

**Volume 18—Studies in the Scriptures—Number 9**  
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**SUFFERING SAINTS.**

“Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19). As the nature of fallen man is very backward to do good, so likewise to suffer evil; and hence it is there are so many exhortations in the Word both to the one and to the other. There is not a little in this Epistle on the subject of “suffering” (which has prime reference to opposition from the world), and many are the inducements advanced for the bearing of it in a God-honouring way. Varied indeed are the grounds for patience mentioned and the streams of comfort therein opened to the persecuted people of God—read through the Epistle with that particular thought in mind. Limiting ourselves to the more immediate context: the Christian is not to be unduly perplexed at his troublous lot (v. 12), rather is he to rejoice because it brings him into fellowship with Christ (vv. 13, 14). Yet we must carefully see to it that our afflictions are not incurred through our own wickedness or folly (vv. 15, 16). Vastly different is the *end* of a Christian from that of the wicked (vv. 17, 18).

“Wherefore—in view of all the reasons and encouragements given in the context—let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.” In different ways and in various degrees the Christian is bound to meet with trying opposition: “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). No matter where they reside, the saints live among those who cannot but cause them suffering: and as Scripture makes abundantly clear, our worst afflictions are to be expected from those who profess to be our brethren and sisters in Christ. Moreover, there is much within the saint himself which cannot but be the cause and occasion of suffering: indwelling corruptions which ever resist the actings of grace, lusts which have to be mortified, a conscience which accuses us when we displease God.

But the grand thing in which we are here to take to heart is the fact that the suffering of saints is “according to the will of God.” Those oppositions he encounters, the injuries done to him are not fortuitous: they are not the result of blind chance or fickle fortune, but are according to Divine ordination and ordering. How inexpressibly blessed to be assured of that! Does it not at once remove the bitterest ingredient from our cup of trouble? The saint never suffers except by the will of God. He who is too wise to err and too loving to be unkind is the One who mixes the medicine and hands it to us. If only we could always realize this, how many rebellious repinings would be silenced, and the rod meekly borne. True, we do not suffer all the time, for God tempers the wind according as our case requires, and graciously grants us brief respites.

Now in view of the fact that suffering is inevitable as long as we are on earth, and particularly because it is “according to the will of God,” our gracious Father, what is the Christian’s duty in connection therewith? To commit the keeping of his soul to Him in well doing. The *manner* of this committal is “in well doing.” And this, first, *before* suffering comes upon us. When some worker of iniquity afflicts a child of God, what a comfort it is if he has the testimony of a good conscience that he is suffering for “well doing” and not because he has wronged his persecutor. How watchful we should be in seeing to it that none can justly speak evil of us and that we do nothing to warrant our enemies

hurting us. Then let us follow a course of “well doing” continually. Second, in the suffering itself. No matter how unprovoked the opposition, we must carry ourselves rightly under persecution: so far from harbouring a spirit of retaliation, we are required to do good unto those who do us evil.

Not only are we to be active in “well doing” unto those who cause us suffering, but our carriage is also to be good with respect to *God*: there must be a meek behaviour under His afflicting hand, with no murmuring against Him. This is of vast importance in connection with the cause of God on earth: that we betray it not through fear or cowardice, and dishonour it not by base retaliation against our oppressors. When we display a Christ-like spirit under afflictions, conducting ourselves in the fear of God and make conscience of our duty, it will exert a strong influence on those who wrong us: touching the hearts of the indifferent and closing the mouths of the obstinate. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual. Far more will be accomplished by prayer, than by taking things into our own hands and seeking to avenge ourselves.

We are not only to commit our souls unto God as to a faithful Creator, but this duty is to be performed “in well doing.” In the suffering itself we should have an eye to God, an eye on ourselves, and an eye to the cause in hand. We must not commit our souls to God in idleness: it is not sufficient that we abstain from evil doing, we are to be active in well doing. Nor may we resort to ungodly compromises in order to escape suffering, for that would be evil, and sin is far, far worse than to have suffering inflicted upon us. Whatever may be the present gain of pleasing men at the expense of displeasing God, the future loss will be immeasurably greater: prayerfully ponder Mark 8:38.

And *what is it* we are to “commit to God in well doing”? Our name, our estate, our bodies, our friends; but chiefly and above all, the keeping of our souls. The soul is our most excellent part. Though the body be burned at the stake, that is a trifle if our soul be preserved unto everlasting glory. Though all our earthly goods be taken from us, what is that if the inestimably precious jewel of our soul is safe in the hands of God? The value of our souls is to be gauged by the price which Christ paid for their redemption. Therefore, whatever trouble or peril we be in at the hands of the wicked, let our first concern be our souls, that it may be well with them. When a man’s house is on fire, he naturally seeks to rescue first that on which he sets the most store; let it be so with the Christian when fiery trials are his portion.

And what is it that we should desire our souls to be kept from? Why, from sin, from doing evil, from not only failing to be profited from the suffering but to be spiritually injured thereby. It is when we are slandered, ill treated, wronged, unjustly persecuted, that we most need God’s preserving grace, for it is natural for us to want to “get our own back.” But when we truly comply with the injunction of Christ’s “love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you” (Matt. 5:44), then has grace triumphed over the flesh and God is greatly glorified. Nor is it a difficult matter to commit our souls unto God when our hearts are impressed with His *faithfulness*. If He unfailingly supplies the temporal needs of all His creatures, will He fail to minister to the spiritual wants of His children? No indeed.—A.W.P.

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

### 11. *The Law and Adultery: Matthew 5:27-33.*

Most writers regard Matthew 5:31-33 as forming a separate subdivision of our Lord's sermon, but really it belongs to the same section as verses 27-30, treating of the same subject and reprehending the same sin, though a different aspect thereof. Under the general head of Adultery occurred another evil, namely the use and misuse of Divorce, concerning which the Law of Moses had been grossly corrupted. Having shown the strictness and spirituality of the Seventh Commandment, Christ here took occasion to condemn the lax views and practices which then obtained in connection with the annulment of marriages. The Jews had fearfully perverted one of the political statutes of the Law, so that divorces were granted on the most frivolous pretences, and it was this our Lord here condemned. Thus, in reality, He was continuing to restore the Seventh Commandment to its proper place and perfections.

In the passage which is to be before us we are supplied with a further illustration of the vast superiority of the righteousness of Christ's kingdom over the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. There is an invariable outworking of the principle that where spirituality wanes morality also deteriorates. All history bears witness to the fact that when vital godliness is at a low ebb the sacred institution of marriage is held in light esteem. It is both solemn and sad to behold an exemplification of the same in our own times: as the claims of God are less and less regarded by those of high and low estate alike, the holy obligations of wedlock are gradually whittled down and then increasingly disregarded. When a country, avowedly Christian, begins to tamper with the institution of marriage and make more elastic its divorce laws, it is a certain proof of its ethical decadence.

Even those with only a smattering of ancient history are aware of the fact that in the last few decades before the fall of both the Grecian and Roman empires, marriage was held in such low esteem that it was a common thing for the women to keep tab on their divorces by the number of rings worn on their fingers. It may be replied, They were *heathen* peoples. True, but of what our moderns would term "highly civilized." Moreover, human nature is the same the world over, and when the fear of God is lost, moral corruptions quickly abound. It was not otherwise with the favoured nation of Israel, as a glance at the Prophets will show. The case of the woman in John 4 to whom our Lord said, "Thou hast had *five* husbands: and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband" (v. 18), is not to be regarded as an exception, but rather as symptomatic of a disease which had spread widely through the Nation.

"It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorce" (Matt. 5:31). The original statute on this matter is found in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. But so perversely had that injunction been interpreted, that one of the leading schools of theology (that of Hillel) taught that a man might put away his wife for any cause. In the Apocryphal writings we read, "The son of Sirach saith, If she go not as thou wouldest have her, cut her off front thy flesh, give her a bill of divorce, and let her go" (Ecclesiasticus 25:26), which is one of many definite indications that the Apocrypha was not inspired by the Holy Spirit. Josephus also wrote, "The law runs thus: He that would be divorced from his wife, for any cause whatever, as many such causes there are, let him give her a bill of divorce." He also confessed that he himself put away his wife, after she had borne him three children, because he was not pleased with her behaviour.

