

Volume 21—Studies in the Scriptures—August, 1942
DIVINE HEALING.

Having exposed the cardinal errors promulgated by the “Divine healing” cults, we turn now to the positive side of the subject. And there is a pressing need to do so for the pulpit has failed grievously here as in so many other directions. Of old God complained, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6) and history has repeated itself. It was prophesied, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD” (Amos 8:11), and that fearful prediction is now in course of fulfillment. In the vast majority of places rank error rather than the Truth is being given out and even in the few remaining centres of orthodoxy the preacher confines himself to such a narrow compass that his people are scarcely any better indoctrinated at the end of the year than they were at the beginning: there is no longer a bringing forth of “things *new*” as well as “things old” (Matt. 13:52). How many of our British readers, we wonder, have ever heard a sermon on their duties and privileges in connection with sickness! Very very few we fear. Little wonder that so many ill-informed members of “evangelical churches” fall such easy victims to modern religious fads.

It is no sufficient reply for preachers to say, We have far weightier and more essential themes to expound. True, the salvation of the soul is of immeasurably greater importance than the healing of the body, nevertheless the Scriptures have much to say concerning the body and it is to our very great loss if we ignore or remain ignorant about the same. Is it of no moment at all whether the Christian is healthy or sickly? Has our loving heavenly Father left His children without any instruction concerning the laws of health? And when they fall ill is their situation no better than that of the unbelieving world? Must they, too, lean upon an arm of flesh when sickness overtakes them, and seek the help of a doctor—often an infidel? The Lord is “A very present help in trouble” (Psa. 46:1): does that mean nothing more than that the saint must, in every instance, seek grace from Him to patiently endure his afflictions? God has promised to supply “all the need” of His people (Phil. 4:19): does that include nothing better than drugs and medicines, such as the Christ-rejecter has access to, when I am ill? These are not questions to be lightly dismissed, but prayerfully pondered in the light of Holy Writ.

If the Divine healing cults have gone to one extreme—that of unbalanced fanaticism, have not most of the Lord’s people in this matter gone to the opposite extreme—that of unbelieving stoicism or fatalistic inertia? Is not the attitude of only too many something like this? O well, man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upwards, so as I cannot expect immunity from physical sufferings, I must take what remedies I can for relief and then make the best of a bad job. Or, Since this is my appointed lot I must endeavour to bear it as patiently as I can. Of course when pain is acute they cry unto the Lord and beg Him to ease their anguish, just as Pharaoh did when God’s sore plagues were upon his land. And when Christians pray for recovery, how many of them really do so with *expectation* of its being granted? How many know where to turn for a pertinent promise and then plead the same prevailingly? Yet some of them feel they are living beneath their privileges as sons and daughters of the Almighty and when they hear or read what is advanced by the “faith healing” people they wonder how much of it is true and how much false.

Now it seems to us that we should begin with the subject of *health*, for prevention is better than cure. O what a priceless boon is a sound body and good health: a boon which is denied to some from birth and which few really appreciate till it is taken from them. It has long impressed the writer what a remarkable thing it is that any of us enjoy any health at all seeing that we have six thousand years of sinful heredity behind us! It is due alone to the goodness and kindness of God that the great majority enter this world with more or less sound bodies and reach youth in the bloom of health. But sin and folly then take heavy toll and the constitutions of millions are wrecked before middle life is reached. Nor is this always brought about by wicked intemperance and dissipation. Often it is the outcome of ignorance—through failure to heed some of the most elementary laws of hygiene. Alas, the majority of people will learn in no other school than that of hard and bitter experience and consequently most of them only discover how to live when the time comes for them to die. True, we cannot put old heads on young shoulders, yet if the inexperienced are too proud to heed the counsels of the mature then they must reap the consequences.

Now surely, other things being equal, the Christian ought to enjoy better health than the non-Christian. Why so? Why, because if his walk is regulated by God's Word he will at least be preserved from those diseases which are the fruit of certain transgressions. The English word "holiness" means wholeness, soundness. The more we are kept from sinning the more shall we escape sin's consequences. "Godliness is profitable unto all things (the body as well as the soul), having promise of the life that *now is*, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). One of the basic laws of health is the Sabbath statute. "The Sabbath was made for man" (Mark 2:27), for his good, because he needed it. It was made for man that he might be a *man*, something more than a beast of burden or a human treadmill. His *body* needs it as truly as does his soul. This has been unmistakably demonstrated in Great Britain. When France collapsed and the British Isles faced the most desperate crisis of their long history, the government foolishly ordered that those in the coal mines and munitions factories must work seven days a week, but they soon learned that the workmen produced *less* than they did in six days—they could not stand up to the additional strain.

By resting from manual toil on the Sabbath man is enabled to recuperate his strength for the labours of the week lying ahead. But that cannot be accomplished by attending one meeting after another on that day, nor by exhausting one's strength through lengthy walks to and from the services. Moving the tent nearer the altar is not the remedy—still less by profaning the Sabbath in carnal "recreation." Another Divine precept which promotes health is, "he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa. 28:16). Side by side with the speeding tempo of modern life we behold the multiplying nervous disorders and those who are murdered or maimed on the highway. For many years we have avoided motor cars, buses and trains whenever the distance to be covered was not too great to walk, not using them more than two or three times in a year. Rushing around, hurrying and scurrying hither and thither is not only injurious but a violation of the Divine rule: "He that hasteth with his feet sinneth" (Prov. 19:2)—which means exactly what it says!

"Take therefore no anxious thought for the morrow" (Matt. 6:34). How good health is promoted by obedience to this precept scarcely needs pointing out. It is carking care and worry which disturbs the mind, affects circulation, impairs digestion, and prevents restful sleep. If the Christian would cast all his care on the Lord (1 Peter 5:7) what freedom from

anxiety would be his! “The joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh. 8:10) physically as well as spiritually. What a tonic to a wearied body and tired mind is it to delight ourself in the Lord: “a merry heart doeth good like a medicine” (Prov. 17:22). “My son, attend to My words . . . for they are life unto those that find them and health to all his flesh” (Prov. 4:20, 22). Do we really believe this? “Fear the LORD and depart from evil: it shall be health to thy navel and marrow to thy bones” (Prov. 3:7, 8).

Godly living is conducive to healthiness of mind and body and other things being equal that *will be one* of its bi-products. By “other things being equal” we mean as in the case of one who is not suffering for the sins of his father, who did not ruin his constitution by debauchery before conversion and who exercises ordinary common sense in attending to the elementary rules of hygiene. One who is “temperate in all things” (1 Cor. 9:25) will escape many or all of those ills which is the price which has to be paid for *intemperance*. Scripture does not require us to be either Spartans or epicureans but to “let our *moderation* be known unto all” (Phil. 4:5). God “giveth richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17), yet not to abuse. “Every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused” (1 Tim. 4:4) providing it is used aright—but His choicest creatures prove harmful if used to excess. God has provided great variety in nature, and each one has to learn for himself what best suits him and *deny himself* of that which disagrees.—A.W.P.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

24. *The Way of Salvation:* Matthew 7:13, 14.

The verses to which we have now come are closely connected with the previous sections of our Lord's Sermon in which He had described the character of those who were the subjects of His kingdom and had laid down the rules by which they must walk. Such teaching as He had given was at direct variance with the popular views entertained by His hearers. The Jews supposed that they were all to be the subjects of the Messiah, simply from being the natural descendants of Abraham and because they bore in their flesh the mark of the covenant. But throughout this discourse the Lord Jesus had made it abundantly clear that something more essential than physical lineage and submission to ceremonial rites was required to make them the spiritual heirs of the Patriarch. There was a straiter gate which had to be entered than any privilege which natural birth gave admittance to, a narrower way to be traversed than that religious life mapped out by the scribes and Pharisees. Only those are accounted the true children of Abraham who have his faith (Rom. 4:16), who do his works (John 8:39), and who are vitally united to Christ (Gal. 3:29).

