

Vol. XII

June, 1933

No. 6

**STUDIES**  
**IN THE**  
**SCRIPTURES**

*“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39*

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EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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*Studies in the Scriptures* appeared without interruption from 1922 to 1953, each issue including six to eight articles addressing a different topic in a series. While virtually unknown to the Christian world when he died, his writings continue to grow in their influence upon God's people around the world, through their clarity, careful exposition, and Christ-centeredness.

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# STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

*“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39*

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EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

### *6. The Holy Spirit during Old Testament Ages*

Much ignorance prevails today concerning this aspect of our subject. The crudest ideas are now entertained as to the relation between the Third Person of the Godhead and the Old Testaments saints. Yet this is scarcely to be wondered at in view of the fearful confusion which obtains respecting their salvation, many supposing that they were saved in an entirely different way from what we now are. Nor need we be surprised at that, for this, in turn, is only another of the evil effects produced by the misguided efforts of those who have been so eager to draw as many contrasts as possible between the present dispensation and those which preceded it, to the disparaging of the earlier members of God's family. The Old Testament saints had far more in common with the New Testament saints than is generally supposed.

A verse which has been grossly perverted by many of our moderns is John 7:39, “The Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” It seems passing strange that with the Old Testament in their hands, some men should place the construction which they do upon those words. The words “was not yet given” can no more be understood absolutely than “Enoch walked with God: and he was not” (Gen 5:24). They simply mean that the Spirit had not yet been given in His full administrative authority, He was not yet publicly manifested here on earth. All believers, in every age, had been sanctified and comforted by Him, but the “ministration of the Spirit” (2Co 3:8) was not at that time fully introduced. The outpouring of the Spirit, in the plenitude of His miraculous gifts, had not then taken place.

Let us first consider, though very briefly, the work of the Spirit in connection with the old or material creation. Before the worlds were framed by the Word of God and things which are seen were made out of things which do not appear (Heb 11:3), when the whole mass of inanimate matter lay in one undistinguished chaos, “without form, and void,” we are told that, “The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Gen 1:2). There are other passages which ascribe the work of creation (in common with the Father and the Son) to His immediate agency. For example, we are told, “by his spirit he hath garnished the heavens” (Job 26:13). Job was moved to confess, “The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life” (Job 33:4). “Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth” (Psa 104:30).

Let us next contemplate the Holy Spirit in relation to Adam. As so much darkness now surrounds this particular, we must enter into it more largely. “Three things were required to render man fit unto that life to God for which he was made. First, an ability to discern the mind and will of God with respect unto all the duty and obedience that God requires of him—as also for to know the nature and properties of God, as to believe Him the only proper object of all acts and duties of religious obedience, and an all-sufficient satisfaction and reward in this world and to eternity. Secondly, a free, uncontrolled, unentangled disposition to every duty of the law of His creation, in order unto living unto God. Thirdly, an ability of mind and will with a readiness of compliance in his affections, for a regular performance of all duties and abstinence from all sin. These things belonged unto the integrity of his nature, with the uprightness of the state and condition wherein he was made. And all these things were the peculiar effects of the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit.

“Thus Adam may be said to have had the Spirit of God in his innocency. He had Him in these peculiar effects of His power and goodness, and he had Him according to the tenor of that covenant, whereby it was possible that he should utterly lose Him, as accordingly it came to pass. He had Him not by especial inhabitation, for the whole world was then the temple of God. In the covenant of grace, founded in the Person and on the meditation of Christ, it is otherwise. On whomsoever the Spirit of God is bestowed for the renovation of the image of God in him, He abides with him forever” (John Owen, 1680).

The three things mentioned above by that eminent Puritan constituted the principal part of that “image of God” wherein man was created by the Spirit. Proof of this is seen in the fact that at regeneration the Holy Spirit restores those abilities in the souls of God’s elect, “And have put on the new man, which is *renewed* in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col 3:10). That is, the spiritual knowledge which man lost at the Fall is, potentially, restored at the new birth, but it could not be restored or “renewed” if man had never possessed it!

The “knowledge” with which the Holy Spirit endowed Adam was great indeed. Clear exemplification of this is seen in Genesis 2:19. Still more conclusive evidence is found in Genesis 2:21-23. God put Adam into a deep sleep, took a rib out of his side, formed it into a woman, and then set her before him. On sight of her Adam said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.” He knew *who* she was and her *origin*, and forthwith gave her a suitable name and he could only have known all this by the Spirit of revelation and understanding.

That Adam was originally made a partaker of the Holy Spirit is quite evident to the writer from Genesis 2:7, "The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and *breathed* into his nostrils the breath of *life*." If those words be interpreted in light of the Analogy of Faith, they can mean nothing less than that the Triune God imparted the Holy Spirit unto the first man. In Ezekiel 37, we have a vivid parabolic picture of the regenerating of spiritual Israel. There we are told, "Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and *breathe* upon these slain, that they may *live*. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived" (Eze 37: 9-10). Again, we find the Savior, after His resurrection, "Breathed on them (the apostles), and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit" (Joh 20:22)—that was the counterpart of Genesis 2:7—the one, the original gift, the other, the restoration of what was lost.

Rightly has it been said that, "The doctrine that man was originally, though mutably, replenished with the Spirit, may be termed the deep fundamental thought of the Scripture doctrine of man. If the first and second Adam are so related that the first man was the analogue or figure of the second, as all admit on the authority of Scripture (Rom 5:12-14), it is clear that, unless the first man possessed the Spirit, the last man, the Healer or Restorer of the forfeited inheritance, would not have been the medium of giving the Spirit, who was withdrawn on account of sin, and who could be restored only on account of the everlasting righteousness which Christ (Rom 8:10) brought in" (George Smeaton, 1880).

Let us next observe the relation of the Holy Spirit unto the nation of Israel. A very striking and comprehensive statement was made by Nehemiah, when he reviewed the Lord's dealings with His people of old, "Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them" (Neh 9:20). He was, until quenched, upon the members of the Sanhedrin (Num 11:16-17). He came upon the judges (Jdg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 15:14). He came upon the kings (1Sa 11:6; 16:13), and the prophets. But note it is a great mistake to say, as many have done, that the Holy Spirit was never *in* any believer before Pentecost. Numbers 27:18, Nehemiah 9:30, 1 Peter 1:11 clearly prove otherwise. But alas, Israel "rebelled, and vexed his holy spirit" (Isa 63:10), as Stephen declared, "Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Act 7:51).

That the Holy Spirit indwelt saints under the legal economy is clear from many considerations. How otherwise could they have been regenerated, had faith been enabled to perform works acceptable to God? The Spirit prompted true prayer, inspired spiritual worship, produced His fruit in the lives of believers then as much as He does now (see Zec 4:6). We have "the *same* spirit of faith" (2Co 4:13) as they had. All the spiritual good which has ever been wrought in and through men must be ascribed unto the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was given to the Old Testament saints *prospectively*, as pardon of sin was given—in view of the satisfaction which Christ was to render unto God.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### 66. *The Faith of Abraham, Concluded (11:17-19)*

“Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom 6:13). The Lord has an absolute claim upon us, upon all that we have. As our Maker and Sovereign, He has the right to demand from us anything He pleases and whatsoever He requires we must yield (1Ch 29:11). All that we have comes from Him and must be held for Him and at His disposal (1Ch 29:14). The Christian is under yet deeper obligations to part with anything God may ask from him. Loving gratitude for Christ and His so great salvation must loosen our hold on every cherished temporal thing. The bounty of God should encourage us to surrender freely whatever He calls for, for none ever lose by giving up anything to God. Yet powerful as are these considerations to any renewed mind, the fact remains that they move us not until *faith* is in exercise. Faith it is which causes us to yield to God, respond to His claims, and answer His calls.

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called; Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure” (Heb 11:17-19). The apostle’s purpose in citing this remarkable incident was to show that it is the property of faith to carry its possessor through the greatest trials, with a cheerful submission and acceptable obedience to the will of God. In order to make this clearer unto the reader, let us endeavor to exhibit the powerful influence which faith has to support the soul under and carry it through testings and trials.

First, faith judgeth of all things aright. It impresses us with a sense of the uncertainty and fleetingness of earthly things and causes us to highly esteem invisible and heavenly things. Faith is a spiritual prudence opposed not only to ignorance, but also to folly. So much unbelief as we have, so much folly is ours, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe” (Luk 24:25). Faith is a spiritual wisdom, teaching us to value the favour of God, the smiles of His countenance, the comforts of heaven. It shows us that all outward things are nothing in comparison with inward peace and joy. Carnal reason prizes the concerns of the present life and grasps at its riches and honours. Sense is occupied with fleshly pleasures, but faith knows, “Thy lovingkindness is better than life” (Psa 63:3).

Second, faith solves all riddles and doubts when we are in a dilemma. What a problem confronted Abraham. What! shall I offer Isaac and bring to nought God’s promises or must I disobey Him on the other side? Faith removed the difficulty, “accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead.” Faith believes the accomplishment of the promise, whatever reason and sense may say to the contrary. It cuts the knot by a resolute dependence upon the power and fidelity of God. Faith casts down carnal imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against God and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Third, faith is a grace which looks to future things and in the light of their reality, the hardest trials seem nothing. Sense is occupied only with things present and thus to nature it appears troublesome and bitter to deny ourselves. But the language of faith is, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; *while* we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2Co 4:17-18). Faith looks within the veil and so has a mighty influence to support the soul in time of trial. He who walks in the light of eternity goes calmly and happily along through the mists and fogs of time. Neither the frowns of men nor the blandishments of the world affect him, for he has a ravishing and affecting sight of the glorious inheritance to which he is journeying.

Fourth, "faith worketh by love" (Gal 5:6) and then nothing is too near and dear to us if the relinquishing of them will glorify God. Faith not only looks forward, but backward. It reminds the soul of what great things God has done for us in Christ. He has given us His beloved Son and *He* is worth infinitely more than all we can give to Him. Yes, faith apprehends the wondrous love of God in Christ and says, If He gave the Darling of His bosom to die for me, shall I stick at any little sacrifice? If God gave me Christ shall I deny Him my Isaac. I love him well, but I love God better." Thus faith works, urging the soul with the love of God, that we may out of thankfulness to Him part with those comforts which He requires of us.

"Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Heb 11:18). This was brought in by the apostle to show wherein lay the greatest obstacle before Abraham's faith. First, he was called on to "offer up" his son and heir. Second, and this after he had "received the promises." Third, not Ishmael, but his "only begotten" or well-beloved Isaac. This is the force of the expression. It is a term of endearment as John 1:18 and 3:16 show. Fourth, he must slay the one from whom the Messiah Himself was to issue, for this is clearly the meaning of the divine promise recorded in verse 18.