Moses had indeed been Divinely directed to allow divorce in case of adultery, for the prevention of yet worse crimes. But that which had been no more than a temporary concession was changed by the Pharisees into a precept, and that so interpreted as to give license to the indulging of their evil and selfish desires. And yet, hypocrites as they were, they made a great parade of obeying Moses with regard to the “bill of divorce.” The Talmudic writings, though they took little trouble to describe the justice of divorce, were rigidly definite with regard to the *form of the bill*, insisting that it must be written in twelve lines, neither more nor less. Such is ever the folly of those who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.

Let us now consider a few details in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. The first thing we notice is the *kind* of statute there given. It was not a moral but a political or civil one, for the good ordering of the state. Among such laws were those of tolerance or permission, which *did not approve* of the evil things concerned, but only suffered it for the prevention of greater evil—as when the sea makes a breach into the land, if it cannot possibly be stopped, the best course is to make it as narrow as possible. Such was the law concerning usury (Deut. 23:20), permitting the Jews to exact it of a stranger, but not to exercise it towards a brother. Similar, too, was the law regulating polygamy (Deut. 21:15). These laws tolerated what God condemned, and that for the purpose of preventing greater evils.

Such was the Mosaic law for divorce: not approving of the giving of a bill of divorce for every trifling cause, but permitting it for the sake of preventing greater misery and crime. For instance, if a man took a strong and rooted dislike to his wife and wished to be rid of her, he would be likely to ill-treat her, until she was in danger of her very life. This law of divorce, then, was granted so as to remove the temptation for a hard-hearted husband to commit murder. Divorce is always a deviation from the original marriage institution consequent upon human depravity. In this instance if a man found that in his wife—something short of adultery, for that was to be punished by death—which made her repulsive to him, he was permitted to divorce her. But this was not to be done verbally and hurriedly, in a fit of temper, but after due deliberation. A “bill of divorce” had to be legally drawn up and witnessed, making the transaction a solemn and final one.

Second, we may note the *strictness* of this law. The man only was permitted to give this bill of divorce: neither here nor anywhere else in the Old Testament was this liberty granted unto the wife. If this strikes us as being unjust or unduly severe, two things are to be taken into consideration. First, in the case of a husband being guilty of immorality, the wife could bring it to the notice of the magistrate, and relief was then afforded her by her guilty partner suffering the death penalty. Second, this statute was expressly designed for the prevention of violence and bloodshed, to protect the weaker vessel; it being taken for granted that the man could protect himself if his wife should attack him.

Third, a brief word now upon the *force* and effect of this law. It made the bill of divorce, given for the stipulated cause, to be regular before men, and marriage thereafter lawful in human courts (Deut. 24:4). Nevertheless, in the court of conscience *before God* the divorce itself and second marriages thereon were unlawful, for God hated such separations (Mal. 2:16); and whichever guilty party under such a divorce married again, committed adultery (Matt. 19:9). Now this law the Pharisees had grossly perverted. They taught that it was a “commandment” (Matt. 19:7), whereas Moses only gave a permission—as the language of Deuteronomy 24:1 plainly denotes. So, too, they taught that for

*any* cause (Matt. 19:3) a man could divorce his wife and thereby be free from her before God, and therefore at liberty to marry another.

“But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery” (Matt. 5:32). Here Christ refutes the corrupt interpretation of the Scribes and Pharisees, and positively affirms that divorce is permissible only in the case of that sin which in God’s sight annuls the marriage covenant, and even then it is only allowed, and not commanded. Many have understood (being misled by the meaning of the English word) the “saving for the cause of fornication” to refer to this sin being committed *before* marriage and concealed by her till afterwards, arguing that only a married person can be guilty of “adultery.” This leads us to raise the point, Do the Scriptures make any real and definite distinction between fornication and adultery? And we answer, No. True, in Matthew 15:19 and Galatians 5:19 they are mentioned separately, yet in Revelation 2:20 and 22 they are clearly used interchangeably, while in Ezekiel 16:25-28 the Wife of Jehovah is said to commit *both* sins.

“But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.” These words of our Lord are too plain to be misunderstood. “According to this law, adultery is the only sufficient reason of divorce. He who for any other cause puts away his wife, is to be held an adulterer if he marry another woman; and she, by marrying him, commits adultery; while, at the same time, he becomes the guilty occasion of adultery, if the woman, who is still his wife, marry another man; for in this case she commits adultery as he also who marries her” (J. Brown). No matter how unscriptural be the laws of the land in which we live, or lax the sentiments and practices of the public today, nothing can possibly excuse anyone from flying in the face of this express declaration of the Son of God repeated by Him in Matthew 19:9.

Something higher than the laws of man must govern and regulate those who fear God. The laws of all “civilized” countries sanction the practice of usury, but the Word of God condemns the same. The laws of our land are open for men to go to court at the first, upon every light occasion, without seeking for some means of agreement. But those who do so, are guilty before God, notwithstanding the liberty given them by our political statutes. In like manner, human laws permit divorce for “incompatibility” of disposition, “mental cruelty” and various other things; but the Law of God condemns such licentiousness. Papists allow divorce for religious reasons, appealing to “everyone that hath forsaken . . . father or mother, or wife . . . for My name’s sake” (Matt. 19:29), but in that place Christ refers not to divorce at all, but to a separation caused by imprisonment, banishment, or death.

Marriage is not a mere civil thing, but is partly spiritual and Divine, and therefore God alone has the power to appoint the beginning, the continuance, and the end thereof. Here the question is likely to be asked, What of *the innocent party* where a divorce has taken place: may such an one marry again with Divine sanction? To the writer it seems strange that, though there is a decided consensus of agreement, all Christians are not one on this matter. In seeking the Scriptural answer to the question, let it first be borne in mind that infidelity on the part of either husband or wife annuls the marriage covenant, the man and woman being no longer “one flesh,” one of them having been adulterously united to some other. Divorce goes yet further, for it legally dissolves and removes the marriage relation.

We are therefore in hearty accord with the Westminster Catechism of Faith which declares, "In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce, and after the divorce to marry another, as if the offending party were dead" (Chap. 24, sect. 5).

In his excellent piece on "Of Marriage after Divorce in Case of Adultery" John Owen pointed out that, to insist that divorce simply secures a legal separation but does not dissolve the marriage relation, would bring in a state harmful to men. God has appointed marriage to be a remedy against incontinence (1 Cor. 7:2), but if innocent parties lawfully divorced may not marry again, then they are deprived of this remedy and debarred from this benefit. If the divorced person has not the gift of continence, it is the express will of God that he should marry for his relief; yet on the supposition of the objector he sins if he marries again, yea, is guilty of the horrible crime of adultery. Is not this quite sufficient to expose the untenability of such an anomaly?

Again—can we suppose for a moment that it is the will of a righteous God for an innocent person to be penalized *the remainder* of his or her earthly life because of the infidelity of another? Surely the very idea is repugnant to all who are really acquainted with the Divine goodness and mercy. Why, if an innocent man upon a divorce is not then at liberty to marry again, he is deprived of his right by the sin of another, which is against the very law of nature; and on such a supposition it lies within the power of every wicked woman to deprive her husband of his natural right. The right of divorce in case of adultery, specified by Christ, for the innocent party to make use of, is evidently designed for his liberty and relief—but on the supposition that he may not again marry, it would prove a snare and a yoke to him, for if thereon he has not the gift of continence, he is exposed to sin and judgment.

But apart from these convincing considerations, the Word of God is plain and decisive upon the matter. In Matthew 5:32 Christ lays down a general rule, and then puts in an exception thereto, the nature of which exception necessarily implies and affirms *the contrary* to the general rule. The general rule is that, Whosoever divorces his wife causes her to commit adultery, and he who marries her becomes guilty of the same crime. The "exception" there must be contrary, namely, that the innocent party in the divorce may lawfully marry again, and the one marrying him or her is not guilty of adultery. But *that* is the *only* exception. 1 Corinthians 7:15 has been appealed to by some as warranting re-marriage in the case of total desertion: but that passage is quite irrelevant, teaching no such thing. The verse refers to an unbelieving husband deserting a believing wife: in such case (says the Apostle) she is not "bound" to pursue her husband and demand support, nor go to law on the matter; rather is she to follow a course of "peace." The verse says nothing whatever about her being free to marry again; nay, verse 39 of the same chapter, says, "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth."