If the teaching of Christ were radically different from that in which the Jews of His day had been brought up, it is in equally sharp contrast with most of the concepts which now prevail in Christendom. If the Jews were completely ignorant of the high and searching requirements of God's holiness it cannot be said that our own generation is any better informed. If they plumed themselves on being the children of Abraham, a large percentage of our people complacently assume that they are members of a "Christian nation." If they believed that the rite of circumcision secured for them the favour of God, multitudes in our churches imagine that the sprinkling of water on the brow of an infant obtains for it a passport to Heaven. And even in those circles which are better instructed, for the most part salvation is offered on much easier terms, far more acceptable to the natural man than those prescribed by the incarnate Son of God. The analogy may be extended still further for if it were the religious leaders of Israel who most strenuously opposed our Lord, it is those now making the loudest claims to orthodoxy that are the bitterest antagonists of the Truth.

In support of our assertion that the doctrine of Christ is directly contrary to the ideas now so prevalent in Christendom, take His solemn and express declaration that *few* there are that find Life, which, we shall see as we proceed, means that only a few will reach Heaven. But who is there today that really believes this? Where is the place in which such a truth is boldly and plainly uttered? We know of none. On the contrary it is generally assumed, yea, said openly, that many, that "millions," that the greater part of the human race will obtain eternal life. Let any man who "attends church" die, and no matter how worldly his life or how crooked his business dealings—do not his friends say with one consent, "he is now at rest," and is not the preacher expected to declare in his funeral sermon that the deceased is "better off"? If anyone should dare to dissent is he not at once condemned for being "harsh and uncharitable"? The tree, forsooth, is not to be known by its fruits but by the label some "religious" gardener has attached to it.

The unwelcome but faithful objector may call attention to our Lord's statement that His flock is a "little"—Greek "very little"—one (Luke 12:32), but the religious world will not listen to him. He must not challenge the Christian profession of his fellows. He must not look for perfect people in this world. We all have our failings, and though some

believe differently from himself, yet their hearts are right, and though others may be slack in performing certain duties, let him remember that they claim to be trusting in the finished work of Christ and therefore it is highly reprehensible for anyone to doubt them. So far from believing that only a *few* will reach Heaven, the vast majority in Christendom today hold that, somehow, in some way, the greater part of our fellows will get there! Hell, if there is such a place, is reserved for arch-criminals and villains, just as our prisons house only a small fraction of the population—the “unfortunates” and “misguided” ones.

And why is it that there are scarcely any left among us who really believe that only the *few* will reach Heaven? There can be only one answer: because it is now generally held that Heaven can be obtained on much easier terms than those prescribed by Christ. The adulterous generation in which our lot is cast is quite sure that Heaven can be reached *without* treading the only way which leads there, that the kingdom of God can be entered without passing through “much tribulation” (Acts 14:22), that we may be disciples of Christ without denying self, taking up our cross and following Him (Matt. 16:24). They do not believe that if their right eye offends it must be plucked out and if their right hand offends it must be cut off (Matt. 5:29, 30). They do not believe that if they live after the flesh they shall die nor that only if through the Spirit they mortify the deeds of the body they shall live (Rom. 8:13). They are fully persuaded that a man can serve two masters and succeed in “making the best of two worlds.” In short, they do not believe the gate is as “strait” nor the way as “narrow” as Christ declared it to be.

All we have to do in order to be saved is to respond to Christ’s gracious invitation and “come unto Him.” Ah, but that “all” is by no means the simple matter that many think and that so many evangelists falsely represent it to be. We have to turn our back upon the world and forsake our cherished sins in order to turn our face unto Christ, as the prodigal had to leave the far country where he had spent his substance in riotous living before he could come to the Father. Christ is the Holy One of God and will not be the minister of sin. Love for the things of this world closes the heart against Him. What caused the young man to go away from Christ sorrowing after some fair show of willingness to be His disciple but love of his possessions? What restrained the invited guests from accepting the invitation to the marriage feast but immoderate affection to the husbanding of a farm and proving of oxen (Matt. 22:5)? “Whoever is under the government of this lust (covetousness) can no more believe in Christ than a man lying under a heap of rubbish or at the bottom of the sea can see the glory of the heavens. The intentness of the eye on one object hinders it from the view of another” (S. Charnock).

When the Philippian jailor asked “what must I do to be saved?” all the Apostle answered was “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house.” Waiving now the fact that that was not the idle inquiry of one who was still in love with the world and taking his fill of its pleasures but instead the distressed cry of one who was desperate, let it be pointed out that while believing in Christ is a simple and easy act considered in itself, yet it becomes a very hard and difficult thing to us by reason of the opposition made thereto by our inward corruptions and the temptations of Satan. To forgive our enemies and love those who persecute and despitefully use us is considered as a notion of the mind, easy to be performed—but try and bring your heart to do the same and you will discover it lies beyond your own unaided powers. As a motion of the mind it is both simple and delightful to cast all our care upon Him who cares for us (1

Peter 5:7), yet a poor man in ill-health and the father of a big family does not find it easy to perform. No heart can tear itself away from the world and hate beloved lusts without first experiencing the mighty operations of the Holy Spirit.

“Enter ye in at the strait gate” (Matt. 7:13), says Christ at the beginning of our passage, and that this is far from being an easy thing to do appears from His word on another occasion: “Strive to enter in at the strait gate” (Luke 13:24). That He should employ such an expression clearly implies the slothfulness and carelessness which characterizes mere nominal professors. And it also denotes there are real difficulties and formidable obstacles to be overcome. The Greek word there used for “strive” (*agonizomai*) is a very expressive and emphatic one, meaning “agonize.” It occurs again in 1 Corinthians 9:25, “and every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things”: the reference is to athletes who took part in the marathon races, willing to undergo the most self-denying discipline to be at their fittest, thereby hoping to win an earthly crown. This word rendered “strive” is translated “labouring fervently” in Colossians 4:12 and “fight” in 1 Timothy 6:12! Ah, my reader, becoming a Christian is not done simply by holding up your hand in a religious meeting or signing some “decision” card. Alas that such multitudes have been deceived by these Satanic catch-pennies!

“The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force” (Matt. 11:12)—like an army storming a city and capturing the same. We have often read of earthly kingdoms being obtained by violence but it seems surprising to hear of such means being used upon the kingdom of Heaven. How are we to understand this? Why thus: “violence” here does not signify unlawful assaults but earnest deliberation. It is not an injurious violence like that which seizes earthly prizes but a holy and industrious violence, intensity of desire and endeavour, persevering zeal which refuses a denial. It is a determination to master all difficulties, to break through all impediments and surmount every obstacle. Such violence was necessary then: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of Heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in” (Matt. 23:13), but did all they could to oppose them. So now: godless relatives and worldly companions will seek to deter the earnest seeker after Christ, but he must not be deterred. “The kingdom of Heaven was never intended to indulge the ease of triflers, but to be the rest of them that labour” (Matthew Henry).

“Enter ye in at the strait gate.” It is not enough to listen to preaching about this “gate,” nor to study its structure or admire the wisdom of its appointment: it must be *entered*. Sermons on repentance and faith in Christ avail us nothing unless they move our hearts to comply therewith. The Greek word here rendered “strait” signifies restrained, cramped, or better “narrow” as it is rendered in the R.V. And what is meant by this strait or narrow gate? A “gate” serves two purposes: it lets in and shuts out. This gate is the only avenue of admittance to that “way” which leads unto Life and all who do not enter by it are eternally barred from the presence of God and the realm of ineffable bliss. The second use of this “gate” is solemnly illustrated at the close of the parable of the virgins. The foolish ones lacked the necessary “oil” (the work of the Spirit in the heart) and when they sought to obtain it, the Bridegroom came and “the door was *shut*” (Matt. 25:10) and though they besought Him to open it unto them, He answered, “I know you not” (v. 12).

What is denoted by entering this Narrow Gate? Chiefly three things. First, *the acceptance of those teachings* of truth, of duty, of happiness, which were unfolded by Christ: the honest and actual receiving into the heart of His holy, searching and flesh-withering instructions. Those teachings may be summed up in His emphasis upon the righteous claims and demands of God upon us and His insistence upon our depraved state and wicked enmity against Him. No one can become a Christian while he entertains any doubt upon the Divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, or while he refuses to bow to the verdict which God has pronounced upon him. We must know ourselves to be utterly lost before there can be any desire for salvation, and we must accept God's sentence of condemnation upon us ere we know how guilty we are in His sight. There can be no traversing the Narrow Way itself until we set our seal that God is true when He declares we are "all as an unclean thing"—that there is "no soundness" in us. It is by relinquishing error—the lies of Satan—and receiving the Truth that we pass through the strait gate.