Long ago, John Owen (1616-1683) called attention to the fact that the Socinians (Unitarians) reduced God's promise to Abraham unto two heads—first, that of a numerous posterity and second, that this posterity should inhabit and enjoy the land of Canaan as an inheritance. But this, as he pointed out, directly contradicts the apostle, who in Hebrews 11:39 affirms that, when they had possessed the land of Canaan almost unto the utmost period of its grant unto them, had *not* received the accomplishment of the promises. We wish our modern "dispensationalists" would ponder that verse. While it is true that the numerous posterity of Abraham and their occupancy of Canaan were both means and pledges of the fulfillment of the promise, yet Acts 2:38-39, and Galatians 3:16 make it unmistakably plain that the subject matter of the promise was Christ Himself, with the whole work of His mediation for the redemption and salvation of His church.

"Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Heb 11:18). This divine promise is first found in Genesis 21:12 and the occasion of God's giving it unto Abraham supplies us with another help towards determining its significance. In the context there, we find that the Lord had given orders for the casting out of Hagar and her son and we read, "And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son" (Gen 21:11). Then it was, to console his stricken heart, that JEHOVAH said unto His "friend," "Grieve not over Hagar's son, for I will give thee one who is better than a million Ishmaels. I will

give thee a son from whom shall descend none other than the promised Savior and Redeemer.” And now Abraham was called upon to slay him who was the marked-out progenitor of the Messiah! No ordinary faith was called for here!

Who can doubt but that now Abraham was sorely pressed by Satan! Would he not point out how “inconsistent” God was?—as he frequently will to us, if we are foolish enough to listen to his vile accusations. Would he not appeal to his sentiments and say, “How will Sarah regard you when she learns that you have killed and reduced to ashes the child of her old age?” Would he not seek to persuade Abraham that God was playing with him, that He did not really mean to be taken seriously, that He could not be so cruel as to require a righteous father to be the executioner of his own dutiful son? In the light of all that is revealed of our great enemy in Holy Writ, and in view of our own experience of his fiendish assaults, who can doubt but what Abraham now became the immediate object of the devil’s attack.

Ah, nothing but a mind that was stayed upon the Lord could have then resisted the devil and performed a task which was so difficult and painful. “Had he been weak in faith, he would have doubted whether two revelations, apparently inconsistent, could come from the same God, or if they did, whether such a God ought to be trusted and obeyed. But being strong in faith, he reasoned in this way, This is plainly God’s command, I have satisfactory evidence of that and therefore it ought to be immediately and implicitly obeyed. I know Him to be perfectly wise and righteous, and what He commands must be right. Obedience to this command does indeed seem to throw obstacles in the way of the fulfillment of a number of promises which God has made to me. I am quite sure that God has made those promises. I am quite sure that He will perform them. How He is to perform them, I cannot tell. That is His province, not mine. It is His to promise and mine to believe. His to command and mine to obey” (John Brown, 1784-1858).

The incident we are now considering shows us again that faith has to do not only with the promises of God, but with His precepts as well. Yea, this is the central thing which is here set before us. Abraham had been “strong in faith” when God had declared he should have a son by his aged wife (Rom 4:20), not being staggered by the seemingly insurmountable difficulty that stood in the way, and now he was strong in faith when God bade him slay his son, refusing to be deterred by the apparently immovable obstacle which his act would interpose before his receiving the seed through Isaac. Ah, dear reader, make no mistake upon this point—a faith which is not as much and as truly engaged with the precepts, as it is with the promises of God, is not the faith of Abraham and therefore is not the faith of God’s elect. Spiritual faith does not pick and choose. It fears God as well as loves Him.

As the promises are not believed with a lively faith unless they draw off our hearts from the carnal vanities to seek that happiness which they offer us, so the commandments are not believed rightly unless we be fully resolved to acquiesce in them as the only rule to guide us in the obtaining that happiness, and to adhere to and obey them. The psalmist declared, “I have *believed thy commandments*” (Psa 119:66). He recognized God’s authority behind them, there was a readiness of heart to hear His voice in them, there was a determination of will for his actions to be regulated by them. So it was with Abraham and



so it must be with us if we would furnish proof that *he* is *our* “father.” “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham” (Joh 8:39).

God’s Word is not to be taken piecemeal by us, but received into our hearts as a whole. Every part must affect us and stir up dispositions in us which each several part is suited to produce. If the promises stir up comfort and joy, the commandments must stir up love, fear, and obedience. The precepts are a part of divine revelation. The same Word which calls upon us to believe in Christ as an all-sufficient Savior, also bids us to believe the commandments of God, for the molding of our hearts and the guiding of our ways. There is a necessary connection between the precepts and the promises, for the latter cannot do us good until the former be heeded. Our consent to the law precedes our faith in the Gospel. God’s commands “are not grievous” (1Jo 5:3). Christ must be accepted as Lawgiver before He becomes our Redeemer, Isaiah 33:22.

How the readiness of Abraham to sacrifice his son condemns those who oppose God’s commands and will not sacrifice their wicked and filthy lusts! “Whosoever he be of you,” says Christ, “that *forsaketh not* all that he hath, he *cannot* be my disciple” (Luk 14:33). By which He meant, until he does in heart sincerity and resolute endeavor turn away from all that stands in competition (for our affections) with the Lord Jesus, he cannot become a Christian, see Isaiah 55:7. In vain do we claim to be saved if the world still rules our hearts. Divine grace not only delivers from the wrath to come, but even now it effectually “teaches” its recipients to *deny* all “ungodliness and worldly lusts, that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Ti 2:12).

“Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead” (Heb 11:19). Here we learn what was the immediate object of Abraham’s faith on this occasion, namely, the mighty power of God. He was fully assured that the Lord would work a miracle rather than fail of His promise. Ah, my brethren, it is by meditating upon God’s sufficiency that the heart is quieted and faith is established. In times of temptation when the soul is heavy with doubts and fears, great relief may be obtained by pondering the divine attributes, particularly, God’s omnipotency. His almighty power is a special prop to faith. The faith of saints has in all ages been much strengthened hereby. Thus it was with the three Hebrews, “Our God whom we serve *is able* to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace” (Dan 3:17)! “With God *all* things are possible” (Mar 10:27). He is able to make good His word, though all earth and hell seem to make against it.

Here too we see exhibited another of faith’s attributes, namely, the committal of events unto God. Carnal reason is unable to rest until a solution is in sight, until it can see a way out of its difficulties. But faith spreads the need before God, rolls the burden upon Him, and calmly leaves the solution to Him. “Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established” (Pro 16:3). When this is truly done by faith, we are eased of many tossings of mind and agitations of soul that would otherwise distress us. So here, Abraham committed the event unto God, reckoning on His power to raise Isaac again, though he should be killed. This is the very nature of spiritual faith—to refer our case unto Him and wait calmly and expectantly for the promised deliverance, though we can neither perceive nor imagine the manner in which it shall be brought about. “Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he *shall* bring to pass” (Psa 37:5).

O how little faith is in exercise among the professing people of God today. Occupied almost wholly with the rising tide of evil in the world, with the rapid spread of Romanism, with the apostasy of Protestantism, the vast majority of those now bearing the name of Christ conclude that we are facing a hopeless situation. Such people seem to be ignorant of the history of the past. Both in Old Testament times and at different periods of this dispensation, things have been far worse than they now are. Moreover, such trembling pessimists *leave out God*. Is not HE “able” to cope with the present situation? A hesitating “Yes” may be given, at once nullified by the query, “But where is the promise that He *will* do so?” Where? Why in Isaiah 59:19, “When the enemy shall come in like a flood [has he not already done so!], the Spirit of the LORD *shall* lift up a standard against him”—but who *believes* it?!

Ah, my Christian reader, ponder thoughtfully that blessed affirmation of Him that cannot lie and then bow the head in shame for thine *unbelief*. Everything in the world may seem to lie dead against the fulfillment of many a divine promise, yet no matter how dark and dreadful the outlook appears, the Church of God on earth today is not facing nearly so critical and desperate a situation as did the father of the faithful when he had his knife at the breast of him on whose one life the accomplishment of *all* the promises did depend. Yet he rested in the faithfulness and power of God to secure His own veracity and so may we do also at this present juncture. He who responded to the faith of sorely tried Abraham, to the faith of Moses when Israel stood before the Red Sea, to the three Hebrews when cast in Babylon’s furnace, *will* to ours, if we *really* trust Him. Forsake then your newspapers, brethren, get ye to your knees, and pray expectantly for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Man’s extremity is always God’s opportunity.

“Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead” (Heb 11:19). This supplies an interesting sidelight on the spiritual intelligence of the patriarchs. The Old Testament saints were very far from being as ignorant as some of our superficial moderns suppose. Erroneous conclusions have often been drawn from the silence of Genesis on various matters. The later books of Scripture frequently supplement the concise accounts supplied in the earlier ones. Rightly did John Owen point out, “Abraham firmly believed, not only in the immortality of the souls of men, but also the resurrection from the dead. Had he not done so, he could not have betaken himself unto this relief in his distress. Other things he might have thought of, wherein God might have exercised His power, but he could not believe that He would do it, in that which itself was not believed by him.”

Some, perhaps, may think that Owen drew too much upon his imagination, that he read into Hebrews 11:19 what is not really there. If so, they are mistaken. There is one clear statement in Genesis 22, which, though not quoted by the eminent Puritan, fully establishes his assertion. There we are told that the patriarch said unto his young men, “I and the lad will go yonder and worship, *and come again to you*” (Gen 22:5). This is exceedingly blessed. It shows us that Abraham was not occupied with his faith, his obedience, or with anything in himself, but solely with the living God. The “worship” of Him filled his heart and engaged all his thoughts. The added words, “and come again to you” make it unmistakably plain that Abraham confidently expected JEHOVAH to raise again from the dead the one he was about to sacrifice unto Him as a burnt offering. A wonderful triumph

of faith was this. Recorded for the praise of the glory of God's grace and for our instruction.

O my dear brethren and sisters in Christ, we want you to do something more than read through this article. We long for you to *meditate* upon this blessed sequel to Abraham's sore trial. He was tested as none other ever was and grand was the outcome, but between that testing and its happy issue there was the exercise of faith, the counting upon God to interpose on his behalf, the trusting in His all-sufficient power. And God did not fail him, though He tried his faith to the limit, yet in the nick of time the Lord intervened. This is recorded for our encouragement, especially for those who are now passing through a fiery furnace. He who can *deliver from death*, what cannot He do! Say then with one of old, "Neither is there any rock [to stay ourselves upon] like our God" (1Sa 2:2). Hannah had found a mighty support to her faith in the power of God.