In Matthew 19:9 Christ declared, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, *except* it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Here again it is evident the plain sense of these words is, that he who divorces his wife for fornication, and then marries another is not guilty of adultery. In such a case the bond of marriage has already been broken, and the one so putting away his guilty wife is free to marry again. When our Lord condemned the putting away and marrying again for every cause, the *exception* He made of "fornication" clearly allows both divorce and re-marriage, for an exception always affirms the contrary

unto what is denied in the rule, or denies what is affirmed in it. [(Condensed from Owen, who closes his piece by saying, "This is the constant practice of all Protestant churches in the world"].

Prevention is better than cure. Even a temporary separation should be the last resource, and every possible effort made to avoid such a tragedy. Marriage itself is not to be entered into lightly and hurriedly, but once the knot is tied, each party should most earnestly consider the relationship which has been entered into and the serious importance of its duties. If love rules, all will be well: unselfishness and forbearance are to be mutually exercised. If the husband gives honour to his partner as unto "the weaker vessel" (1 Peter 3:7), and the wife sees to it that she render unto her husband "due benevolence" (1 Cor. 7:3), much needless friction will be avoided. Let them bear with each other's infirmities, study each other's dispositions, and seek to correct each other's faults. Above all, let them often together draw near unto the Throne of Grace and seek God's blessing on their married life. The holier their lives, the happier they will be. Nothing is more honouring to God than a home which bears witness to the sufficiency of His grace and shadows forth the union which exists between Christ and His Church.—A.W.P.

N.B. Our purpose in adverting (above) to the writings of John Owen was not because we felt our case needed the support of any human authority, but in order that our readers might know what was taught and practiced by the godly Puritans.

## THE LIFE OF DAVID.

### 93. His *Grand Reward*.

We were obliged to omit several points of importance at the close of our article last month, so we will commence here at the stage where we then left off. There we called attention to an essential detail—one which, so far as we can discover, has escaped the notice of all the commentators—namely, that God’s judgment upon Israel was twofold, or in two distinct stages—and we would also observe that this corresponded exactly with David’s sin. First we are told, “The Lord sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men” (1 Chron. 21:14). In Samuel’s account it reads, “there died of the plague from Dan *even to Beersheba* seventy thousand men” (2 Sam. 24:15). How remarkably did the punishment fit the crime, for David had commanded Joab, “Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan *even to Beersheba*, and number ye the people” (v. 2). It will be remembered that the account of the census-taking closed by saying, “So when they had gone through all the land, they came to *Jerusalem* at the end of nine months and twenty days” (v. 8).

Second, “And God sent an angel unto *Jerusalem* to destroy it” (1 Chron. 21:15). Samuel tells us, “and when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented Him of the evil” (2 Sam. 24:16), and follows with David’s prayer. But the account in Chronicles evidently observes a closer chronological order, for there we read, “And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the Heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered?” (1 Chron. 21:16, 17). The dreadful spectacle of the avenging angel, about to fall upon the holy city, deeply affected David. He had previously repented of and confessed his sin, but the calamity which now threatened the capital itself, caused him to pour out his heart afresh unto the Lord, both in humble contrition and earnest supplication.

“And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed.” What blessed self-abnegation was this. David takes the entire blame unto himself, adding, “but as for these sheep, what have they done?” Rightly did Matthew Henry answer the question by saying, “Why, they had done much amiss: it was *their* sin which had provoked Jehovah to leave David to himself, as He did.” “Let Thine hand, I pray Thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father’s house” (v. 17). How nobly did David here stand in the breach, and that, at his own cost. He not only shouldered the guilt, but was willing to bear the retribution.

As we pointed out last month, it was as though David said, Smite me, the shepherd, but let the flock be spared. Ah, but *that* could not be: God would not allow David to suffer in the stead of all Israel. No, none could fill that awful and honourable place of substitution but David’s Son and Lord. Nevertheless, we see how grandly he, in spirit, foreshadowed the good Shepherd, who, that they might be rich, Himself became poor, and actually took upon Himself the sins of His sheep and died in their place. “But not on Thy people, that they should be plagued” (v. 17). Is it not lovely to behold David here referring to Israel not as “the people,” but as “Thy people”? In his folly he had regarded them as *his* people, but in his wisdom he now saw them as the *Lord’s*.

Let us point out here that the confession and prayer of David on this occasion should be taken to heart by every minister of the Gospel. In his comments, T. Scott applied the



principle of David's heart-exercises to preachers thus, "While ministers mourn over the state of their congregations, they may sometimes profitably enquire whether their own pride, want of zeal and simplicity, their self-indulgence or conformity to the world, do not bring a secret blight upon their labours, although more open evils do not bring a blot upon their profession? And whether the people's souls are not suffering for their correction, and to bring them to deeper humiliation, greater fervency in prayer, and a more spiritual frame of mind and devotedness to God. And surely we should choose to be chastened in our own persons, rather than that the blessing should be withheld from our congregations: for though the Lord is righteous in these dispensations, yet the people have not deserved *at our hands*, that we should occasion this evil to them. Grace teaches men to condemn themselves rather than others, and to seek the interests of their fellows in many respects before their own: and earnest prayers offered in this temper of mind, by those who unreservedly cast themselves on the mercies of the Lord are very prevalent."

Returning now to the crime of David, we may observe that his supplication prevailed with God. Such deep humiliation, such unsparing acknowledgment of his faults, such utter self-abnegation and such tender pleading for the people, touched the heart of Him who is filled with compassion. If the unselfishness of Moses prevailed at another grave crisis in their history, when he asked God to blot him out of His book (Exo. 32:32) rather than that the nation should be destroyed; equally so did the readiness of David for God's judgment to fall upon himself and his house instead of his subjects, turn the tide—for it was in direct answer to his pleading that God said to the angel, "stay now thine hand." This gives beautiful completeness to our type, portraying as it does the efficacy of our great High Priest's intercession on behalf of His people.

There is one other point of deep practical importance to be noted here. "God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it, and as he was destroying (or as 2 Sam. 24:16 puts it "when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it"), the Lord beheld, and He repented Him of the evil" (1 Chron. 21:15). And *what was it* that He now "beheld"? Why, David and his servants, "clothed in sackcloth," fallen "upon their faces" (1 Chron. 21:16)! It was not simply that He "saw," but "*beheld*"—with concentrated attention. And then follows immediately David's supplication. Here, then, is the final lesson: it is the one clothed with sackcloth, on his face in the dust, whose intercession prevails with God! In other words, it is the one who is thoroughly humbled, who is brought to the place of self-loathing, and who takes upon his own spirit the afflictions of others, who alone is qualified to plead on their behalf.

Were we asked whose prayers we would rather have on our behalf, we should unhesitatingly reply, Not those who are in raptures on the mountain top, but those who are mourning before God over their own sins and the sufferings of others. Personally, we appreciate far more highly the supplications of those who are (spiritually speaking) clothed in sackcloth, than those arrayed in their wedding garments. It is the absence of the "sackcloth" which renders ineffectual the prayers of so many today. Here, then, is holy encouragement for those of God's people who are bowed in the dust before Him: if we have repented of and confessed our sins, and are truly humbled before Him, then is the very time to intercede for other tried souls. Finally, observe the prompt compliance of the angel to the Lord's order, "stay thine hand": if celestial creatures are so obedient to their Maker's word, how promptly should we respond to His revealed will.

