). What could be plainer? The “natural man” is fallen in his *unregenerate* state. Unless he be born from above, he is completely devoid of spiritual discernment. Our Lord expressly declared, “Except a man be born again, he *cannot see* the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:3). The “natural man” cannot see himself, his ruin, his depravity, the filthiness of his own righteousness. No matter how plainly God’s truth be presented to him, being blind, he cannot discern either meaning, its spirituality, or its suitedness to his need. A spiritual understanding of the Gospel is as truly due to the operation of the Holy Spirit as that He is the Author of divine revelation. Spiritual life must precede spiritual sight, and the Spirit Himself must enter the heart before there is life, “And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live” (Eze 37:14).

The work of the Spirit in regeneration is a divine miracle which is the result of His forthputting of supernatural power. It is the quickening of a spiritual corpse. It is the bringing of a dead soul to life. The sinner himself can no more accomplish it

by an act of his own will than he can create a universe. This miracle of grace is spoken of in Scripture as, “The exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead” (Eph 1:19-20). “The same power which was put forth to raise Christ from the dead, is put forth in regeneration....Christ’s resurrection is the exemplary pattern of our spiritual resurrection, according to which, as the Spirit wrought in Him, so He works in us a work conformed to His resurrection. As the resurrection of Christ was the great declaration of His being the Son of God, so is regeneration of our being sons of God, being the evidence of our adoption, and also the first discovery of our election. As Christ’s resurrection is the first step to His eternal glory, so regeneration is the first open introduction into all the blessings of that state of grace into which the child of God is now introduced” (S. E. Pierce).

II. Meetness for Heaven Is by the Spirit

Our *title* to the glory lies in the righteousness of Christ. Our personal *fitness* for it lies in the Holy Spirit’s regeneration of us. Writing to the regenerated at Colosse, the apostle said, “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col 1:12). And then he shows *wherein* this *meetness* consists, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col 1:13). Their title is without them, their “meetness” within. The Holy Spirit has created in them a nature which is capacitated to know and enjoy the Triune God.

In our unregenerate state, we were completely under the power of darkness, that is, of sin and Satan, and we were less able to deliver ourselves from this bondage than Jonah was able to escape from the belly of the whale. We “sat in darkness” and “in the region and shadow of death” (Mat 4:16). We were “captives,” “bound,” and “in prison” (Isa 61:1). We were those “having *no* hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). From this dreadful state, every renewed soul has been “delivered” by the gracious, sovereign, invincible power of the Holy Spirit, and has been “translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.” Then, let each renewed reader give equal homage, adoration, worship to Him, as to the Father and the Son.

III. Justification and Sanctification Are by the Spirit

“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and *by the Spirit* of our God” (1Co 6:11). This is a remarkable Scripture and little pondered. It would lead us too far away from our present theme were we to attempt a full exposition of it. Two things

only would we barely point out. The three saving blessings enumerated in this verse are referred, first, to the “name” or merits of Christ as the procuring cause, and then, to the Holy Spirit, who makes the elect partakers of them, by His own effectual application. He it is who enlightens their minds and opens their hearts to take in and be assured that they *are* “washed, sanctified and justified.”

IV. Faith is from the Spirit

A deeply taught servant of God once wrote to a young preacher, “Never represent faith as being an act so ‘simple’ that the work of the Spirit is not needed to produce it.” Yet this is what has been commonly done. A great many of the evangelists of the past hundred years have displayed a zeal which was not according to knowledge (Rom 10:2), and manifested a far greater concern to see souls saved than to preach the truth of God in its purity. In their efforts to show the *simplicity* of the “way of salvation,” they have lost sight of the *difficulties* of salvation (Luk 18:24; 1Pe 4:18). In their pressing of the responsibility of man to believe, they have ignored the fact that none can believe till the Spirit imparts faith. To present Christ to the sinner, and then throw him back on his own will, is to mock his helplessness. The work of the Spirit in the heart is as real and urgent a need as was the work of Christ on the cross. For the heart truly to believe in and trust God is a *spiritual* act, a good fruit,” and if fallen man possesses inherent power to do good, then to present the atonement to him is altogether needless.

There is no middle ground between death and life, no intermediate stage between conversion and non-conversion. The bestowal of eternal life is instantaneous. We are “*created* in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:10). It is a most serious error to suppose that after the Spirit of God has done His work in the sinner, it still remains for him to say whether he shall believe or not. All who are the recipients of His supernatural operations *are* regenerated, effectually converted, and actually believe. It is not that the Spirit imparts capacity to believe and then waits for the individual to exercise his will to believe. No, He works in the “both to will *and* to do” (Phi 2:13). I may tell a man that in the next room there is a lighted lamp, and he may not believe me. But let me bring it into the room where he is, so that he sees the light for himself, and he is irresistibly persuaded. So a servant of God may tell a man that Christ is sufficient for the chief of sinners, and he believes not. But when Christ is “revealed *in* him” (Gal 1:16), he cannot but trust Him—see 11 Corinthians 4:6.

How perversely men *reverse* the order of God’s truth. They urge dead sinners to come to Christ, supposing they have power of will to do so, whereas Christ has plainly and emphatically stated that, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Joh 6:44). “Coming to Christ” is the affections of

the heart being drawn out towards Him, and how can one love a person he *knows not*? (see Joh 4:10). Ah, it is the Spirit who must bring Christ to me, reveal Him in me, before I can truly know Him. “Coming to Christ” is an *inward* and *spiritual* act, not an outward and natural one. Truly, “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” (1Co 2:14). We cannot so much as “see” Christ until we are born again (Joh 3:3).

Saving grace is something more than an objective fact presented to us. It is a subjective operation wrought within us. As it is not by *natural* discernment that I discover my need of Christ, so it is not by my natural strength and will that I “come” to Him. There must be life and light (sight) before there can be motion. A babe has to be born, and have strength and sight too, before it is able to “come” to its parent. Believing in Christ is a supernatural act, the product of supernatural power. One may, by means of grammatical phrases and spiritual propositions, teach spiritual truth to another, but he cannot illumine his mind with respect thereto. He may tell a man that God is holy, but he cannot impart to him a *consciousness* that God is holy. He may tell him that sin is infinitely heinous, but he cannot beget in him a *feeling* or heart realization that it is so. To those who were well acquainted with him outwardly, Christ said, “Ye neither know me nor my Father” (Joh 8:19). A man may “know the way of righteousness” (2Pe 2:21) theoretically, intellectually, but that is a vastly different matter (though very few are inwardly aware of it) from a spiritual and experimental acquaintance with it.

“We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak” (2Co 4:13). Here the Spirit of God is spoken of according to the work which He performs. “The title ‘*Spirit of faith*’ intimates that the Holy Spirit is the Author of faith, for all men have not faith. That is, it is not given to all and does not belong to all (2Th 3:2). The designation means that the procuring cause of faith is the Holy Spirit, who produces this effect by an invincible call, an invitation which accompanies, according to the good pleasure of His will, the external proclamation of the Gospel. The faith, therefore, of which He is the Author, is not effected by the hearer’s own effectual will....The special operation of the Spirit inclines the sinner previously disinclined, to receive the invitation of the Gospel. For it is He alone, acting as the Spirit of faith, that removes the enmity of the carnal mind to those doctrines of the cross which, but for this, would seem to him unnecessary, or foolish and offensive” (Professor George Smeaton).

Writing to the Philippian saints, the apostle declared, “Unto you it is *given*...to believe on him” (Phi 1:29). Faith is God’s “gift,” as Ephesians 2:8-9 positively affirms. It is not a gift *offered* for man’s acceptance, but actually conferred upon God’s children, breathed into them. It is imparted to each of God’s elect, at His appointed time, by the Holy Spirit. It is not produced by the creature’s will, but is of

the “faith of *the operation* of God” (Col 2:12). We read of “the *work* of God’s children, breathed into them.” It is the “work” of the Spirit, by His supernatural action. The Holy Spirit is given by Christ to this end, that each of those for whom He died should be brought to a saving knowledge of the truth. Therefore, we are told, “Who by him [not by our wills] do believe in God” (1Pe 1:21). In 1 Corinthians 3:5, it is said, “By whom ye believed, even as the *Lord* gave to every man.” So in Ephesians 6:23, it is declared, “Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, *from* God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The very degree and strength of our faith is determined solely by God. “Think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the *measure* of faith” (Rom 12:3). If by grace, you are truly a “believer,” let the reader give God the Spirit honour, glory, and praise for it.

V. Salvation Is Wholly Applied by the Spirit

“We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation *through sanctification of the Spirit* and belief of the truth” (2Th 2:13). The mission of the Spirit in the earth is to apply to God’s elect the redemption purposed by the Father and purchased by the Son for them. The Holy Spirit is here to make good in the souls of the heirs of glory the fruits of the travail of Christ’s soul. This He does by means of the Gospel, by the written and oral ministry of the Scriptures, for the Word of God is the *only* instrument He employs or uses. The Word of God is “the word of life” (Phi 2:16), but it only becomes such in the experience of the individual soul by the immediate operation and application of the Spirit of God. As Paul wrote to the Thessalonian saints, “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit” (1Th 1:5). This is not to deny the efficacy of the Word itself, but is to insist that the direct agency of the Spirit on the heart is absolutely necessary in order to the *reception* of the Word. The Word is a lamp unto our path, but there must be an opening of the eyes of our understanding by the Spirit before we can *see* its light.

The salvation of God’s elect was purposed, planned, and provided by God the Father before the foundation of the world. It was procured and secured by the incarnation, obedience, death, and resurrection of God the Son. It is made known, applied to, and wrought in them by God the Spirit. Thus, “Salvation is of the LORD” (Jon 2:9), and man has no part in it at any point whatsoever. The child of God is not the earner, but the recipient of it. Faith is not the condition which the elect sinner must perform in order to obtain salvation, but is the means and channel through which he personally *enjoys* the salvation of the Triune JEHOVAH.

THE EVERLASTING COVENANT

Part 1

Dr. Hugh Martin (1821-1885) began his invaluable work on the atonement by saying, “If we would investigate the very doctrines of atonement which God’s Word sets forth—avoiding arbitrary and capricious speculations, and illegitimate and useless trains of thought—it must be laid down at the outset, as a proposition of transcendent importance, that the doctrine of the atonement ought to be discussed and defended as inside the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace.” Alas that so many have failed to do so, with the result that the foundations of faith have been undermined, truth has been perverted, the people of God have been perplexed, and the enemies of the Lord afforded every opportunity to attack with no little success an otherwise impregnable fortress.

The satisfaction or atonement of Christ ought never to be separated from its *source*, that source being the eternal agreement entered into by the Persons of the Godhead. That which Christ wrought out in time was what had been determined upon in the timeless counsels of the Holy Trinity. That which was accomplished here in this world was what had been decided upon and ordained in heaven before ever this earth had an existence. Christ did not propose the plan of reconciliation or offer to carry it into execution, instead it was proposed unto Him. The Father drew the plan and proposed it unto Christ as the God-man, the Mediator. He most cheerfully engaged to carry out that plan. The Holy Spirit was a witness unto that great transaction between the Father and the Son, and He recorded it in the eternal volume of the divine decrees, and has accurately and authentically stated it in the Holy Scriptures, in which we read of, “The blood of *the everlasting covenant*” (Heb 13:20).

When writing or thinking of the work of redemption, we ought to ascend to its *source*, and begin with the consideration of that eternal agreement between the Persons of the Godhead on which the whole dispensation of divine grace to the elect is founded. It is failure to recognize or refusal to believe what is revealed in the Scripture of truth concerning the relation of Christ’s mediatorial work to the everlasting covenant which has engendered so many fruitless controversies upon the atonement. Once we are enabled to discern the fact of, the terms of, the immutability of the covenant of grace, then, such questions as the injustice of an innocent person suffering for the guilty, of the certain efficacy or contingent inefficacy of Christ’s sacrifice securing what it was designed to effect, and of the

scope or extent of the atonement—whether for all mankind or only the elect of God—are settled once and for all.

That Scripture expressly reveals an organic connection between the covenant of grace and the sacrifice of Christ is plain from the words of Hebrews 13:20, “The blood of the everlasting covenant.” So again in Zechariah 9:11, we find God saying to the Mediator, “By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.” Our blessed Lord Himself, when instituting the memorial supper, said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (1Co 11:25). It is the blood which makes an atonement for the soul (Lev 17:11), but it does so because that blood is “the blood of the everlasting covenant.” In Hebrews 8:6, Christ is expressly denominated the “mediator of a better covenant,” and in Hebrews 7:22, “a surety of a better covenant.” Yes, Scripture represents Him as the very *substance* of the covenant. “I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a *covenant* of the people, for a light of the Gentiles” (Isa 42:6).