"By faith Abraham...offered up Isaac...accounting that God was able to raise him up" (Heb 11:17-19). Faith, then, *expects* a recompense from God. Faith knows that it is a saving bargain to lose things for Christ's sake. Faith looks for a restitution of comforts again, either in kind or in value, "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren...for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren...and in the world to come eternal life" (Mar 10:29-30)—that is, either actually so, or an abundant equivalent. When one of the kings of Israel was bidden by the Lord to dismiss the army he had hired, he was troubled and asked, "What shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel" (2Ch 25:9). Whereupon the prophet replied, "The LORD is able to give thee much more than this"! When a man, through faithfulness to Christ, is exposed unto the frowns of the world, and his family faces starvation, let him know that God *will* undertake for him. The Lord will be no man's debtor.

"From whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb 11:19). Abraham had, as to his purpose, sacrificed Isaac, so that he considered him as dead, and he (thus) received him back from the dead—not really, but in a manner bearing likeness to such a miracle. This illustrates and demonstrates the truth of what has just been said above. God returns again to us what we offer to Him, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal 6:7). "That which he hath given will he pay him again" (Pro 19:17), for He will not be beholden to any of His creatures. Hannah gave up Samuel to the Lord and she had many more children in return (1Sa 2:20-21). How great, then, is the folly of those who withhold from God anything which He asks of them. How they forsake their own mercies, stand in their own light, and hinder their own good.

"From whence also he received him in a figure." (Heb 11:19). Here is the grand outcome of the patriarch's faith. First, the trial was withdrawn, Isaac was spared. The speediest way to end a trial is to be completely resigned to it. If we would save our life, we must lose it. Second, he had the expressed approval of the Lord, "Now I know that thou fearest God" (Gen 22:12). He whose conscience is clear before God enjoys great peace. Third, he had a clearer view of Christ than he had before, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day," (Joh 8:56) said the Savior. The closer we keep to the path of obedience, the more real and precious will Christ be unto us. Fourth, he obtained a fuller revelation of God's name. He called Him, "Jehovah-Jireh" (Gen 22:14). The more we stand the test of trial, the better

instructed shall we be in the things of God. Fifth, the covenant was confirmed to him (Gen 22:16-17). The quickest road to full assurance is full obedience.

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*Please continue in prayer for the circulation of "Studies."*

## THE LIFE OF DAVID

### *18. His Check from Abigail*

In our last article, we saw how that God submitted David unto a testing of quite another character and from a different quarter than those he had previously been tried by. Hitherto, the thorn in his side had been none other than the king of Israel, to which we may add the callous indifference toward him of the nation at large. But now he was unexpectedly rebuffed by an individual farmer, from whom he had sought some victuals for his men. "His churlish soul, adding insult to injury, dismissed the messenger of David with contumely and scorn. It is a hard thing to endure. David had endured and was enduring much. He was suffering from the active enmity of Saul and from the dull apathy of Israel. But both were great, and so to speak, dignified enemies. Saul was Israel's king and Israel were God's people. It seemed comparatively honourable to be persecuted by *them*, but it was a far different thing to endure the reproach of one so despicable as Nabal. 'Surely in vain,' said David, 'have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness'" (1Sa 25:21) (Benjamin W. Newton, 1620-1682).

What made the trial more poignant to David's soul was the fact that he himself had acted honourably and kindly toward Nabal. When, on a previous occasion he had sojourned in those parts, he had not only restrained his own men from preying upon Nabal's flocks, but had been a defense to them from the wandering bands of the Philistines. It was, then, the least that this wealthy sheep owner could do to now show his appreciation and make present of a little food to David's men. Instead, he mocked them. Ingratitude is always trying to flesh and blood, but more so when it is coupled with gross injustice. Yet often God is pleased to try His people in this way, calling upon them to receive treatment which they feel is quite "uncalled for," yea, positively "unjust." And why does God permit this? For various reasons—among others, to furnish us opportunities to *act out what we profess!*

The reaction of David unto this trial is recorded for our learning, for us to lay to heart and turn into earnest prayer. "And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword" (1Sa 25:13). Well may we ask, Had he been so long in the school of affliction and not yet learned patience! "He forgot that all suffering, all reproach, that is *for God's sake*, is equally honourable, whether it come from a monarch or from a churl. His proud spirit was roused, and he who had refused to lift up his hand against Saul and had never unsheathed his sword against Israel, he who was called to fight, not for his *own sake*, against his *own*

enemies, but for *the Lord's sake* against the *Lord's* enemies, he—David, forgot his calling and swore that Nabal should expiate his offense in blood" (B. W. Newton)

And how are we to account for his lapse? Wherein, particularly, was it that David failed? In being unduly occupied with the second cause, the human instrument. His eyes were upon man, rather than upon God. When his men returned with their disappointing tidings he ought to have said with Job, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). Ah, it is easy for us to say what David *ought* to have said, but do we act any better when we are similarly tested? Alas, has not both writer and reader full reason to bow his head in shame! Far be it from us, who thoroughly deserve them ourselves, to throw stones at the beloved Psalmist. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit has faithfully recorded his failures and the best way for us to profit from them is to trace them back to their source, and seek grace to avoid repeating them.

Above we asked the question, Had David been so long in the school of affliction and not yet learned patience? This leads us to inquire, *What is patience?* Negatively, it is meekly receiving *as from God* whatever enters our lives, a saying from the heart, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (Joh 18:11). Positively, it is a persevering continuance in the path of duty, not being overcome by the difficulties of the way. Now to accept as from God whatever enters our lives requires us to cultivate the habit of seeing *His* hand in everything. Just so long as we are unduly occupied with secondary causes and subordinate agents, do we destroy our peace. There is only one real haven for the heart and that is to "rest in the Lord," to recognize and realize that "of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are *all* things" (Rom 11:36), ever seeking to learn His lesson in each separate incident.

It is blessed to know that "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD," and that "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand" (Psa 37:23-24). Yes, and oftentimes though we trip, He keeps us from falling. Where it is the genuine desire of the heart to please the Lord in all things, He will not let us go far wrong. Where the will is sincerely bent Godwards, He will not suffer Satan to prevail. Thus it was here with David. To answer the fool (Nabal) according to his folly (Pro 26:4) was just what the devil desired and momentarily he had gained an advantage over him. But the eyes of the Lord were upon His tempted servant and graciously did He now move one to deter him from accomplishing his vindictive purpose. Let us admire His providential workings.

First, we are told that, "But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them. But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields: They were a wall unto us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him" (1Sa 25:14-17). One of Nabal's servants acquainted his mistress with what had transpired, confirming, be it noted, what was said by David's men in verse 7. He probably drew the logical inference that David would avenge his insult, and anxious for his

own safety as well as for the other members of the household and yet not daring to voice his fears unto Nabal, he informed Abigail.

How wondrously God makes all things “work together” for the good of His own. How perfect are His ways—fulfilling His own secret and invincible designs, yet leaving quite free the instruments who, unconsciously, fulfill them. The providential machinery to restrain the impetuous David was now set in motion. A servant of Nabal’s, moved by nothing higher than the instinct of self-preservation (so far as *his* consciousness went), warns his mistress of their impending danger. Now mark, secondly, her response. She did not laugh at the servant and tell him his fears were groundless, nor was she suddenly paralyzed by feminine fright at the alarming tidings. No, a hidden Hand calmed her heart and directed her mind. Accepting the warning, she acted promptly, setting out at once with an elaborate present to placate the angry David—present that would meet the immediate needs of his hungry men, see verses 18-19.

There are some who have criticized this action of Abigail’s, dwelling upon the last clause of verse 19, “But she told not her husband Nabal.” Such a criticism is a very superficial conclusion. What Abigail did was necessary for the protection of the family. Perceiving that Nabal’s stubbornness would ruin them all, the exigencies of the situation fully justified her conduct. It is true she owed allegiance to her husband, but her first and great duty was to take measures to protect their lives. Inferior interests must always be sacrificed to secure the greater—our property to preserve our lives, our very lives to preserve our souls. As we shall see, verses 24, 28 make it clear that she acted from no disloyalty to Nabal. Nevertheless, it is an extraordinary case which is here before us, and so *not* to be used as an example.

And what of David at this time? Was he recovered from his outburst of anger? No, indeed, or there had been no need for Abigail’s mission of conciliation. The words of Nabal were still rankling within his heart. Hear him as he petulantly declares, “Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good” (v. 21). He repented of the kindness shown Nabal, feeling now that it had been wasted upon him, that he was devoid of gratitude and incapable of appreciating the good turn shown him. But God is “kind unto the unthankful and to the evil,” and bids us, “Be ye therefore merciful” (Luk 6:35-36). Ah, to cultivate that attitude we must seek grace to *mortify* the spirit of pride which desires recognition and that bitterness which rises when we are slighted.

Not only was David chafing under the ingratitude and taunts of Nabal, but he was still bent on revenge, as verse 22 shows, he had determined to slay every male in Nabal’s household. This was unjust and cruel in the extreme, and if God suffered him to carry out such a design, had greatly sullied his character, and given his enemies an immense advantage against him. So determined was he, that he confirmed his intention with an oath, which was rash and savored of profanity. See here, dear reader, what even the child of God is capable of when grace is not active within him. The realization of this ought to make us walk very softly, and work out our salvation with “fear and trembling.” It is for this reason that God so often withdraws from us the power of His Spirit—that we may know what is yet in our hearts (2Ch 32:31), and be humbled before Him.

How blessedly God *times* His mercies. Here was David premeditating evil, yea, on the point of carrying out his wicked purpose. But there was one, sent by the Lord, already on the way to deliver him from himself. Ah, dear reader, have not you and I often been the recipient of similar favours from heaven? Were there not times, be they recalled to our deep shame, when *we* had determined upon a course dishonouring to our Lord, when, all praise unto Him, some one crossed our path and we were delayed, hindered, deterred. That some one may not have spoken to us as definitely as Abigail did unto David, rather perhaps *their* errand was of quite another nature, which at the time we may have resented as a nuisance for interrupting us. But now, as we look back, do we not see the kind hand of God withholding us from carrying out an evil purpose!

Apparently David was already on his way to execute his evil intention when Abigail met him (v. 20). Blessed is it to see the place which she now took, "When Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, And fell at his feet" (v. 23-24). This was not mere adulation and it was something more than an ordinary salutation. It was *faith's acknowledgment* of the "anointed of the Lord." Nabal had insulted him as a runaway slave, but his wife owns him as a superior, as her king in the purpose of God. Her address to him on this occasion (v. 24-31) is deserving of close study, but we can only offer a few brief remarks upon it.