“And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (2 Sam. 24:18). If we compare at this point the supplementary account we learn that, “Then the angel of the Lord commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD” (1 Chron. 21:18). The relief, then, for David in this dark hour was announced (through Gad) by the avenging angel, and thus we may say once more that the eater himself yielded meat, the strong one sweetness (Judg. 14:14). Most blessed indeed was this, for an “altar” calls for an accepted worshipper, and the Lord would not have given directions for the one, if He had not provided the other. Thus it was with the very first worshipper: “And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering” (Gen. 4:4)—his person was first accepted and then his sacrifice; and here the Lord’s readiness to accept an offering at the hands of David was proof that David himself had been received.

This Divine direction for David to now erect an altar, denoted, first, that God was thoroughly reconciled to him, and therefore might he infer with Manoah’s wife, “If the LORD were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt offering and a meal offering at our hands” (Judg. 13:23). Second, that peace between God and guilty sinners is effected by sacrifice, and not otherwise than by Christ, the great Propitiation. Thus, while God’s mercy rejoiced against judgment on this solemn occasion, yet He made it abundantly clear that His grace reigns through righteousness (Rom. 5:21) and not at the expense of it. It is the blood which makes an atonement for the soul (Lev. 17:11), because it is the blood which placates the retributive justice of God. Third, that when God’s judgments are graciously stayed, we ought to acknowledge it with thankfulness to His praise: “I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me” (Isa. 12:1).

It will be remembered 2 Samuel 24:16 informed us that when the angel of the Lord stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, he was “by the threshing place of Araunah.” The peaceful occupation of this Gentile (for he was a Jebusite), quietly continuing to thresh his wheat on the floor of his own isolated garner (1 Chron. 21:20) *without* the walls of Jerusalem, stands out in marked contrast from the troubled scene *within* the city, where David and the elders of Israel clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces. Nevertheless, Araunah, too, was threatened, for the avenging angel drew nigh to and stood over the peaceful threshing floor itself, and as 1 Chronicles 21 tells us, “Ornan (Araunah) turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves” (v. 20). But the angel smote them not: telling us most blessedly, in figure, that Gentiles as well as Jews are delivered from judgment on the ground of the Antitypical Sacrifice.

The tranquil plot of ground of Araunah was not to be the scene of judgment, but was ordained to be the place of grace, forgiveness, and peace. And *where* was that threshing floor situated? Most significantly, on Mount Moriah. We are not left in any doubt upon this point, though the information is supplied neither in 2 Samuel 24 nor 1 Chronicles 21—not for lazy people is the Bible written! “Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in Mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the place of Araunah the Jebusite” (2 Chron. 3:1). And Moriah, as its name intimates, was the very place where Jehovah appeared as “Jehovah-Jireh” to Abraham, and where—true to His covenant name—He appeared to meet and provide for the need of David. How very remarkable and inexpressibly blessed: Moriah was and continued to be the place of sovereign *grace*!

Moriah was the mount to which Abraham went when commanded to offer up Isaac. In Genesis 22:14 we read, "And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-Jireh: as it is said to this day, in the mount of the LORD it shall be seen." That is, seen as the Provider, or as Gesenius, the celebrated Hebraist, renders it, "in the mount of Jehovah it shall be provided." B. W. Newton tells us that Moriah is "a name derived from the same root, and signifies the place of appearing, i.e., of the appearance of Jehovah as the Provider. It should be observed that all the thoughts connected with Moriah and the provision there made, are to be traced back to the words of Abraham, "my son, God will provide (Heb. "for") Himself a lamb for a burnt offering" (Gen. 22:8).

But now observe the contrast. Confiding implicitly in God, even when he understood not the reason of His commands, Abraham went to Moriah to give full proof of his faith and obedience. Far otherwise was it with poor David. He went there as one whose disobedience had encompassed him with sorrow, judgment and death. He came clothed with sackcloth, bowed down by anguish. He came because he saw the sword of the avenging angel drawn against him and his people. He came as the "troubled one," as one who needed to be delivered from "going down to the pit" (Psa. 30:3). True, Abraham was afflicted, yet how different was the sorrow of the consciously-obedient Abraham from the consciously-disobedient David! Nevertheless, David found on Moriah the same God that there met Abraham. In the very place where Abraham by a countermand from Heaven was stayed from slaying his son, the angel by a like countermand was stayed from destroying Jerusalem!

"And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite" (2 Sam. 24:18). It is to be duly noted that the "altar" was *God's* thought and not David's. This is very blessed, telling us that the initiative is ever with God in all salvation matters. God is the great Provider: our privilege is to accept His gracious provision. Christ—to whom the altar pointed—was the gift of God and *not* the product of man. We love Him because *He* first loved us. And how gracious He was not to keep David in suspense a whole day, nor even an hour. No sooner had he sought unto God, and He immediately responded. The ark was then at mount Zion and the tabernacle at Gibeon (2 Chron. 1), but David was bidden to go neither to the one nor the other.

"And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded" (2 Sam. 24:19). What beautiful completeness this gives to all that has been before us. The penitent, prudent, submissive, and supplicating one, is now seen as the *obedient* one. How could it be otherwise? He who is, spiritually speaking, clothed with sackcloth, does not follow a course of self-will and self-pleasing. David made no demur against being told to seek unto this Gentile and ask a favour at his hands. A truly meek heart neither reasons about nor objects to the Divine demands, but complies promptly. Here, then, is the final mark of the prevailing intercessor: he who has power with God in prayer (after his recovery from folly), is one that now treads the path of obedience. If God is to respond to our petitions, we must respond to His precepts.

In closing, let us call attention to one other point of analogy between the experiences of Abraham and David on this memorable mount, the one which is most pertinent of all to our present subject—David's grand reward. God called the Patriarch to Moriah not only that he might there give proof of his faith and obedience, but more especially that this trial of Abraham might be the occasion of unfolding to him (and through him, to us)

a fuller revelation of His own ways in *grace*: for as we now know, the touching drama there enacted provided a striking adumbration of the Father Himself not sparing His own beloved Son, but freely delivering Him up for all His people. In like manner, God not only provided a substitute for David on Moriah, but He there vouchsafed him a revelation of the counsels of His grace. Moriah was not only the place where David obtained forgiveness for his sins, but it was also made to him the place of *honour and blessing*.

Upon the altar he there erected, David, “offered burnt offerings and peace offerings” (1 Chron. 21:26). Nor did he do so in vain: the Lord “answered him from Heaven by fire”—in token of His approval and acceptance. But more: this was the time when and the place where he received commission to prepare for the building of God’s House. “Then David said, This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel” (1 Chron. 22:1). Now it was that David learned where was the sacred spot which Jehovah had chosen for the site of *the Temple*. This, then, was David’s grand reward: unto *him*, and not to any of the Prophets, nor even to the high priest, was given the holy privilege of entering into God’s mind concerning His House and to make provision for the same! How true it is, dear reader, that God ever honours those that honour Him—even though it be by appearing before Him in sackcloth: though He does not always make His approbation so evident to our senses as He did here to David’s.—A.W.P.

## THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

### 10. *Its Blessedness.*

The doctrine of Election *magnifies the character of God*. It exemplifies His *grace*. Election makes known the fact that salvation is God's free gift, gratuitously bestowed upon whom He pleases. This must be so, for those who receive it are themselves no different from and no better than those who do *not* receive it. Election allows some to go to Hell, to show that all deserved to perish. But grace comes in like a dragnet and draws out from a ruined humanity a little flock, to be throughout eternity the monument of God's sovereign mercy. It exhibits His omnipotency. Election makes known the fact that God is all powerful, ruling and reigning over the earth, and declares that none can successfully resist His will or thwart His secret purposes. Election reveals God breaking down the opposition of the human heart, subduing the enmity of the carnal mind, and with irresistible power drawing His chosen ones to Christ. Election confesses that, "we love Him because He first loved us," and that we believe because He made us willing in the day of His power (Psa. 110:3).

The doctrine of Election ascribes all the glory to God. It disallows any credit to the creature. It denies that the unregenerate are capable of predicating a right thought, generating a right affection, or originating a right volition. It insists that God must work in us both to will and to do. It declares that repentance and faith are themselves God's gifts, and not something which the sinner contributes towards the price of his salvation. His language is, "Not unto us, not unto us," but, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." These paragraphs were written by us almost a quarter of a century ago, and today we neither rescind nor modify them.