Now a covenant is an agreement between two parties who are under mutual engagements. Something is to be done by one of the parties, in consequence of which the other party binds himself to do something in return. When a master, for example, enters into an agreement or covenant with a servant, he prescribes certain duties to be performed by the servant, and promises to recompense him with suitable wages. By consenting to the compact, the servant becomes bound to perform the stipulated work, and the master is bound to bestow the reward when the term of labour is finished. In a covenant, therefore, there are two parts, a condition and a promise. When the condition of the covenant is met, the performer is by right entitled to the reward.

In his truly excellent work, *The Satisfaction of Christ* (1650), Dr. John Owen (1616-1683), the prince of the Puritans, when treating of the everlasting covenant, pointed out, “There are five things required to the complete establishing and accomplishing of such a compact and agreement, 1. That there be sundry persons, two at least, namely, a promiser and undertaker, agreeing voluntarily together in counsel and design, for the accomplishment, and to bring about some common end, acceptable to them both, so agreeing together; being both to do somewhat, that they are not otherwise obliged to do; there must be some common end agreed on by them, wherein they are delighted; and if they do not both voluntarily agree to what is on each hand incumbent, it is no covenant or compact, but an imposition of one upon the other. 2. That the person promising who is the principal engager in the covenant, do require something at the hand of the other, to be done or undergone, wherein he is concerned. He is to prescribe something to him, which is the condition, whereon the accomplishment of the end aimed at, is to depend. 3. That he make to him who doth undertake, such promises as are necessary for his supportment and encouragement, and which may fully balance in his judgment, all

that is required of him, or prescribed to him. 4. That upon the consideration of the condition and promise, the duty and reward prescribed and engaged for, as formerly mentioned, the undertaker do voluntarily address himself to the one, and expect the accomplishment of the other. 5. That the accomplishment of the condition being pleaded by the undertaker, and approved by the promiser, the common end originally designed, be brought about and established. These five things are required to the entering into, and complete accomplishment of such a covenant, convention, or agreement, as is built on personal performances; and they are all eminently expressed in the Scripture, to be found in the compact between the Father and the Son.”

Let us adopt these statements as our divisions:

I. The Agreement between the Father and the Son

God and the Mediator agreed together in counsel for the accomplishment of a common end, namely, the promotion of the manifested glory of God in the salvation of His elect. In Zechariah 6:13, we read, “And the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” The reference here is to the Lord JEHOVAH, and the Man, whose name is “the Branch” of the previous verse. The “counsel of peace” signifies the compact or agreement between Them, as to the reconciliation between God and His sinful people. There was a voluntary concern of the Father and the Son for the accomplishment of the work of peace in bringing us to God. It is to this that Isaiah 9:6 also refers. There Christ is called, “Wonderful, Counsellor,” as concurring in the design of His Father, and with Him, to be the Child born and the Son given “to us,” that He might be the Prince of peace. In that connection, and in that passage (only) is Christ called “the everlasting Father,” because His everlasting “children” (Heb 2:13) were being covenanted for. So, too, in Zechariah 13:7, the Mediator is addressed by JEHOVAH as, “My Fellow,” because they had taken counsel together about the work of our salvation.

The Mediator’s voluntary acceptance of the Father’s proposal is clearly seen from His own language in that great Messianic Psalm, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:7-8). These words express His cheerful compliance with the terms of the covenant, and those terms—God’s “will”—are recorded in the volume of the divine decrees concerning the salvation of God’s elect, and transcribed in the Holy Scriptures.

Therefore is Christ called the “surety of the covenant” (Heb 7:22). A “surety” is a person who gives security for another that he will perform somethings which the other is bound to do. That is, in case of failure, will perform it for him. This work, as given to our Saviour, signifies that He came under obligation to fulfil the

conditions of the covenant for His people. He undertook to yield that obedience unto the law which they owed, and to make satisfaction to divine justice for their sins. A surety for a bankrupt is one who engages to satisfy his creditors by paying his debts. Hence, when the Lord Jesus is called the Surety of the new covenant, it denotes that He undertook to discharge the whole debt which His people owed to the Law of God, the debt of obedience, the debt of suffering.

As we have seen above, our Saviour is also called the “mediator” of the covenant. This title imports that He interposes between God and men to reconcile them. “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1Ti 2:5). For this office, He is qualified by the constitution of His person. Possessed of the divine nature, He agreed to assume the human, that He might be allied to both parties. Very similar in force to the “Mediator” of the new covenant is Christ’s title of, “the last Adam” (1Co 15:45) and a contrast (Rom 5:18) between him and the first Adam. This designation of our Saviour’s declares that He is a *federal Head*, by whose conduct others are affected.

II. The Work the Father Gave the Son to Do

There are many expressions used in both Old and New Testaments which, when carefully weighed, oblige us to conclude that there was an eternal transaction between the Father and the Son—the former assigning to the latter a certain task in order to secure the salvation of His elect. First, it was required of the Surety that He should take on Him the nature of those whom He was to bring to God. Therefore do we find him saying, “A body hast thou prepared me” (Heb 10:5)—that is “appointed for me.” Hence it is said, “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman” (Gal 4:4).

Second, it was required of Him that, in this “body,” or human nature, He should be a *servant*, and yield obedience to God. Therefore we hear the Father saying of Him, “Behold, my servant” (Isa 42:1). The Father required from the Mediator perfect obedience to all the precepts of His law. Therefore are we told in Galatians 4:4, that He was “made under the law.” And so we hear Him expressing, in view of His future incarnation, His intention to fulfil it, “I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:8). He knew and loved the Law, and came into this world to honour it by submission to its authority. From the beginning, He was ever ready to recognize His obligations to God. As a boy, He was “subject unto” His parents (Luk 2:51). By receiving baptism at the hands of His forerunner, He solemnly and publicly dedicated Himself unto the service of His Father, saying, “Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness” (Mat 3:15); and His whole conduct was a commentary upon His declaration, “I must work the works of him that sent me” (Joh 9:4). Though He were a Son, “yet learned he obedience” (Heb 5:8).

Third, it was required of Him that He should suffer and undergo what in justice was due to those He came to deliver. Satisfaction had to be made for their sins. The glory of the Gospel is that, “Grace reigns through righteousness” (Rom 5:21). Salvation is of grace, but this grace comes to us in a way of *righteousness*. It is grace to us, but it was brought about in such a way that all our debt was paid. Thus God is seen to be both just and merciful—just in requiring full compensation to His broken Law—merciful because it was He, and not the sinner, who furnished the ransom. The redeemed are saved without any injury to justice. Now, Christ was “foreordained before the foundation of the world” as the Lamb whose precious blood was to be shed (1Pe 1:19-20). He had received “commandment” to lay down His life (Joh 10:18). Therefore was He “obedient unto death” (Phi 2:8), and hence, when the bitter cup which had been appointed was presented to Him, He said, “Not my will, but thine, be done.”

III. The Promises the Father Made the Son

The promises of the covenant may be distinguished into two classes—the one, those which immediately respected Christ, and the other, that which respected His elect. Let us consider the former first. In relation to Christ Himself, God promised to furnish him with all necessary *preparation for* the arduous work which He had undertaken to perform. Let the reader carefully consult Isaiah 11:2-3; 49:1-3. Again, the Father promised to support him *in* that work. That work was attended with such difficulties that created power, although unimpaired by sin, would have been totally inadequate to it. It was to be performed in human nature, and *that* had failed in an easier undertaking even when possessed of untainted innocence, and of faculties in all their freshness and vigour. Our Saviour was encouraged by the assurance of the divine presence and assistance (see Isaiah 42:1-7). Blessed is it to behold the Lord Jesus firmly depending upon those promises in the most trying occasions.

Once more, the Father promised to confer a glorious *reward* upon His Son’s *accomplishment* of the work. He promised to invest him with honour and power (Psa 110:1; 89:27; 72:8). These promises were fulfilled after His resurrection from the dead, when God gave him a name above every name (Phi 2:9-11). He promised too to accomplish and secure the salvation of that people for whom He had obeyed, suffered, and died (see Isa 53:10-12). He would have an offspring who would arise to call him blessed, and rejoice in the wondrous benefits which He had purchased and procured for them.

Concerning the promises which respect the elect, they were made in the first instance *to Christ*, with whom alone God transacted in the Covenant of Grace. Those promises were made to the Surety, for the persons in whose favour they were to be performed had no actual existence, for that transaction took place before

Genesis 1:1. A remarkable proof of this is found in Titus 1:2, “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, *promised* [not simply “purposed”] before the world began.” If eternal life was promised “before the world began,” it follows that it must have been promised to Christ, who was then constituted the federal Head of His people. “Eternal life” is *the* promise, including all others (see 1Jo 2:25). With Titus 1:2 should be carefully compared 1 Timothy 1:9.

IV. The Son’s Acceptance of the Conditions

The covenant engagement into which our Saviour entered was entirely *voluntary* on His part. There existed no previous obligation, nor was there any authority by which He could be compelled to do it. As a divine Person, He was subject to no one and acknowledged no superior, “He thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Phi 2:6). By a free action of His own will, He consented to execute that work which the Father had proposed to Him. Proof of this is found in Psalm 40:6, which takes us back to the servant of Exodus 21:5-6, who willingly relinquished his rights. So Christ freely and cheerfully undertook to do and suffer the will of His Father.

It is important to be clear upon and hold fast this point. Whatever was the will of the Father, was the will of the Son. Whatever the Father proposed, the Son consented to. If there are any verses in the New Testament which speak of the Father *sending* the Son, there are also many others which affirm His own voluntariness therein, “The Son of man is *come* to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luk 19:10), “Christ Jesus *came* into the world to save sinners” (1Ti 1:15), etc. His words, “I *delight* to do *thy* will, O my God” (Psa 40:8) for ever settle this point.

V. The Father’s Acceptance of the Work Performed

When Christ had completed on earth the work which had been given Him to do, He “offered himself without spot to God” (Heb 9:14). The Lord God evidenced His acceptance of the Mediator’s sacrifice, first, by preserving His body in the grave. With absolute trust the Saviour said, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Psa 16:10). Nor did He. Second, by raising Him from the dead, “Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death” (Act 2:24). In bringing forth the crucified Saviour from the tomb, God showed to all created intelligences that He *was* well pleased with the work His incarnate Son had performed. Moreover, He was raised not as an act of grace or mercy, but “according to the spirit of *holiness*” (Rom 1:4). Thus, the death of Christ was the payment of His people’s debt. His resurrection was God’s receipt. Third, God evidenced His acceptance of Christ’s mediatorial work by exalting His Servant-Son above all creatures (Phi 2:9-11).

VI. The Son's Claim to the Promised Reward

This is what Christ's present intercession on high consists of. It is not through strong crying and tears, in earnest pleadings and supplications, as in the days of His humiliation, but in *laying claim* to His rightful remuneration, namely, that God shall now save "unto the uttermost" all those for whom He acted as Surety. The whole of His high priestly prayer in John 17 is to be regarded in *that* light. There, we behold the Mediator demanding the accomplishment of the whole compact and the fulfilment of all the promises which were made to him when He undertook to become a Saviour (Joh 17:1-4, 9, 12-16), concluding by saying, "Father, I *will* that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" (verse 24).

In Psalm 2, there is a remarkable unfolding of our present theme, which is understood by very few of the Lord's people today. It contains a series of prophecies, which, like all others, are to receive a *double* fulfilment. We confine ourselves now to the original accomplishment of them. First, we behold the leaders of the Gentiles and the rulers of the Jews taking counsel together against JEHOVAH and against His Christ (Psa 2:1-3). This found its fulfilment at the cross, as Acts 4:25-28 plainly shows. Second, we have JEHOVAH's response (Psa 2:4-6)—His derision against them, His threat to visit them in wrath—which was fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem (Mat 22:7), and His exaltation of Christ (Psa 2:6). Third, we hear JEHOVAH saying, "I will *declare* the decree" (Psa 2:7), i.e. I will now make known, publish abroad, the mystery of the everlasting covenant. He owns Christ in resurrection (Act 13:33). Then, He says, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance," etc. (Psa 2:8). "Ask of me"—put in your claim for the fulfilment of that promise to which Thou art now justly entitled.

VII. The Immutability of the Covenant

From all that has been before us, it should be evident, beyond all possibility of contradiction, that the Covenant of Grace is entirely *unconditional* as far as man is concerned, for it was made long before he drew his first breath. The elect themselves cannot be a party to it, though their salvation was the purpose of it. How far, far below the glorious truth of God are the wretched thoughts and opinions of people today! The idea which now prevails is that Christ's death has merely made possible the salvation of men, that it has simply afforded sinners an opportunity of becoming reconciled to God. Instead, the death and resurrection of Christ were the ratification of an eternal agreement between the Father and the Son, which infallibly ensures the salvation of all named in it.