It is to be carefully noted that Abigail did not upbraid David for cherishing the spirit of revenge and tell him that it ill-became his character and calling. It had not been seemly for *her* to do, rather did she leave it for his conscience to accuse him. She did not excuse her husband's conduct, nor did the present case allow her to hide his infirmity, but she sought to turn his well-known character for rashness and insolence (v. 25) into an argument with David, why he should lay aside his resentment. "She intimated that Nabal (whose name means 'folly') intended no peculiar affront to him, but only spoke to his usual way of treating those who applied to him, and it was beneath a person of David's reputation and eminence to notice the rudeness of such a man" (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

Abigail's piety comes out clearly in verse 26. Possibly she perceived a change in David's countenance, or more probably she felt in her spirit that the object before her was now gained. But instead of attributing this unto her pleading, or the present she had brought, she ascribed it solely unto the restraining grace of God, "The LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand." Thus alone is God honoured and given His proper place, when we freely impute unto *His* working all that is good in and from our fellow creatures. Beautiful too is it to behold how she shields her churlish husband: "upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be" (v. 24), "I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid" (v. 28). She took upon herself the blame for the ill-treatment of his men and says, "If thou wilt be angry, be angry against *me*, rather than with my poor husband."

Next, we behold her strong faith "The LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house" (v. 28). She makes reference unto the future to draw his heart from the present. As another has said, "To the heir of a kingdom, a few sheep could have but little attraction and one who knew that he had the anointing oil of the Lord upon his head, might easily bear to be called a runaway servant." Ah, it is ever the office of faith to look beyond present circumstances and difficulties, on to the time of deliverance, and only thus do we begin to

judge things from *God's* viewpoint. Then she pointed out that David was fighting "the battles of the LORD" (v. 28), and therefore it was not for him to think of avenging an insult to himself.

Her closing words in verses 29-31 are very beautiful. First, she makes reference to the relentless persecution of Saul, but of becoming loyalty to the throne speaks of him as "a man" rather than "the king" and assures David in most striking language that his life should be preserved (v. 29). Second, looking away from his abject condition, she confidently contemplated the time when the Lord would make him "ruler over Israel." How heartening was this unto the tried servant of God! Thus too does God often send us a word of comfort when we are most sorely tried. Third, she pleaded with David that he would let his coming glory regulate his present actions, so that in that day, his conscience would not reproach him for previous follies. If we kept more before us the judgment-seat of Christ, surely our conduct would be more regulated thereby. Finally, she besought David to remember her, his "handmaid," when he should ascend the throne.

"As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprovcr upon an obedient ear" (Pro 25:12). Abigail was a wise reprovcr of David's passion and he gave an obedient ear to the reproof according to his own principle, 'Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness' (Psa 141:5). Never was such an admonition either better given or better taken" (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Herein are the children of God made manifest. They are tractable, open to conviction, willing to be shown their faults, but the children of the devil ("sons of Belial") are like Nabal—churlish, stubborn, proud, unbending. Ah, my reader, lay this to heart. If we will listen to faithful counselors now, we shall be delivered from much folly and spared bitter regrets in the future.

God blessed this word of Abigail's to David, so that he was now able to view the whole transaction and his own bitter spirit and purpose in a true light. First, he praises God for sending him this check in a sinful course (v. 32). It is a true mark of spirituality when we discern and own the Lord's hand in such deliverances. Second, he thanked Abigail for so kindly interposing between him and the sin he was about to commit (v. 33). Ah, we must not only receive a reproof patiently, but *thank* the faithful giver of it. Note that instead of speaking lightly of the evil he premeditated, David emphasized its enormity. Third, he dismissed her with a message of peace and accepted her offering. The whole shows us wise men are open to sound advice, even though it comes from their inferiors, and that oaths must not bind us to do that which is evil.

Finally, let us point out for the benefit of preachers that we have in the above incident a blessed picture of an elect soul being drawn to Christ. 1. Abigail was yoked to Nabal—so by nature we are wedded to the law as a covenant of works and it is "against us" (Col 2:14). 2. She was barren to Nabal, see Romans 7:1-4. 3. It was tidings of impending doom which caused her to seek David (v. 17). 4. She took her place in the dust before him (v. 23). 5. She came to him confessing "iniquity" (v. 24). 6. She sought "forgiveness" (v. 28). 7. She was persuaded of David's goodness (v.28). 8. She owned his exaltation (v. 30). 9. She, like the dying thief, begs to be "remembered" (v. 31). 10. David granted her request, accepted her person, and said, "Go up in peace" (v. 35)!



## WAITING AT WISDOM'S GATES

### *Part Two*

But another thing is said of the blessed man. He does more than hear Wisdom's voice, he watches at Wisdom's gates. "Blessed is the man that heareth me, *watching* daily at my gates" (Pro 8:34). And what are these gates at which the blessed man watcheth? By Wisdom's gates, I understand those places where Wisdom speaks by those whom she calls her maidens—ministers called and taught by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Among the Jews, counsels were held in the gates of the city—causes were heard and decided, and judgment was given. The oppressors were condemned and the oppressed were delivered. Property was redeemed and contracts were entered into. So, also, in Wisdom's gates, where Wisdom presides and speaks, teaches and directs, these things spiritually are done, and heavenly business is transacted. At her gates, she assembles and gathers together her children, to speak to them and to give them good counsel. Here she reveals the secrets of their hearts; passes judgment upon what is false and evil; takes away their rotten props; drives them out of their refuges of lies; exposes the deceit of their hearts; opens them to receive the truth, and to attend unto the things that are spoken by her; brings redemption into the soul; saves it from the oppressor, from the delusions of Satan, and the accusations of conscience; and sweetly reveals her pardon and peace. Here she strengthens the weak hands and confirms the feeble knees; comforts the distressed, satiates the longing soul; fills the empty soul with good things; opens blind eyes, unstops deaf ears, circumcises the heart; and makes the lame to leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing. Here righteous judgment is given, a true balance is held, and right and just weights are put therein, and the Lord is known to be a God of judgments, by whom actions are weighed. These are the gates of righteousness, the gates of Wisdom, and here the righteous resort and here the blessed man "watches."

Yes, he *watches*. He does not go out of form or custom, or merely to hear a fine *orator* or to satisfy conscience. No, he *watches*. As the criminal on the gallows watches and strains his eyes, looking to the skirts of the crowd and to the distant hills, if peradventure he may see the messenger of mercy, dispatched from the king's presence with the wished-for reprieve; as the sick patient anxiously looks toward the door, in expectation of the far-famed physician; as the shipwrecked mariner watches the dim spot in the horizon, in hopes it may prove to be a sail approaching for his deliverance; as the suitor watches the face of him to whom he presents his petition, or the beggar the opening of the gate in hopes of receiving an alms; even so does the blessed man watch at Wisdom's gates. He watches for some token for good, some message of peace, some sweet consolation; some sensible and powerful manifestation of love and freedom, mercy and grace; some interpretation of his case, and unraveling of his dark and difficult experience; some light on his path, some crumbs from the bread of life, some shinings and beams from the Sun of righteousness; some instruction in righteousness, some promise of good things; some proof that *his* spots are the spots of God's children, that he is not deceived, that he is in the way of life, and that he is among the jewels of the Lord. He watches attentively, he longs earnestly, for these blessings. He goes to Wisdom's gates in hopes of hearing glad tidings; of being filled

and rejoiced, of having pardon and peace sealed in his heart; of hearing Wisdom's voice, seeing her arm revealed, feeling her healing power, not to have his judgment only informed, but to have his heart affected; not to be seen of man, but to see the Lord's face and to have the light of His countenance lifted up upon him. Thus he watches at Wisdom's gates, in expectation of seeing and receiving from her hands a good and perfect gift. "Blessed is the man that *heareth* me, *watching* daily at my gates" (Pro 8:34).

The blessed man is said to attend *daily*, to hear and watch for Wisdom. Thus these blessed watchers watch daily and wait for some hope, some comfort, some promise, some light, and blessing from Wisdom. They are found at Wisdom's gates as often as they open and they are able to come. There is no need to exhort them to go there. They require no entreaties. They are hungry and want food; needy and poor, and want to be enriched; naked, and want clothing; cold, and want to be warmed; miserable, and want to be comforted; guilty, and want to be pardoned. They do not mind walking a few miles to hear the Word, for the desire of their soul is towards it. They endure affliction and watch continually, sometimes with more, and sometimes with less fervor. Those who are very unlike Wisdom's watching children can be kept from hearing and watching because the road is long and rough, the weather cold or damp, or because some trifling obstacle is in the way. But observe the word "my"—"that watcheth daily at my gates." "*My* sheep hear *my* voice...and a stranger they will not follow," (Joh 10:5, 27) saith Christ. Thus blessed hearers and blessed watchers cannot sit under a legal or dry doctrinal ministry, in which Wisdom's voice is not heard, and be satisfied therewith. Though they would feign fill their belly with the husks which the swine eat, they cannot. It will not do for them, they must have "clean provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan" (Isa 30:24). They cannot sit under a dead minister who exalts the creature and exhorts him to do what he feels he cannot do, for he has "the sentence of death" in himself, that he should not trust in himself (2Co 1:9). The blessed hearers and watchers will never be content with a legal preacher or a dry, though correct letter, preacher. They want power, unction, experience, interpretation of their cases, and to have the footsteps of the flock (Song 1:8) traced out, that they may go forth their way by them. There are thousands who are very attentive and regular at their churches and chapels, are very fond of being there early, and never miss when the doors are open, who are far from being among the number of the *blessed* hearers and watchers, for they can hear and watch like strangers, which blessed hearers and watchers cannot do. They can delight in the gates of Satan, transformed into an angel of light (2Co 11:14), but blessed hearers and watchers can approve of Wisdom's gates only.

"Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors" (Pro 8:34). Here is another mark of a blessed man—he *waits* at the posts of Wisdom's *doors*. But what are those doors? A door is that which we pass through to obtain entrance into a house, chamber, or private enclosure, and is the only lawful and proper inlet to those who come in a direct and blessed way. The Lord Jesus said of Himself, "I am the door," implying that none can enter into the fold or bond of the covenant, but through Him. They must not only have a sight of Him afar off, but in experience or nearness to and entry into Him, ere they can, as His sheep, lie down and feed in the fold of the covenant of grace and delight themselves in God's everlasting, electing, redeeming, renewing, and preserving

love. Christ is Himself the covenant, as it is said in Isaiah 42:6, and He is one of the divine covenanters (Zec 9:11). In Him are hid all the covenant stores of wisdom and knowledge, salvation and righteousness, mercy and truth, peace and life. Therefore, the soul that would enjoy these blessings must have more than a letter knowledge of them. He must handle and enjoy, taste and feast and this he cannot do until, by the blessed Spirit, he has such a revelation of Jesus as to assure him he is “a man in Christ.”