"The Lord makes distinctions among guilty men according to the sovereignty of His race. 'I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel: but I will have mercy upon the house of Judah.' Had not Judah sinned too? Might not the Lord have given up Judah also? Indeed He might justly have done so, but He delights in mercy. Many sin, and righteously bring upon themselves the punishment due to sin: they believe not in Christ, and die in their sins. But God has mercy, according to the greatness of His heart upon many, who could not be saved upon any other footing but that of undeserved mercy. Claiming His royal right, He says, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.' The prerogative of mercy is vested in the sovereignty of God: that prerogative He exercises. He gives where He pleases, and He has a right to do so, since none have any claim upon Him" (C. H. Spurgeon: "The Lord's Own Salvation"—Hosea 1:7).

The above makes it sufficiently plain that it is no light thing to reject this blessed part of eternal Truth: nay it is a most solemn and serious matter so to do. God's Word is not given us to pick and choose from—to single out those portions which appeal to us, and to disdain whatever commends itself not to our reason and sentiments. It is given to us as a whole, and by it each of us must yet be judged. To reject the grand truth we are here treating of is the height of impiety, for to repudiate the election of God is to repudiate the God of election. It is a refusal to bow before His high sovereignty. It is the corrupt preacher opposing himself against the holy Creator. It is presumptuous pride which insists upon being the determiner of its own destiny. It is the spirit of Lucifer, who said, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:13, 14).

The blessedness of this doctrine appears in that *it is all important in the plan of salvation*. Consider this first from the Divine side. A Scriptural presentation of this grand truth is indispensable if the distinctive acts of the Triune God in salvation matters are to be recognised, honoured and owned. Salvation proceeds not from one Divine Person only, but equally from the Everlasting Three. Jehovah has so ordered things that each One in the Godhead should be magnified and glorified alike. The Father is as really and truly the Christian's Saviour as is the Lord Jesus, and so, too, is the Holy Spirit—note how the Father is expressly designated, "God our Saviour" in Titus 3:4, as distinct from "Jesus Christ our Saviour" in verse 6. But this is ignored and lost sight of if this precious doctrine be omitted. Predestination pertains to the Father, propitiation to the Son, regeneration to the Spirit. The Father originated, the Son effectuated our salvation, and by the Spirit it is consummated. To repudiate the former is to take away the very foundation.

Consider it now from the human side: election lies at the very base of a sinner's hope. By nature all are the children of wrath. In practice, all have gone astray. The whole world has become guilty before God. All are exposed to wrath, and if left to themselves would be involved in one common ruin. They are "clay of the same lump," and continuing under nature's forming hand would be all "vessels to dishonour" (Rom. 9:21). That any are saved is of the grace of God (Rom. 11:4-7). Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of sinners, is Himself the Elect One, as described by the Prophet (Isa. 42:1). And all who shall ever be saved are elected in Him, given to Him of the Father, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. It was to accomplish their salvation that God gave His only begotten Son, and that Jesus Christ assumed our nature and gave His life as a ransom.

It is to call the elect that the Scriptures are given, that ministers are sent, that the Gospel is preached, and the Holy Spirit is here. It is to accomplish election that men are taught of God, drawn of the Father, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, made partakers of precious faith, endued with the spirit of adoption, the spirit of prayer, and the spirit of holiness. It is in consequence of their election that men are made obedient to the Gospel, are sanctified by the Spirit, and become holy and without blame before God. Had there been no Divine election, there had been no Divine salvation. Nor is this a mere arbitrary assertion of ours: "Except the Lord of hosts had left us a seed we had been as Sodom and been made like unto Gomorrah" (Rom. 9:29). Lost sinners cannot save themselves. God was under no obligation to save them. If He is pleased *to* save, He saves whom He will.

Election not only lies at the foundation of a sinner's hope, but also accompanies every step of the Christian's progress to Heaven. It carries to him the glad tidings of salvation. It opens his heart to receive the Saviour. It is seen in every act of faith, in every holy duty, and in every effectual prayer. It calls him. It quickens him in Christ. It beautifies his soul. It crowns him with righteousness and life and glory. It contains within it the precious assurance that, "He which hath begun a good work within you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). There was nothing in them which moved God to choose His people, and He so deals with them as not to permit anything in or from them as to cause Him to reverse that choice. As Romans 8:30 so definitely intimates, predestination involves glorification, and therefore guarantees the supply of the elect's every need in between the two.

The blessedness of this doctrine appears in *its essential elements*. We will single out three or four of the principal of these. First, the superlative honour of being chosen by God. In all choices the person choosing puts a value on the chosen. To be selected by a

king unto an office, or to be called to some employment by the state, how it will dignify a man. Thus it is in spiritual affairs. It was a special commendation of Titus that he had been “chosen of the churches” (2 Cor. 8:19). But that the great God, the blessed and only Potentate, should choose such poor, contemptible, worthless, and vile creatures as we are, passes knowledge. Ponder 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, and see how this is there dwelt upon. How it should amaze us! How it should humble us. Note how this honourable emphasis is put upon the Lord Jesus: “Behold My Servant, *whom I have chosen*” (Matt. 12:18); so upon His members too: “The elect’s sake, *whom He hath chosen*” (Mark 13:20).

Again—the consequent excellence of this. They are *the elect*: the ones which God has chosen, and does not high worth, honour, excellence, necessarily follow from this? The chosen of God must needs be choice: the act of God makes them so. Observe the order in 1 Peter 2:6—“chief Cornerstone, elect, precious”—precious because elect. Take the most eminent of God’s saints, and what is their highest title and honour? This: “For David My servant’s sake, *whom I chose*” (1 Kings 11:34). “Aaron whom He had chosen” (Psa. 105:26). Paul, “he is a chosen vessel unto Me” (Acts 9:15). “Ye are a chosen generation, a peculiar people” (1 Peter 2:9), that is, elect. That expression is taken from, “Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people” (Exo. 19:5). It imports that which is dear to God: “since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable” (Isa. 43:4).

Again—mark the fullness of such high privilege. “Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts” (Psa. 65:4); yea, he is “most blessed forever” (Psa. 21:6), or as the Hebrew has it (see margin) “set for blessings,” that is, set apart or appointed for naught but blessings. As the New Testament expresses it, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with *all spiritual blessings* in the heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him” (Eph. 1:3, 4). Election, then, is the treasure-fountain of all blessedness. The elect are chosen unto the nearest approach and union unto God that is possible for creatures, to the highest communion with Himself. Consider, too, the *time* when He chose us. Paul dates it from “the beginning” (2 Thess. 2:13). God has loved us ever since He was God, and while He *is* God He will continue to do so. God is from everlasting and He continues to be God to everlasting (Psa. 90:2), and His love to us is as old: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” And His love is like Himself: causeless, changeless, endless.

The blessedness of election appears again in the comparative *fewness* of the elect. The paucity of men enjoying any privilege magnifies it the more, as in the case of the preservation of Noah and his family: “The ark . . . wherein few, that is eight souls were saved” (1 Peter 3:20). What a contrast was that from the whole world “of the ungodly,” which all perished! The same fact and contrast was emphasised by Christ in Luke 12. “For all these things do the nations of the world seek after” (v. 30): that is, the things of time and sense, and God gives such to them. But in opposition thereto, the Lord says, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you *the kingdom*” (v. 32). His design was to show the greater mercy of God that so few are reserved unto spiritual and eternal favours, while all others have only material and temporal things as their portion.

How this solemn fact should affect our hearts. Turn your eyes, dear reader, upon the world today, and look where you will, what do you behold? Are you not compelled to say of the present generation, in all nations alike, that God has left them to walk “in their own ways”? Must we not mournfully conclude of the men and women of this age that “the

whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19)? The sparse number that are of God are indeed thinly sown—a small handful of gleaning in comparison with the whole great crop of mankind. And let it not be forgotten that what appears now before our eyes is but the actualization of that which was foreordained in eternity. There is no disappointed and defeated God on the Throne of the universe. He has *His* way “in the whirlwind and in the storm” (Nahum 1:3).

