

A lit candle, a magnifying glass over an open book, and a quill pen. The candle is lit, casting a warm glow. The magnifying glass is positioned over the open book, which is lying flat. The quill pen is resting on the right page of the book. The background is dark, making the illuminated objects stand out.

Annual Volume

1932

STUDIES IN THE
SCRIPTURES

ARTHUR W. PINK

Studies in the Scriptures

Annual Volume 1932

Vol. XI

by Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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JANUARY

THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST

For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1Ti 2:5). Some unregenerate men, who deny the God-head of Christ, imagine they find something in this verse which supports their system of infidelity, but this only serves to make the more evident the fearful blindness of their minds. As well might they reason from Galatians 1:1 (where we read, “Paul, an apostle, *not of men*, neither by man, but *by Jesus Christ*”), that the Lord Jesus is not Man, as to infer from 1 Timothy 2:5 that He is not God. As we shall show in what follows, none could possibly heal the breach between God and men save one who partook of each of their natures.

“For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1Ti 2:5). “In that great difference between God and men, occasioned by our sin and apostasy from Him, which of itself could issue in nothing but the utter ruin of the whole race of mankind, there was none in heaven or earth, in their original nature and operations, who was meet or able to make up a peace between them. Yet this must be done by a mediator, or cease forever. This mediator could not be God Himself absolutely considered, for ‘a mediator is not of one, but God is one’ (Gal 3:20). And as for creatures, there was none in heaven or earth, there was none meet to undertake this office. ‘For if one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?’ (1Sa 2:25)” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

In view of this state of things, the eternal Son, out of love for His Father and that people which had been given to Him, volunteered to enter the office and serve as Mediator. It is to this that Philippians 2:7 refers, where we are told that He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” The susception (taking upon Him) of our nature for the discharge of the mediatorial office therein, was an act of infinite condescension, wherein He is exceedingly glorious in the eyes of His saints. To quote again from the eminent Puritan:

“Such is the transcendent excellency of the divine nature, it is said of God that, ‘He dwelleth on High, and *humbleth himself to behold* the things that are in heaven and in the earth’ (Psa 113:5-6). All His respect unto creatures, the most glorious, is an act of infinite condescension. And it is so on two accounts. First, because of the infinite distance there is between His being, and that of the creature. Hence, ‘All nations before him are as a drop of a bucket.’ Second, because of His infinite self-sufficiency unto all the acts and ends of His own eternal blessedness.

What we have a desire unto, is that it may add to our satisfaction, for no creature is self-sufficient unto its own blessedness. God alone wants nothing, and stands in need of nothing, see Job 35:6-8. God hath infinite perfections in Himself.

“How glorious, then, is the Son of God in His susception of the office of mediator! For if such be the perfection of the divine nature, and its distance is so absolutely infinite from the whole of creation, and if such be His self-sufficiency unto His own eternal blessedness, so that nothing can be taken from Him, nothing added unto Him, so that every regard to Him unto any of His creatures, is an act of self-condescension from the prerogative of His being and state; what heart can conceive, what tongue can express the glory of that condescension in the Son of God, whereby He took our nature upon Him, took it to be His own, in order to a discharge of the office of Mediator in our behalf!” Nothing but love, love unfathomable, to His Father and to His people, could have moved Him thereunto.

When we speak of Christ as Mediator, we always think of Him as God and man in one person, and that His two natures, though infinitely distinct, are not to be separated. As God, without a human nature united to His divine person, He would be too high to sustain the character or to perform the work of a servant, and, as such, to yield to the law that obedience which was incumbent upon Him as Mediator. So, on the other hand, to be man, or merely a creature, would be too low, and altogether inconsistent with that infinite value and dignity which must be put upon the work He was to perform. Therefore, none but God incarnate, possessing two natures, was qualified to act as Mediator. Let us amplify this important consideration with a few details.

First, it was necessary that the Mediator should be a divine person. “It was requisite that the Mediator should be God, that He might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God and the power of death, give worth and efficacy to His sufferings, obedience, and intercession, and to satisfy God’s justice, procure His favour, purchase a peculiar people, give His Spirit to them, conquer all their enemies, and bring them to everlasting salvation” (Westminster Catechism, 1643). None but God can give eternal life, and, therefore, none but a divine person could be a real Saviour of those who were dead in sins (Joh 10:27-28). Again, “For man to glory in any one as his Saviour, and give him the honour of the new creation, to resign himself to His pleasure, and become His property, and say to Him, ‘Thou are *Lord* of my soul,’ is an honour to which no mere creature can have the least claim. ‘*In JEHOVAH* shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory’ (Isa 45:25) (Hermann Witsius, 1636-1708).

Second, it was necessary that the Mediator should be a human person. “It was requisite that the Mediator should be man, that He might advance our nature, perform obedience to the law, suffer, and make intercession for us in our nature, having a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, that we might receive the adoption of sons, and have comfort and access with boldness unto the throne of grace” (Westminster Catechism). The law of God requires the love of our neighbour, but none is our neighbour but who is of the same blood with us. Therefore, before our *Surety* could satisfy the law for us, He must become man. So, too, He needed to take on Him our nature in order to our being united to Him in one body, and He made members “of his flesh and of his bones” (Eph 5:30).