The blessed man that hears Wisdom and watches at her gates, at which are laid up all manner of precious fruits (Song 7:13), knows and feels this. He has such a savor of the preciousness which Jesus is and has in Himself, that he pants after the enjoyment thereof. He is not content to “go about Zion” and to mark her walls and bulwarks, (Psa 8:12, 13) as thousands are, but he wants to *find an entrance into* Zion, to be brought into the citadel of safety, and the banqueting house of love, and therefore his eyes are up unto the Lord (Psa 123:1-2). He is “looking unto Jesus” (Heb 12:2), and waiting with anxiety and longing desires, in hope that He will put forth His hand, and take him in to Him, as Noah put forth his hand and took into the ark the dove which had been fluttering over the waste of waters and drowned bodies, and could find no rest for the sole of her foot—not being able to rest on that which had destroyed so many, nor on the corruption which floated on every side. He waits and knocks also at the posts of the doors of love, mercy, and salvation. He knows what they are in the letter and has sometimes had glimpses and rays of the Sun of righteousness darting through them into his soul. He has been very near the free enjoyment of what his soul desires, even at “the posts.” But he wants more than this. He wants to find an *entrance into* the doors, by assurance entering into him. He wants the witness of the Spirit and the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit. For these, he begs and knocks, with sighs and groans, and hungerings and thirstings. Sometimes he fears the doors will never be opened to him, he is so vile and foul, unbelieving and hardhearted. He sees there is a “door of faith” (Act 14:27) and a “door of hope” (Hos 2:15), and hears that they are opened to waiting and troubled souls in the wilderness (Hos 2:14). But he must have more than *hearing* these things as truths and blessed realities. He must *enjoy and enter into* them as such.

Now such a waiter has faith in Christ, but it is only like a drop of oil under the muddy water, which is struggling to rise to the top, or like a bladder or cork caught in the seaweeds and held down thereby. Though it is in its nature to rise and ascend, it cannot. He has, then, faith to believe his need of these things and to cry to the dear Lord to open to him, to let him in. He has faith and hope sufficient to keep him knocking and calling for admission, like a storm-beaten and shivering traveler at the door of an inn, the keeper whereof is in bed and asleep, and who, if he hears his voice, appears not inclined to rise and open to him. He waits for God to enable him to receive the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul (1Pe 1:9), to convince him that he *has* “faith of the operation of God” (Col 2:12). He cannot conclude that he has true faith and that his is a good hope through grace (2Th 2:16) till he can feel thereby assured he is elected and born of God. False professors, who are left-hand goats and not right-hand sheep, and so never hear the voice of Wisdom, get into the full assurance of faith very easily. Nothing is more simple to them. They say, “you have *only* to believe.” But *only to believe* is as impossible to Wisdom’s waiting children, as for them to grasp the whole firmament with their hands or to lay hold

upon and enter into the sun. They feel their helplessness, weakness, unbelief, darkness, and blindness. They are like wayfaring men, who, although they may perchance be in the right way, cannot be assured thereby, because all behind and before, above and around them, is thick darkness, and they know not where they are and are afraid to proceed or go backwards lest they should fall into a bog or pit, or over a precipice, but they call and shout, in hopes of being heard and directed in the way. They stand still, and wait and watch for the break of day, for the light to visit them.

Thus Wisdom's watching, waiting children feel what David was experiencing when he said, "LORD, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the LORD more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning" (Psa 130:2-6). Now a soul in this state is a "blessed" soul. He is a wise son, an heir of God, and a joint-heir together with Christ. Though under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the Father (Gal 4:2), yet is he a true son and not a bastard (Heb 12:8). Although he is but at the *posts* of Wisdom's doors, holding on by only a little hope, a little strength, a little light, a something which will not let him give up watching, but which keeps him looking for the morning, for the day-star to arise in his heart (2Pe 1:19) and the Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings (Mal 4:2), he is manifestly, though not to himself, one of God's children. Yea, though he is like the chapped ground, which, parched with the droughts of summer, cleaves into deep fissures, and can only open its many mouths, and gape for the refreshing and reviving rain. For it is the blessed Spirit who has taught him that without Jesus he can do nothing and that has made him open his mouth wide, that He might fill it (Psa 81:10). He may wait long and seemingly in vain, but in the set time (Psa 102:13), God will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground (Isa 44:3). He will show him that He has set before him an open door and no man can shut it (Rev 3:8), while like Hannah, he speaks and prays only in his heart (1Sa 1:13). God hears the voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace (Jer 30:5). Wisdom sees him at the posts of her doors, though he cannot see that. Wisdom observes and cares for him. Wisdom will keep him watching as long as it is good for him, but not a moment longer. There is a set time to favour Zion, (Psa 102:13) and it cannot be hastened nor retarded. The vision, saith the Lord, is *for an appointed time*, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie. Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry (Hab 2:3). Those who, like Simeon, are found waiting for the consolation of Israel (Luk 2:25), like Simeon will, ere the earthly house of their tabernacle be dissolved, be blessed with holding their Savior in the arms of their faith and will be enabled to say, "Lord, now lettest thou [or, *now* thou lettest] thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation" (Luk 2:29-30).

Thus a waiting soul is a blessed soul. "Blessed *is* [not *shall be*] the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." (Pro 8:34). He *is* a saved soul, though he cannot say *my* God and *my* Savior. He is not blessed because he hears, and watches and waits, but because he is blessed, therefore a hearing, watching, and waiting spirit is given him. Patience is the fruit of the Spirit and the Spirit puts forth no

fruits but in elect souls. He who groans within himself, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body (that is, who waits till he shall be brought into the full enjoyment of the redemption of his body, which is redeemed as well as his soul—or who waits, longing to be rid of his body of death and corruption—who waits, desiring to be freed from sin and to enjoy the full fruition of the adoption of the sons of God), is a blessed man (Rom 8:23). And so is the man who, though sorely oppressed and cast down, is not destroyed, nor bereft of hope, nor able to consent to evil, but endures temptation (Jam 1:12). “Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD” (Psa 128:1). “*Blessed* are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. *Blessed* are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted, etc., etc. (Mat 5:3-12). Now in some one or more of these states all who are born of God are found and all such, though differing in the depth of their feelings and experience, are blessed persons and hear Wisdom (not the mere words of man), nor are taken up with fine, empty oratory—not hear this or that good man, for Wisdom saith, “Blessed is the man that heareth *me*, watching [not loungeth listlessly] daily at *my* gates, waiting at the posts of *my* doors” (Pro 8:34).

Happy, blessed man that waits in the spirit for Jesus! God says he *is* blessed, He *has* blessed him, and none can curse him, neither Satan, nor the law, nor sin, nor man. Blessed is every one that blesseth him and cursed is he that curseth him. God will never be tired, however long the time may be to the watching, hearing soul. He may fear he will be cut off, but God declares He will preserve and keep him. “He that trusteth in the LORD shall never be confounded or put to shame,” and therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you. For the Lord is a God of judgment and leads in the way of righteousness, and in the midst of the paths of judgment (Pro 8:20). “Blessed *are all* they that wait for Him” (Isa 30:18), (John Gadsby, 1843).

## DISPENSATIONALISM

### *2. The Purpose of God (Summarized)*

We are not unmindful of the fact that this magazine is read by two widely different classes of people. First, it is being sent unto a goodly number of preachers and others who are fitted for the deeper things of God. Second, the greater number who receive it have not enjoyed the privileges of the former and so are heavily handicapped when they take up such articles as in this present series on “Dispensationalism.” Thus the happy task before us of seeking to minister unto those whose needs are similar, yet whose capacities to receive and digest food is so varied, is not without its difficulties. On the one hand, we wish (by God’s grace) to maintain the level indicated by the title of our little paper, “*Studies in the Scriptures*,” yet on the other hand, we desire wisdom from above so that we may minister in such a way that (if they will but take prayerful pains) even the babes of

Christ may be edified. It has therefore occurred to us that if we give a summary of the last three articles (really one in three parts) some may be helped.

First, we pointed out (in the March issue) that the favourite text of the “Dispensationalists”—“rightly dividing the word of truth” (2Ti 2:15)—makes no reference whatever to the sectioning of God’s Word and limiting large portions of it to companies long since dead and gone. That instead, 2 Timothy 2:15 bids the servant of God see to it that he ministers the Word suitably unto the various conditions and circumstances of his congregation. The members of his spiritual family are in widely different states of soul—some are cold and sluggish and need rousing, some are sad and need comforting, some are ignorant and need instructing, some are feeble and need strengthening, some are flirting with the world and need admonishing. As a wise parent suits the diet unto the ages and health of his children, so will a well-instructed pastor.

Second, we pointed how that the great majority of the “Dispensationalists” begin at the wrong place. Instead of starting with the “Adamic dispensation,” they need to go back to the everlasting covenant, which God entered into with Christ on behalf of His elect before the foundation of the world. That instead of commencing with Genesis 1, we need to make Ephesians 1:3-6 the foundation of our study and thinking. It is there that we find the key which opens up to us God’s “Program for the Ages.” It is there we discover the character and contents of God’s eternal purpose, which purpose is slowly but surely being accomplished during the course of human history. It is there we learn that the grand center of God’s counsels is the glorifying of Himself in and by Christ, through the redeeming of His favoured people.

In commenting upon the language of Ephesians 1:3, we sought to repudiate a double error which the “Dispensationalists” have made there. First, that the contents of that verse describe blessings which *only* the saints of this Christian dispensation receive, and second, that its terms are in designed contrast from the material blessings which Israel enjoyed in Canaan. That verse 3 cannot be restricted unto Christians of this age is clear from what follows in verse 4-6—the connective, “according as” at the beginning of verse 4, shows they speak of one and the same company. Now *all* of God’s elect, from Abel onwards, were “chosen in Christ,” were “predestinated unto the adoption of children,” and were “accepted in the Beloved.” This should be abundantly clear to every spiritual reader who will carefully ponder the terms of John 10:16, Ephesians 2:19-21, Hebrews 11:40.

In developing our refutation of the second error, we called attention to the fact that the Old Testament saints, equally with the New Testament saints, were blessed with “all *spiritual* blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” First, we pointed out how that the language of Ephesians 1:3 points a designed contrast from the spiritual “blessings” which we received *in* unfallen Adam.

In Ephesians 4:18, Christians are reminded that in their unregenerate state they were “*alienated from* the life of God.” Now such language would be meaningless if the saints had *never* enjoyed the life of God. 1 Corinthians 15:22 tells us that “in Adam all die,” died spiritually, so all were once alive in Adam, alive spiritually. But Adam, being a man of the earth (“of the earth, earthy”) though we were originally blessed with *spiritual* blessings in him, yet only as in an earthly man. In blessed antithesis from this, the entire election of

grace have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in *heavenly places* in Christ, the heavenly Man. *That* is the contrast pointed by Ephesians 1:3.