And again we say how deeply should this startling contrast affect our hearts. “For a few to be singled forth and saved, when a multitude, yea, a generality of others are suffered to perish, how doth it heighten the mercy and grace of salvation to us; for God in His providence to order many outward means to deliver a few, which He denies to others who perish: how doth this affect the persons that are preserved? How much more when it is ‘so great a salvation’ ” (T. Goodwin). This appears from what were types and mere shadows of it in Old Testament times, as in the case of the one small family of Noah alone being spared from the universal deluge. So too by the example of Lot, pulled out of Sodom by the hand of angels. And why? “The Lord being merciful unto him,” says Genesis 19:16. Mark what a deep sense of and valuation upon Lot had of the same: “Behold now, Thy servant hath found grace in Thy sight, and Thou hast magnified Thy mercy, which Thou has showed unto me in saving my life” (Gen. 19:19).

But there is this further to be considered: our being delivered from a condition of like wretchedness and wrath as pertains to the non-elect, which held not in the cases mentioned above. Noah was, “A just man, and upright in his generations” (Gen. 6:9), and Lot was “righteous” and “vexed his soul with the filthy conversation of the wicked” (2 Peter 2:7). They were not guilty of those awful sins because of which God sent the flood and fire upon their fellows. But when *we* were ordained to salvation, we lay before God in a *like condition* of corruption and guilt as all mankind are in. It was only the sovereign decree of a sovereign God which purposed our being brought out of a state of sin and wrath into a state of grace and righteousness. How stupendous, then, was the mercy of God unto *us*, in making this difference (1 Cor. 4:7) between those in whom there was, “no difference” (Rom. 3:22)! O what love, what whole-hearted obedience, what praise are due unto Him!

The blessedness of this doctrine appears in that a true apprehension thereof is *a great promoter of holiness*. According to the Divine purpose the elect are destined to a holy calling (2 Tim. 1:9). In the accomplishment of that purpose, they are actually and effectually brought to holiness. God separates them from an ungodly world. He writes upon their hearts His Law, and affixes to them His seal. They are made partakers of the Divine nature, being renewed in the image of Him who created them. They are an habitation of God, their bodies becoming the temple of the Holy Spirit, and they are led by Him. A glorious change is thus wrought in them, transforming their character and conduct. They wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. To them, old things are passed away and all things are become new: forgetting the things which are behind, they press forward to the things which are before. They are kings and priests unto God, and shall yet be adorned with crowns of glory.

There are those who, in their ignorance, say that the doctrine of election is a licentious one—that a belief of it is calculated to produce carelessness and a sense of security in sin. Such a charge is a blasphemous reflection upon the Divine Author of it. This truth, as we have shown at length, occupies a prominent place in the Word of God, and that Word is



holy, and the whole of it profitable for instruction in *righteousness* (2 Tim. 3:16). The Apostles one and all believed and taught this doctrine, and they were promoters of piety and not encouragers of loose living. It is true that this doctrine, like every other in Scripture, may be *perverted* by wicked men and put to an evil use, but so far from that militating against the Truth, it only serves to demonstrate the fearful extent of human depravity. We also grant that unregenerate men may intellectually espouse this doctrine and then settle down into a fatalistic inertia. But we emphatically deny that a *heart* reception thereof will produce any such effect.

That faith, obedience, and holiness are the inseparable consequences and fruits of election is unmistakably clear from the Scriptures (Acts 13:48; Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 1:4-7; Titus 1:1), and has been fully set forth by us in previous articles. How can it be otherwise? Election always involves regeneration and sanctification, and when a regenerated and sanctified soul discovers that he owes his spiritual renewal solely to the sovereign predestination of God, how can he but be truly grateful and deeply thankful? And in what other way can he express his gratitude than in a holy course of fruitful obedience? An apprehension of the everlasting love of God for him will of necessity awaken in him a responsive love to God, and wherever *that* exists, there will be a sincere effort to please Him in all things. The fact is that a spiritual sense of the distinguishing grace of God is the most powerful constraining motive unto genuine godliness.

Were we to enter into detail upon the principal elements of holiness, our article would be extended indefinitely. A due consideration of the fact that there was nothing in us which moved God to fix His heart upon us, and that He foresaw us as ruined and Hell-deserving creatures, will *humble* our souls as nothing else will. A spiritual realization that all our concerns are entirely at the disposal of God, will work in us a *submission* to His sovereign will as nothing else can. A believing perception that God set His heart upon us from everlasting, choosing us to be His peculiar treasure, will work in us a *contempt of the world*. The knowledge that fellow-Christians are the elect and beloved of God will evoke love and *kindness* unto them. The assurance that God's eternal purpose is immutable and guarantees the supply of our every need will impart solid *comfort* in every trial.—A.W.P.

## THE HOLY SABBATH.

### 7. *Its Christianization.*

In the first section of our remarks upon the Christianization of the Sabbath (in the August issue) we confined our attention mainly to two things. First, in pointing out that the many arguments advanced for the perpetuation of the Sabbath in this dispensation (June and July articles) cannot possibly be rendered invalid by the mere fact of a change in the Day of Rest—that it most certainly does not follow from the first day of the week now being the one specially hallowed for Divine worship, a proper Sabbath as such no longer obtains. Second, we sought to show that a change of economy required a change in the day of Sabbath observance: if the New Covenant was to stand out with clear distinctness from the Old, then a new Day of Rest best accorded with and testified to the establishment of the same.

We are now to dwell more particularly on the fact that the first day of the week is the one ordained of God for the Christian Sabbath. We must ask our friends to kindly remember that these pages are read by people of varied shades of thought, some of them having been brought up under quite different teaching from what others have received, and as we desire (under God) to help one and all, we often feel obliged to take up an aspect of a subject which will not appeal to the majority, yea which may seem to them quite needless. Some of our readers have been influenced by “Seventh Day Adventism,” and we must confess that in our wide reading we have come across very little indeed which was calculated to solve their difficulties; and therefore we deem it well to enter carefully and with some detail into this point.

The old creation comprised in it the law of obedience of man unto God, this being implanted in his moral nature, which gave inclination unto the observance of it. The law of creation had a covenant inseparably annexed to it, as had also the Siniatic constitution. The immediate end of those covenants was to bring men by due obedience unto the rest of God, and as a pledge thereof and also a means of attaining it, the Day of Rest was instituted. All these things therefore must have a place also in the New Covenant belonging unto the new creation, the immediate end of which is our entrance into the rest of God, as the Apostle proves at length in Hebrews 4. But therein we are not absolutely to enter into God’s rest as a Creator and Rewarder, but to God in Christ as *Redeemer*, the foundation of which is the work of God in the new creation, and the complete satisfaction or complacency which He finds in Christ’s atonement.

Thus it should be apparent that the particular day of the week on which the Sabbath is to be observed, resolves itself into *what Covenant* we walk under before God. If the Siniatic covenant has been annulled, then of necessity the Day of Rest has been changed. On the other hand, to insist that the Sabbath as given to the Jews is not abolished requires us to perpetuate the whole system of Mosaic ordinances which stood on the same bottom with it. That this is not simply an inference or dogmatic assertion of ours, that it is actually a Scriptural proposition is clear from the whole argument of Hebrews 7-10. “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Heb. 7:12). “The covenant being changed, the rest which was the end of it being changed, and the way of entering into God’s rest being changed, a change of the day of rest must of necessity thereon ensue” (John Owen). With these introductory remarks we now proceed to offer further proofs for the *first* day of the week being the Christian Sabbath.

First, it was *plainly adumbrated in Old Testament times*. This change in the weekly Day of Rest from the last to the first day of the week, that is, from the seventh to the eighth, as everything pertaining to the Christian era, was intimated under various types and shadows. The work of creation was finished in six days, and on the seventh God rested from His work, which completed a week, or the first series of time. The eighth day, then, was the first of a new series, and on that day Christ rose as the Head of the new creation. The eighth day is accordingly signalized in the Old Testament, pointing in a manner the most express to the day when Christ entered into His rest, and when in commemoration thereof His people are to rest.