Third, it was necessary that the Mediator should be God and man in one person. “It was requisite that the Mediator, who was to reconcile God and man, should Himself be both God and man, and this in one person; that the proper works of each nature might be accepted of God for us, and relied on by us, as the works of the whole person” (Westminster Catechism). Had He been God only, He could not have died. Had He been man only, He could not have merited for and bestowed the Holy Spirit upon all His people. Had He not been the God-man, our redemption

would have been brought about by two persons! Therefore, did the eternal Word become flesh (Joh 1:14)—for ever be His name adored.

Now, inasmuch as the Mediator is God and man in one person, it follows that various things may be truly stated concerning, or applied to Him, which are infinitely opposite to each other, namely, that He has all power and wisdom as it concerns His Deity, and yet, that He is weak and finite as respects His humanity. In one nature, He is equal with the Father, and so receives nothing from Him, nor is under any obligation to yield obedience. In His other nature, He is inferior to the Father, and so receives all things from Him. Here then is what makes it manifest that there is *no* contradiction between John 10:30 and John 14:28. As the second person of the Trinity, He could say, “I and *my* Father are one.” As the God-man Mediator, “My Father is greater than I.” Such verses as Matthew 11:27; 28:18; John 17:5; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Ephesians 1:22-23; Revelation 1:1, etc., all speak of Him as “the Mediator!”

In seeking to make practical application of this blessed theme, we cannot do better than quote the following words. “Think of it, my brother, I entreat you, upon every occasion when drawing nigh to the throne of grace, through that channel by which alone you can approach the throne—through the mediation of Jesus—and in that recollection, may the Lord strengthen your hands and heart. That almighty Friend we now have in heaven, in whose hands all our high interests are placed, though once ‘Man of sorrows,’ was, and is, no less, at the same time, one with the Father, ‘over all God blessed forever,’ (Rom 9:5)” (Robert Hawker, 1753-1827). May the Lord be pleased to add His blessing to this meditation.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

49. Sanctification (10:15-18)

The verses which are now to be before us bring to a close the principal argument which the apostle was setting before the Hebrews. That which follows, partakes more of the nature of a series of exhortations, drawn from the thesis which had previously been established. The immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism, seen in the glorious person of our great High Priest and the perfect efficacy of His sacrifice, had been fully demonstrated. “Here we are come unto a full end of the dogmatical part of this epistle, a portion of Scripture filled with heavenly and glorious mysteries, the light of the church of the Gentiles, the glory of the people Israel, the foundation and bulwark of faith evangelical” (John Owen). Immediately afterward, that eminent expositor added, (words which most suitably express the writer’s own sentiments) the following.

“I do therefore here, with all humility, and sense of my own weakness and utter inability for so great a work, thankfully own the guidance and assistance which hath been given to me in the interpretation of it, so far as it is, or may be of use unto the church, as a mere effect of sovereign and undeserved grace. From that alone it is, that having many and many a time been at an utter loss as to the mind of the Holy Spirit, and finding no relief in the worthy labours of others, He

hath graciously answered my poor, weak supplications, in supplies of the light and evidence of truth.”

The relation of our present passage to what has been before us in the last article is this—In Hebrews 10:11-14, the perfection of Christ’s sacrifice is declared, first, comparatively in verses 11-14, and then, singly in verse 14. While in Hebrews 10:15-17, a further proof or confirmation of this is given from the Old Testament Scriptures. So efficacious was the mediatorial work of Christ that, “By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” Said the Puritan, Stephen Charnock (1628-1680), “That one offering was of such infinite value that it perfectly purchased the taking away of sin, both in the guilt, filth, and power, and was a sufficient price for all the grace believers should need for their perfect sanctification to the end of the world. There was the satisfaction of His blood for the removal of our guilt, and a treasure of merit for the supply of our grace” (Vol. 5, p. 231).

There is a further link between our preceding portion and the present one. In Hebrews 10:14, the apostle had declared, “For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” Now, he describes those marks by which the “sanctified” are to be *identified*. Unto those who really value their souls and are deeply concerned about their eternal destiny, this is a vitally important consideration. How may I know that I am one of that favoured company for whom the incarnate Son of God offered Himself a sacrifice for sin? What clear and conclusive evidence do I possess that I am among the “sanctified”? Answer to these weighty questions is furnished in the verses which we are now to ponder. May each reader join with the writer in begging God to grant him an honest heart and a discerning eye to see whether or no they describe what has been actually made good in his own experience.

“Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin” (Heb 10:15-18). There are two parts to the assertion made in verse 14, first, “them that are sanctified.” Second, such are “perfected forever.” In the proof text which the apostle here gives, both of these are found, though in the inverse order. The “sanctified” are they in whose hearts God puts His laws. Those who are “perfected forever” are they whose sins God remembers no more.

“Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us” (Heb 10:15). “The foundation of the whole preceding discourse of the apostle, concerning the glory of the priesthood of Christ, and the efficacy of His sacrifice, was laid in the description of the new covenant, whereof He was the Mediator, which was confirmed and ratified by His sacrifice, as the old covenant was by the blood of bulls and goats (Heb 8:10-13). Having now abundantly proved and demonstrated what he designed concerning them both, His priesthood and His sacrifice, he gives us a confirmation of the whole, from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, in the description of that covenant which he had given before. And because the crisis to which he had brought his argument and disputation was that the Lord Christ, by reasons of the dignity of His person and office, with the everlasting efficacy of His sacrifice, was to offer Himself but once, which virtually includes all that he had before taught and declared, including in it an immediate demonstration of the insufficiency of all those sacrifices which were often repeated, and, consequently, their removal out of the church. He returns unto those words of the Holy Spirit for the proof of this particular also” (John Owen).

“Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us” (Heb 10:15). Three questions are suggested by these words. First, *unto what* is the Holy Spirit a “witness”? Second, what is the “also” to be

connected with—*who else* has witnessed to the same thing? Third, *how* does the Holy Spirit “witness”? Let us, then, seek answers to these queries.

Unto what is it that the Holy Spirit is here said to be a “witness”? If we go back no farther than the preceding verse, the answer would be, unto the fact that the one satisfaction which has been made by the Redeemer secures the eternal perfection of all who are sanctified. What follows in Hebrews 10:16-18 bears this out. Nevertheless, we are persuaded that it is necessary to look farther afield if we are to obtain the deeper and fuller answer. The satisfaction made by the Redeemer was the fulfilling of the divine “will,” the performing of that which had been stipulated in the Everlasting Covenant, and it is of *that* the whole context is speaking. The Holy Spirit was present when that wondrous compact was made between the Father and the Mediator, and, through Jeremiah, He made known a part of its glorious promises. The proof of this will become clearer as we advance.

Second, “Whereof the Holy Spirit *also* is a witness to us” looks back to Hebrews 10:9. There we have the testimony of the Son unto the eternal decree which God had made, and which He had come to execute. Here (in Hebrews 10:17-18), that of the Spirit to what the Father had promised the Mediator He would do unto His covenant people. Thus, we may here behold the three persons of the Godhead concurring. Yet, there is such a fullness to the words of Scripture that we do not think what has just been pointed out exhausts the scope of this word “also.” The leading thought of the context (and of the epistle) is the sufficiency, finality, and efficacy of the one sacrifice of Christ. *That* was “witnessed” to when the Mediator “*sat down* on the right hand of God” (Heb 10:12). And the Holy Spirit is *also* a witness to us of the same blessed fact by means of His work of sanctification in the hearts and minds of those for whom Christ died.

As to *how* the Spirit witnesses to us, the first method is by means of the written Word, specifically, by what He gave out by the prophet Jeremiah. The apostle had argued the *sufficiency* of Christ’s sacrifice from its singularity (Heb 10:12), in contrast from the many sacrifices of Judaism (Heb 10:11), and the *finality* of it from the fact that He was now “*sat down*,” indicating that His work of oblation was finished. To this the Hebrews might object that what the apostle had pointed out were but plausible reasonings, to which they could not acquiesce unless they were confirmed by the clear testimony of Scripture, and therefore, did he now quote once more from the memorable prophecy of Jeremiah 31, which clearly established the conclusions he had drawn. *How* the terms of that prophecy ratified his deductions will appear in the sequel.

“Whereof the Holy Spirit is also a witness *to us*.” The last two words need to be carefully observed in these days, when there are so many who (under the guise of “rightly dividing the Word”) would rob the children of God of a part of their needed bread—let the reader be much on his guard against such men. What the prophet Jeremiah gave out was for the people of God in *his* day. True, and hundreds of years later, the apostle did not hesitate to say that what Jeremiah wrote was equally “to us.” Note particularly, not only “for” us, but “to us”! The whole of God’s Word, from beginning to end, was written for the good of His people until the end of the world.

But further, the Holy Spirit is not only a Witness unto us of the Everlasting Covenant and of the efficacy of Christ’s offering through the written Word objectively, but also by His application of that Word to us subjectively. As said the apostle unto the Corinthians, “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables *of the heart*” (2Cor 3:3). A cause is known by its effects, a tree by its fruits. So the value and virtue of Christ’s sacrifice are witnessed to us by the Spirit through the powerful workings of His grace on our hearts. Every

grace implanted by the Spirit in the Christian's soul was purchased by the obedience and blood of Christ, and are living evidences of the worth of them.

"For after that he had said before" (Heb 10:15). The particular proof-text from Jeremiah, which the apostle was about to quote, is prefaced by these words of his own, as also is the clause "saith the LORD" in the next verse, the apostle's language. If it be asked, "*What* was it that was said 'before'?" the answer is, "This is the covenant that I will make with them." If it be inquired, "What is that which is said '*after*'?" even this, "I will put my laws into their hearts," etc. The particular point to be observed is that these divine mercies, of God's putting His laws into our hearts and forgiving our sins, are the immediate fruits of Christ's sacrifice, but more remotely, are the fulfillment of God's covenant-promises unto the Mediator.

The Everlasting Covenant which God made with Christ is *the ground* of all the good which He does to His people. Proof of this statement is supplied in many a Scripture, which is little pondered in these days. For example, in Exodus 6:5, we find JEHOVAH saying to Moses, "I have remembered my covenant," which is rendered as the reason for His bringing of Israel out of Egypt. Again, in Psalm 105:8, we are told, "He hath remembered his covenant forever." So in Ezekiel 16:60, God declares, "Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant." While in Luke 1, we read in the prophecy of Zacharias, "Blessed by the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hated us; to perform the mercy to our fathers, and *to remember his holy covenant*" (Luk 1:68-72).