The covenant work of Christ not only gave full and final satisfaction to God for the failed responsibilities of His people, atoning for all their sins and securing a perfect righteousness for them, but it also procured for them the gift of the regenerating Spirit, and with Him, the gifts of repentance, faith, preservation, and glorification. God “*hath* blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3). When? When we believed? No, “*According* as he hath chosen us in him *before* the foundation of the world.” That was not merely an election *to* those blessings, but an actual *bestowment* of them upon us in Christ, and this secures the actual communication of them to us now *through* Christ. In like manner, we are told, “Who hath saved us...according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2Ti 1:9). The “grace” there is in addition to God’s “purpose,” and that “grace” *included* regenerating grace, justifying grace, sanctifying grace, believing grace, glorifying grace (compare 2Ti 1:2).

The salvation of God’s elect is not left contingent on their repenting and believing, but is made certain by God’s promise to Christ that He “*shall* see of the travail of his soul, and shall be *satisfied*” (Isa 53:11). And that promise is made good by giving the Holy Spirit to each of those for whom Christ fulfilled His covenant engagements. Though God’s elect be yet in a state of nature, some of them dead in trespasses, wallowing in the mire of this world, yet has the Father assured His Son, “By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth *thy* prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water (Zec 9:11). He acquired a legal right to their persons, and therefore, in His own appointed time, does God, by His Spirit, bring them forth on to resurrection ground. Assured of this, Christ declared, “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they *shall* hear my voice: and there *shall* be one fold, and one shepherd” (Joh 10:16).

How invincibly certain then is the salvation of every one for whom Christ covenanted! Each of them shall yet say with David, “He hath made with me [in Christ] an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and *sure*: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire” (2Sa 23:5).

COMING TO CHRIST

Part 4

IV. With the Will

The man within the body is possessed of three principal faculties: the understanding, the affections, and the will. As was shown in the first article, all of these were radically affected by the fall. They were defiled and corrupted, and in consequence, they are used in the service of self and sin rather than of God and of Christ. But in regeneration, these faculties are quickened and cleansed by the Spirit—not completely, but initially and continuously so in the life-long process of sanctification, and perfectly so at our glorification. Now each of these three faculties is subordinated to the others by the order of nature, that is, as man had been constituted by his Maker. In Genesis 3:6, we read, “The woman saw [perceived] that the tree was good for food [that was a conclusion drawn by the understanding], and that it was *pleasant* to the eyes [there was response of her affections], and a tree to be desired [there was the moving of the will]...she took [there was the completed action].”

Now the motions of divine grace work through the apprehensions of faith in the understanding, these warming and firing the affections, and they in turn influencing and moving the will. Every faculty of the soul is put forth in a saving “coming to Christ.” “If thou believest with *all* thine heart, thou mayest”—be baptized (Act 8:37). “Coming to Christ” is more immediately an act of the will as John 5:40 shows, yet the will is not active toward Him until the understanding has been enlightened and the affections quickened. The Spirit first causes the sinner to perceive his deep need of Christ, and this by showing him his fearful rebellion against God, and that none but Christ can atone for the same. Secondly, the Spirit creates in the heart a desire after Christ, and this by making him sick of sin and in love with holiness. Third, as the awakened and enlightened soul has been given to see the glory and excellency of Christ, and His perfect suitability to the lost and perishing sinner, then the Spirit draws out the will to set the highest value on that excellency, to esteem it far above all else, and to close with him.

As there is a divine order among the three Persons of the Godhead in providing salvation, so there is in the applying or bestowing of it. It was God the Father’s good pleasure in appointing His people from eternity unto salvation that was the most full and sufficient *impulsive* cause of their salvation, and every whit able to

produce its effect. It was the incarnate Son of God whose obedience and sufferings were the most complete and sufficient *meritorious* cause of their salvation, to which nothing can be added to make it more apt and able to secure the travail of His soul. Yet neither the one nor the other can *actually* save any sinner except as the Spirit *applies* Christ to it. His work becomes the *efficient* and immediate cause of their salvation. In like manner, the sinner is not saved when his understanding is enlightened and his affections fired. There must also be the act of the will, surrendering to God, and laying hold of Christ.

The order of the Spirit's operations corresponds to the three great offices of Christ the Mediator, namely, His prophetic, priestly, and kingly. As Prophet, He is first apprehended by the understanding, the truth of God being received from His lips. As Priest, He is trusted and loved by the heart or affections, His glorious person being first endeared unto the soul by the gracious work which He performed for it. As Potentate, our will must be subdued unto him, so that we submit to His government, yield to His sceptre, and heed His commandments. Nothing short of the throne of our hearts will satisfy the Lord Jesus.

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (Joh 6:44). This "drawing" is accomplished by the Spirit—first, in effectually enlightening the understanding; second, by quickening the affections; third, by freeing the will from the bondage of sin and inclining it toward God. By the invincible workings of grace, the Spirit turns the bent of that will, which before moved only toward sin and vanity, unto Christ. "Thy people," said God unto the Mediator, "shall be willing in the day of thy power" (Psa 110:3). Yet though divine power be put forth upon a human object, the Spirit does not infringe the will's prerogative of acting freely. He morally persuades it. He subdues it. He subdues its sinful intractability. He overcomes its prejudice, wins and draws it by the sweet attractions of grace.

The perfect consistency between the freedom of a regenerated man's spiritual actions and the efficacious grace of God moving him thereto is seen in 11 Corinthians 8:16-17. "But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord, he went unto you." Titus was moved to that work by Paul's exhortation, and was willing "of his own accord" to engage therein, and yet it was "God which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus" for them. God controls the inward feelings and acts of men without interfering with either their liberty or responsibility. The zeal of Titus was the spontaneous effusion of his own heart, and was an index to and element of his character. Nevertheless, God wrought in him both to will and to do of *His* good pleasure.

No sinner savingly "comes to Christ," or truly receives Him into the heart, until the will freely consents (not merely "assents" in a theoretical way) to the severe and

self-denying terms upon which He is presented in the Gospel. No sinner is prepared to forsake all for Christ, take up “the cross,” and “follow” Him in the path of universal obedience, until the heart genuinely esteems Him “the fairest among ten thousand,” and this none ever to do before the understanding has been supernaturally enlightened and the affections supernaturally quickened. Obviously, none will espouse themselves with conjugal affections to that person whom they account not the best that can be chosen. It is as the Spirit convicts us of our emptiness and shows us Christ’s fullness, our guilt and His righteousness, our filthiness and the cleansing merits of His blood, our depravity and His holiness, that the heart is won and the resistance of the will is overcome.

The holy and spiritual truth of God finds nothing akin to itself in the unregenerate soul, but instead, everything that is opposed to it (Joh 15:18; Rom 8:7). The demands of Christ are too humbling to our natural pride, too searching for the callous conscience, too exacting for our fleshly desires. And a miracle of grace has to be wrought within us before this awful depravity of our nature, this dreadful state of affairs, is changed. That miracle of grace consists in overcoming the resistance which is made by indwelling sin, and creating desires and longing Christward; and then it is that the will cries,

*“Nay, but I yield, I yield,
I can hold out no more;
I sink, by dying love compell’d,
And own Thee Conqueror.”*

A beautiful illustration of this is found in Ruth 1:14-18. Naomi, a back-slidden saint, is on the point of leaving the far country, and (typically) returning to her Father’s house. Her two daughters-in-law wish to accompany her. Faithfully did Naomi bid them, “Count the cost” (Luk 14:28). Instead of at once urging them to act on their first impulse, she pointed out the difficulties and trials to be encountered. This was too much for Orpah. Her “goodness” (like that of the stony-ground hearers, and myriads of others) was only “as a morning cloud,” and “as the early dew,” it quickly went away (Hos 6:4). In blessed contrast with this, we read that Ruth “clave unto her,” saying, “Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest I will go: and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.”

What depth and loveliness of affection were here! What wholehearted self-surrender! See Ruth freely and readily leaving her own country and kindred, tearing herself from every association of nature, turning a deaf ear to her mother-in-law’s begging her to return to her gods (Ruth 1:15) and people. See her renouncing idolatry and all that flesh holds dear, to be a worshipper and servant of the living God, counting all things but loss for the sake of His favour and salvation. And her future conduct proved her faith was genuine and her profession sincere. Ah, naught

but a miraculous work of God in her soul can explain this. It was God working in her, “Both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure” (Phi 2:13).

The relation between our understanding being enlightened and the affections quickened by God, and the resultant consent of the will, is seen in Psalm 119:34, “Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.” “The sure result of regeneration, or the bestowal of understanding, is the devout reverence for the law and a reverent keeping of it in the heart. The Spirit of God makes us to know the Lord and to understand somewhat of His love, wisdom, holiness and majesty, and the result is that we honour the law and yield our hearts to the obedience of the faith. The understanding operates upon the affections. It convinces the heart of the beauty of the law, so that the soul loves it with all its powers. And then it reveals the majesty of the Lawgiver, and the whole nature bows before His supreme will. He alone obeys God who can say, ‘My Lord, I would serve Thee, and do it with all my heart,’ and none can truly say this till they have received, as a free grant, the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit” (Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892).

Ere turning to our final section, a few words need to be added here upon 1 Peter 2:4, “To whom coming, as unto a living stone...ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.” Has the sovereign grace of God inclined me to come unto Christ? Then it is my duty and interest to “abide” in Him (Joh 15:4)—abide in Him by a life of faith daily (Gal 2:20). It is in this way of continual coming to Christ that we are “built up a spiritual house” (1Pe 2:5). It is in this way that the life of grace is maintained, until it issues in the life of glory. Faith is to be always receiving out of His fullness “grace for grace” (Joh 1:16). Daily should there be the renewed dedication of myself unto Him and the heart’s occupation with Him.

V. Tests

Unto those who never savingly “came to Christ,” He will yet say, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat 25:41). The contemplation of those awful words ought almost to freeze the very blood in our veins, searching our consciences, and aweing our hearts. But, alas, it is much to be feared that Satan will blunt their piercing force to many of our readers, by assuring them that *they have already* come to Christ, and telling them they are fools to doubt it for a moment. But, dear friend, seeing that there is no less than your immortal soul at stake, that whether you spend eternity in heaven with the blessed or in hell with the cursed, hinges on whether or not you really and truly “come to Christ,” will you not read the paragraphs which follow with double care?

1. How many rest on their sound doctrinal views of Christ. They believe firmly in His deity, His holy humanity, His perfect life, His vicarious death, His bodily

resurrection, His ascension to God's right hand, His present intercession on high, and His second advent. So too did many of those to whom James addressed his epistle, but he reminded them that, "The devils also believe and tremble" (Jam 2:19). Oh my reader, saving faith in Christ is very much more than assenting to the teaching of Scripture concerning Him. It is the giving up of the soul unto Him to be saved, to renounce all else, to yield fully unto Him.

2. How many mistake the absence of doubts for a proof that they have savingly come to Christ. They take for granted that for which they have no clear evidence. But, reader, a man possesses not Christ by faith, as he does money in a strong-box or title deeds of land which are preserved by his lawyer, and which he never looks at once in a year. No, Christ is as "bread" which a man feeds upon, chews, digests, which his stomach works upon continually, and by which he is nourished and strengthened (Joh 6:53). The empty professor feeds upon a good opinion of himself rather than upon Christ.

3. How many mistake the stirring of the emotions for the Spirit's quickening of the affections. If people weep under the preaching of the Word, superficial observers are greatly encouraged. And if they go forward to the "mourners' bench" and sob and wail over their sins, this is regarded as a sure sign that God has savingly convicted them. But a supernatural work of divine grace goes much deeper than that. Tears are but on the surface, and are a matter of temperamental constitution—even in nature, some of those who feel things the most give the least outward sign of it. It is the weeping of the heart which God requires. It is a godly sorrow for sin, which breaks its reigning power over the soul that evidences regeneration.

4. How many mistake a fear of the wrath to come for a hatred of sin. No one wants to go to hell. If the intellect be convinced of its reality, and the unspeakable awfulness of its torments are in a measure believed, then there may be great uneasiness of mind, fear of conscience, and anguish of heart over the prospect of suffering its eternal burnings. Those fears may last a considerable time, yea, their effects may never completely wear off. The subject of them may come under the ministry of a faithful servant of God, hear him describe the deep ploughing of the Spirit's work, and conclude that he has been the subject of them, yet have none of that love for Christ which manifests itself in a life all the details of which seek to honour and glorify Him.

5. How many mistake a false peace for a true one. Let a person who has had awakened within him a natural dread of the lake of fire, whose own conscience has made him wretched, and the preaching he has heard terrified him yet more, then is he not (like a drowning man) ready to clutch at a straw? Let one of the false prophets of the day tell him that all he has to do is to believe John 3:16, and salvation is his, and how eagerly will he—though unchanged in heart—drink in

such “smooth things.” Assured that nothing more is required than firmly to believe that God loves him and that Christ died for him and his burden is gone, peace now fills him. Yes, and nineteen times out of twenty that “peace” is nothing but Satan’s opiate, drugging his conscience and chloroforming him into hell. “There is no [true, spiritual] peace, saith my God, to the wicked,” and unless the heart has been purified, no man will see God (Mat 5:8).