Now these spiritual blessings in *heavenly places* were “inherited” in Christ by all of God’s elect from Abel onwards. That the “blessing of Abraham” (i.e. the blessing Abraham received from God), was of a *spiritual* and not of a material nature, is clear from Galatians 3:14, and that Abraham was aware that the ultimate reception of it awaited him in heaven may be plainly seen by a reference to Hebrews 11:11-16. Then we sought to show that the “blessing” which Jacob received from Isaac was identical with the “blessing of Abraham,” though it was couched in the language of earthly things. That statement, once it is seen to be Scriptural, should revolutionize our understanding of much of the Old Testament Scriptures. Spiritual blessings are there frequently referred to under material figures, heavenly favours under earthly shadows. Just as we are told in Revelation 11:8 that the city of Jerusalem “which *spiritually* is called Sodom and Egypt,” so very many of the places, objects, and things referred to in the Old Testament have a spiritual meaning.

In amplifying the above thought we appealed to the Psalms. If they be read impartially we cannot but see that the soul experiences of the spiritual in Israel were quite on a par with the attainment of the most eminent saints of the New Testament. The very first Psalm strikes the keynote and describes at length the man who is truly “blessed.” That figures of speech abound in that book is obvious at a glance and any attempt to interpret literally only reduces them to an absurdity. Take the well-known language of the twenty-third. Who is so senseless as to understand the “green pastures” and the “still waters” to signify only material food and drink? Then why should those who insist on carnalizing the sacred oracles ridicule those who give a *spiritual* interpretation to “Mount Zion,” the “cedars of Lebanon,” the “snows of Hermon,” etc., etc.?

It is tragic beyond words to find those who are now looked up to as the champions of orthodoxy perpetuating the great error into which the Jews of old fell. *They* had great reverence for the Holy Scriptures, had implicit confidence in their divine authorship, and yet in their gross carnality saw no deeper than the outward letter of the Word, literalizing everything and missing the spiritual meaning and application of it. Even the apostles were considerably tainted by this poison. When their Lord warned them against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they imagined He was rebuking them because they had “taken no bread” (Mat 16:7). When He said to them, “I have meat to eat that ye know not of,” (Joh 4:32) they asked each other, “Hath any man brought Him ought to eat?” (Joh 4:33). With such solemn examples before us are we not without excuse if we take not the warning to heart! Is it not obvious that spiritual things can only be “spiritually discerned” and that for this we are dependent upon the teaching of the Holy Spirit!

“I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day” (Isa 27:3). How blessed is such language as this when I discern here the promise of Christ to nourish and preserve His Church on earth! “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn” (Deu 25:4). How blessed to learn that that was written “*altogether for our sakes*,” that God’s servants today might know that “he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope” (1Co 9:10)! Here the Holy Spirit Himself has placed a sure key in our hands and shown us *how* to open the

*spiritual* meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures—the “oxen” were but figures of Christian evangelists.

In the next place, we sought to show that even during the Old Testament times God was administering the everlasting covenant, that under the legal economy of Moses, *grace* was being exercised unto all those who had been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. This is admittedly the most difficult aspect of our subject and at a later date we hope, God willing, to devote a series of articles to a consideration and exposition of the covenants which God made with Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David, giving particular attention to the Siniatic. Yet we trust sufficient has been said in our last article, particularly in the lengthy quotation made from Samuel Hopkins, to throw some light thereon. The *Gospel*, as well as the Law, was preached unto Israel, preached largely (though not exclusively) through the whole ceremonial system and ritual which was established under Moses.

In the purpose of God, the Lamb was “slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8), and therefore each of His elect became (at their regeneration and conversion) interested in and sharers of the benefits which Christ’s atoning sacrifice was to procure for them, namely, the bestowment of the Holy Spirit, the gift of faith, the forgiveness of their sins, and the “exceeding great and precious promises of God” (2Pe 1:4). These were made over to them in the covenant of grace or in other words, were revealed to them by the Gospel of God. The covenant of grace was administered by God from the days of Abel onwards or none of Adam’s fallen race would ever have been taken into the favour of God. True that covenant of grace was administered in different forms and by varied methods, yet the substance of it was always the same. The deliverance of Noah and his family from the flood, of Lot from Sodom, of Israel from Egypt, of Daniel from the lion’s den, were all so many adumbrations of the redemptive deliverance which Christ has wrought for His people.

The giving of the moral law unto Israel served a number of different purposes and needs to be considered from a number of various angles. First, it announced the unchanging requirements of God’s righteousness and holiness. Second, it revealed to fallen man his spiritual impotency, his utter inability to meet the claims of his Maker and Governor. Third, it revealed the need for substitutionary sacrifice and served as a constant foil unto the ceremonial law. Fourth, it also furnished a rule of conduct unto those who trusted in the sacrificial blood and desired to please Him who had made such gracious provision to meet their deep needs. Grace reigns through righteousness (Rom 5:21) and not at the expense of it, and if all the details of the Siniatic covenant be carefully pondered, there will be found a blessed and wondrous mingling of justice and mercy, grace and righteousness, Gospel and Law. But as we expect to devote a separate article to the consideration of the Law in this present series, we will not here further anticipate the contents of the same.

Few passages in the New Testament afford more help when pondering the varied *character* of the Mosaic economy than Romans 10:5-9. There the apostle quotes a Scripture from the Pentateuch, which seems to have been completely lost sight of by our modern “Dispensationalists.” In Deuteronomy 30:14, we find Jehovah saying through Moses, “The word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest



do it"--see the whole passage, verses 11-15. This, the Holy Spirit, by the pen of the apostle, expressly declares to be "the righteousness of faith" (i.e., the Gospel) and then Paul adds, "that is, the word of faith, which we preach" (Rom 10:8). Let the reader attentively weigh the language of Deuteronomy 30:11-14 and then ponder the apostle's inspired comment thereon. Does not this one example furnish clear evidence that the language of the Old Testament can only be understood in the light of the New?

But there is something more there in that Deuteronomy passage which we particularly wish the reader to see clearly. The apostle affirms in plain language that the Gospel he preached was proclaimed by Moses too, as he says again in Romans 3:21, "the righteousness of God" (that is, the perfect obedience of Christ which is imputed to all who believe in Him, Romans 3:24) which is now manifested more fully and openly under this new covenant or testament, was "witnessed by the law and the prophets." Note it well that the Law and the prophets not only "predicted" this righteousness of God, but definitely "witnessed" to the same. Further proof is furnished by the apostle in Romans 4, where he cites the cases of Abraham and David, as being justified by faith without the deeds of the Law.

How clear it is, then, that the Old and New Testaments possess a central unity, that God has had only one way of saving from the beginning, and that the covenant of grace has been administered by Him in every stage of human history. And how clear it is that modern "Dispensationalists" have an entirely erroneous conception of the Mosaic economy! The teaching of the "Scofield Bible," and all who echo its misleading and mischievous novelties, is to be steadfastly resisted, no matter how unpopular such resistance may render one among "Fundamentalists." When a man makes the studied statement that "As a dispensation, grace begins with the death and resurrection of Christ, the point of testing is *no longer legal obedience* as the *condition of salvation*, but accepting or rejecting of Christ" (as Mr. Scofield does in his notes on John 1:16), he at once exposes fundamental ignorance both of "the Law" and "the Gospel," and therefore is no safe teacher for lovers of the truth to follow.

In conclusion, may we suggest that those who have been able to follow this article and have, under God, been helped by the same, turn back now and prayerfully *study* the three which precede it. We shall greatly value the prayers of God's people that we may be definitely guided by the Holy Spirit in preparing the remaining articles of this series. The need for them is great. The difficulty of receiving them is great too, for all of us have much to *unlearn* and only divine grace can enable us to re-examine the whole subject impartially, be willing to relinquish errors which hitherto we thought were God's truth, and receive with meekness what God has for us.

## LORD AND SAVIOR

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD" (Isa 55:8). Most solemnly do these words make manifest the terrible havoc which sin has

wrought in fallen mankind. They are out of touch with their Maker. Nay more, they are "*alienated from* the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph 4:18). In consequence of this the soul has lost its anchorage, everything has been thrown out of gear, and human depravity has turned all things upside down. Instead of subordinating the concerns of this life to the interests of the life to come, man devotes himself principally to the present, and gives little or no thought unto the eternal hereafter. Instead of putting the good of his soul before the needs of the body, man is chiefly occupied about food and raiment. Instead of man's great aim being to please God, ministering to self has become his prime business.

Man's thoughts ought to be governed by God's Word and his ways regulated by God's revealed will. But the converse is the case. Hence it is that the things which are of great price in the sight of God (1Pe 3:4) are despised by the fallen creature and hence it is that "that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luk 16:15). Man has turned things topsy turvy. This is sadly evidenced when he attempts to handle divine things. The perversity which sin has caused appears in our *reversing* God's order. Holy Scripture speaks of man's "spirit and soul and body" (1Th 5:23), but when the world makes reference thereto, it says "body, soul, and spirit"—witness the motto of the Y.M.C.A. Scripture declares that Christians are "strangers and pilgrims" (Heb 11:13) in this scene, but nine times out of ten, even good men talk and write of "pilgrims and strangers."

This tendency to reverse God's order of things is part and parcel of fallen man's nature and unless the Holy Spirit interposes by working in us a miracle of grace, its effects are *fatal* to the soul. Nowhere do we have a more fearful and tragic example of this than in the evangelistic message which is now being given out, though scarcely any one seems aware of it. That something is radically wrong with the world is widely recognized. That Christendom too is in a sad state many are painfully conscious, that error abounds on every side, that practical godliness is at a low ebb, that worldliness has devitalized most of the churches, is apparent to an increasing number of earnest souls. But there are few indeed whose eyes are open to see *how* bad things are, few indeed perceive that things are rotten at the very foundation. Yet such is the case.

God's way of salvation is almost entirely unknown today. The "Gospel" which is being preached, even in "orthodox" circles, where it is supposed that the faith once delivered to the saints is still being earnestly contended for, is an *erroneous* gospel. Even there man has *reversed* God's order. With very rare exceptions, it is being taught (and has been for upwards of thirty years) that nothing more is required in order for a sinner's salvation than that he "accept Christ as his personal *Savior*." Later, he ought to bow to Him *as Lord*, consecrate his life to Him, and serve Him fully and gladly. But though he fails to do so, nevertheless, heaven is sure unto him. He will lack peace and joy now, and probably miss some millennial "crown," but having received Christ "as his personal Savior," he has been delivered from the wrath to come. Such is a reversing of God's order. It is the devil's lie and only the Day to come will show how many have been fatally deceived by it.