Second, *the exercise of true repentance*. "From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent" (Matt. 4:17). It was announced of His forerunner that he should "prepare the way of the Lord." And how did he do so? By making ready a people to receive Him when He appeared before them as "The Lamb of God." And in what did that readiness consist? This, that they repented, confessed their sins, and owned that death was their due by being buried in baptism in the Jordan by him (Luke 3:1-16). The Gospel is no less holy than the Law and therefore it requires that our hearts bewail our former transgressions of the Law and be firm and sincere in its resolution against all future sin. "You and your sins must separate, or you and your God will never come together. No one sin may you keep. They must all be given up: they must be brought out like the Canaanite kings from the cave and hanged up before the sun. You must forsake them, abhor them, and ask the Lord to overcome them" (C. H. Spurgeon). It is by abandoning our idols and the pleasures of sin that we pass through the strait gate.

Third, *the complete surrender of ourselves* to God in Christ. This will anticipate an objection which some may be ready to make: is not the Lord Jesus "the Door" (John 10:9)? Yes, and He is so according to the three principal functions of His mediatorial office: He is "the Door" into God's presence as His Prophet, Priest and King. To savingly believe in Christ is to receive Him as Prophet to instruct us, as Priest to atone for us, and as King, to rule over us. Only as His holy teachings are really accepted by a contrite heart is any soul prepared to place any value on His cleansing blood and the sincerity of our acceptance of Him as Priest is evidenced by our readiness to submit to His royal sceptre, for like His types He is "first the King of righteousness and after that the King of Peace" (Heb. 7:2). Christ's cleansing blood is available to none who are unwilling to throw down the weapons of their warfare against God: they must forsake their way if they would be pardoned (Isa. 55:7). Only by a serious dedication of ourselves unto God through Christ can we become enjoyers of the riches of His grace. It is by a complete surrender of ourselves unto God that we pass through the strait gate.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate" (Matt. 7:13). Here was "duty repentance" and "duty faith" with a vengeance, for this exhortation is obviously addressed unto the unsaved: "Enter ye in" definitely implies they were yet outside. And unto whom was Christ speaking? Not to heathen idolaters, who were without any knowledge of the true God. No, it was to those who believed in Jehovah and who received the Scriptures as His very

Word. It was to those who averred, “we have one Father, even God” (John 8:41). Nevertheless, despite all their knowledge of the Truth and enjoyment of external privileges, they had never entered that gate which alone admitted them to the only way which leads unto Life. This same exhortation is equally applicable and pertinent today unto multitudes of church members who notwithstanding their profession and performances have never been born again. In this exhortation Christ makes it plain to His ministers that He would have them recognize the responsibility of their hearers, and call upon the unregenerate to discharge their duties.

“For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat” (Matt. 7:13). In those words our Lord advanced a reason or argument to enforce His previous exhortation. There is another gate than the “strait” one, altogether different thereto, for it is “wide” and gives entrance into a broad way but it leads to the bottomless Pit. It is “the course of this world” (Eph. 2:2), in which all its unregenerate citizens are found. It is the path of self-will and self-gratification. It is “wide” because those in it own no restrictions. They have broken down the Commandments of God which were designed to be a hedge about them. It is therefore a pleasant and easy way to the flesh, for no inquiry and diligent search has to be made in order to find it, no resolution and perseverance are called for in order to continue treading it, no self-denial has to be practiced to remain therein. A dead fish can float with the stream and only a living one can swim against it: so the unregenerate mechanically follow this road, for there is nothing in them to resist the law of gravity. The going is smooth and easy because it is all *down hill*!

It is a *crowded road*, for “many there be which go in thereat.” It is the very width of it which renders it so attractive to the carnal mind. Here there are no “quota” limitations, no barring of “aliens,” no restrictions of colour, caste or creed. There is plenty of room for all. Men may walk in the ways of their hearts and in the sight of their eyes—give rein to their lusts and full indulgence to their inclinations—and none shall hinder them. This broad road is thronged because all mankind are in it by nature, birth admitting them into the same. Nor has anyone the slightest desire to desert it unless a miracle of grace is wrought upon him. Like Lot and his wife in Sodom every last one of us is so loath to leave the city of destruction that the Christian, too, had preferred to remain there and perish unless the Lord had sent His messengers to “pluck” him as a brand from the burning. “Woe to the multitude of many people” (Isa. 17:12), says God to this densely-packed road.

It is a *deceptive road*, for few upon it have any idea of where it is taking them. Those upon it believe they are following the wise course for they regard as fools those who differ from them. We are only young once: life is short, let us have a merry time while it lasts. Let us eat, drink and be merry seems to them the very dictates of common sense. Ah, it is “a way which *seemeth right* unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12). So sure are its travelers they are *right*, they conclude anyone is afflicted with “religious mania” who prefers the Narrow Way. Yet it is a *fatal* road, for it “leadeth to destruction,”—hopeless and eternal destruction! It conducts to the bottomless Pit, the unquenchable fire, and the undying worm. It is the way of the ungodly and Scripture expressly declares that “the way of the ungodly shall *perish*” (Psa. 1:6). And my reader, that fatal way can only be abandoned by conversion, by a radical about-face, by turning from sin and self-pleasing and turning unto God and holy living.—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF ELIJAH.

32. *His Ordeal.*

“And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD” (1 Kings 21:20). We have already considered Ahab’s question and the first part of the Prophet’s reply. We turn now to look at the solemn charge which he preferred against the king. “Because thou hast *sold thyself to work evil* in the sight of the LORD.” Here we may observe how essential it is that we note very particularly each word of Holy Writ, for if we read this verse carelessly we shall fail to distinguish sharply between it and an expression used in the New Testament, which though very similar in sound is vastly different in sense. In Romans 7:14 we find the Apostle declares, “But I am carnal, *sold under sin*.” That statement has puzzled quite a few and some have so misunderstood its force that they have confounded it with the Prophet’s terrible indictment against Ahab. It may be somewhat of a digression, yet numbers of our readers will probably welcome a few expository comments upon the difference in meaning of these two expressions.

It will be noted that Romans 7:14 begins with the affirmation, “For we know that the Law is spiritual,” which among other things means it legislates for the soul as well as the body—its demands reaching beyond the mere outward act to the motive which prompted it and the spirit in which it is performed. In a word, it requires *inward* conformity and purity. Now as the Apostle measured himself by the high and holy requirements of God’s Law, he declared, “but I am carnal.” That was not said by way of self-extenuation to excuse his coming so far short of the Divine standard set before us but in self-condemnation because of his lack of conformity thereto. That is the sorrowful confession of every honest Christian. “I am carnal” expresses what the believer is in himself by nature: though born from above, yet the “flesh” in him has not been improved to the slightest degree. Nor is that true of the believer only when he has suffered some fall—he is always “carnal,” for there is no getting rid of the old nature—though he is not always conscious of this humiliating fact. The more the Christian grows in grace the more does he realize his carnality—that the “flesh” pollutes his holiest exercises and best performances.

“Sold under sin.” This does not mean that the saint gives up himself to be the willing slave of sin but that he finds himself in the case or experience of a slave, of one whose master requires him to do things against his own inclinations. The literal rendering of the Greek is, “having been sold under sin,” that is at the Fall, in which condition we continue to the end of our earthly course. “Sold” so as to be under the power of sin for the old nature is never made holy. The Apostle speaks of what he finds himself, what he is before God and not of what he appeared in the sight of men. His “old man” was thoroughly opposed to God’s Law. There was an evil principle in him against which he struggled, from which he longed to be delivered, but which continued to exert its fearful potency. Notwithstanding the grace he had received he found himself far, far from being perfect and in all respects unable to attain thereunto, though longing after it. It was while measuring himself by the Law, which requires perfect love, that he realized how far short he came of it.