Circumcision was to be administered unto children on the *eighth* day (Gen. 17:12). On the *eighth* day, but not before, animals were accepted in sacrifice (Lev. 22:27). On the *eighth* day the consecration of Aaron as high priest, and his sons, after various ceremonies, was completed (Lev. 9:1). On the *eighth* day was the cleansing from issues, emblematic also of sin (Lev. 15:29). On the *eighth* day atonement was made for the Nazarite who was defiled (Num. 6:10). When the sheaf of the firstfruits was brought to the priest, it was to be accepted on the *eighth* day (Lev. 23:11)—a distinctive type of the resurrection of Christ. The *eighth* day was sanctified at the dedication of the Temple (2 Chron. 7:9), and in its sanctification at the time of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29:17).

Now, can any spiritual mind suppose for a moment that this repeated use of the eighth day, in connection with the most solemn services of God's ancient people and in a manner so conspicuous, was without a special purpose? Did not the wisdom of God single out that day for some very important end? intimating thereby an antitypical new beginning? The *eighth* day corresponds with the first day of the week, on which according to all those appointments, Christ was received as the Firstborn from the dead, His sacrifice accepted, and on which, as the great High Priest He was "consecrated for evermore," having made atonement for His people, by which they are cleansed from all sin. That purpose of God is fully developed in the New Testament, where He who is Lord of the Sabbath, without in the slightest degree changing the obligation to observe a seventh day, appropriated to Himself the first instead of the last day of the week.

Second, this change is clearly *intimated by what is recorded of the first day in the New Testament*. The alteration in the day of Sabbath rest and worship was emphasized by Christ's personal visitations to His assembled disciples on the first of the week. After His appearing to the travelers to Emmaus, the Saviour was seen no more until His mysterious and blessed manifestation in the upper room. "Then the same day at evening, being the first of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you" (John 20:19). What is the Holy Spirit's object here in mentioning the particular day of the week? Was it not to inform us that this was now a *particular* day? Jews would understand at once what was signified by the notice that a religious "assembly" occurred on the *seventh* day, and Christians are to equally understand what is denoted by such an allusion to the *first* day.

The next detail to be noticed in the above passage is, "the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for *fear of the Jews*." What is indicated by those words? Let it be remembered that the Lord had already "opened their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45), which must mean that, in a measure at least, they now knew the types had given place to the reality. We also know that, "He through

the Holy Spirit had given *commandments* unto the Apostles whom He had chosen, to whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:2, 3). What other conclusion, then, can be drawn, but that the disciples now observed the Sabbath on the first day of the week, and that they therefore took the precaution of fastening the doors because they knew how incensed the Jews would be for their departure from the ancient observance of the Sabbath on the seventh day?

Thomas was absent on the above occasion, and when he learned of its marvels, expressed strong unbelief. Throughout that week the Lord Jesus did not reappear. But when the disciples assembled again on the *first day* of the next week, Thomas being present with them, He once more stood in their midst and said, "Peace be unto you" (John 20:26). Is there nothing marked by that interval of time? His other interviews with them are not thus dated! Surely the fact that Christ was not seen by His disciples for a whole week, and

that He then appeared to them again on the first day when they met for special worship, clearly signifies His definite sanction of *this* as the appointed day of meeting with His disciples? And is not this most expressly confirmed by the Holy Spirit's advent at Pentecost? Most assuredly the Spirit's descent on the first day of the week crowned this ordinance and ratified the newly instituted Christian Sabbath.

Third, the first day of the week was *celebrated by the early Church*. That this was how the Apostles understood the matter appears from their custom, for they assembled together for the breaking of bread and the preaching of the Word "on the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7). Are we not compelled to conclude that what the Apostles did, and what the churches did under their supervision, must have been done in accord with the revealed will of their Divine Master? But, it will be objected, If God requires the Sabbath to be duly observed on the first day of the week during this Christian dispensation, why has He not given a definite command through His Apostles to that effect in the Epistles? To this question we make three replies. In the first place, it savors strongly of impiety: a taking it upon ourselves to say *how* God is to make known His pleasure to us—He has other ways of declaring His will besides through express precepts.

In the second place, such a question loses sight altogether of the situation in which many of the early Christians found themselves—a situation very different from that which generally obtains today. In the first generation of the Christian era it was quite impossible for the Sabbath to be kept with the same sacred strictness with which the Jewish Sabbath had been observed. So long as the Christian Church was confined to the boundaries of Palestine, and its members were made up of Jewish believers and proselytes, as it was for some time, it was required of all the converts to continue in an exact observance of the Jewish Sabbath in compliance with the law of the land. They did, in addition, observe the Lord's Day, so far as that was possible privately; but they had it not in their power to render the first day one of holy rest for all their fellows.

When the Christian Church enlarged her borders and converts from the Gentiles added thereto, the Christian Sabbath had to encounter most formidable obstacles and was met by almost constant opposition. Let it also be carefully borne in mind that many of the early Gentile converts were the slaves of heathen masters, and it will at once appear how impossible it was for the Church to secure anything approaching Sabbath observance, so far as that implies the setting apart of the first day from all secular interests and the devoting of it solely unto Divine worship. It was therefore most merciful on God's part to

lay not upon them a burden which they could not have borne. Nevertheless there is clear evidence that those early Christians devoted at least a part of the first day to special worship so far as their distressed and persecuted state rendered possible.

But in the third place, we ask, Is it true that no Divine command for the sanctification of the first day is to be found in the Epistles? And we reply, No, it is not. "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Cor. 16:1, 2). "I have given order," is certainly the language of authority, and cannot be regarded as anything less than an apostolic command. It is to be duly noted that Paul "gave order" concerning not only the principle of systematic Christian giving (for the relief of indigent saints), but also stipulated the time when such collections were to be made, that being appointed for "the first day of the week." Nor was such a regulation peculiar to the church at Corinth, as is intimated by his, "so I teach everywhere in every church" (4:17), "so ordain I in all churches" (7:17). Moreover, he expressly tells us, "the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37).

"In view of this important verse, we may remark: there is here clear proof that the *first* day of the week was observed by the church at Corinth as holy time. If it were not, there can have been no propriety in selecting that day in preference to any other in which to make the collection. It was the day which was set apart to the duties of religion, and therefore an appropriate day for the exercise of charity and the bestowment of alms. There can have been no reason why this day should have been designated except that it was a day set apart to religion, and therefore deemed a proper day for the exercise of benevolence towards others. This order extended also to the churches in Galatia, proving also that the first day of the week was observed by them, and was regarded as a day proper for the exercise of charity towards the poor and afflicted. And if the first day of the week was observed, by apostolic authority in those churches, it is morally certain that it was observed by others. This consideration, therefore, demonstrates that it was the custom to observe this day, and that it was observed by the authority of the early founders of Christianity" (A. Barnes).

It is abundantly clear, then, from this passage that the *first* day of the week was by Divine authority appointed for Divine worship—for this "collection" was an act of Christian fellowship. Ere passing on, it should be pointed out that the Greek which is here rendered "the first (day) of the week" is the very same expression that is employed by the four Evangelists in connection with the resurrection of Christ (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1; John 10:1), also in John 20:19 when He appeared to the disciples in the upper room. The word used is "Sabbaton," which means both "week" and "Sabbaths." Literally, then, it reads, "the first of *the Sabbaths*," the Holy Spirit using this particular term to denote the beginning of a new series. Thus we need not have the slightest hesitation in speaking of "The Christian Sabbath."

The Christian Sabbath was most strikingly honoured by Christ Himself in His glorious appearing on the isle of Patmos and the Prophetic revelation which He there made to His servant John. In narrating the wondrous visions which he there received, the Apostle describes the time when they were given to him as, "on the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10). Now all the days of the week are the Lord's, but that one of them should be singled out and thus designated to distinguish it from the others, shows that *this* day is His in a *peculiar*

*sense*, as specially devoted to His honour. It is called “the Lord’s Day” for precisely the same reason that the holy feast is called “the Lord’s Supper” (1Cor. 11:20)—the one as a memorial of His death, the other of His resurrection. This particular designation supplies further proof that He is “Lord of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28).