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord" (Heb 10:16). The reference is to the "new covenant" of Jeremiah 31:31, so called, not because it was new *made*, for with respect to its original constitution, it was made with the elect in Christ their Head from all eternity (Ti 1:2). Nor as newly *revealed*, for it was made known in measure to the Old Testament saints. But it is so referred to in distinction from the former *administration* of it, which had waxen old and vanished away. It is also called "new" because of the "new heart," "new spirit," "new song" which it bestows, and because of new ordinances, baptism and the Lord's supper, which have displaced the old ones of circumcision and the passover supper. Further, it may suitably be designated as "new" because its vigour and efficacy are perpetual. It will never be antiquated or give place to another.

"I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them" (Heb 10:16). And who are the favoured ones in whom God works thus? Those whom He eternally set apart (Eph 1:4), those whom He gave to the Mediator (Joh 17:6), those for whom Christ died, "whom he did predestinate, those he also called" (Rom 8:30). These, and these only, are the ones with whom God deals so graciously. Others may, through religious instruction or personal effort, acquire a theoretical acquaintance with the laws of God, but only His elect have a vital knowledge of Him.

"I will put my laws into their hearts" (Heb 10:16). As we deem this expression of tremendous importance, we will endeavor to explain it according to the measure of light which God has granted us thereon. First, it will aid us to an understanding thereof if we consider the case of Adam. When he left the Creator's hands, the law of God was in his heart, or, in other words, he was endowed with all sorts of holy properties, instincts, and inclinations unto whatsoever God did command, and an antipathy against all He forbade. That was the "law" of the nature of his heart. The laws of God in Adam were Adam's original *nature*, or constitution of his spirit and soul, as it is the law of nature in beasts to love their young, and of birds to build their nests.

“When God created man at first, He gave him not an outward law written in letters or delivered in words, but an inward law put into his heart, and concreated with him, and wrought in the frame in his soul. And the whole substance of this law of God, the mass of it, was not merely dictates or beams of light in his understanding, directing what to do, but also real, lively, and spiritual dispositions, and inclinations in his will and affections, carrying him on to what was so directed, as to pray, love God, and fear Him, to seek His glory in a spiritual and holy manner. They were inward abilities suited to every duty” (Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680). The external command of Genesis 2:17 was designed as the *test* of his responsibility. What God had graciously placed within him was the equipment for the discharging of his responsibility.

Should it be inquired, “Where is the Scripture which teaches that God placed His laws in the heart of unfallen Adam?” it is sufficient to reply that Psalm 40:8 presents *Christ* as saying, “Thy law is within my heart,” and Romans 5:14 declares that Adam was “*the figure* of him that was to come.” But more, just as we may discover what grain the earth bears by the stubble which is found in the field, so we may ascertain what was in unfallen man by the ruins of what is yet to be seen in fallen and corrupt humanity. Romans 2:14 says the Gentiles “do *by nature* the things contained in the law.” Their very conscience tells them that immorality and murder are crimes. Thus, as an evidence that the law of God was originally the very “nature” of Adam, we have the shadow of it in the hearts of all men.

Alas, Adam did not continue as God created him. He fell, and the consequence was that his heart was corrupted, his very “nature” vitiated, so that the things he once loved, he now hated, and what he should have hated, he now served. Thus it is with all of his fallen descendants. Being “alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph 4:18), their carnal mind “is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). Instead of that holy “nature” or spiritual propensities and properties, man is now indwelt and dominated by *sin*. Hence, Romans 7:23 teaches us that sin is a “law” in our members, namely, “the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2). And thus it is that, in Jeremiah 17:1 (as the opposite of Hebrews 10:16), sin and corruption in the heart is said to be “*written* with a pen of iron, with the point of a diamond.”

Now, in regeneration and sanctification, the “image” of God, after which Adam was originally created, is again stamped upon the soul. See Colossians 3:10. The laws of God are written on the Christian’s heart, so that it becomes his very “nature” to serve, obey, please, honour, and glorify God. Because the law of God is renewed again in the soul, it is termed the “law of the mind” (Rom 7:23), for the mind is now regulated by the authority of God and turns as instinctively to Him as does the sunflower to the sun, and as the needle answers to the loadstone. Thus, the renewed heart “*delights* in the law of God” (Rom 7:22), and “serves the law of God” (Rom 7:25), it being its very “nature” so to do.

This wondrous change, which takes place in each of those for whom Christ died, is here attributed directly and absolutely to God, “*I will* put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds *will I* write them” (Heb 10:16). This is much more than a bare offer being made unto men, far beyond an ineffectual invitation which is to be received. It is an invincible and miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit, which thoroughly transforms the favoured subjects of it. Only He, who first made man, can remake him. None but the Almighty can repair the awful damage which the Fall wrought, counteract the dreadful power of sin, deliver the heart from the lusts of the flesh, the thralldom of the world, the bondage of Satan, and re-write upon it His holy law, so that He will be loved supremely and served sincerely and gladly.

“I will put my laws into their hearts” (Heb 10:16). This is in contrast from those who were under the old, or Siniatic, covenant. There, the “ten words” were engraven upon tables of stone, not only to intimate, thereby, their fixed and permanent authority, but also to figure forth the *hardness* of the hearts of the unregenerate people to whom they were given. But under the new covenant—that is, the *administration* of the Everlasting Covenant and the *application* of its grace to God’s elect in this Gospel dispensation—God gives efficacy to His holy law in the souls of His people. First, by subduing and largely removing the enmity of the natural heart against Him and His law, which subduing is figuratively spoken of as a circumcising of the heart (Deu 30:6), and a “taking away the stony heart” (Eze 36:26). Second, by implanting the principle of obedience to His law, which is figuratively referred to as the giving of “an heart of flesh” and the “writing of his laws upon the heart.”