“Sold under sin”: indwelling corruption holds the believer back. The more spiritual progress he is enabled to make, the more he discovers his handicap. It is like a man journeying uphill with a heavy load on his shoulder or back—the further he proceeds the more conscious does he become of that burden. But how is this to be harmonized with

“sin shall not have dominion over you” (Rom. 6:14)? Thus: though indwelling sin tyrannizes the believer, it by no means prevails over him totally and completely. Sin reigns over the *sinner*, having an absolute and undisputed dominion over him, but not so with the saint. Yet it so far plagues as to prevent his attaining unto perfection, which is what he craves: see Philippians 3:12. From the standpoint of the new nature and as God sees him in Christ, the believer is spiritual. From the standpoint of the old nature and as God sees him in himself, he is “carnal.” As a child of Adam he is “sold under sin,” as a child of God he “delights in the Law of God after the inward man” (Rom. 7:22). The acts of a slave are indeed his own acts, yet not being performed with the full consent of his will and delight of his heart they are not a fair test of his disposition and desires.

Vastly different was the case of Ahab from that which we have briefly sketched above: so far from being brought into captivity against his will, he had “sold himself to work evil in the sight of the Lord.” Deliberately and without limit Ahab wholly gave himself up unto all manner of wickedness in open defiance of the Almighty. As Balaam “loved the wages of unrighteousness” (2 Peter 2:15) he freely hired himself unto Balak to curse the people of God. As Judas coveted the silver of the chief priests, he sought them out and covenanted to betray the Saviour unto them (Matt. 26:14, 15), so this apostate king “sold himself to work evil” without compunction or reserve. His horrible crime in respect of Naboth was no detached act contrary to the general tenor or course of his life, as David’s sin in the matter of Uriah had been, but was simply a specimen of his continual rebellion against God. “Having sold himself to work evil in the sight of the Lord, as if in contempt and defiance of Him, he was openly, constantly, and diligently employed in it as a slave in his master’s business” (Thomas Scott).

“Thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD” (1 Kings 21:20). Ahab’s downward course commenced when he *married Jezebel* (v. 25), a heathen, an idolater—and the consequences of that horrible union are recorded for our learning. They stand out as a red light, a danger signal, a solemn warning to the people of God today. The Law expressly forbade an Israelite to marry a Gentile, and the New Testament just as definitely prohibits a Christian from marrying a worldling. “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14). It is at his or her peril that any Christian willfully treads under foot this Divine commandment, for deliberate disobedience is certain to incur the marked displeasure of God. For a child of His to enter the state of wedlock with an unbeliever is to make Christ have concord with Belial (2 Cor. 6:15). When a Christian man marries a worldling a son of God becomes united to a daughter of Satan. What a horrible monstrosity! Sad it is to find ministers of the Gospel not only countenancing this sin by officiating at such ungodly weddings but many of them committing the same offense! Sadder still is it to see the denominations to which they belong winking at such conduct, instead of disciplining them.

In no uncertain tones did Elijah denounce Ahab for his defiant union with Jezebel and all the evils it had brought in its train. “Thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD” (1 Kings 21:20). That is the prime business of God’s servant: to make known the indignation and judgment of Heaven against sin. God is the enemy of sin. He is “angry with the wicked every day” (Psa. 7:11). His wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Rom. 1:18). That wrath is the antagonism of holiness to evil, of consuming fire to that which is incapable of sustaining it. It is the

business of God's servant to declare and make known the awful case and course of the sinner: that those who are not for Christ are against Him, that he who is not walking with God is fighting against Him, that he who is not yielding himself to His service is serving the Devil. Said the Lord Jesus, "whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34), complying with the orders of his master, the slave of his lusts, yet the willing slave, delighting therein. It is not a service which has been forced upon him against his desires, but one into which he has voluntarily sold himself and in which he voluntarily remains. And therefore it is a criminal servitude for which he must be judged.

This, then, was the ordeal which confronted Elijah and in essence it confronts every servant of Christ today. He was the bearer of an unwelcome message. He was required to confront the ungodly king and tell him to his face precisely what he was in the sight of a sin-hating God. It is a task which calls for firmness of mind and boldness of heart. It is a task which demands the glory of God shall override all sentimental considerations. It is a task which claims the support and co-operation of all God's people. Let them do and say nothing to discourage the minister in the faithful discharge of his office. Let them be far from saying, "Prophesy not unto us right things: speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isa. 30:10). Rather let the people of God pray earnestly that the spirit of Elijah may rest upon their ministers, that they may be enabled to open their mouths "with all boldness" (Acts 4:29), that they may keep back nothing which is profitable, that they may shun not to declare all the counsel of God (Acts 20:20, 27). Let them see to it that there is no failure to hold up their hands in the day of battle (Exo. 17:12). Ah, my reader, it makes a tremendous difference when the minister knows he has the support of a praying people! How far is the pew responsible for the state of the pulpit today?

"Behold, I will bring evil upon thee" (1 Kings 21:21). It is the business of God's servant not only to paint in its true colours the course which the sinner has chosen to follow but to make known the inevitable consequence of such a course. First and negatively they who have sold themselves to work evil in the sight of the Lord "have sold themselves for *nought*" (Isa. 52:3). Satan has assured them that by engaging in his service they shall be greatly the gainers, that by giving free rein to their lusts they shall be merry and enjoy life. But he is a liar, as Eve discovered at the beginning. Unto those who sell themselves to work evil it may be inquired, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" (Isa. 55:2). There is no contentment of mind, no peace of conscience, no real joy of heart to be obtained by indulging the flesh but rather the wrecking of health and the storing up of misery. O what a wretched bargain is this: to sell ourselves "for nought"! To squander our substance in riotous living and then come to woeful want. To render full obedience to the dictates of sin and receive only kicks and cuffs in return. What madness to serve such a master!

But the servant of God has a still more painful duty to perform and that is to announce the positive side of the consequences of selling ourselves to work evil in the sight of the Lord. Sin pays terrible wages, my reader. It is doing so at this present moment in the world's history. The horrors of war with all the untold suffering and anguish they entail, are the wages of sin now being paid out to the nations and those nations which sinned against the greatest light and privileges are the ones receiving the heaviest installments. And is it not meet it should be so? Yes, a "just recompense of reward" (Heb. 2:2) is what the Word of Truth designates it. And identically the same principle pertains to the individual: unto everyone who sells himself to work evil in the

sight of the Lord His rejoinder is, "Behold, I will bring evil upon thee,"—dire judgment which shall overwhelm and utterly consume. This, too, is the duty of God's servant: to solemnly declare unto every rebel against God, irrespective of his rank, "O wicked man, thou shalt surely die" (Ezek. 33:8), and that same verse goes on to tell us that God will yet say unto the watchman that failed in this duty, "his blood will I require at thine hand." O to be able to say with Paul, "I am free from the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26)!

"And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked Me to anger and made Israel to sin. And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat" (1 Kings 21:22-24). The mills of God grind slowly but they grind exceedingly small. For many years Ahab defied Jehovah but now the day of reckoning was nigh at hand and when it dawned Divine Judgment would fall not only upon the apostate king and his vile consort but upon their family as well so that his evil house should be utterly exterminated. Is it not written "the name of the wicked shall rot" (Prov. 10:7)? We are here supplied with an awe-inspiring illustration of that solemn principle in the governmental dealings of God: "visiting the iniquities of the fathers on the children" (Exo. 20:5). Behold here the justice of God in making Ahab reap as he had sown: not only had he consented unto the death of Naboth (1 Kings 21:8) but the sons of Naboth also had been slain (2 Kings 9:26), hence Divine retribution was visited not only upon Ahab and Jezebel but on their children, too.