6. How many mistake self-confidence for spiritual assurance. It is natural for each of us to think well and hope well of ourselves, and to imagine with Haman, “I am the man whom the king delighted to honour” (Est 6:6). Perhaps the reader is ready to say, “That is certainly not true of me. So far from having a high esteem, I regard myself as a worthless, sinful creature.” Yes, and so deceitful is the human heart, and so ready is Satan to turn everything to his own advantage, that these very lowly thoughts of self may be feasted on and rested on to assure the heart that all is well with you. The apostate king Saul began by having a lowly estimate of himself (1Sa 9:21).

7. How many make a promise the sole ground of their faith, and look no farther than the letter of it. Thus the Jews were deceived by the letter of the law, for they never saw the spiritual meaning of Moses’ ministry. In like manner, multitudes are deceived by the letter of such promises as Acts 16:31, Romans 10:13, etc., and look not to Christ in them. They see that He is the jewel in the casket, but rest upon the superscription without, and never lay hold of the Treasure within. But unless the *Person* of Christ be apprehended, unless there be a real surrendering to His lordship, unless He be Himself received into the heart, then believing the letter of the promises will avail nothing.

The above paragraphs have been written in the hope that God may be pleased to arouse some empty professors out of their false security. But lest any of Christ’s little ones be stumbled, we close with an excerpt from John Bunyan’s (1628-1688), *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*. “How shall we know that such men are coming to Christ? Answer: Do they cry out at sin, being burdened with it, as an exceedingly bitter thing? Do they fly from it, as from the face of a deadly serpent? Do they cry out of the insufficiency of their own righteousness, as to justification in the sight of God? Do they cry out after the Lord Jesus to save them? Do they see more worth and merit in one drop of Christ’s blood to save them, than in all the sins of the world to damn them? Are they tender of sinning against Jesus Christ? Do they favour Christ in this world, and do they leave all the world for His sake? And are they willing (God helping them) to run hazards for His name, for the love they bear to Him? Are His saints precious to them? If these things be so, these men *are* coming to Christ.”

HEART WORK

Part 4

“God is not the author of confusion” (1Co 14:33). No, the devil causes that, and he has succeeded in creating much in the thinking of many by confounding the “heart” with the “nature.” People say, “I was born with an evil heart, and I cannot help it.” It would be more correct to say, “I was born with an evil nature, which I am responsible to subdue.” The Christian needs clearly to recognize that *in addition* to his two “natures”—the flesh and the spirit—he has a heart which God requires him to “keep.” We have already touched upon this point, but deem it advisable to add a further word there. I cannot change or better my “nature,” but I may and must my “heart.” For example, “nature” is slothful and loves ease, but the Christian is to redeem the time and be zealous of good works. Nature hates the thought of death, but the Christian should bring his heart to desire to depart and be with Christ.

The popular religion of the day is either a head or a hand one. That is to say, the labouring to acquire a larger and fuller intellectual group of the things of God or a constant round of activities called, “Service for the Lord.” But the *heart* is neglected! Thousands are reading, studying, taking “Bible courses,” but for all the *spiritual* benefits their souls derive, they might as well be engaged in breaking stones. Lest it be thought that such a stricture is too severe, we quote a sentence from a letter recently received from one who has completed no less than eight of these “Bible study courses.” “There was nothing in that ‘hard work’ which ever called for self-examination, which led me really to know God, and appropriate the Scriptures to my deep need.” No, of course there was not! Their compilers—like nearly all the speakers at the big “Bible conferences”—studiously avoid all that is unpalatable to the flesh, all that condemns the natural man, all that pierces and searches the conscience. Oh, the tragedy of this *head* “Christianity.”

Equally pitiable is the *hand* religion of the day, when young “converts” are put to teaching a Sunday school class, urged to “speak” in the open air, or take up “personal work.” How many thousands of beardless youths and young girls are now engaged in what is called, “Winning souls for Christ,” when *their own* souls are spiritually starved! They may “memorize” two or three verses of Scripture a day, but that does not mean their souls are being fed. How many are giving their evenings to helping in some “mission,” when they need to be spending the time in “the secret of the Most High”! And how many bewildered souls are using the major part of the Lord’s day in rushing from one meeting to another instead of seeking

from God that which will fortify them against the temptations of the week! Oh, the tragedy of this *hand* “Christianity.”

How subtle the devil is! Under the guise of promoting growth in “the knowledge of the Lord,” he gets people to attend a ceaseless round of meetings, or to read an almost endless number of religious periodicals and books. Or under the pretence of “honouring the Lord,” by all this so-called “service,” he induces the one or the other to *neglect* the great task which *God* has set before us—“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23). Ah, it is far easier to speak to others than it is constantly to use and improve all holy means and duties to preserve the soul from sin, and maintain it in sweet and free communion with God. It is far easier to spend an hour reading a sensational article upon “the signs of the times,” than it is to spend an hour in agonizing before God for purifying and rectifying grace!

This work of keeping the heart is of *supreme importance*. The total disregard of it means that we are mere formalists. “My son, give me thine heart” (Pro 23:26). Until *that* be done, God will accept nothing from us. The prayers and praises of our lips, the labour of our hands, yea, and a correct outward walk, are things of no value in *His* sight while the heart be estranged from Him. As the inspired apostle declared, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not *love*, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge: and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not *love*, I am nothing: And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not *love*, it profiteth nothing” (1Co 13:1-3). If the heart be not right with God, we cannot *worship* Him, though we may go through the form of it. Watch diligently, then, your love for *Him*.

God cannot be imposed upon, and he who takes *no* care to order his heart aright before Him is a hypocrite. “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, *but their heart* goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument” (Eze 33:31-32). Here are a company of formal hypocrites, as is evident from the words, “as my people”—like them, but not of them. And what constituted them impostors? Their outside was very fair—high professions, reverent postures, much seeming delight in the means of grace. Ah, but their *hearts* were not set on God, but were commanded by their lusts, went after covetousness.

But lest a real Christian should infer from the above that He is a hypocrite too, because many times his heart wanders, and he finds—strive all he may—that he cannot keep his mind stayed upon God when praying, reading His Word, or

engaged in public worship, to him we answer that the objection carries its own refutation. You say, “Strive all I may.” Ah, if you *have*, then the blessing of the upright is yours, even though God sees well to exercise you over the affliction of a wandering mind. There remains still much in the understanding and affections to humble you, but if you are *exercised* over them, strive against them, and *sorrow over* your very imperfect success, then that is quite enough to clear you of the charge of reigning hypocrisy.

The keeping of the heart is supremely important because, “out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23). It is the source and fountain of all vital actions and operations. The heart is the warehouse, the hand and tongue are but the shops. What is in *these* comes from *thence*—the heart contrives and the members execute. It is in the heart that the principles of the spiritual life are formed, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil” (Luk 6:45). Then, let us diligently see to it that the heart be well stored with pious instruction, seeking to increase in grateful love, reverential fear, hatred of sin, and benevolence in all its exercises, that from within these holy springs may flow and fructify our whole conduct and conversation.

This work of keeping the heart is *the hardest of all*. “To shuffle over religious duties with a loose and heedless spirit will cost no great pains, but to set thyself before the Lord, and tie up thy loose and vain thoughts to a constant and serious attendance upon Him—this will cost something! To attain a facility and dexterity of language in prayer, and put thy meaning into apt and decent expressions, is easy. But to get thy heart broken for sin whilst thou art confessing it, be melted with free grace, whilst thou art blessing God for it, be really ashamed and humbled through the apprehensions of God’s infinite holiness, and to *keep* thy heart in *this* frame, not only in, but after duty, will surely cost thee some groans and travailing pain of soul. To repress the outward acts of sin, and compose the external acts of thy life in a laudable and comely manner, is no great matter—even carnal persons by the force of common principles can do this. But to kill the root of corruption within, to set and keep up a holy government over thy thoughts, to have all things lie straight and orderly in the heart, this is *not* easy” (John Flavel, 1630-1691).

Ah, dear reader, it is far, far easier to speak in the open air than to uproot pride from your soul. It calls for much less toil to go out and distribute tracts than it does to cast out of your mind unholy thoughts. One can speak to the unsaved much more readily than he can deny self, take up his cross daily, and follow Christ in the path of obedience. And one can teach a class in the Sunday school with far less trouble than he can teach himself how to strengthen his own spiritual graces. To keep the heart with all diligence calls for frequent examination of its frames and dispositions, the observing of its attitude towards God, and the prevailing directions of its affections, and that is something which no empty professor can be brought to do!

Give liberally to religious enterprises he may, but give himself unto the searching, purifying and keeping of his heart, he will not.

This work of keeping the heart is *a constant one*. “The keeping of the heart is such a work as is never done till life be done. This labour and our life end together. It is with a Christian in this business, as it is with seamen that have sprung a leak at sea. If they tug not constantly at the pump, the water increases upon them, and will quickly sink them. It is in vain for them to say the work is hard, and we are weary. There is not time or condition in the life of a Christian which will suffer an intermission of this work. It is in the keeping watch over our hearts, as it was in the keeping up of Moses’ hands, while Israel and Amalek were fighting below (Exo 17:12). No sooner do Moses’ hands grow heavy and sink down, but Amalek prevails. You know it cost David and Peter many a sad day and night for intermitting the watch over their own hearts but a few minutes” (J. Flavel).

Having sought to show that the keeping of the heart is the great work assigned the Christian, in which the very soul and life of true religion consists, and without the performance of which all other duties are unacceptable to God, let us now point out some of the corollaries and consequences which necessarily follow from this fact.

1. The labours which many have taken in religion are lost. Many great services have been performed, many wonderful works wrought by men, which have been utterly rejected by God, and shall receive no recognition in the day of rewards. Why? Because they took no pains to keep their hearts with God in those duties. This is the fatal rock upon which thousands of vain professors have wrecked to their eternal undoing—they were diligent about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. How many hours have professors spent in hearing, reading, conferring, and praying, and yet, as to the supreme task God has assigned, have done nothing. Tell me, vain professor, when did you shed tears for the coldness, deadness, and worldliness of your heart? When did you spend five minutes in a serious effort to keep, purge, improve it? Think you that such an easy religion can save you? If so, we must *inverse* the words of Christ and say, “Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth unto life, and many there be that go in thereat.”

2. If the keeping of the heart be the great work of the Christian, then how few *real* Christians are there in the world. If every one who has learned the dialect of Christianity and can talk like a Christian, if every one who has natural gifts and abilities and who is helped by the common assisting presence of the Spirit to pray and teach like a Christian, if all who associate themselves with the people of God, contribute of their means to His cause, take delight in public ordinances, and pass as Christians were real ones, then the number of the saints would be considerable. But, alas, to what a little flock do they shrink when measured by *this* rule. How few make conscience of keeping their hearts, watching their thoughts, judging their

motives. Ah, there is no human applause to induce men to engage in this difficult work, and were hypocrites to do so, they would quickly discover what they do not care to know. This heart work is left in the hands of a few hidden ones. Reader, are *you* one of them?

3. Unless real Christians spend more time and pains about their hearts than they have done, they are never likely to grow in grace, be of much use to God, or be possessors of much comfort in this world. You say, “But my heart seems so listless and dead.” Do you wonder at it, when you keep it not in daily communion with Him who is the fountain of life? If your body had received no more concern and attention than your soul, what state would it now be in? Oh, my brother or sister, has not your zeal run in the wrong channels? God may be enjoyed even in the midst of earthly employments, “Enoch walked with God, and begat sons and daughters” (Gen 5:19-24)—he did not retire into a monastery, nor is there any need for you to do so.

4. It is high time the Christian reader set to this heart work in real earnest. Do not you lament, “They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept” (Song 1:6)? Then away with fruitless controversies and idle questions! Away with empty names and vain shows! Away with harsh censuring of others—turn upon yourself. You have been a stranger long enough to this work. You have trifled about the borders of religion too long. The world has deterred you from this vitally necessary work too long. Will you now resolve to look better after your heart? Haste you to your closet.

DECEMBER

THE BOUNTIES OF GOD

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1Co 2:9). How often this passage is quoted only as far as we have now quoted it. How rarely are the following words added, “But God *hath* revealed them unto us by his Spirit” (1Co 2:10). Why is this? Is it because so few of God’s people search out and live in the enjoyment of what the Spirit has revealed in the Word concerning those things which God has prepared for them that love Him? If we were more occupied with God’s riches than with our poverty, Christ’s fullness than our emptiness, the divine bounties than our leanness, on what a different plane of experience should we live!

Of late, we have been much impressed by noting some of “the *riches* of his grace” (Eph 1:7). It is indeed striking to note that our Christian life starts at a marriage feast (Luk 14:16-23; Mat 22:1-14), just as Christ’s first miracle was wrought at one (Joh 21-11). The word to us is, “Come, for all things are *now* ready” (Luk 14:17). “Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage” (Mat 22:4). Observe the, “I have *prepared*,” agreeing with “the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” in 1 Corinthians 2:9. Notice the “*are* ready,” confirming the, “God *hath* revealed them unto us” of 1 Corinthians 2:10. Mark the, “my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings,” for “all things are of God” (2Co 5:18). The creature contributes nothing, all is provided for him. Finally, weigh the, “Come unto *the marriage*.” The figure is very blessed. It speaks of joy, festivity, feasting.