We are well aware that the above is strong language and likely to come as a shock unto many of our readers, but we beg them to test it by what now follows. In every passage of the New Testament where these two titles occur together, it is "Lord and Savior," and never "Savior and Lord." The mother of Jesus averred, "My soul doth magnify the Lord,

And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior” (Luk 1:46-47). Unless JEHOVAH had first become her “Lord,” most certainly He would not have been her “Savior.” No spiritual mind that seriously ponders the matter can have any difficulty in perceiving this. How could the thrice holy God save one who scorned His authority, despised His honour, and flouted His revealed will? It is indeed infinite grace that God is ready to be reconciled to us when we throw down the weapons of our rebellion against Him, but it would be an act of unrighteousness, a putting a premium upon lawlessness, were He to pardon any sinner before he was first reconciled to His offended Maker.

In 2 Peter 1:10, the saints of God are bidden to make their “calling and election sure” (and this, by *adding to* their faith the other graces enumerated in verses 5 to 7), and are assured that if they do so they shall never fail, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto them abundantly “into the everlasting kingdom of our [1] Lord and [2] Savior Jesus Christ” (2Pe 1:11). That is, an abundant entrance should be given them now into His kingdom of grace and hereafter into His kingdom of glory. But what we would particularly note is *the order* in which Christ’s titles are here mentioned. It is not “our Savior and Lord” as the corrupt preaching and teaching of this degenerate day presents it, but instead, “Lord and Savior,” for He becomes the Savior of none until the heart and will unreservedly receive Him as LORD.

“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2Pe 2:20). Here the apostle refers to those who had a head-knowledge of the truth and then apostatized. There had been a reformation in their outward lives, but no regeneration of the heart. For a while they were delivered from the pollutions of the world, but no supernatural work of grace having been wrought in their souls, the lustings of the flesh proved too strong and they were again overcome, returning to their former manner of life like the dog to its vomit and the sow to its wallowing in the mire. The apostasy is described as “to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (v. 21), which has reference to the terms of discipleship made known in the Gospel. But what we are particularly concerned with is the Spirit’s order. These apostates had been favoured with the “knowledge of [1] the Lord and [2] Savior Jesus Christ.”

In 2 Peter 3:18, God’s people are exhorted to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Here again God’s order is the very opposite of man’s. Nor is this merely a technical detail, concerning which a mistake is of little moment. No, the subject of which we are now treating is basic, vital, fundamental, and error at this point is *fatal*. Those who have not submitted unto Christ as LORD, but are trusting in Him as “Savior” are deceived, and unless God graciously disillusion them, will go down to their everlasting burnings with a lie in their right hand (Isa 44:20).

The same principal is clearly illustrated in passages where other titles of Christ occur. Take the opening verse of the New Testament, where He is presented as “Jesus Christ, [1] the son of David, [2] the son of Abraham.” Waiving now the “dispensational” signification of these titles, let us view them from the doctrinal and practical viewpoint, which should *ever* be our *first* consideration. “Son of David” brings in the throne. It emphasizes His authority. It demands allegiance to His scepter. And “son of David” comes *before* “son of

Abraham"! Again, in Acts 5:31, we are told that God had exalted Jesus to His own right hand "to be [1] a Prince and [2] a Savior." The concept embodied in the title "Prince" is that of supreme dominion and authority, as Revelation 1:5 clearly shows, "The prince of the kings of the earth."

If we turn to the book of Acts and read it attentively, we shall quickly discover that the message of the apostles was altogether different—not only in emphasis, but in substance—from the preaching of our times. On the day of Pentecost, Peter declared, "Whosoever shall call on the name of *the Lord* shall be saved" (Act 2:21) and reminded his hearers that God had made Jesus (or manifested Him to be) "both Lord and Christ" (Act 2:36), not Christ and Lord! To Cornelius and his household, Peter presented Christ as "Lord of all" (Act 10:36). When Barnabas came to Antioch, he "exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (Act 11:23). There also Paul and Barnabas "commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed" (Act 14:23). At the great synod in Jerusalem, Peter reminded his fellows that the Gentiles would "seek after [not only a "Savior," but] the Lord" (Act 15:17). To the Philippian jailer and his household, Paul and Silas preached, "the word of *the Lord*" (Act 16:32).

What we specially desire the reader to see is not only that the apostles *emphasized* the Lordship of Christ, but that they made surrender thereto *essential unto salvation*. This is clear from many other passages. For example, we read, "And believers were the more added to [not "Christ," but] the Lord" (Act 5:14). "And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to *the Lord*" (Act 9:35). "And many believed in the Lord" (Act 9:42). "And much people was added unto the Lord" (Act 11:24). "Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord" (Act 13:12). "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house" (Act 18:8).

The fact is that very, very few today have any right conception of what a scriptural and saving *conversion* consists of. The call to it is set forth in Isaiah 55:7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return [having in Adam departed] unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him." The character of it is described in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." Conversion, then, is a turning from sin unto holiness, from self unto God, from Satan unto Christ. It is the voluntary surrendering of ourselves to the Lord Jesus, not only by consent of dependence upon His merits, but also by a willing readiness to obey Him, giving up the keys of our hearts, and laying them at His feet. It is the soul declaring, "O LORD our God, other lords beside thee *have had* dominion over us [namely, the world, the flesh, and the devil]: but by thee only *will we* make mention of thy name" (Isa 26:13).

"Conversion consists in our being recovered from our present sinfulness to the moral image of God or which is the same thing, to a real conformity to the moral law. But a conformity to the moral law consists in *a disposition to* love God supremely, live to Him ultimately, and delight in Him superlatively, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, and *a practice agreeing thereto*. And therefore conversion consists in our being recovered from what we are by nature to such a disposition and practice" (Jas. Bellamy, 1770). Searching indeed are those words in Acts 3:26, "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." *This* is

Christ's mode of blessing men—*converting* them. However the Gospel may instruct and enlighten men, so long as they remain the slaves of sin, it has conferred upon them no eternal advantage, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom 6:16).

Let us point out here that there is a very real difference between believing in the deity of Christ and surrendering to His Lordship. There are many who are firmly persuaded that Jesus is the Son of God. They have not a doubt that He is the Maker of heaven and earth. But that is no proof of conversion. The demons owned Him as the "Son of God" (Mat 8:29). What we are pressing in this article is not the mind's assent to the Godhood of Christ, but the will's yielding to His authority, so that the life is regulated by His commandments. While there must be a believing in Him, there must also be a subjecting of ourselves to Him—the one being useless without the other. As Hebrews 5:9 so plainly tells us, "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey him*."

*Yet in the very face of the sunlight-clear teaching of Holy Writ, intimated above, when unsaved people are concerned about (we will not say their dreadful state, but) their future destiny and inquire, "What must we do to be saved?" the only answer they are now given is, "Accept Christ as your personal Savior," no effort being made to press upon them (as Paul did upon the Philippian jailer) the Lordship of Christ. John 1:12 is the verse which many a blind leader of the blind glibly quotes, "But as many as received Him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." Perhaps the reader objects, "But nothing is there said about receiving Christ as Lord." Directly, no, nor is anything there said about receiving Christ "as a personal Savior"! It is a whole Christ which must be received or none at all. Why seek to halve Him?*

But if the objector will carefully ponder the context of John 1:12 he will, unless blinded by prejudice, quickly discover that it is as LORD Christ *is* there presented and as such must be "received" by us. In the previous verse we are told, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (Joh 1:1). In *what* character does that view Him? Why, clearly, as the Owner and Master of Israel and it was as such they "received Him not." Consider too what He does for those who do receive Him, "to them gave he power [the right or prerogative] to become the sons of God." Who but the Lord of lords is vested with authority to give unto others the title to be sons of God!

In his unregenerate state, no sinner is subject to Christ *as Lord*, though he may be fully convinced of and freely acknowledge His deity and employ the words, "Lord Jesus" when referring to Him. When we say that no unregenerate person, "is subject unto Christ as Lord," we mean the His will is not the rule of life—to please, obey, honour, and glorify Christ is not the dominant aim, disposition, and striving of the heart. No, so far from *this* being the case, his real sentiment is, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?" (Exo 5:2). The whole trend of his life, in a saying, is, "We will not have this man to *reign over us*" (Luk 19:14). Despite all their religious pretensions, the actual attitude of the unregenerate unto God is, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve [be in subjection to] him?" (Job 21:14-15). Their conduct intimates "our lips are our own: who is Lord over *us*!" (Psa 12:4). Instead of

surrendering to God in Christ, every sinner turns unto *his own* way (Isa 53:6), living only to please self.

When the Holy Spirit convicts one of sin, He causes that person to see what SIN *really* is. He makes the convicted one to understand and feel that sin is rebellion against God, that it is a refusal to submit to the Lord. The Spirit causes him to recognize and realize that he has been an insurrectionist against Him who is exalted above all. He is now convicted not only of this or that sin, this or that “idol,” but is brought to realize that his whole life has been a *fighting against God*, that he has knowingly, willfully, and constantly ignored and defiled Him, deliberately preferring and choosing to go his own way. The work of the Spirit in God’s elect is not so much to show and convince each of them that they are “lost sinners” (the conscience of the natural man knows that, without any supernatural operation of the Spirit!), as it is to reveal the exceeding *sinfulness* of sin (Rom 7:13), and that by making us to see and feel the fact that all sin is a species of spiritual *anarchy*, a defiance of the “Lordship” of God.

Hence it is that when a man has really and truly been “convicted” by the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit, the first effect is complete and abject *despair* in the heart. It now appears to that one that his case is utterly hopeless. He now perceives he has sinned *so* grievously that it appears impossible for a righteous God to do anything but damn him for all eternity. He now sees what a *fool* he has been in thus heeding the voice of temptation, fighting against the Most High, and in losing his own soul. He now recalls how often God has spoken to him in the past—as a child, as a youth, as an adult, upon a bed of sickness, in the death of a loved one, in adversities—and how he refused to hearken, deliberately turning a deaf ear, and defiantly going on in *his own* way. He now feels that he has in truth sinned away his day of grace.

Ah, my reader, the ground *must* be plowed and harrowed before it is made receptive to the seed. So the heart must be prepared by these harrowing experiences, the stubborn will broken, *before* it is ready for the balm of the Gospel. But O how very few ever *are* savingly “convicted” by the Spirit! As the Spirit continues His work in the soul, plowing still deeper, revealing the hideousness and heinousness of SIN, producing a horror of and hatred for it, He next begets the beginning of *hope*, which issues in an earnest and diligent seeking and inquiry, “What must I do to be saved?” Then it is that He who has come to earth to glorify Christ, presses upon that awakened soul the claims of His Lordship, set forth in such passages as Luke 14:26-33, and gives us to realize that Christ demands our hearts, lives, and all. Then it is He grants grace unto the quickened soul to *renounce* all other “lords,” *to turn away from* all “idols,” and to receive Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King.