"And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah." In declaring that He would make the house of Ahab like unto that of two other wicked kings who preceded him, God announced the total destruction of his descendants and that by a violent end. For of the house of Jeroboam—whose dynasty lasted barely twenty-four years—we read, "He smote all the house of Jeroboam: he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until He had destroyed him" (1 Kings 15:29). Of Baasha—whose dynasty lasted only just over a quarter of a century—we are told, "He left him not one male, neither of his kinsfolk nor of his friends" (1 Kings 16:11). Probably one reason why the fearful doom which overtook the families of his predecessors is here specifically mentioned was to emphasize still further the enormity of Ahab's conduct—that he had failed to take to heart those recent judgments of God. It greatly aggravates our sins when we refuse to heed the solemn warnings which history records of the unmistakable Judgments of God upon other evildoers. Thus the guilt of our generation is that much the greater through disregarding the clarion call made by the war of 1914-18 [WWI] for the nations to turn from their wickedness and return to the God of their fathers.

And what was the effect produced upon Ahab by this message from Jehovah? Disconcerted and displeased he was on first beholding the Prophet, yet when he heard the awful sentence he was deeply affected: "he rent his clothes and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly" (1 Kings 21:27). He made no effort to silence Elijah by self-vindication. His conscience smote him for approving the murderous act, for seizing the booty though not killing the owner thereof. He knew well that connivance at wickedness by those in authority, who ought to restrain it, is justly visited upon themselves as their own deed; that the receiver of stolen goods is as bad as the thief. He was abashed and abased. God can make the stoutest sinner to tremble and

the most arrogant humble himself. But all is not gold that glitters. There may be a great outward show of repentance without the heart being changed. Many have been made afraid of God's wrath who would not part with their sins. It is to be carefully noted there is no hint that Ahab put away Jezebel or restored the worship of the Lord.

That which is recorded here of Ahab is both solemn and instructive. Solemn, because it sounds a warning against being deceived by appearances. Ahab made no effort to justify his crimes nor did he lay violent hands on Elijah. Nay, more—he humbled himself and by his outward acts acknowledged the justice of the Divine sentence. What more could we ask? Ah, that is the all-important point. External amendment of our ways, though good in itself, is not sufficient: “rend your heart and not your garments” (Joel 2:13) is what a holy God requires. A hypocrite may go far in the outward performance of holy duties. The most hardened sinners are capable of reforming for a season: Mark 6:20; John 5:35. How many wicked persons have, in times of danger and desperate illness, abased themselves before God but returned to their evil ways as soon as restored to health? Ahab's humiliation was but superficial and transient, being occasioned by fear of judgment and not heart-hatred of his sins. Nothing is said of his restoring the vineyard to Naboth's heirs or next of kin, and where righting of wrongs is absent we must always seriously suspect the repentance. Later we find him saying of a servant of God, “I *hate* him” (1 Kings 22:8), which is clear proof that he had undergone no change of heart.

Instructive, also, is the case of Ahab for it throws light on God's governmental dealings with individuals in this life. Though the king's repentance was but superficial, inasmuch as it was a public or visible humbling of himself before God, He was so far owned and honoured and an abatement of His sentence was obtained—“because he humbleth himself before Me I will not bring the evil in his days, but in his son's day” (1 Kings 21:29)—he was spared the anguish of witnessing the slaughter of his children and the complete extermination of his house. But there was no repeal of the Divine sentence upon himself. Nor was the king able to avoid God's stroke, though he made attempt to do so (22:30). The Lord had said, “in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood” (21:19), and we are told, “so the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria. And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armour, according unto the word of the LORD” (1 Kings 22:37, 38). He who sells himself to sin must receive the wages of sin. For the doom which overtook Ahab's family see 2 Kings 9:25; 10:6, 7, 13, 14, 17.

“And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, the dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel” (1 Kings 21:23). No vain threats were those which the Prophet uttered, but announcements of Divine judgment which were fulfilled not long after. Jezebel outlived her husband for some years but her end was just as Elijah had foretold. True to her depraved character we find that on the very day of her death, “she painted her face and tired her head and looked out at a window” to attract attention (2 Kings 9:30). It is solemn to observe that God takes note of such things, not with approbation but abhorrence, and it is equally solemn to learn from this passage that those women who paint their faces and go to so much trouble in artificially dressing their hair and seek to make themselves conspicuous belong to the same class as this evil queen or “cursed” creature (v. 34). She was thrown out of the window by some of her own attendants, her blood sprinkling the wall, and her corpse being ruthlessly trampled under foot. A short

time after when orders were given for her burial, so thoroughly had the dogs done their work that nothing remained but “the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands” (2 Kings 9:35). Ah, my reader, God is as faithful and true in making good His threats as He is in fulfilling His promises.—A.W.P.

DOCTRINE OF SAINTS' PERSEVERANCE.

4. *Its Marvel.*

5. The marvel of the saints' perseverance is seen in grace's dwelling-place. In what uncongenial and inimical surroundings is the new nature set—in the depraved soul of a fallen creature. Not only is there nothing in man capable of nourishing the principle of holiness but everything which is directly opposed thereto: "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit" (Gal. 5:17). Birds do not fly beneath the waves nor will fish live on dry ground because they are out of their native element. Then what a wonder it is for grace to be preserved and grow in a heart which by nature is desperately wicked. Would trees grow if their seeds were planted in salt? Why, then, should communicated grace take root and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit when planted in the midst of corruption? That is truly a miracle of Divine horticulture: a miracle which is far too little attended unto and admired. Well may each believer exclaim, "I am as a wonder to many" (Psa. 71:7) not failing to add, "but Thou art my refuge." The Christian is a mystery to himself, an enigma to the unregenerate who cannot understand his denying himself the things they delight in and finding pleasure in what they loath. But he is a "wonder," a prodigy of grace, unto his brethren and sisters in Christ.

The miracle of the survival of the principle of grace in a human soul will be the more manifest if we contrast the present case of the believer with that of Adam in the day of his pristine purity. Grace was connatural with our first parents when their Maker pronounced them "very good": if, then, they so quickly lost their grace when it was placed in a pure soil, what a wonder it is that it should be preserved in a heart which is essentially evil! When the Son of God became incarnate Herod moved the whole country in a determined attempt to slay Him: and when Christ comes into the heart the whole soul rises up in opposition against Him. The carnal mind, the lusts of the flesh, an intractable will, are all antagonistic to every breathing after holiness. Preservation of grace in the saint is more remarkable than for one to succeed in carrying an unprotected but lighted candle across an open moor in a boisterous wind. Yea, as the Puritans were wont to say, it is as though a fire were kept burning year after year in the midst of the ocean. Grace is not only preserved but maintains its purity amid indwelling sin: as gold cannot be altered in its nature by the dross or transmuted into the rubbish amid which it lies, neither can the new nature be defiled by the mass of corruption wherein it dwells.

6. It is seen in their exposure to Satan's attacks. If there were no Devil at all it would be a miracle that any believer should persevere in the path of obedience while living in such a world as this. Surrounded as he is by the ungodly, ever seeking to allure him into their own sinful ways, carrying within him lusts which are in full accord with the evil around him it is a wonder of wonders that he should remain steadfast. But over and above that he is called upon to resist the arch-enemy of God, the mightiest of all His creatures who is filled with enmity against him and bent upon his destruction. We are plainly warned, "your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8): how then shall feeble lambs hope to successfully resist him! We are told that when the woman brought forth the "Man-child who was to rule all nations" that the red dragon, "stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child" (Rev. 12:4). As the dragon acted thus toward the Head Himself so does he still seek to vent his malice upon the members of His mystical body.

Who is capable of estimating the power of Satan and the hosts of evil spirits he commands? And who can adequately describe the weakness and frailty of those called upon to withstand his attacks? If Adam in Paradise with no lust within to entice and no world under the curse all around him fell under the very first assault of Satan upon him, who are we to engage him in conflict? Fallen man could as well move a mountain with his finger as overcome the Prince of this world. Nevertheless of renewed men it is written, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in the high places" (Eph. 6:12). Satan with all his wisdom, his power, his myrmidons are marshaled and exerted in tremendous opposition to the interests of the children of God, as the histories of Job, of David (1 Chron. 21:1), of Joshua, (Zech. 3:1), of Peter (Luke 22:31), and of Paul (1 Thess. 2:15) clearly show. We have often marveled at the deliverance of Daniel while spending a night in the lions' den—no less a miracle is the Christian's preservation from the continuous attacks of Satan and all his demons. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:11).