*He spread the banquet, made me eat,
Bid all my fears remove,
Yea, o’er my guilty, rebel head
He placed His banner—Love.*

Practically the same figure is employed by Christ again in Luke 15. There He pictures the penitent prodigal welcomed home by the Father. No sooner is he clothed and fitted for the “house” than the words go forth, “Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and *be merry*” (Luk 15:23), and we are told, “They began to be merry.” Since, in the parable, that merriment met with no reverse, since it is portrayed without a break and without a bound, then assuredly, we may conclude that this new-born joy ought to go on characterizing all who know that they are within this festive scene—as truly so now, as soon it will be in the glory.

A beautiful type of the lavish manner in which God bestows His bounties upon His people is found in Genesis 9:3, “Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you *all* things.” This was JEHOVAH’S response to the “sweet savour” which He had just smelled. It is most important that we should note the connection, and perceive the ground on which God so freely bestowed “all things” upon the patriarch. At the close of Genesis 8, we see Noah building an altar unto the Lord, and presenting burnt offerings thereon. Here at the beginning of Genesis 9, we learn God’s answer thereto.

What has just been before us blessedly foreshadowed the unmeasured portion bestowed upon the new creation, the members of which have been “blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3). These “blessings” are based upon God’s estimate of the value of Christ’s sacrifice of Himself. The abiding worth of that sacrifice is immeasurable and illimitable, as immeasurable as the personal excellency of the Son, as illimitable as the Father’s delight in him. How the nature and extent of those blessings, which accrue to God’s elect on the ground of Christ and His finished work, are intimated by the substantives and adjectives employed by the Holy Spirit when describing the profuseness of the divine bounties which have already been bestowed upon us, and which we shall enjoy for ever and ever!

Take, first, God’s *grace*. Not only are we told of the “riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7), and of the “exceeding riches of his grace” (Eph 2:7), but we read that it has “*abounded* unto many,” and that we receive “abundance of grace,” yea, that grace has (Greek) “*super-abounded*” (Rom 5:15, 17, 21). It is the limitless wealth of divine grace flowing forth and multiplying itself in its objects. The foundation, or moving cause of this, is made known in John 1. When the only-begotten Son of the Father became flesh and tabernacled here for a season, it was as One who was “*full* of grace and truth,” and because we have been made joint heirs with Him, it is written, “And of his *fulness* have all we received and grace upon grace” (Joh 1:16).

Take again God’s *love*. There has been neither reserve nor restraint in the outflow of His love to its loveless and unlovely objects. He has loved His people with an everlasting love (Jer 31:3), and wondrously has He manifested it. For when the fullness of time was come, He sent forth His Son, born of a woman, yes, He did

so love the world as to give His only-begotten Son, “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Joh 3:15). And therefore do we read of His “*great* love wherewith he loved us” (Eph 2:4). The Greek word which is there translated, “great,” is rendered, “plenteous,” in Matthew 9:37 and “abundant” in 1 Peter 1:3. Love unmeasured, that passes knowledge, filling our lives with its unceasing ministrations, ever active in priesthood and advocacy on high, how truly is it, “Love abundant”!

Our present theme is inexhaustible. Our blessed Lord came here that His people “might have *life*, and that they might have it more *abundantly*” (Joh 10:10). This was first made good when Christ, as the Head of the new creation, the “beginning of the creation of God” (Rev 3:14), breathed on His disciples and said, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit” (Joh 20:22). It was the risen Saviour communicating His resurrection-life to His own (compare Gen 2:7 for the beginning of the old creation). So too, when that same blessed One, who down here received the Spirit without measure (Joh 3:34), ascended on high as the glorified Man, He baptized His people in the Holy Spirit (Act 2:1-4), which as the apostle Paul assures Gentile saints, “He shed on us *abundantly*” (Ti 3:6). Here, once more, is emphasized the profuseness of God’s bounties.

Consider now His *confidences*. Said the Lord Jesus to His disciples, “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for *all* things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (Joh 15:15). There are things which the angels “desire to look into” (1Pe 1:12), yet have they been made known to us by God’s Spirit. What a word is that in Ephesians 1:8-9, “Wherein he hath *abounded* toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will”! This may be termed the abundance of His counsels.

Once more, take the exercise and display of His *power*. The apostle prayed that we might know, “What is the *exceeding greatness* of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:19-20). Here was the might of God working transcendently in an objective way. Its correlative is recoded in Ephesians 3:20, “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh *in* us”—clearly this is the highest forth-putting of energy, working subjectively.

In such lavish measure, then, has God blessed His people. As the apostle wrote to the Colossians concerning Him who is our life, “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete [filled full] in him” (2:9-10). But it is one thing to know, intellectually, of these bounties of God, it is quite

another, by faith, to make them our own. It is one thing to be familiar with the letter of them. It is another to live in the power of and be the personal expression of them.

What shall be our response to such divine munificence? Surely it is that “The abundant grace might through the *thanksgiving* of many redound to the glory of God” (2Co 4:15). Surely it is that *we* should “*abound in hope*, through the power of the Spirit” (Rom 15:13), for it is only here that hope finds its sphere of exercise, as it is only in the saints that it will receive full fruition. If God speaks thus uniformly of the varied character of our blessing—whether it be His grace, His love, His life imparted to us, His confidences, His power, His mercy (1Pe 1:3, etc.)—as being so “abundant,” it must be because He would impress our hearts with the exuberance of the bounties He has bestowed upon us. And the practical effect of this on our souls should be to cause us to, “*Joy in God* through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:11), to draw out all that is within us in true worship, to fit us for closer and deeper fellowship with Himself. “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, *may abound* to every good work” (2Co 9:8). May it be so, for His name’s sake.

THE HOLY SPIRIT’S WORK

2. In the Saved

“The transcendent grace of God is the glorious subject of the everlasting Gospel. It is revealed in it, proclaimed by the preaching of it, in its meridian splendour, in its utmost perfection, and with the utmost plainness and freeness *to sinners as sinners*. The Gospel of salvation is accompanied by the Holy Spirit with life and light to elect sinners, and made the power of God unto their salvation. By it, they hear Christ’s voice, see His glory, behold how He loved them, receive Him into their hearts, live by faith on the Son of God, and find and enjoy every blessing of the Father’s everlasting love and boundless mercies, flowing into their souls through the most precious blood-shedding and inestimable value and everlastingly efficacious sacrifice of the worthy Lamb—all which give us a grand display of the exceeding riches of grace. So saith the apostle, ‘But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)’” (Eph 2:4-5).

“The Holy Spirit having, as the Spirit of life, quickened the elect with spiritual life in their souls, gives them to see, know, and understand the fountain from which all flows. He opens, explains, and applies with divine power to the mind, what Paul, speaking of himself and Timothy, hath declared, ‘Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began’” (2Ti 1:9).

“The Holy Spirit, agreeably to His office in the covenant of grace, is pleased to take of the things of Christ and to ‘shew’ or make them manifest. He leads poor awakened sinners to behold the Lamb of God, and in a sight of Him as set forth in the Word, and testified of by the Spirit therein, they see salvation. On which they cannot forbear individually breaking out, saying, ‘Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation’” (Isa 12:2). Perceiving how exactly suited Christ is to them, and how exactly suited they are for Him to glorify Himself in their eternal redemption, they cannot but prize and esteem Him as the Author and Finisher of their salvation.

“This knowledge concerning Christ they receive from the everlasting Gospel, which is made effectual to them, as accompanied with the divine energy of His Spirit. In it they find Christ, and know that His love passeth knowledge, that His mercy endureth for ever, that His bloody sweat is their everlasting purification, His wounds and bruises received in the day of the Lord’s fierce anger, their everlasting healing, His soul travail, their peace, and His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, their everlasting righteousness and perfection. This gladdens their hearts, and fills their minds with peace, so that in believing the everlasting worth, virtue, and efficacy of His blood and righteousness, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (S. E. Pierce, 1746-1829).

Before the Lord Jesus left His disciples, He declared, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (Joh 14:16). That “Comforter” was henceforth to be the Teacher of God’s saints, giving to them the Holy Scriptures, opening them to their understandings, applying them to their hearts, supplying all their spiritual need. Yet how little do God’s people realize the exceeding preciousness of this gift! How faintly do they apprehend how much they owe, how deeply they are indebted, to the gracious operations of the third Person of the blessed Trinity! How rarely are their hearts engaged and their thoughts occupied with the divine “Comforter”! How scant is the honour, praise, and worship given Him!

The mission of the Spirit in the earth is to bring and apply to the souls of God’s elect that great and glorious redemption which was wrought out and purchased for them by the incarnate Son. “Salvation is of the LORD” (Jon 2:9), entirely so from the beginning to end. The Father purposed, planned, and provided it. The Son

procured and secured it. The Spirit imparts it. Faith perceives, understands, and enjoys it. But faith is neither a faculty nor an act of the natural man. It is the result of “the operation of God” (Col 2:12), namely, the inward, imperceptible, invincible workings of the Holy Spirit. Faith is one of the *senses* of the “new man.” As the physical body has five senses—sight, hearing, etc.—so has the “new man” his senses. That new man which is “created” (Eph 2:10) by the Spirit is “spirit” (Joh 3:6). The “new man” has *eyes* to see that which the natural man cannot (1Co 2:14). He has *ears* to hear that which the unregenerate are totally deaf to (Psa 58:4-5), and so on. But before there can be spiritual eyes and ears, there must be a “spiritual man” *to* see and hear.

A “new creature” (2Co 5:17)—not the old one changed or renovated—has to be brought into existence. This is the product of the Spirit’s creative work. He is here to give new and spiritual being to each of God’s elect, who are, by natural birth, “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1). This is the Holy Spirit’s work *in salvation*. The Holy Spirit is as truly the Saviour of God’s people as Christ is. It is written, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he *saved* us, *by* the washing of regeneration, and renewing of *the Holy Spirit*” (Ti 3:5). And again, “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2Th 2:13). As hell had been our eternal portion, but for the work of Christ, so heaven could never be our dwelling-place, but for the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit not only shows the elect sinner his need *of* Christ, but “reveals” Him *in* him (Gal 1:16). Christ is the “true light” (Joh 1:9), but the unregenerate love “darkness rather than light” (Joh 3:19). Therefore, they will never, of themselves, come to the light. No, the light has to be brought to them. As it is written, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6).

It is not till the sinner has been brought “out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1Pe 2:9) that he comes to Christ. Comes to Him with his *mind* (Isa 26:3), the spiritual “understanding” which has been “given” him (1Jo 5:20). His spiritual “affections” being drawn out to Him (1Pe 1:22), comes to Him with his *will* (Phi 2:13), the new man surrendering completely to His lordship. “Coming to Christ” is *not* an outward, but an inward act. It is not the act of the “natural man” (Joh 6:44), but of the new man (Joh 6:40)—“see” spiritually before “believe.” And this new and spiritual man is the product of the sovereign and supernatural operations of the Spirit, to which *we* contribute nothing, and in which *we* have no part whatever.

The instrument which the Holy Spirit employs, “the seed” which He uses, is the written Word of God. As long as the Word is only presented to us objectively, it makes no spiritual impression upon us. Not until the Holy Spirit implants *within* the soul, subjectively, does the Word *become to us* “quick and powerful” (Heb 4:12). True, that Word is, in itself, the “Word of life” (Phi 2:16), as the germ of life is in

the living grain before it is sown in the ground. But it only *becomes* the “Word of life” *in* the individual when the Holy Spirit imparts it to the soul itself. When He does so, that individual enters into a “saving knowledge of the truth.” God’s great salvation is no longer a beautiful theory, but an experimental fact to the consciousness. Then it is that the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and *shows* them unto me—having previously given *eyes* to see. Then it is that, under the Spirit’s *application* of the Scriptures to my understanding and heart, I gradually discover more and more what a vile and totally depraved sinner I am in myself. And then it is, and thus, I am brought to realize, by the Spirit, how well suited is Christ, the Saviour of *sinners*, to me.

The “new man,” having been formed in the Christian, his new “senses” and faculties need training and developing, as our natural ones did when we were little children. For this, too, the Christian is entirely dependent upon the power and operations of the third Person of the Godhead. He is in constant need of being “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man” (Eph 3:16). For this he should pray indefinitely each day. In everything and for everything the Christian is absolutely dependent upon the Holy Spirit. In the remainder of this article, we shall consider some of the works of the blessed Comforter in the soul.