Observe very particularly, dear reader, that God here says *not*, “I will put my promises,” but, “my *laws* in their hearts” (Heb 10:16). He will not relinquish His claims. Unreserved subjection to His will is what His justice requires and what His power secures. The grand triumph of grace is that “enmity” against the law (Rom 8:7) is displaced by “love” for the law (Psa 119:97). This is it which explains that word in Psalm 19:7, “The *law* of the LORD is perfect *converting* the soul.” It will probably surprise most of our readers (alas that it should do so) to be told that the Gospel never yet “converted” anybody. No, it is the law which the Spirit uses to convict of rebellion against God, and not until the soul penitently repudiates and forsakes his rebellion, is it ready for the message of peace which the Gospel brings.

The careful reader will notice there is a slight difference between the wording of Hebrews 8:10 and 10:16. In the former, it is, “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts,” but in the passage now before us, the two clauses are reversed. One reason for this is as follows—Hebrews 8:10 gives the divine *order of operation*. The mind is first informed, and then, the heart is reformed. Moreover, in Hebrews 8:10, it is a question of *knowing God*, and for that, the understanding must be enlightened before the affections can be drawn out to Him—none will love an unknown God. The Spirit begins by conveying to the regenerate an efficacious knowledge of the authority and excellency of God’s laws, giving them a powerful realization both of their binding force and spirituality, and then, He communicates a love for them, so that their hearts are heartily inclined toward them.

When the apostle defines the seat of the corruption of our nature, he places it in the “mind” and “heart.” “Walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their *mind*; having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of *their heart*.” Therefore does the divine work of sanctification, or the renovating of our natures, consist of the rectifying both of the mind and heart, and this, by furnishing them with the principles of faith, love, and adherence to God. Thus, *the grace* of the new covenant (purchased for His people by Christ) is as extensive to repair our “nature” as sin is (in its residence and power) to deprave us. God desireth truth “in the inward parts” (Psa 51:6)—not that outward conformity to His law may be dispensed with, for that is required too, but unless it proceed from an inward love for His law, the external actions cannot be accepted by Him.

“From these things, we may easily discern the nature of that grace which is contained in this first branch of the first promise of the covenant. And this is the effectual operation of His Spirit, in the renovation and saving illumination of our minds, whereby they are habitually made conformable unto the whole law of God, that is, the rule and the law of our obedience in the new covenant, and enabled unto all acts and duties that are required of us. And this is the first grace promised and communicated unto us by virtue of this covenant, as it was necessary that so it

should be. For, 1. The mind is the principal seat of all spiritual obedience. 2. The proper and peculiar actings of the mind in discerning, knowing, judging, must go before the actings of the will and affections, much more before all outward practices. 3. The depravation of the mind is such by blindness, darkness, vanity, and enmity, that nothing can inflame our souls, or make an entrance towards the reparation of our natures, but an internal, spiritual, saving operation of grace upon the mind” (John Owen).

In Hebrews 10:16, the heart is mentioned before the mind because the Spirit is here giving the divine standard for us to measure ourselves by. It is the test whereby we may ascertain whether or no we are among the “sanctified,” who have been perfected forever by the one offering of Christ. An intellectual knowledge of God’s laws is no proof of regeneration, but a genuine heart-acquaintance with them is. The questions I need to honestly face are such as these: Is there within me that which answers to the Law without me? That is, is it actually and truly my desire and determination to be regulated and controlled by the revealed will of God? Is it the deepest longing of my soul, and the chief business of my life, to please and serve God? Is it the great burden of my prayers that He will work in me “both to will and to do of *His* good pleasure” (Phi 2:13)? Is my deepest grief occasioned by my failure to be altogether holy in my wishes and words and ways? Experimentally, the more we love God, the more shall we discern the excellency of His law.

“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 10:17). Notice again the *order* of our passage. What is found here comes *after* verse 16, and not before. In the order of grace, justification (of which forgiveness is the negative side) precedes sanctification, but in the believer’s apprehension, it is otherwise. I can only ascertain God’s justifying of me by making sure I have within the fruits of His sanctifying me. I must study the effects to discover the cause. In like manner, God elects before He calls, or regenerates, but I have to make my *calling* “sure” in order to obtain evidence of my election. See 2 Peter 1:10. There are many who give no sign of God’s law being written in their hearts, who, nevertheless, claim to have had their sins forgiven by Him. But such are sadly deceived. Scripture entitles none to regard themselves as divinely pardoned save those who have been saved from self-will and self-pleasing.

“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 10:17). These words must not be understood to signify that the sins of God’s people have vanished from His *essential* mind, but rather that they will never be recalled by Him as He exercises His office as *Judge*. Our Substitute, having already discharged our liabilities and Justice having been fully satisfied, payment cannot be demanded twice over. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). This is the negative side of the believer’s justification, that his sins are *not* reckoned to his account. The positive aspect is that the perfect law-righteousness of Christ is imputed to him.

“Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin” (Heb 10:18). Here the apostle draws the irrefutable conclusion from the premises he had so fully established. Before pondering it, let us give a brief summary of these wonderful verses. First, the Everlasting Covenant is the foundation of all God’s gracious dealings with His elect. Second, that eternal compact between the Father and the Mediator is now being administered under the “new covenant.” Third, the design of this covenant is not to set apart a people unto external holiness only, but to so sanctify them that they should be holy in heart and life. Fourth, this sanctification of the elect is effected by the communication of effectual grace unto them for their conversion and obedience, which is here (under a figure) spoken of as God’s putting His laws into their hearts and writing them in their minds. Fifth, this practical sanctification is God’s *continuation* of

that work of grace which He begins in us at regeneration—our glorification is the *completing* of the same, for then, the last remains of sin will be removed from us, and we shall be perfectly conformed to the image of His Son.

“Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.” These words give the apostle’s application of the Scripture quoted from Jeremiah, which was made for the express purpose of demonstrating the perfection of Christ’s sacrifice. The conclusion is irresistible. The one offering of Christ has secured that the grace of the Everlasting Covenant *shall be* communicated unto all of those for whom He died, both in the sanctifying and justifying of their persons. Since, then, their sins are all gone from before the face of God, *no* further sacrifice is needed.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

1. David as a Youth

The life of David marked an important epoch in the unfolding of God’s purpose and plan of redemption. Here a little and there a little, God made known the grand goal toward which all His dealings tended. At sundry times and in divers manners, God spake in times past. In various ways, and by different means, was the way prepared for the coming of Christ. The work of redemption, with respect to its chief design, is carried on from the fall of man to the end of the world by successive acts and dispensations in different ages, but all forming part of one great whole, and all leading to the one appointed and glorious climax.

“God wrought many lesser salvations and deliverances for His church and people before Christ came. Those salvations were all but so many images and forerunners of the great salvation Christ was to work out when He should come. The church, during that space of time, enjoyed the light of divine revelation, or God’s Word. They had, in a degree, the light of the Gospel. But all those revelations were only so many forerunners and earnest of the great light which He should bring, who came to be “the Light of the world” (Joh 8:12). That whole space of time was, as it were, the time of night, wherein the church of God was not indeed wholly without light, but it was like the light of the moon and stars, that we have in the night—a dim light in comparison with the light of the sun. The church, all that time, was a minor. See Galatians 4:1-3 (Jonathan Edwards, (1703-1758).

We shall not here attempt to summarize the divine promises and pledges which were given during the earlier ages of human history, nor the shadows and symbols which God then employed as the prefigurations of that which was to come. To do so would require us to review the whole of the Pentateuch. Most of our readers are more or less familiar with the early history of the Israelitish nation, and of what that history typically anticipated. Yet, comparatively few are aware of the marked advance that was made in the unfolding of God’s counsels of grace in the days of David. A wonderful flood of light was then shed from heaven on things which were yet to come, and many new privileges were then vouchsafed unto the Old Testament Church.

In the preceding ages, it had been made known that the Son of God was to become incarnate, for none but a divine person could bruise the Serpent's head (cf. Jude 1:9), and He was to do so by becoming the woman's "Seed" (Gen 3:15). To Abraham, God had made known that the Redeemer should (according to the flesh) descend from him. In the days of Moses and Aaron, much had been typically intimated concerning the Redeemer's priestly office and ministry. But now, it pleased God to announce that particular person in all the tribes of Israel from which Christ was to proceed, namely, David. Out of all the thousands of Abraham's descendants, a most honourable mark of distinction was placed upon the son of Jesse by anointing him to be king over His people. This was a notable step toward advancing the work of redemption. David was not only the ancestor of Christ, but in some respects, the most eminent personal type of Him in all the Old Testament.

"God's beginning of the kingdom of His church, in the house of David, was, as it were, a new establishing of the kingdom of Christ. The beginning of it in a state of such visibility as it thenceforward continued in. It was, as it were, God's planting the root, whence that branch of righteousness was afterwards to spring up, that was to be the everlasting King of His church. And therefore, this everlasting King is called the *branch from the stem of Jesse*. 'And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots' (Isa 11:1). 'Behold the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise up unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper' (Jer 23:5). So Christ, in the New Testament, is called '*the root and offspring of David*', (Rev 22:16) (*Work of Redemption* by Jonathan Edwards, 1757).

It is deserving of our closest attention, and calls for our deepest admiration, that each advance which was made in the unfolding of the counsels of divine grace occurred at those times when human reason would have least expected them. The first announcement of the divine incarnation was given, not while Adam and Eve remained in a state of innocency, but after they had rebelled against their Maker. The first open manifestation and adumbration of the Everlasting Covenant was made after all flesh had corrupted its way on earth, and the flood had almost decimated the human race. The first announcement, of the particular people from which the Messiah would spring, was published after the general revolt of men at the tower of Babel. While the wondrous revelation, found in the last four books of the Pentateuch, was made, not in the days of Joseph, but after the whole nation of Israel had apostatized (see Heb 10:5-9).

The principle to which attention has been directed in the above paragraph received further exemplification in God's call of David. One has but to read through the book of Judges to discover the terrible deterioration which succeeded the death of Joshua. For upwards of five centuries, a general state of lawlessness prevailed. "In those days there was no king in Israel: *every* man did that which was right in his *own* eyes" (Jdg 21:25). Following this was Israel's demand for a king, and that, that they might "be *like* all the nations" (1Sa 8:20). Therefore did JEHOVAH declare, "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath" (Hos 13:11). He too was an apostate, and his history ends by his consulting a witch (1Sa 28), and perishing on the battlefield (1Sa 31).