7. It is seen in the renunciations they are required to make. "If any 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, he cannot be My disciple. So likewise whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26, 27, 33). Who can be expected to accept Christian discipleship on such exacting terms as these?! No wonder that men of all shades of theological opinion have invented terms which are easier and more pleasant to the flesh, yet such are only blind leaders of the blind. Christ will receive none who refuse His yoke. God will not own as His people those who refuse to give Him their hearts. Sin must be hated, lusts must be mortified, the world must be renounced. A Christian is one who repudiates his own wisdom, strength and righteousness. A Christian is one who holds himself and all that he has at the disposal of the Lord. As Abram at the call of God turned his back on the old manner of life, so those who are his believing children are made willing to sacrifice all their temporal interests, counting not their lives dear unto themselves. What a marvel is this that grace enables its possessor to pluck out right eyes and cut off right hands, yea which empowers timid women and children to go to the stake rather than apostatize!

8. It is seen in the Way they are required to walk. It is a "narrow" way, for it is shut in on either side by the Divine Commandments which forbid all that is contrary to the Divine will. It is the way of "holiness," without which no man shall see the Lord. It is the way of obedience—of complete and continuous subjection to the Lord—wherein my own will is set aside. It is a difficult way, hard to find and harder still to traverse, for the whole of it is uphill. It is a lonely way, for there are but few upon it. It is therefore a way which is entirely contrary to flesh and blood, which presents no attraction to fallen human nature. Yet it is the *only* way which leads unto Life. That narrow way of self-abnegation is the one which Christ trod and sufficient for the disciple to be as his Master. He has left us an example that we should follow His steps so that there is no following of Christ without walking the way He went and that way was one of sacrifice, of bearing reproach, of enduring suffering. "Whosoever will save his life (for himself) shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:25). No cross, no crown.

What a marvel it is for any sinful creature to voluntarily choose such a path, to accept the cross as the dominant principle of his life!

9. It is seen in the frailty of the Christian. We would naturally think that since God requires His people to overcome such formidable obstacles, perform such difficult tasks and wrestle with such enemies He would make them strong and powerful. Surely if they are to maintain their piety in a world like this, discharge duties which are contrary to flesh and blood, resist the Devil and all his hosts—the Lord will make each of His saints as mighty spiritually as Samson was physically. If one of them shall chase a thousand and two of them put ten thousand to flight must it not be because of their superior might? How shall they endure opposition, overcome temptations, be fruitful unto every good work unless they be endued with abundant grace? But here again the Lord's thoughts are the very opposite of ours. His people are so frail and helpless in themselves that He declares, "without Me ye can do nothing," and sooner or later each of them is made to realize this for himself. Apart from the Lord the believer is as weak as water. Power for the conflict lies not in himself, but in Another. "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of *His* might" (Eph. 6:10). Peter thought he was strong enough in himself to overcome temptation, but he soon discovered that though the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak.

But is there not such a thing as growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord? Certainly there is but such progress is of a very different nature from what many imagine. Growth in grace is a deepening realization of *where* our strength, our wisdom, the supply for every need is to be found. Growing in grace is not an increasing self-sufficiency but an increasing dependence upon God. Those who are spiritually the strongest are they who know most of their own weakness. It is the empty vessel which God fills. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might (of their own) He increaseth strength" (Isa. 40:29). Surely none of us can hope to attain a higher measure than that of the most favoured of the Apostles. Yet Paul acknowledged, "when I am *weak* then am I strong," (2 Cor. 12:10). Here, then, is truly a miracle: that one who is compassed with infirmity, who is not sufficient himself to think anything as of himself (2 Cor. 3:5)—and therefore still less able to *do* anything good—who has "no might" of his own, who is utterly helpless in himself, should nevertheless fight a good fight, finish the course, and keep the faith. "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Cor. 1:27).

10. It is seen in the fruits which the Christian bears. We have already called attention to the survival of the principle of grace in spite of the uncongenial soil in which it is placed and the foul atmosphere of this world where it grows. And equally wonderful is that which issues from it. This line of thought might be extended considerably but space requires us to abbreviate. What a marvel that the Christian's *faith* should be preserved amid so many trials and buffetings, betrayals by false brethren and even the hidings of God's face! That notwithstanding, the most painful crosses and losses it affirms, "yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Not only have God's saints remained steadfast under persecution, but after being beaten "they *rejoiced* that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus" (Acts 5:40, 41). Others "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods" (Heb. 10:34). What a marvellous fruit is this, to "glory in tribulation" (Rom. 5:3), to "sing praise unto God" (Acts 16:25) while lying in a dungeon with backs bleeding. Such fruits are not the products of nature. To hope against hope (Rom. 4:18), to acknowledge "it is good for me

that I have been afflicted” (Psa. 119:71), to cry, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60), while being stoned to death, are the fruits of Divine *grace*.

11. It is seen in their submission under and triumph of faith over the severest chastisements. It is natural to murmur when everything appears to go wrong and the face of Providence wears a dark frown but it is *supernatural* to meekly submit and say, “the will of the Lord be done.” When “fire from the LORD” went out and devoured Nadab and Abihu because of their presumptuous conduct, so far from their father making an angry outburst at the severity of their punishment, we are told that he “held his peace” (Lev. 10:3). When the awful tidings were broken to the aged Eli that both of his wayward sons were to be smitten by Divine judgment on the same day, he quietly acquiesced saying, “It is the LORD: let Him do what seemeth Him good” (1 Sam. 3:18). When Job’s sons and daughters were suddenly stricken with death and his flocks and herds carried away by thieves, he exclaimed, “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away, blessed be the name of the LORD” (1:21). And when his own body was smitten with “sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown,” so far from losing all confidence in God and apostatizing, he declared, “though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him” (13:15).

12. It is seen in their perseverance in piety when deprived of all public means of grace. When the undershepherds are taken away what shall the poor sheep do? When corporate testimony breaks down what will become of the individual? When Zion is made desolate and the Lord’s people are carried captives into a strange land will they not pine away? True, this is an exceptional state of affairs, yet at various stages of history it has pleased God to deprive numbers of His people of all the external means of grace and preserve them as isolated units. It was thus at a very early stage. Behold Abraham, the father of the faithful, dwelling alone amid the heathen yet maintaining communion with the Lord. Behold Daniel in Babylon, in the face of deadly peril, preserving his piety. Some of us used to sing as children, “Dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone, dare to have a purpose true, and dare to make it known.” Is not our own lot cast in a day when not a few of the scattered children of God have to lament, “I am as a sparrow alone upon the house top” (Psa. 102:7)? Even so, as God miraculously sustained Elijah in the solitudes of Cherith so He will preserve each of them.

13. It is seen in their deliverance from apostasy. What numbers have been fatally deceived by Romanism! What multitudes of the outer court worshippers have been stumbled by the multiplication of sects in Protestantism, each claiming to take the Scriptures for their guide yet often differing on the most fundamental truths! What crowds have been attracted by the false prophets and heretical teachers, especially in America, during the past century! But though the real children of God may have been bewildered it drove them to search His Word more closely for themselves, for they know not the voice of strangers (John 10:5). In our own day because iniquity or lawlessness abounds the love of many has waxed cold and tens of thousands who a little time ago appeared to “run well” have gone right back into the world. Yet, by God’s grace, there is still a remnant who cleave unto the Lord and the very fewness of their numbers emphasizes the marvel of their preservation. It is a miracle of grace that any “hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end”—never more so than in this dark day.

What an amazing thing it was that Jonah should be cast overboard into the sea without a lifebelt and with no boat to rescue him and yet that he was not drowned! Still

more remarkable that he should be swallowed by a whale and remain alive in its belly for three days and nights! Most wonderful of all that the whale disgorged the Prophet not in the ocean but vomited him out on the land. So amazing is this that it has been made the favourite subject of jest by infidels. But it presents no difficulty to the Christian, who knows that “with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26). We not only believe the authenticity of this miracle but have long been convinced it is a designated *type* not only of the resurrection of the Redeemer but of the preservation of the redeemed. The case of Jonah not only adumbrates a backsliding believer but an extreme case of backsliding at that: showing that when a saint yields to self-will and forsakes the way of obedience, though he will be severely chastened, the arm of the Lord will reach after and restore him to the paths of righteousness.