I. He sheds abroad God’s love in the heart

“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us” (Rom 5:5). The epistle to the Romans contains a full unfolding and exposition of the Gospel of God (Rom 1:1). The verse we have quoted gives the first mention of the Spirit in it (except Rom 1:4). Therefore, this is the logical place to start in our consideration of the Spirit’s work in the Christian. He it is who communicates to the heart of the elect sinner that wondrous love which has dwelt in the heart of God toward him from all eternity (Jer 31:3). It is by the Spirit that a discovery is made to us of God’s love.

No sinner has any real sense of the eternal and redeeming love of God for himself till it is actually communicated by the Spirit. To the unregenerate, Christ said, “But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you” (Joh 5:42). In his unconverted state, the Christian dreaded God, feeling that He was *against* him. Yea, all men naturally hate God (Rom 8:7). It is only when we see His love to us in Christ, by the Comforter, that we repent and love Him—“We love him, because he first loved us” (1Jo 4:19). “The LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, *to* love the LORD thy God” (Deu 30:6). “Though sinners should hear ten thousand times of the love of God in the gift of His Son, they are never properly affected by it, till the Holy Spirit enters their hearts, and till the love to

Him is produced by the truth through the Spirit” (Robert Haldane, 1764-1842)—see 1 Corinthians 2:10.

II. He Assures Us That the Word is God’s

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might *know* the things that are freely given to us of God” (1Co 2:12). In verse 4, the apostle reminded the Corinthians that when he first preached to them, it was “not with enticing words of man’s wisdom”—vain philosophy—but “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,” i.e. with a God-given message. And this was “that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1Co 2:5). That which Paul had preached was the “wisdom of God in a mystery,” i.e. a divine secret, but now disclosed, namely, “the hidden wisdom [counsels of grace], which God *ordained* before the world unto our glory” (1 Cor 2:7). These counsels of grace, this electing love, which was to be accomplished through redemption, “none of the princes of this world knew” (1Co 2:8). That the whole of this passage concerns the predestinating grace of God towards His elect is clear from, “God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1Co 2:10), i.e. He is thoroughly cognizant of and conversant with the secret counsels of the eternal Three in the everlasting covenant.

In 1 Corinthians 2:11, the apostle points out that the human spirit is only capable of understanding human things, so divine things are known only by the divine Spirit. And we Christians have received “not the spirit of the world,” i.e. a mere reasoning faculty, but “the Spirit which is of God,” the Comforter given to us, dwelling in us, and this that, “We might know the things that are freely given to us of God”—given to us now in the written Word for faith’s instruction and encouragement. It is the Holy Spirit who works in the soul of the Christian a firm persuasion, an unshakable assurance, that the Scriptures are the Word of God. It is not only through the testimony and authority of “the church” that he receives them as divine. Godly men may present convincing arguments for their inspiration, and those arguments may win an intellectual assent, but they neither search the conscience nor beget in the soul a spiritual faith in them. The same Spirit who moved holy men of old to write them must work in the heart a consciousness that they are *God’s* Word. It is by the Spirit that we are “established” in the faith (2Co 1:21).

III. He Directs Our Walk

This is the fulfilment of one of the many promises which God has given to His people, “And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Eze 36:27). Even after God has imparted His Spirit to an elect soul, he has to be *caused* to “walk in God’s statutes.” As Jeremiah declared, “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer 10:23). Looked at according to the flesh, the old man, the Christian is not only ignorant of those paths pleasing to God, but he is averse to them. Looked at according to the spirit, the new man, the Christian is but a “babe” in Christ and needs a Guide and Supporter. Of old, the Psalmist confessed, “He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake” (Psa 23:3). This is the acknowledgment of every true Christian.

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom 8:14). This is the chief and distinguishing mark of a true Christian. He is *always* “led by the Spirit,” for He never releases His hold of us. He leads first to Christ, then to the throne of grace, and then to practical godliness, ultimately to the glory. He “leads” by enlightening the desires of the new man, by inclining the will. It is the Spirit of God who keeps us in the narrow way, and delivers from the destructive snares of Satan.

IV. He Prompts All True Obedience

Christians have no more vital godliness than what the Holy Spirit has wrought in them. Some who would assent to this bare statement would probably dissent did they pause to analyse it. We have no more faith than what the Holy Spirit has imparted to us, no more knowledge of God, no more hope or love, than what He has given. This is a very humbling confession to make, and proud flesh resents it. Yet the teaching of Holy Writ makes it unmistakably clear that the Author of all true godliness is the divine Comforter. “By the grace of God I am what I am” (1Co 15:10)—namely, by what the Spirit of God has imparted to me, wrought in me, produced through me, “Without the Lord I can do *nothing*” (Joh 15:5).

In the new nature, given at the new birth, there is a fitness and a readiness unto godly obedience, but *no power*. It has been well said, “We are not in this world intrusted with any spiritual ability from God, as without farther actual assistance and aid to do anything that is good” (Dr. John Owen, 1616-1683). Thus, the Christian stands in daily need and constant need of the Spirit’s gracious operations. “Our sufficiency is of God” (2Co 3:5), and He works in us not only to will, but also to “*do* of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13). Therefore, we find the apostle praying that He would “make you perfect in every good work to do his will.” How? By

“working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight” (Heb 13:21). And thus do the godly own, “For thou also hast wrought all our works in us” (Isa 26:12).

V. He produces all spiritual fruit

Of old, God said, “From *me* is thy fruit found” (Hos 14:8). Spiritual fruit is neither produced by nor does it issue from the natural man. It is produced by the Holy Spirit, and issues from the new man, “Which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24). All that God works in and through His people is by the Spirit. For the Philippians, Paul prayed that they might be “filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Phi 1:11)—inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is the Executive of the Godhead, *He* is to be understood as the producer, they are “by Jesus Christ” as their meritorious cause.

The leading passage on fruit-bearing is found in John 15:1-8. There the Lord Jesus, under the figure of a vine and its branches, teaches us that “fruit” is the consequent and outcome of “abiding” in Him, which is one of the New Testament terms for intimate communion. But communion with Christ is produced and sustained by the Holy Spirit, who is here to glorify Christ. Yet faith has to be in exercise. There must be definite dependence on the Spirit for this. The result of such communion and faith is “fruit,” i.e. “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, temperance,” and in Galatians 5:22, these are expressly called, “the fruit *of the Spirit*.”

VI. He Conforms Us to Christ

To this every believer has been predestinated (Rom 8:29), and the decree of God is made good by the workings of His Spirit. Here again the only instrument which He uses is the written Word. He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto the Christian (Joh 16:13, 15). That is, He opens to our understandings and hearts the glories of Him who is altogether lovely. He shines upon the sacred page so that in His light we see light (Psa 36:9). As our thoughts are occupied with Christ, as our hearts are engaged with Him, the features of His likeness are stamped upon us. This is the meaning of 11 Corinthians 3:18, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

VII. He Inspires All True Prayer

A great deal of what passes for “prayer” today is nothing but the religiousness of the flesh. The Pharisees made long prayers, the Mohammedans and Papists do the same. Nor is Protestantism free from this plague. Again, much of our supposed praying is only the distress of the natural man finding utterance. The most ungodly will cry unto the Lord in moments of real peril and acute pain. But this is nothing better than the cries which animals make when in distress. Thus did God complain about Israel of old, “They have not cried unto me *with their heart*, when they *howled* upon their beds” (Hos 7:14), which plainly intimates that they *had* “cried unto him” with the outward voice, yet was it a cry which was no more effectual than the “howling” of the wild beasts.

Of old, the disciples of the Lord besought Him, “Teach us *to* pray” (Luk 11:1). This needs to be our daily request, for of ourselves we know neither *how* to pray nor *what* to pray for. But thank God, the Spirit is given to Christians “to help their infirmities” (Rom 8:26). This He does by granting them the “spirit of grace and supplication” (Zec 12:10), by showing them from the Scriptures how to present their petitions so as to gain the ear of God. This is “praying in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 1:20). The Spirit is both the inspirer and inditer of all prayer. But His aid must be sought, His guidance importuned.

VIII. He Preserves the Christian

This He does by “renewing” him in the inner man “day by day” (2Co 4:16), strengthening us with His might (Eph 3:16 and cf. 3:20). It is by the Spirit that we are kept from soul-destroying error, and preserved from making shipwreck of the faith. We are “kept by the power of God through faith” (1Pe 1:5), that is by the effectual operations of His Spirit maintaining and sustaining our faith. Thus, it is by the Spirit that we are “*sealed* unto the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30).

Ere closing this article, which makes no pretensions to having presented anything like a *complete* outline of this important subject, perhaps some of our readers will welcome a few lines on what is termed the “endowment of the Holy Spirit.” Many of God’s people have been sorely perplexed and harassed (Eze 13:22) by the deceptions of some who have asserted that Christians should seek from God a second work of grace, variously designated by them as the “baptism of the Spirit,” “filling of the Spirit,” etc. They have affirmed that the Holy Spirit is willing to come upon us in mighty power if we will fulfil the conditions specified by these men, some of whom have been looked up to as eminent Bible teachers, and who claim that *they* have been thus endued by the Spirit. We have met, personally, numbers of God’s people who have earnestly sought this blessing, who have done

everything their teachers bade them do, only to find the desired “blessing” eludes them. Instead of blaming their teachers, they have blamed themselves. Instead of searching the Scriptures, they have sought to search their own hearts, with the result that some known to us have ended in mental homes, others in a suicides’ grave.

Of course, appeal is made by these men to the Word of God, yet it does not support their error. Let any exercised soul read carefully through the book of Acts, and he will not there find a single passage which tells of any of the apostles urging Christians to *seek* an enduement of the Spirit, still less are there any inspired directions as to how such an enduement may be obtained. This of itself is quite sufficient to expose the unscripturalness of these troublers of the saints. Neither their method nor their message is apostolic. True, we do read in Acts of the *Apostles* being filled with the Spirit, speaking in tongues, working signs and wonders, but that was *before* the New Testament was written and completed. Those divine gifts were the authentication of their mission. But those abnormal gifts were withdrawn before the last of the apostles passed from this scene.

Again, in the New Testament, there are twenty-one epistles, and with one seeming exception (Eph 5:18), none of them contains any exhortations for God’s people to *seek* any further “anointing” or “endowment” other than what they already received when they were born again. Still less are there any rules and regulations laid down for the obtaining of any “second blessing.” Nor need Ephesians 5:18 occasion the slightest difficulty. If verses 18 and 19 be read together, it is obvious that the simple meaning of this passage is, “Let not Christians find their joy and delight in carnal intoxicants (such as the worldlings do), but in spiritual enjoyments and employments.” The definite article is not found here in the Greek, and “be filled with the Spirit” is interpreted for us in the parallel passage in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,” etc.

The responsibility of the Christian is to recognize that he *is* indwelt by the Spirit (Rom 8:9), that his body is “the temple of the Spirit” (1Co 6:19). It is to seek help from God daily that he may be kept from “grieving” the Spirit (Eph 4:30). It is to honour the Spirit by owning that *all* his springs are in Him, that He is the Author and Producer of all spiritual fruit in him. It is to render prayer, praise and worship to the Spirit, equally as to the Father and the Son. May the Lord the Spirit graciously add His blessing to what has been written, and cause the reader to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1Th 5:21).

THE EVERLASTING COVENANT ADMINISTERED

Part 2

The salvation of God's people originated in the covenant acts of the Eternal Three. The Covenant of Grace comprises all the divine designs and transactions respecting the redemption of the elect. In it, we learn the eternal purpose of Father, Son, and Spirit, fixing the manner of redemption and everything relating thereto, and entering into a mutual agreement, in which the part each divine Person should perform, as distinguished from the others, was fixed and voluntarily undertaken. A proper apprehension of these covenant transactions is of vast importance, for when the Holy Spirit reveals to a soul the reality of them, he is at once brought off from all creature-acts, for he then perceives that the salvation of God's people is the *certain* consequence of that covenant. He now discerns that it was the will of God from all eternity to save His people from all their sins and miseries, and out of the hands of all their enemies, by Jesus Christ alone. He now knows that, in the sight of God, he was saved in Christ and by Christ from all sin.

The God-given blessing of an eye of faith enables the recipient of it to see that his salvation was from eternity wholly dependent upon the responsibility of his Surety, and He being sufficient and all-sufficient for them for whom He engaged, and He having completed the whole of His incarnation, life, and death, has obtained "eternal redemption" (Heb 9:12). He now sees for himself the truth of the apostle's words that God made Christ to be sin for His people, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2Co 5:21). This causes the Spirit-taught soul to admire and adore the Lord Jesus Christ for His righteousness and sacrifice. He sees such worth, such perfection, such virtue and efficacy in His merits and blood, as causes him to rest his heart with holy contentment and delight thereon. As the Spirit grants him clearer spiritual apprehension of these divine realities, he sees his righteousness in the sight of God as Christ Himself.