And nothing but the sovereign and supernatural work of God the Spirit can bring this to pass. Surely this is self-evident. A preacher may induce a man to *believe* what Scripture says about his lost and undone condition, persuade him to “bow to” the divine verdict, and then “accept Christ as his personal Savior.” No man wants to go to hell, and if he be intelligently assured that Christ stands ready as a fire escape, on the sole condition that he jump into His arms (“rest on His finished work”), thousands will do so. But a hundred preachers are unable to make an unregenerate person realize the unspeakably dreadful *nature* of SIN, make him feel that he has been a lifelong rebel against God, so change his

heart that he now hates himself, and longs to please God, and serve Christ. Only God the Spirit can bring any man to the place where he is willing to forsake every idol, cut off a hindering right hand or pluck out an offending right eye, if so be that *Christ* will “receive” him! Ah, *a miracle* of grace has been wrought when we give up ourselves to the Lord (2Co 8:5) to be *ruled* by Him.

Ere closing, let us anticipate and remove an objection. Probably some are disposed to say in reply to what has been written above, “But the exhortations addressed to the saints in the New Testament epistles show that it is *Christians*, and *not* the unsaved, who are required to surrender to God and yield to Christ’s Lordship, Romans 12:1, etc. Such a mistake, now alas so commonly made, only serves to demonstrate the gross spiritual darkness which has enveloped even “orthodox” Christendom. The exhortations of the epistles simply signify that Christians are *to continue* AS they began, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus *the Lord*, so walk ye in him” (Col 2:6). All the exhortations of the New Testament may be summed up in two words, “*Come* to Christ,” “*Abide* in him,” and what is “abiding” but coming to Christ constantly, 1 Peter 2:4! The saints who were exhorted, as per Romans 12:1, had *already* been bidden to “yield” themselves “unto God” (Rom 6:13)! While we are left on earth, we shall *ever* need such admonitions. Proof of what we have said is found in Revelation 2. The backslidden church at Ephesus was told to “Repent, and do the *first* works” (v. 5)!

And now dear reader, a pointed question, Is Christ your Lord? Does He in deed and in truth occupy the throne of your heart? Does He actually *rule* your life? If not, then most certainly He is NOT your “Savior.” Unless your heart has been renewed, unless grace has changed you from a lawless rebel into a loving and loyal subject, then you are yet in your sins, on the broad road that leadeth to destruction. May it please God, in His sovereign grace, to speak loudly to some precious souls through this article.

## BITTERS AND SWEETS

Dear Brother: May mercy and peace be multiplied unto you, and may a covenant God bless you with abundance of His consolations, which are far better than the smiles of men. I have had wave upon wave, and billow upon billow since I saw you. I can assure you I did many times fear it was all over, that God had left me, that I should prove an apostate at last, and that all my prayers, groans, and fears were nothing but fleshly, and would all end in the flesh.

I understand you were at our house when my poor dear prodigal son set out on his last ramble, with the determination that he would never see T. again. When I came home from my journey and heard the particulars, had not the Lord given me a little help, I must have sunk. The old serpent set on me so unmercifully that I reeled to and fro like a drunken man, for I have laboured for this dear child, particularly for the last four or five years, that God would prove him to be a vessel of mercy and now he was gone for the fourth time, with the determination that he would never see father or mother, sister or brother again, but

would go across the seas. O how the devil did roar, "Where are your prayers now? Where is your hope now of his being a vessel of mercy? What do you think now of the promises which you have leaned on?" O how I staggered and my pangs of labour came on again, I believe ten times stronger than before.

My dear friend, the lad was in my very bowels and what could I do but travail in labour for him? I had four or five weeks' travail of soul before I could hear anything about him, except that he had passed on his way towards Exeter. I had but one prayer for him to God and that was that He would turn the devil out of his palace from reigning in his heart, and set up His own kingdom there and bring him home again, sitting at Jesus' feet, clothed, and in his right mind. Here my soul was fixed, nor could I be moved from it. And sometimes my soul was in such wrestlings for this one blessing, that the devil might be dethroned out of his heart, my body has been so weak that I could scarcely crawl from one end of the room to the other. A few weeks before he sent me a letter, O what a conflict I had! It came to my mind that he was a vessel of wrath and this text ran through me like a dagger, "He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." O how I staggered, and my very loins heaved up with pangs of grief! "What," cried I, "my dear child for whom I have travailed in such soul-trouble for five years, shall be destroyed, and that without remedy?" And then the devil presented him before my eyes, as having cut his throat, and being now in hell, where he must be tormented forever and ever.

O my friend, I can never tell you a thousandth part of what I passed through for about an hour. O what groans I poured out that God would direct me to some portion of His dear Word. "O Lord," I cried, "do send me a crumb, do let me pick up but a single crumb." In my poor, feeble confused state of mind, I took the blessed book of God and opened it upon the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, when the first five verses so overpowered me with wonder and glory at the greatness, power, majesty, mercy, and grace of the dear Redeemer, that I was obliged to cry out, "Is anything too hard for the LORD"? (Gen 18:14) But when I came to the sixth and seventh verses, I felt every string and bond break, and for a few minutes did not know whether the Lord was not breaking the pitcher at the fountain and taking my poor tempest-tossed devil-dragged soul into the heavenly port. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (Isa 11:6).

O my dear friend, bless God for His mercy. He smiled and whispered with His still small voice, "Thy prayers are heard, and come up before me. I will bring the leopard home, and he shall be heartily glad to lie down with the kids, and a little child shall lead them." O how I kissed the feet of my dear Lord! I washed them with my tears, and wiped them in my feelings with the hairs of my head. I blessed Him, praised Him, till my very body was so faint and feeble that I hardly knew for a few minutes whether I was in the body or out of it. I could not help shouting, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be light unto me."

In about a fortnight after this, my dear lad wrote me a letter to say that he was a soldier in Plymouth barracks, that he was in the very bowels of hell night and day, and that hell



from beneath was moved for him to meet him at his coming. It was such a letter of contrition that I saw in a moment that the wolf was brought to dwell with the lamb and the leopard was willing to lie down with the kid. Upon this I wrote to Mr. T. (though he was a perfect stranger personally to me), telling him all the circumstances and begging of him the favour to go to the barracks and see the lad, and then to let me know what he thought of him, whether he believed he was really brought to see the error of his ways and is heartily sick of them, and whether he thought it would be advisable for me to purchase his discharge or not.

I soon received a letter from Mr. T. and so full was it of feeling and sympathy with me in my trouble, and so good an account did it give of the lad, that it so broke and melted my soul into union with his soul that I felt as if we were one spirit. He said he believed there was a great change wrought in the lad's soul, that he was sick of his past life, and that therefore he considered it was my duty as his father, to get him out of his present situation. So I procured his discharge and he has been at home near a month, and never did I see, bless the Lord, a more visible change. How he longs to feed amongst the kids! God has already and still is sorely chastening him out of His law, and what a school that is! I believe in my very heart that the kingdom of God is set up in his soul, though he is still shut up unto the faith, which, I believe, will hereafter be revealed to his soul. Poor thing! He has had two or three crumbs since he came home and this makes him stick close under the table.

I have another testimony that sweets and bitters, emptyings and fillings, frowns and smiles, groans and songs, famishings and feastings, God has bound fast together and neither men nor devils shall break them asunder. It is through fire and water that we are brought into a wealthy place. Yet, blessed be my covenant God, not one hair of my head has been singed. Poor fool! When I was in the furnace, I expected sometimes to be completely consumed. Ah, my dear friend, if God had dwelt with me on the ground of *my* faith, where must I have sunk? Into the pit, never to rise more. But though we believe not, He abideth faithful—He cannot deny Himself, bless His holy name. “As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him” (Psa 103:13) How sweet has that text been to me at times! But the devil has come again and torn asunder with rage, and told me that it did not belong to me. And I tell you what, it does not matter what God does for me, or however He may favour me, at times with His presence, if He leaves me to the devil and my own heart, I am disputing every bit of it. I find it just the same now as ever it was—flesh and blood are flesh and blood still, and the devil, unbelief, carnal reason, and all his devilish crew, are devilish still. And I find that faith, love, patience, meekness, watchfulness, and every spiritual grace, either in thought, word, or deed are all sovereign favours from God, and that not any one of them can ever be in exercise but as God the Holy Spirit draws it forth. I know that every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and am a living witness that salvation, and salvations too, are all of grace. J. W., 1837—first published in the “Gospel Standard,” 1838.

## SPIRITUAL HELPLESSNESS

“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil” (Pro 8:13). The “fear of the LORD” is one of the many names given to that new nature or principle of grace and holiness which is communicated to the Christian at his new birth. Evidence we *have* received this divine gift is that sin is now a burden and a grief to us. The longing of the renewed heart is to be completely done with sin, but this longing is only realized when we are called Home. Meanwhile, sooner or later, God makes the real Christian learn by humbling experiences that he is without the least power of help from himself. It is easy to *say*, “I have no power,” but not so to actually realize the fact, and therefore does God allow *us* to try and overcome our secret lusts and besetting sins and to cast out our idols. We pray Him to help us and every fall we have are sorry for it, and are determined not to act so foolishly again, and we really expect we shall not.

But alas, Satan and sin work upon our native corruptions and with open eyes we go again and again into sin, and bring a heavy load of guilt upon our consciences. The “law” which Paul speaks of as being at work in his members (Rom 7:23) is nothing else than a love of sin. This is too strong for the Christian and though he seeks to be more diligent in reading, meditation, prayer, repenting, and believing, the victory he longs for comes not to him. Yea—we will not gloss over the solemn fact, but *honestly* acknowledge it—matters get worse and worse. We read the Word, but it seems to have no power over us. We pray, but it seems all in vain, for the more we pray against sin, the stronger it works and perhaps we go to the throne of grace with increasing reluctance. As for repentance, our hearts seem like stone, till perhaps we are ready to believe that God has given us up entirely.

Now all of this, and much more that might be said, is to teach us that we *are* altogether “without strength.” God Himself tells us that when the Ethiopian can change his skin and the leopard his spots, then can those who are accustomed to do evil, do well (Jer 13:23), and we are brought to realize this in our experience. And how can we find it out in any other way, except by testing our own arm and discovering *our* supposed strength to be but weakness! But is this all? No, emptied of self, we are then ready to again find Christ a “very present help in trouble” (Psa 46:1). Only those who are truly sin-sick apply in earnest to the great Physician of souls!