Such is the dark background upon which the ineffable glory of God's sovereign grace now shone forth. Such is the historical setting of the life of him we are about to consider. The more carefully this be pondered, the more shall we appreciate the marvelous interposition of divine mercy at a time when the prospects of Israel seemed well nigh hopeless. But man's extremity is always God's opportunity. Even at that dark hour, God had ready the instrument of deliverance, "a man after his own heart" (1Sa 13:14). But who he was, and where he was located, none but JEHOVAH knew. Even Samuel the prophet had to be given a special divine revelation in order to

identify him. And this brings us to that portion of Scripture which introduces to us, David as a youth.

“And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons (1Sa 16:1). This is the sequel to what is recorded in 1 Samuel 16:10-12. Saul had despised JEHOVAH, and now he was rejected by Him (1Sa 15:23). True, he continued to occupy the throne for some little time, nevertheless, Saul was no longer owned of God. An important principle is here illustrated, which only the truly Spirit-taught can appreciate. A person, an institution, a corporate company is often rejected by God secretly, a while before this solemn fact is evidenced outwardly. Judaism was abandoned by the Lord immediately before the cross (Mat 23:38), yet the temple stood until A.D. 70!

God had provided Him a king among the sons of Jesse the Bethlehemite, and, as Micah 5:2 informs us, Bethlehem Ephratah was “little among the thousands of Judah.” Ah, “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are” (1Co 1:27-28). And why? “That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1Co 1:29). God is jealous of His own honour, and therefore is He pleased to select the most unlikely and unpromising instruments to execute His pleasure (as the unlettered fishermen of Galilee to be the first heralds of the Cross), that it may the more plainly appear the power is His alone.

The principle which we have just named received further illustration in the particular son of Jesse which was the one chosen of God. When Jesse and his sons stood before Samuel, it is said of the prophet that “He looked on Eliab and said, Surely the LORD’S anointed is before him.” (1Sa 16:6). But the prophet was mistaken. And what was wrong with Eliab? The next verse tells us, “But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1Sa 16:7). Ah, my reader, this is solemn and searching. It is at your *heart* the Holy One looks! What does He see in you?—a heart that has been purified by faith (Act 15:9), a heart that loves Him supremely (Deu 6:5), or a heart that is still “desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9)?

One by one, the seven sons of Jesse passed in review before the prophet’s eye, but the “man after God’s own heart” was not among their number. The sons of Jesse had been called to the sacrifice (1Sa 16:5), and, apparently, the youngest was deemed too insignificant by his father to be noticed on this occasion. But, “The counsel of the LORD that *shall* stand” (Pro 19:21), so inquiry and then request is made that the despised one should be sent for. “And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he” (1Sa 16:12). Most blessed is it to compare these words with what is said of our Lord in Song of Solomon 5:10, 16, “my beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousands...His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely.”

The principle of divine election is designed for the humbling of man’s proud heart. Very striking and solemn is it to see that, all through, God ignored that in which the flesh glories. Isaac, and not Ishmael (Abraham’s first born), was the one selected by God. Jacob, and not Esau, was the object of His eternal love. The Israelites, and not the Egyptians, the Babylonians, or the Greeks, was the nation chosen to shadow forth this blessed truth of God’s sovereign foreordination. So here, the eldest sons of Jesse were all “rejected” by JEHOVAH, and David, the youngest, was the one of God’s appointing. It should be observed too that David was the *eighth*

son, and all through Scripture that numeral is connected with *a new beginning*. Suitable then (and ordained by divine providence) was it that he should be the one to mark a fresh and outstanding epoch in the history of the favoured nation.

The elect of God are *made manifest* in time by the miracle of regeneration being wrought within them. This it is which has always *distinguished* the children of God from the children of the devil. Divine calling, or the new birth, is what *identifies* the high favourites of heaven. Thus, it is written, “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called” (Rom 8:30)—called out of darkness into His marvelous light (1Pe 2:9). This miracle of regeneration, which is the birth-mark of God’s elect, consists of a complete *change of heart*, a renewing of it, so that God becomes the supreme object of its delight, the pleasing of Him its predominant desire and purpose, and love for His people its characteristic note. God’s *chosen* are transformed into the *choice* ones of the earth, for the members of Christ’s mystical body are predestinated to be “conformed to the image” of their glorious Head, and thus do they, in their measure, in this life, “show forth” His praises.

Beautiful is it to trace the fruits or effects of regeneration which were visible in David at an early age. At the time Samuel was sent to anoint him king, he was but a youth, but even then, he evidenced, most unmistakably, the transforming power of divine grace. “And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, *behold*, he *keepeth the sheep*” (1Sa 16:11). Thus, the first sight we are given of David in God’s Word presents him as one who had a heart (a shepherd’s care) for those who symbolized the people of God. “Just as before, when the strength of God’s people were being wasted under Pharaoh, Moses, their deliverer, was hidden as a shepherd in a wilderness. So, when Israel was again found in circumstances of deeper, though less ostensible, peril, we again find the hope of Israel concealed in the unknown shepherd of an humble flock” (*David* by Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899).