The everlasting covenant is *published* in the Gospel of God's grace. As we read in Romans 16:25-26, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." Notice, first,

the Gospel is here said to be a “*revelation* of the mystery.” This “mystery” had been “kept secret,” not from all men, but from all nations. Second, it was revealed “by the scriptures of the prophets,” but that which had for centuries been known only to Israel was now to be “made known to all nations.” Third, mark the title here given to the Deity, “the *everlasting* God”! This attribute of eternity is hereby ascribed to Him because the “everlasting covenant” is here in view.

Above, we have said that the Gospel is a *revelation* of a divine mystery. Clear proof of this is found in 1 Corinthians 2. There the apostle declared, “But we speak the wisdom of God...ordained before the world unto our glory” (verse 7). The apostle here calls the Gospel (see 1Co 1:17-18 and cf. 2:2-6) the “wisdom of God,” because in it the wondrous wisdom of God is made known. But more, he affirms that the Gospel exhibits a “*hidden wisdom*” (cf. “kept secret”—Rom 16:25), yea, that which God had predestinated to the glory of His people. That the whole of this passage in 1 Corinthians 2 concerns the eternal grace of God toward His elect is clear from “the things which God hath *prepared* for them that love him” (1Co 2:9), which things “God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the *deep* things of God” (1Co 2:10), i.e. the Spirit is thoroughly cognizant of and conversant with the secret counsels of the Eternal Three in the “everlasting covenant.”

The words “kept secret since the world began,” in Romans 16:25, are not to be taken absolutely, as the very next verse clearly shows. This “mystery” or “hidden wisdom” had, to a considerable degree, been made known in the Scriptures of Israel’s prophets, but as 1 Corinthians 2:8 tells us, it was something which “none of the princes of this world knew.” “But now is made manifest” (Rom 16:26) is explained in the last clause of the verse, “made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.” Parallel with this is Ephesians 3:3-9. There, Paul again refers to “the mystery,” the “mystery of Christ” which “in other ages was not made known to *the sons of men*” (though it was to Israel), but now he was to “preach among the *Gentiles* the unsearchable riches of Christ.” So in Colossians 1:25-27, note, “this mystery *among the Gentiles*” (verse 27).

Reverting once more to Romans 16:26, the apostle declares that this mystery, or hidden wisdom, concerning the everlasting covenant had been made manifest by the Scriptures of the prophets. Many are the Old Testament passages which might be cited in illustration of this fact. This covenant is expressly mentioned in Psalm 89:3-4, “I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations.” The direct and local reference is to David and his descendants, but without doubt a greater than David is here in view, viz. his illustrious Son and Lord, who is sometimes called by this very name (see Eze 37:24-25; Hos 3:5), and in whom this promise has been fulfilled (Luk 1:32-33; Act 2:34-38). A careful reading of the whole psalm will show that its language is too sublime, and the things foretold are

too great, to admit of being limited to any earthly monarch or succession of monarchs.

In Psalm 119:122, David prays, “Be *surety* for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.” In Isaiah 38:14, Hezekiah supplicates God thus, “O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake [Heb. “be surety”] for me.” When these men prayed thus, to be delivered from their enemies and afflictions, by addressing their Deliverer in *this* particular character, it is evident that they understood He had undertaken to be Surety for His people. The *mediatorial* work and character of Christ was well known to the Old Testament saints.

In Isaiah 49, we have what may be called a *draft* of the covenant, or *deed* of gift, between Christ and His Father for us, wherein Christ first begins and shows His commission as the ground of the treaty between Them, intimating to His Father that He had called Him unto this great work, “Listen, O isles, unto me: and hearken, ye people, from far; the LORD hath called me from the womb: from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name” (Isa 49:1). Then He refers to God’s having fitted Him for the work, “And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword: in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me” (Isa 49:2). In what follows, the triune God has condescended to employ expressions taken from a human manner of speaking, that we may the better comprehend this mysterious transaction.

First, the Father offers, as it were, *only* “*Israel*” as Messiah’s portion, “Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified” (Isa 49:3), to which Christ is represented as foreseeing how few of Israel would believe in Him, and that such sparse gleanings would be a poor recompense for all His toil. Yet He is prepared to leave the issue with the Lord, “Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God” (Isa 49:4). God, therefore, answers Him again, and *enlarges the grant*, “And now, saith the LORD, that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him. Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. (Isa 49:5) And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will *also* give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth....In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee *for a covenant* of the people (Isa 49:6-8). Thus, we see that this covenant which God made with Christ was to save both Jews and Gentiles as the reward for His work.

That by divine agreement and covenant settlement, Christ had been set up as Mediator *before* He entered this world is plainly taught in the New Testament too. In John 6:27, we hear Christ saying, “Labour...for that meat which endureth unto

everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father *sealed*.” So again in John 6:38, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” In John 10:18, He speaks of a “power” or “commandment” which He has received from the Father to lay down His life and take it again, so that He might answer the great end of redemption thereby. In John 10:36, He referred to Himself as Him “whom the Father hath *sanctified* [consecrated to a divine service], and sent into the world”—“sanctified” before “sent”! In Luke 22:29, He declared to His disciples, “I *appoint* unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath *appointed* unto me.”

The everlasting covenant of grace was typified, or more correctly speaking, adumbrated (shadowed forth in this lower or visible sphere), in the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham. This will be easier for us to grasp if we bear in mind the fact that the Gospel is a revelation of the Covenant of Grace. Now, in Acts 3:25, we read that Peter said, “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the *covenant* which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.” Now link up this with Galatians 3:8, “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.” Note well that what is called, “the covenant” in the former passage is called, “the gospel” in the latter, and that “all kindreds of the earth” in one becomes “all nations” in the other, while the “blessing” mentioned in both is explained to be the justification of the ungodly by faith.

The all-conclusive proof that the Abrahamic covenant shadowed forth in time the Covenant of Grace, which had been made in eternity, is found in Galatians 3:16, “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ,” not only Christ personal, but “Christ” *mystical*, i.e., the Head and His members. This is clear from Galatians 3:29, “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s *seed*, and heirs according to the promise.”

The Abrahamic covenant was followed by the Sinaitic, which was the very antithesis of the other, the former being one of pure grace, the latter one of works. The Abrahamic was one of unconditional promise. The Sinaitic was conditional, blessing being determined by Israel’s obedience to the law. Now, as the Abrahamic adumbrated the everlasting covenant, so the Sinaitic exemplified the Adamic. The first man had been constituted by God the federal head of his race, and God entered into a covenant with him (see Hos 6:6), and thus, he was “the figure of him that was to come” (Rom 5:14). That covenant was one of works, blessing for Adam and his posterity being conditioned upon the obedience of the federal head.

It has been well said that, “God deals with men only by covenant. What is a covenant? It is a promise made upon conditions to be fulfilled. This being so, it is

clear that there can be only two covenants possible between God and man—a covenant founded on what *man shall do*, and a covenant founded on what *God shall do for him*; in other words, a covenant of works, and one of grace” (Dr. G. S. Bishop). The Covenant of Works was made with Adam, the Covenant of Grace with Christ. Israel, according to the flesh, was under the one, the spiritual “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16) are the beneficiaries of the other. The one was revealed by the Law, the other is made known by the Gospel, as the Law preceded the Gospel, the Covenant of Grace is termed, “the *new* covenant” (Heb 8:8), not because it is “new” in its constitution, but because it is new in its *manifestation* and *proclamation* abroad.

Coming now to the *administration* of the covenant, we would observe, first, that the blessings of it are committed into the hands of the Saviour, that He may distribute them according to His own will, which in this, as in everything else, harmonizes perfectly with the will of the Father. This high honour has been conferred upon the Mediator that the blessings which were purchased, with His infinitely perfect satisfaction, should be at His own disposal, and that hell-deserving sinners should be reminded of their incalculable obligations to Him, by receiving every blessing immediately from His hands. His fulfilment of the conditions which the everlasting covenant had required of Him gave Him a right to the promises and the possession of their inestimable treasures. The scriptural proofs for these assertions are clear and convincing.

After His resurrection, the triumphant Surety declared to His disciples, “All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and earth” (Mat 28:18), evidently meaning that such right of administration was bestowed upon Him in consequence of His obedience unto death. Centuries before, the Psalmist, moved by the spirit of prophecy, said, “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men: yea, for the rebellious also” (Psa 68:18). Those words of David’s were explained by Peter to the Jews, who were amazed at the miracles of Pentecost, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the *promise* of the Holy Spirit, *he* hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Act 2:32-33). Three things are observable in these words. First, the gift of the Spirit to Christ was the performance of a “promise” that had been made to Him by the Father. Second, the Spirit was given to Christ that He might pour Him out upon men, like the refreshing rains which fall upon the earth. Third, the subjection of the Spirit to the Mediator in the economy of grace (Mar 1:8) demonstrates that “all authority” is Christ’s *in heaven* as well as upon earth (Mat 28:18).

Anticipating His resurrection, our great High Priest declared to His disciples on the eve of His death, “As thou hast given him power [authority] over all flesh” (Joh 17:2). And for what purpose was that grant made unto Him? The same verse tells us, “that he should give eternal life to as many as thou *hast* given him.” That was

the equivalent of saying that He would administer the promised blessings of the Covenant of Grace to those for whom He had covenanted, whose Surety and Mediator He was. Again, in Matthew 11:27, He declared, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." Now upon this donation or gift to Him (as Mediator) is founded the whole dispensation of grace, which was established by His authority and will be continued until the end. Hence, immediately after, comes the gracious promise of the Gospel, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat 11:28). This important truth is more fully expressed in Ephesians 4:8, 11-16.

Now the administration of the covenant has taken the form of a will or "testament," or deed, by which a person bequeaths his property to his heirs, to be enjoyed by them after his decease. Thus, the blessings of the covenant are conveyed to its beneficiaries in a testamentary form. The Greek word, *diatheke*, occurs forty times in the Authorized Version. It has been rendered "covenant" twenty times and "testament" twenty times. The Greek word has this double meaning, yet it is of great importance to distinguish between its two significations in order to a right understanding of each passage in which it is found. Unfortunately, our English translators have not always succeeded in doing this. For example, in Hebrews 7:22, Jesus is termed, "a surety of a better testament," or "will," which is a quite meaningless expression. It should have been, "surety of a better covenant," the more so as it is there contrasted with the Sinaitic covenant, which certainly was not a "testament." So again, "The mediator of the new testament" (Heb 9:15) conveys no intelligible concept. "Covenant" is the proper word there.

But in Hebrews 9:16-17, it should be observed that "testament" is the proper rendition, "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." This idea of a "testament" naturally follows after mention of the "eternal *inheritance*" in the previous verse. "As an inheritance is conveyed from one person to another by testament, this designation may be given to the Covenant of Grace, because it conveys to us the inheritance of eternal life, and conveys it in virtue of the death of the Surety. It was with the Covenant of Grace as it was with a testament. As the death of the testator is necessary to render a testament valid, so the death of Christ was necessary to ratify the covenant, and to make its promises sure to His spiritual seed. It is the necessity of the death of Christ which the apostle intended to establish, and the notice of a testament is incidentally introduced, solely for the purpose of illustrating this death, as an inheritance comes to the legatee through the death of a testator" (Dr. John Dick, 1764-1833).

In treating of the *administration* of the Covenant of Grace, it is essential that we should consider it, severally, under *two distinct economies*, of which the one preceded, the other succeeded, the coming of Christ in the flesh. That there *was* a dispensation of grace prior to the divine incarnation should be evident to every

careful reader of the Old Testament. It commenced immediately after the fall, when the first intimation of mercy was made (Gen 3:15), and it continued till the death of the Saviour, when it was formally abolished. That it was virtually and vitally the same with the present dispensation, and differed from it only in form, may be proved from a number of considerations. Abel's offering of a bleeding lamb "by faith" (Heb 11:4), which necessarily presupposes a revelation of the divine will (Rom 10:17), evidences that the Gospel of divine grace was made known at a very early date. The same blessed evangel was preached to the patriarchs, and later to Israel, by their typical institutions and the voices of their prophets. Therefore is the mission of Christ said to be the fulfilment of the ancient predictions, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David: *as* he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began" (Luk 1:68-70).

When before Agrippa, Paul declared, "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying *none other* things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles" (Act 26:22-23). To the Hebrews, he declared that the Gospel had been preached to Israel in the wilderness (Heb 4:2). To the Galatians, he insisted (when rebutting the errors of Judaizers) that the Gospel he proclaimed had, long before, been preached to Abraham, and that those who believed it were admitted to a participation in the same privileges with the patriarchs, "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed *with* faithful Abraham" (Gal 3:8-9).

There are at least two passages in the New Testament which expressly affirm that the dispensation of grace, under which the Old Testament saints lived, was founded upon that atonement of Christ by which the covenant was ratified. First, Romans 3:25, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in is blood, to declare is righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Note carefully the expression "for the remission of sins that are past." Here, the apostle is obviously referring to the sins of the Old Testament saints, which God had remitted prior to the manifestation of Christ. But how had it been consistent with His justice to do so, seeing that no expiatory sacrifice of efficacy had been offered for them? The answer is—the satisfaction of the Redeemer was of such infinite value that its virtue reaches back to the beginning of time, as well as forward to the end of it. God acted like a creditor who lets his debtor go free, although the payment had not been made by the surety, because he has full confidence in him that he *will* fulfil his engagement.