A number of testimonies are still extant that the Christians in the first three centuries observed the Sabbath on the first day of the week. “On the day which is called Sunday, all, whether dwelling in the towns or in the villages, hold meetings, and the memoirs of the Apostles and the writings of the Prophets are read, as much as the time will permit; then the reader closing, the president in a speech exhorts and incites to an imitation of those excellent examples; then we all rise and pour forth united prayers” (Justin Martyr, in his *Apology*: A.D. 150). Another witness of the same era is Eusebius, “All things whatever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord’s Day, as more appropriately belonging to it, because it has a precedence, and is first in rank, and more honourable than the Jewish Sabbath. It is delivered to us that we should meet together on this day,” (Comments on Psalm 92).—A.W.P.

### A TENDER HEART.

“Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place . . . I also have heard thee, saith the LORD” (2 Kings 22:19). This was part of the message which God sent in response to an inquiry made by the godly king Josiah. It occurred at a time when the earthly people of God had sunken very low—so low that “the Book of the Law” had been lost, and was only then recovered (v. 8). The sacred Book was read in the hearing of the king, and so deeply was he affected by its solemn message, “he rent his clothes” (v. 11). As he learned of the greatness of Jehovah’s wrath, which was kindled against his subjects, Josiah sent messengers to inquire of the Lord. The answer was that sore judgment would certainly fall upon Jerusalem, but that the king would be removed from this world before the storm of Divine wrath should burst.

That the above is recorded for our instruction scarcely needs to be pointed out, and deeply important and valuable are the lessons illustrated thereby. It tells us that the One with whom we have to do takes cognizance of the state of our hearts. It reveals to us the fact that God’s dealings with us in Providence are regulated—in part, at least—by the state of our hearts. It announces to us that a *tender heart* is of great price in the sight of the Lord. It makes evident that the tenderness of Josiah’s heart was the reason why Divine judgment did not fall upon his kingdom in his own lifetime. It presents to us the startling and blessed spectacle of a man with a tender heart at a time when spirituality was at its lowest ebb in Israel. It makes clear to us what are the marks or characteristics of a tender heart.

What an excellent thing, then, is a “tender heart.” What delight it gives unto the Lord. Why certainly, for it is the product of His own handiwork. By nature the heart of fallen man is very far from being “tender” *Godwards*, for *that* is what was denoted in the case of Josiah. No, sad to say, it is the very opposite: so far as the Lord is concerned, the heart of every descendant of Adam is hard, callous, stubborn and defiant. Before it can become tender, a miracle of *grace* needs to be wrought upon it. It is to this the words of the Prophet refer: “I will put a new spirit within you[them]; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh” (Ezek. 11:19). Whatever be the future application of these words to the nation of Israel, the substance of them is most assuredly made good every time a soul is truly born again.

A “tender heart,” then, stands in direct antithesis from a hard one. It is the opposite of a heart of *stone*, which is cold, lifeless, not responsive. It is a spiritual, a supernatural thing: we stress this because some confuse with it the workings of natural conscience. There are not a few who mistake the fluctuations of natural conscience for a heart made tender in the fear of the Lord, and in this age of superficiality this is scarcely to be wondered at. There are plenty of unregenerate people who have consciences that are—in certain directions—very alert and active: witness the deluded Roman Catholics who would not dream of eating any animal meat during “lent,” yet these very people have no compunction in worshipping images of wood and stone. Verily such religionists “strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.” Such is man the world over until and unless sovereign grace is pleased to bestow upon him a tender heart.

Natural conscience is intensely superstitious. It is most punctilious over self-inflicted austerities, and most watchful against violating self-imposed rules—yet it will commit sins which one who has the fear of God in his heart would not be willingly guilty of for

gold or rubies. On the other hand, the very same conscience will stumble over the veriest trifles, regarding which, one who is enlightened by God and regulated by His Word would not feel the least scruple about. Natural conscience will “pay tithes of mint, anise, and cummin,” while it “omits the weightier matters of the Law” (Matt. 23:23). It will refuse to enter Pilate’s judgment hall, “lest it should be defiled” (John 18:28), and that, at the very time when its possessors were venting their hatred against the Christ of God. Thus the distinction between the superstitious workings of conscience in the natural man and the activities of a “tender heart” in the child of God is clear-cut, and there is no excuse for confusing the one with the other.

A heart which has been made tender in the fear of God is one which moves as the Holy Spirit works upon it: moves not away from but toward the One whom the Spirit is here to glorify, for the Divine will is its orbit. “It is like the mariner’s compass, which having been once touched by the magnet, always turns toward the North. It may indeed oscillate and tremble backwards and forwards, but still it will return to the pole, and ultimately remain fixed at the point whence it was temporarily disturbed. So when the heart has been touched by the Spirit, and has been made tender in God’s fear, it may for a time waver to the right hand or to the left, but it is always trembling and fluctuating till it points toward God, as the eternal center of its happiness and holiness” (The Gospel Pulpit, 1843).

Let us now be a little more specific. A “tender heart” is not only one of Divine production and is the opposite of a hard and unregenerate heart, but it is a *sensitive* one—just as a tender plant is exceedingly sensitive to chilly winds and biting frosts. A heart that is tender in the fear of God shrinks from all sin and makes conscience of the same. So long as it retains its tenderness, it firmly refuses to trifle with that which the wicked make a sport of. It shuns the very appearance of evil, and hates the garment spotted by the flesh. Its earnest and constant prayer is, “Lead me not unto temptation, but deliver me from evil.” Because it is so sensitive, it trembles at the Word of God” (Isa. 66:2), for His holy awe is upon that soul. Consequently, it deems the contents of that Word far too sacred to be made the subject of carnal jangling and argument.

A tender heart is one which has a deep concern for the glory of God and the welfare of His kingdom. Superlatively was this exemplified by the Lord Jesus Christ: who so thoroughly absorbed with the honour of His Father and the furtherance of His cause on earth, His own interests and aggrandizement were completely swallowed up in magnifying the One who had sent Him. And the same principle is found in each of His followers, though with vastly different degrees of manifestation. The tender heart is one in which the love of God is shed abroad, and just so far as that is allowed to dominate and regulate do we seek to please Him. Consequently, a tender heart is one which is deeply grieved, touched to the quick, by everything which dishonours his best Friend—whether it be seen in others or discovered in himself. What more tender than the eye, and what so sensitive to a foreign substance!

A “tender heart” is pliant. The heart of the unregenerate is likened unto “the nether millstone” (Job 41:24), but that which is wrought upon by the Holy Spirit resembles wax—receptive to His impressions upon it. The stony heart is impervious to pleadings and threatenings alike, but the tender heart is amenable and responsive to the Divine call. Man in his natural state says with Pharaoh, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice?” (Exo. 5:2), but one which has been supernaturally quickened asks, “Lord, what



wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). The more tender the plant, the more readily it lends itself to being trained or twined around an upright stake. So it is with the child of God. In his "first love" he freely yields himself unto God as one that is alive from the dead, and his members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom. 6:13). This tenderness and pliability of heart is evidenced by its possessor humbling himself before God—as was clearly the case with Josiah (2 Kings 22:19).

A tender heart is *conscientious*. It makes its possessor diligent in the performance of duty. If an employer, he will not oppress and be a hard taskmaster, but be just, and considerate, knowing that he also has a Master in Heaven. If an employee, he will not shirk his work, but will do it with all his might whatsoever his hand findeth to do, with good will, "as to the Lord" (Eph. 6:7). It makes its possessor careful in heeding the Divine exhortations and warnings. He lays to heart such a word as, "Take us the foxes, the *little* foxes, that spoil the vines" (Song. 2:15). How tender we are of our eye: no matter how tiny the particle of grit which enters and irritates, we quickly and diligently seek to extract it—equally zealous is a tender heart to remove whatever endangers spiritual fruitfulness.

It makes its possessor considerate of the rights and needs of his fellows. He will not take advantage of kindness nor disregard the welfare of those about him. He will deny himself rather than callously ignore the comfort of his neighbours. When he sees one in dire distress he will not pass by on the other side, but go and endeavour to relieve him. A heart which is tender Godwards is never hard and cruel manwards.—A.W.P.