14. It is seen in God’s manifold workings in and for them. This necessarily follows from all that has been said under the preceding heads. The perseverance of saints must be the consequence of the Divine preservation of them—believers have no spiritual wisdom and no spiritual strength of their own—therefore God must work in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure. His *preventing* grace: as the martyr observed a murderer on his way to the gallows he exclaimed, “there goes John Bradford but for the grace of God.” From how many temptations and sins on which their hearts were set are Christians delivered, as David from slaying Nabal? *Protecting* grace: “mercy shall compass him about” as a shield (Psa. 39:10). *Quickening* grace, whereby the principle of holiness is enlivened: “the inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16). *Confirming* grace, whereby we are kept from being tossed to and fro: “Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God” (2 Cor. 1:21 and cf. 2 Thess. 2:17). *Fructifying* grace: “From Me is thy fruit found” (Hosea 14:8). *Maturing* grace: “make you perfect in every good work to do His will” (Heb. 13:21). These and other operations of Divine grace are all summed up in that acknowledgement, “Thou also hast wrought *all* our works in us” (Isa. 26:12) to which every saint freely ascribes and which alone explains the marvel of his perseverance.—A.W.P.

DYING GRACE.

My best beloved: I am now going from a prison to a palace. I have finished my work: I am now to receive my free-grace wages. I am going to Heaven, where are two of my children and leaving thee on the earth, where are three of my babes: those above need not my care but the three below need thine. It comforts me to think two of my children are in the bosom of Abraham and three of them will be in the arms and care of so godly a mother. I know thou art a woman of a sorrowful spirit, yet be comforted, God hath many mercies in store for thee; and the prayers of a dying husband for thee will not be lost. To my shame I speak it, I never prayed so much for thee at liberty as I have done in prison. I cannot write more, but I have a few practical counsels to leave with thee.

1. Keep under a sound orthodox and soul-searching ministry. Oh! there are many deceivers gone out into the world; but Christ's sheep know His voice and a stranger they will not follow. Attend on the ministry that teaches the way of God in truth and follow Solomon's advice: "Cease to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge" (Prov. 19:27). 2. Bring up my children in the knowledge and admonition of the Lord. The mother ought to be a teacher in the father's absence. "The prophecy that his *mother* taught him" (Prov. 31:1); and Timothy was instructed by his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5).

3. Pray in the family daily, that thy dwelling may be among the number of the families that do call on God. 4. Labour for a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price (1 Peter 3:4). 5. Pore not on the comforts thou wantest, but on the mercies thou hast. 6. Look rather at God's end in afflicting than at the measure and degree of thy afflictions. 7. Labour to clear up thy evidences for Heaven when God takes thee from the comforts of earth; that as thy sufferings do abound, thy consolations in Christ may much more abound (2 Cor. 1:5). 8. Though it is good to maintain a holy jealousy of the deceitfulness of thy heart, yet it is evil for thee to cherish fears and doubts about the truth of thy graces. If ever I had confidence touching the graces of another, I have confidence of grace in thee; I can say of thee, as Peter said of Silvanus, "This is the true grace of God wherein ye stand" (1 Peter 5:12). Oh! my dear soul, wherefore dost thou doubt? whose heart hath been upright, whose walkings have been holy, and I could venture my soul in thy soul's stead, such confidence have I of thee. 9. When thou findest thy heart secure, presumptuous and proud, then pore upon thy corruptions more than upon grace; but when thou findest thy heart doubting and unbelieving, then look on thy graces, not on thy infirmities. 10. Study the covenant of grace and the merits of Christ, and then be troubled if thou canst. Thou art interested in such a covenant that accepts purposes for performances, desires for deeds, sincerity for perfection, the righteousness of another, namely, that of Jesus Christ, as if it were thine own. Oh my love! rest, rest then, in the love of God, in the bosom of Christ!

11. Swallow up thy will in the will of God, it is a bitter cup we are to drink, but it is the cup our Father hath put into our hand. When Paul was to go to suffer at Jerusalem, the Christians could say, "The will of the Lord be done." 12. Rejoice in my joy; to mourn for me inordinately argues that thou either envy or suspect my happiness. The joy of the Lord is my strength—O let it be thine also! Dear wife, farewell! I will call thee wife no more, I shall see thy face no more; yet I am not much troubled, for now I am going to meet the Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom I shall be eternally married. Thy dying, yet most affectionate friend till death, Christopher Love.

(The above is a letter written to his wife, from the Tower of London, on August 22, 1651, on the day of his execution).

N.B. What a striking illustration does the above supply of the marvel of Christian perseverance in the faith! Here is a man in the prime of life, an affectionate husband and father, innocent of any crime, cruelly cast into prison, to suffer death. Yet at the end (whatever there may or may not have been previously) there is no bitterness against his persecutors, no complaining at the injustice of his lot, no murmuring against God; but serenity of mind and joy of heart!

GOOD ADVICE.

From a master to his apprentice, when leaving his service and entering into life for himself. My young friend: As you were early committed to my care by your pious mother, whose death soon after left you a tender orphan; so I trust, in sincerity of heart, I have endeavoured to warn and counsel you against those evils which your inexperienced age was exposed to and directed and encouraged you in the principles of religion and of practices of virtue, which may lay the foundation for a happy and useful life; and I am now, with great affection, fulfilling the last part of my trust, by giving you some important counsels and cautions on your entrance on the stage of life wherein you will meet with temptations and difficulties you never yet experienced and will need all the assistance you can receive from God and man for your wise and happy conduct.

1. See that the foundation of religion is well laid in a sincere conversion, an entire and willing resignation of your soul to God as your sovereign Lord and Ruler and supreme and satisfying good; living by faith on Christ Jesus as the Saviour and hope of sinners, through whose mercy and mediation we are to seek for and receive every blessing from God for time and eternity. I trust you are not altogether a stranger to these dispositions of soul; but my advice is that you never rest satisfied until you have, in your own conscience, a full evidence of your sincerity herein. It is a dreadful thing for an immortal spirit to hang in a state of suspense by the slender thread of life between two such amazing extremes as an eternal Heaven or Hell. Satisfaction may be had: and it is worth all the pains, prayers, and vigilance you can use to obtain it.

2. As you are entering into a world wherein great variety of examples, methods of conduct, and manners in religion will be presented to you, some plausible, some pernicious, and many destructive—if you value your conscience or your comfort, make the sacred Word of God, which is to be the rule of your future judgment and of God's present providence over you, the invariable rule of your disposition and practice. Believe me, you will never find a more faithful counsellor, a more advantageous guide, or cordial, constant and comforting friend than in these sacred oracles of wisdom and truth if you closely study and practice them. Let no day therefore pass over without some serious perusal of it, join with earnest prayer to God for wisdom to understand it and power to conform to it. Study those inimitable rules of wisdom and prudence in the Proverbs of Solomon to direct your practice; the Psalms of David to inspire your devotion and the whole Word of God, especially the New Testament, to form your faith, your heart, your hope thereof. Particularly, treasure up in your mind some pertinent passages to every article of faith, commanded duty, and forbidden temper and practice—that your belief may be directed by the wisdom and your conscience formed by the authority of God in every scene of duty and temptation. “Bind them continually to thine heart, and tie them about thy neck; when thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life” (Prov. 6:21-23).

3. If you would enjoy the pleasures of a rational religious being let your actions not only be lawful for the matter of them but laudable as to the ends for which you performed them; that is, let it be the chief view and highest end in all you do *to please God* and glorify Him. It is the great prerogative of the Most High God and the proper homage that is due to Him for all His reasonable creatures, that, as He is their Creator and absolute

owner, so He should be their chief end; and this end should be habitually intended by them in all their actions; and it is the great condescension of God and consolation of religion that He hath not only permitted us to enjoy the comforts and perform the offices of life but hath made it part of our duty so to do—so that there is not a minute of our life but we may be doing the work of God while we are serving ourselves and may convert the common actions of life into the services of religion by directing them to His glory. Study noble views, therefore, in all you do: devote yourself entirely to God and He will return you to yourself, wiser and better than He found you. Study to glorify Him by a life of holiness and beneficence and He will honour and bless you; so much as is done for God He will accept and reward, but what is done from low and selfish views is lost at your account: whatsoever therefore ye do, do it “as the servants of Christ . . . with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men” (Eph. 6:6, 7).