The second passage is in Hebrews 9:15, “And for this cause he is the mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” The “transgressions which were under the first covenant” has reference to the sins of God’s (spiritual) elect who lived, dispensationally, under the Sinaitic covenant, the typical sacrifices for which were then offered up, delivering *only* from the *temporal* penalties of the law. Yet some of them obtained the full and eternal forgiveness of their sins, namely, the “called” of Israel; and that, too, was on the ground of the great sacrifice which was to be offered in the fullness of time. Christ was the Mediator of the new covenant for the redemption of *their* sins, as well as for the sins of His saints who have lived since the cross. Thus, we see that the elect of God who lived under the Law of Moses were saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as they who are saved under the Gospel.

Christ, in fact, sustained the office and performed the duties of Mediator *before* His incarnation. “It was not a vain opinion of the Jews that it was the second Person of the Trinity who gave the promise of mercy to our first parents in paradise, appeared to the patriarchs, published the Law from Sinai, conducted the church in the wilderness, and managed its affairs during the ages which followed. It is certain that a divine Person *did* often appear under the ancient economy, and as there is no reason to think it was the Father, whom no man has seen, we conclude it was the Son, who assumed the form of that nature in which He was after to sojourn upon earth. He was the Angel of God’s presence, and the Angel of the covenant, concerning whom these three particulars are worthy of attention: That He was a divine Person, for the name of God was in Him, and the power of pardoning or not pardoning sin belonged to Him. That He acted in an official capacity, for He was an angel or messenger. And that His office was connected with the gracious dispensation which was then established, for He was the Messenger of the covenant. As far as that dispensation was carried on by the revelation of the divine will, we are expressly assured that it was under His direction and superintendence. It was the Spirit of the Messiah, Peter says, who ‘testified beforehand’ in the prophets ‘the suffering of Christ, and the glory that should follow’—1 Peter 1:11” (Dr. John Dick, 1764-1833).

Concerning the administration of the everlasting covenant *since* the coming of Christ, it is the Gospel which makes known to us the eternal council between the Father and the Son, which displays the richness and freeness of divine grace, which proclaims salvation to all who believe, and comforts its recipients by its promises of present and future refuge. The present dispensation is distinguished from the past by the superior clearness of its manifestation. What was formerly exhibited under the veil of types is now openly revealed, “The darkness is past, and the true light now

shineth” (1Jo 2:8). It is distinguished, too, by the more abundant supply of the Spirit.

The great *design* in the administration of the covenant of Grace is to impart its benefits to those for whom they were intended. This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit who works faith in the hearts of those who were chosen in Christ to eternal life. It is only by faith that we can learn our individual interest in that covenant, and that God-given faith causes its recipient to “take hold of his covenant” (Isa 56:6), yea, to enter into covenant with God. Where God acts, there is a reciprocal action from those in whom He works. Does God love His people? They love Him in return. Has He called them? They too dedicate themselves to a covenant God, with a real sense of their binding obligations to render Him that obedience which they are thereby engaged to.

It concerns each person, therefore, to inquire whether God has made with *him* a covenant, “ordered in all things and sure.” It is an inquiry intimately connected with his eternal welfare, for salvation comes to any sinner only on the basis of this covenant. How then shall the point be ascertained? First, he who has entered into a covenant with God is an awakened and convicted sinner. None others feel their need of God’s great salvation. Peace with God is prized only by those who have been made conscious of death, and of the divine displeasure and vengeance. Careless worldlings are unconcerned about reconciliation with God. The Spirit’s application of the law to the heart and conscience is the first step by which men are led to take hold of God’s covenant and “make peace with God” (Isa 27:5).

Second, he who has entered into this covenant has “fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him” (Heb 6:18). That “hope” is set before him in the Gospel. The word “refuge” looks back to the cities of refuge in Israel (Num 33; Jos 20), entry into which secured from the avenger of blood. The awakened and convicted sinner, aroused and terrified by his sins and the wrath of God, *flees* for refuge to Christ, and by a God-given faith, lays hold of, believes in, appropriates the Saviour as his.

Third, he who has entered into this covenant rests his hope of salvation upon the righteousness of Christ, by which it was fulfilled, and on that alone. He has no confidence in the flesh. He repudiates his own righteousness as filthy rags. He relies not on any works, performances, or acts of his own. The language of his heart and lips is, “My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day...I will go in the strength of the LORD God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of *thine only*” (Psa 71:15-16).

Lastly, he who is in covenant with a holy God is a holy person. God’s promise to Christ concerning His people is, “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people” (Heb 8:10). The effects of this are clearly and unmistakably manifested in their

daily lives. True, while they are left in this world, the flesh is still there, and it annoys and hinders them, so that they are prevented from fully realizing the desires of their hearts. Nevertheless, their faith overcomes the world (1Jo 5:4). The Spirit in them, which is mightier than Satan (1Jo 4:4), subdues the flesh, and produces in and through them *His* “fruit.” They are taught that they have no strength of their own, and so they look to the Lord for enablement. They depend upon His grace, and He works in them (notwithstanding all the opposition of the flesh, which is as nothing to Him) “both to will *and to do* of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13). Thus, they ascribe *to Him* all the praise of their success.

HEART WORK

Part 5

The heart of man is his worst part before it be regenerate, and his best part afterwards; it is the seat of principles and the source of actions. The eye of God is, and the eye of the Christian ought to be, principally fixed upon it. The great difficulty after conversion is to keep the heart with God. Herein lies the very pinch and stress of religion. Here is that which makes the way to life a narrow way, and the gate of heaven a straight one. To afford some direction and help in this great work, these articles have been presented. We realize their many defects, yet trust that God will be pleased to use them. No other subject can begin to compare with it in practical importance.

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

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

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

Ah, my reader, experience is the great schoolmaster. Much in Job and Lamentations will seem dull and uninteresting until you have had deeper exercises of soul. The seventh chapter of Romans is not likely to appeal much unto you until you make more conscience of indwelling sin. Many of the later Psalms will appear too extravagant in their language until you enjoy closer and sweeter fellowship with God. But the more you endeavour to keep your heart, and bring it into subjection unto God, to keep from it the evil solicitations of Satan, the more *suited to your own case* will you find many chapters of the Bible. It is not simply that you have to be in the “right mood” to appreciate, but that you have to pass through certain exercises of heart ere you can discover their appropriateness. Then it is that you will have “felt” and “tasted” for yourself the things of which the inspired writers treat. Then it is that you will have the key which unlocks many a verse that is fast closed unto masters of Hebrew and Greek.

2. Care in keeping the heart supplies one of the best evidences of sincerity. There is no external act which distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches” (Psa 63:5-6).

6. The diligent care of the heart makes Christian fellowship profitable and precious. Why is it that, when Christians meet together, there are often sad jarrings and contentions? It is because of unmortified passions. Why is their conversation so frothy and worthless? It is because of the vanity and earthiness of their hearts. It is not difficult to discern by the actions and converse of Christians what frames their spirits are under. Take one whose mind is truly stayed upon God; how serious, heavenly, and edifying is his conversation, “The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment: the law of his God *is in his heart*” (Psa 37:30-31). If each of us was humbled every day before God under the evils of his own heart, we should be more pitiful and tender toward others (Gal 6:1).

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

8. By keeping our hearts diligently, we should the soonest remove the scandals and stumbling-blocks out of the way of the world. How the worthy name of our Lord is blasphemed because of the wicked conduct of many who bear His name. What prejudice has been created against the Gospel by the inconsistent lives of those who preach it. But if we keep *our* hearts, we shall not add to the scandals caused by the ways of loose professors. Nay, those with whom we come in contact will see that we “have been with Jesus.” When the majestic beams of holiness shine from a heavenly walk, the world will be awed and respect will again be commanded by the followers of the Lamb.

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

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

Second, God would never leave you under so many heart burdens and troubles if He intended not your benefit thereby. You say, Lord, why do I go mourning, all the day having sorrow of heart? For long have I been exercised over its hardness, and not yet is it broken. Many years have I been struggling against vain thoughts, and still I am plagued by them. When shall I get a better heart? Ah, God would thereby show you what your heart by nature is, and have you take notice of how much you are beholden to free grace! So, too, He would keep you humble, and not let you fall in love with yourself!

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

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

ANNUAL LETTER

This is the final issue of STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES. It began in 1922 as a “labour of love” for the poor and needy seeking water and finding none. Well do we remember the beginning and progress as year after year the little messenger found its way to the ends of the earth, taking words of salvation and comfort in its

pages. Being frail, I never thought it would fall to me to finish the work so dear to each of us; but the Most High has shown that His thoughts are not as ours, by causing to come to pass what I never expected. The hidings of His providential dealings are wonderful and fill one with awe as one is brought face to face with the ways of the Mighty One. We could not endure to have revealed to us beforehand what is in the cup given us from our loving Father. In wondrous mercy, He has drawn a veil over all His mysterious providences and lifts it as we are able to bear His unfolding of the path we are to tread. With each revelation, He sweetly ministers grace to endure as we go along the way. What precious words, “What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter” (Joh 13:7).

Many were the difficulties and trials through which STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES came, but the rough places have been made plain, and the crooked straight, as each has been faced, so that it has been a pleasant task, as one would expect a “labour of *love*” to be. All praise to Him who doeth all things well. In looking back over the past, nothing stands out more wonderfully than to recall how that, in all our journeys around the world, not an issue failed to be printed and posted. What can one say of such things, but, “It is the LORD’S doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes” (Psa 118:23)? There are times when nothing but His Word can express our innermost being and tell what the heart feels by His wondrous interventions, so that one must say, “Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks; for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare” (Psa 75:1).

With gratitude and thankfulness, I would record the faithfulness of my much loved and esteemed friends for having “stood with me in the breach” again, as they did years ago when the Lord used them, and by their noble work, made it possible for STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES to continue. But for their invaluable work of typing articles from old volumes, 1953 would not have been completed—I am now unable to type. What a marvel! They “offered themselves willingly to the work,” and thereby Satan was thwarted of his plan to stop STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES in the beginning. None but Himself could have done and enabled to be done what has been accomplished from beginning to end. Neither man nor Satan can prevent God’s purposes being fulfilled. That is a real comfort for every child of His, for Satan is constantly trying each one of the chosen seed.

I feel sure none ever had a better printer than it has pleased the Lord to favour us with. He has been most kind and considerate in taking over all responsibility in connection with the work of the magazine, and I have been relieved of all anxiety over that which I do not understand. The standard of work throughout has been most excellent, ever since the Lord was pleased to move him to do our printing. “What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits” (Psa 116:12), but thanksgiving unto Him for so ordering our every way?

In the July personal word, reference was made to Mr. Pink's works which are published in the U.S.A. The dollar-pound problem has curtailed the circulation in Great Britain. I asked the publisher to permit me to supply STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES readers, which he has kindly consented to do. He has sent me prices of all the works available and I will gladly quote you British currency for what you desire. God willing, I purpose taking orders and asking the publisher to post back direct to those requesting them. All readers in the U.S.A. and Canada, please write direct to Mr. I. C. Herendeen, Swengel, Union Co., Pennsylvania.

"In all thy ways acknowledge him" (Pro 3:6) has been in mind as I have attempted to write this piece. I am not qualified for such a task, but since it came upon me, I have sought to carry out my dear late husband's wishes to the best of my ability, fully realizing that *my* best is far, far below the standard. Looking to Him alone for enablement to perform what I felt I could not do in bringing the magazine to a close, He has not failed me, but has done wonders greater than could have been imagined. But then, is He not a great God, and doeth great things? Should I not expect Him to do great things? I feel we should all be profoundly thankful to the Lord that STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES continued so many years. Truly the Lord was good in providing such ministry, thereby supplying your need in His own most marvellous way.

"In *all* thy ways acknowledge him"—in the hard, equally as in the pleasant. To bow submissively to His most holy will, resting in the thought, "Let him do what seemeth him good" (1Sa 3:18). Unreservedly, to *resign* all into His loving hand—"The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21). So having cast his bread upon the water and finished his course on earth in glory, my dear husband, the late Editor, shall find it again. For me, I seek to follow on in weakness in this vale of tears unto that better land where nothing that defileth or maketh a lie cometh. What a prospect! Done with sin for ever! I commend you, my dear friends, whom we sought to serve so long, unto the care of Him who has promised, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Mat 28:20). Remember me at the throne of grace and "to communicate forget not." By wondrous mercy, VERA E. PINK.

I am pleased to inform you that STUDIES closes with the largest balance of any year. "The LORD of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah!" (Psa 46:7).