4. Be very watchful against an inordinate affection to the present world. Use it with sober cheerfulness and gratitude to Heaven, as far as is necessary to your present comfortable existence, but suffer it not to engage your heart. An earthly sensual mind is the basest perversion of the noble faculties of the soul of man, and the highest dishonour reflected on that glorious and good Being who created and redeemed it. The predominant degree of this evil and sordid disposition is ever inconsistent with sincerity in religion and the inordinate degrees of it in good men are the foundation of many sorrows, Divine rebukes and Providential afflictions. Very just is the saying of a worthy divine to this purpose: “Whatsoever we make an idol of will be a cross to us if we belong to Christ, and a curse to us if we do not.” The interest of the soul in sincere Christians more often suffers from the unhallowed love of mortal objects than from the love of unlawful ones. Watch carefully, therefore, over your affections and when any temporal good appears unusually delightful see that your inclinations to God do not grow feeble and languid thereby and your affections to spiritual concerns more cold and indifferent. Remember, that to be carnally-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.

5. Labour to procure and constantly to cherish a meek and humble spirit, which is of high estimation in the sight of God and men. This will make you easy to be pleased, difficult to be offended, calm and serene in every circumstance of life. This will cause you to be courteous and affable to inferiors, respectful to superiors and procure honour and esteem from others, far beyond all the assuming airs of pride and arrogance and self-applause. Especially let this disposition be cherished in all your religious concerns: a condescending God, a humble Redeemer, and a proud sinner are the most astonishing scenes that can present themselves to the mind of man. Labour to be sensible how little knowledge and goodness you possess compared with the rule of your duty and the attainments of others, and never measure yourself but by your superiors in wisdom and goodness. Expect to excite your gratitude to Heaven for its great favours to your soul.

6. Watch over the natural appetites of the body: let not those senses which were designed to administer innocent pleasures become incentives to sin. The sensitive affections have so far overpowered reason and conscience in man that the Scripture can find no word more fit to describe his fallen state by than *flesh*; and believe me, it requires all the assistance that piety and reason can afford to keep them in due subordination. Be chaste and virtuous, not only in conversation and behaviour but in the dispositions of your mind; indulge no lascivious thoughts or looks and run not unnecessarily into temptations thereunto: you know how great a flame the fire of lust indulged may kindle.

Observe the injunctions which our Lord and Saviour has given concerning the government of the eyes (see Matt. 5:28), and imitate the wise example of Job 31:1 and David (Psa. 119:37) relating thereunto. Be also sober and temperate in the use of diet and drink: every degree is excessive therein which renders you indisposed to action and exercise of body and mind; particularly let no company engage you to exceed the bounds of reason herein—a peremptory refusal or two at first will ever free you from their solicitations—but easy compliance will encourage their repeated assaults upon your innocence and virtue.

7. Be very cautious in your choice of company and friends for we insensibly grow like unto those with whom we frequently and familiarly converse. Be rude and uncivil to none but intimate only with a few and let those few be well-chosen, such as you may improve by in virtue and goodness; especially let this be attended to in the choice of a relation through life. Believe it that love is usually a blind passion, erroneously mistaking both persons and things; and therefore if you would consult your true happiness, never enter into an agreement with this nature without first consulting your elder and judicious friends, whose knowledge of human nature is greater and their affections more cool and therefore fitted to form a truer judgment.

I cannot conclude this letter of advice without recommending to you a benevolent heart and useful and charitable life as the noblest disposition and highest enjoyment the present state can afford. Consider yourself as a member of the universe, whose proper disposition is to feel the sorrow and rejoice in the happiness of all the beings that surround you: and permit me to point out that the sensualist, the covetous, the ambitious, in the highest gratification of their desires, never felt a joy comparable to that of doing good. Watch therefore against a contracted selfish spirit as an high injury to yourself, and be diligent, prudent and frugal in all your economy that you may have the capacity of being a great blessing to others. Especially endeavour to promote their best interests, whereby you may be an everlasting blessing unto them.

That the God of all grace may inspire your heart with heavenly wisdom, preserve you from the evils of life, grant you prosperity and make you a blessing in every relation thereof; give you more to feel the power and the pleasures of godliness in this world and in due time grant you to receive the rewards of it in a better is the hearty prayer and desire of your sincere friend and affectionate master—November, 1752.

GODLY COUNSEL

Dear Son: We are all well here, thanks be to God; the Divine Providence watching about our tabernacle and compassing us about with favour as with a shield. Our great inquiry is, What shall we render? Alas, our renderings are nothing to our receivings; we are like the barren field on which much cost is bestowed but the crop is not accordingly. Our heavenly Father is loading us with His benefits and we are loading Him with our sins, grieving Him that comforts us; and how long, how long shall it be so? O that it might be otherwise! that our mercies might be as on to the wheels, to make us so much the more active and lively in our Master's work. There may a day come when it will cost dear to be honest; but, after all, fear God and keep His commandments is the whole of man. I therefore commend it to you and you to God, who is a shield and buckler to them that fear Him.

We are well, but in daily expectation of that which we are born and born again to, and that is, trouble in this world, yet rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, which we are reaching after and pressing towards, as we trust you are also. Where you are, you see more of the glittering vanities of this world in a day than we here do in an age and are grown more and more in love with them or dead and dying to them; I hope dead and dying to them, for they are poor things and perish in the using. Be sincere and humble and choice in your company, always either getting good or doing good.

Your acquaintance, I doubt not, increaseth abroad and accordingly your watch must be, for by that oftentimes, ere we are aware, we are ensnared. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise." The farther progress you make in your studies, you will find them the easier: it is so with religion, the worst is at the first. It is like the picture that frowned at first entrance but afterwards smiles and looks pleasant. Your improvement is our joy. Be sincere and serious, clothed with humility, always abounding in the work of the Lord; and when you have done all, be saying, "I am an unprofitable servant."

It was a good advice of the moral philosopher, In your converse with men, *distrust*; but I must add, In everything towards God, *believe*. Expect temptation and a snare at every turn and walk accordingly. We have a good cause, a vanquished enemy; a good second, an extraordinary joy; for he that overcomes need not desire to be more happy than the second and third chapters of the Revelation speaks him to be. I would have you redeem time, for, hearing the Word in season and out of season, your other studies will prosper never the worse, especially if you could return immediately from it to the closet again, without cooling diversions by the way.

See your need of Christ more and more and live upon Him; no life like it, so sweet, so safe. We cannot be discharged from the guilt of any evil we do without His merit to satisfy; we cannot move in the performance of any good required without His Spirit and grace to assist and enable for it; and when we have done all, that all is nothing without His mediation and intercession to make it acceptable; so that every day, in everything, He is all in all. Though you are at a distance from us now, we rejoice in the good hope of meeting again in the land of the living, that is, on earth, if God see good; however, in Heaven which is the true land of the living, and is best of all. The Lord God everlasting be your Sun and Shield in all your ways; see time hasting away apace toward eternity and the Judge even at the door, and work accordingly; wherever you are, alone or in company, be always either sowing or reaping.

As for me, I make no other reckoning but that the time of my departure is at hand and what trouble I may meet with before, I know not, the will of the Lord be done: one of my chief desires is that no iniquity of mine be laid up for you. Be careful of your health, but especially neglect not the main matter. The soul is the man: if that do well all is well. Worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh. Expect trouble in this world and prepare for it; expect happiness in the other world and walk worthy of it unto all pleasing.

A good book is a good companion at anytime, but especially a good God, who is always ready to hold communion with those that desire and seek communion with Him. Keep low and humble in your thoughts and opinion of yourself; but aim high in your desires and expectations, even as high as the kingdom of Heaven itself and resolve to take up with nothing short of it. The Lord guide you in all your ways and go in and out before you, and preserve you blameless to His heavenly kingdom. Your loving father, Philip Henry.

The above was written to his son, Matthew Henry, the famous commentator.——A.W.P.