An incident is recorded of the shepherd-life of David that plainly denoted his character and forecast his future. Speaking to Saul, ere he went forth to meet Goliath, he said, “Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him” (1Sa 17:34-35). Observe two things. First, the loss of one poor lamb was the occasion of David’s daring. How many a shepherd would have considered *that* a thing far too trifling to warrant the endangering of his own life! Ah, it was love to that lamb and faithfulness to his charge which moved him to act. Second, but how could a youth triumph over a lion and a bear? Through faith in the living God! He trusted in JEHOVAH, and prevailed. Genuine faith in God is ever an infallible mark of His elect (Ti 1:1).

There is at least one other passage which sheds light on the spiritual condition of David at this early stage of his life, though only they who are accustomed to weigh each word separately are likely to perceive it. “LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions: How he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. Lo, we heard of it *at Ephratah*: we found it in the fields of the wood” (Psa 132:1-6). A careful reading of the whole Psalm reveals to us the interests of the youthful David’s heart. There, amid the pastures of Bethlehem Ephratah, he was deeply concerned for JEHOVAH’S glory.

In closing, let us note how conspicuous was the *shepherd* character of David in his early days. Anticipating for a moment that which belongs to a later consideration, let us thoughtfully observe how that, after David had rendered a useful service to king Saul, it is recorded that, “David went

and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem" (1Sa 17:15). From the attractions (or distractions) of the court, he returned *to the fold*—the influences of an exalted position had not spoiled him for humble service! Is there not a word here for the pastor's heart? The evangelistic field, or the Bible-conference platform, may furnish tempting allurements, but your duty is to the "sheep" over the which the good Shepherd has placed you. Take heed to the ministry you have received of the Lord, that you fulfill it.

Fellow-servant of God, your sphere may be an humble and inconspicuous one. The flock to which God has called you to minister may be a small one. But, faithfulness to your trust is what is required of you. There may be an Eliab ready to taunt you, and speak contemptuously of "those *few* sheep in the wilderness" (1Sa 17:28), as there was for David to encounter, but regard not their sneers. It is written, "His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Mat 25:21).

As David was faithful to his trust in the humble sphere in which God first placed him, so he was rewarded by being called to fill a more important position, in which, there too, he honourably acquitted himself. "He chose David also for his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: from following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob, his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to *the integrity of his heart*; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hand" (Psa 78:70-72).

THE CLAIMS OF GOD

Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed" (1Sa 12:24-25). These words were uttered by God's servant to Israel at an important crisis in their national history. Dissatisfied with the divine theocracy, they wished to be like the heathen and have a human king to be their head and leader. The Lord suffered them to have their wish gratified, but pressed upon them the wickedness of it. Then, His servant faithfully presented to them the certain issues of two courses of conduct—if they feared and served the Lord, He would prosper them. If they rebelled against Him, His hand would smite them (1Sa 12:14-15; 24-25).

In our text, we find Samuel setting before Israel the requirements of God from them. They were to fear and serve Him. In it, he reminds them of the wondrous mercies which had been shown them, and the obligation which these imposed. He bids them consider the great things which God had done for them. In 1 Samuel 12:7, he called upon them to "stand still" while he reasoned with them before the Lord of His "benefits" (margin) unto them. God had brought them out of the house of bondage (1Sa 12:8). He had made them to dwell in the favoured land of Canaan. When they had departed from Him and He sorely chastened them, then, they cried unto Him, confessed their sin, and He graciously delivered them from their enemies (1Sa 12:9-11). What then ought to be their response? Fear and serve Him.

“Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for *our* learning” (Rom 15:4). The temporal deliverances, which JEHOVAH wrought of old for Israel, shadowed forth the spiritual deliverances which Christ has secured for His people, and which the Holy Spirit applies to them experimentally. Their emancipation from Egypt figured our redemption from the bondage of sin, “Redeemed from...your vain conversation” or “manner of living” (1Pe 1:18). Christ died not only to save His people from Hell, but also to “deliver us from this *present* evil world” (Gal 1:4). Such inestimable blessings carry with them immense obligations. The claims of God upon His people are infinitely greater than those He has upon the wicked. And naught but divine grace can enable us to answer our obligations and meet His claims. What these are we shall now consider.

1. “*Fear the Lord.*” Of the unregenerate, it is said, “There is *no* fear of God before their eyes” (Rom 3:18). They have no respect for His authority, no concern for His glory, no love for His law. But concerning the righteous, we are told, “Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him” (Ecc 8:12). And why? Because “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil” (Pro 8:13), and “By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil” (Pro 16:6). Thus, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Pro 9:10), for without it, man is a consummate fool, on a lower level than the beasts which perish, for “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib” (Isa 1:3), but the wicked own not the voice of their Maker.

To “fear the Lord” is for the heart to be deeply impressed by His awful majesty, His immeasurable power, His ineffable holiness. It is to stand in reverent awe of Him. If the seraphim veil their faces in His presence (Isa 6:2), how much more ought worms of the earth bow in the dust before Him! To fear the Lord is to tremble at the very thought of knowingly opposing Him. It is to have the utmost respect for every revelation of His imperial will. When the father of Isaac obeyed the divine command to lay his beloved son on the altar of sacrifice, the Lord said, “Now I know that thou *fearest* God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me” (Gen 22:12). And this godly fear which is required from *us* (compare Act 9:31; 2Co 7:1; 1Pe 1:17) is not to be spasmodic and occasional, but as Proverbs 23:17 says, “Be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long.” Then, what cause have we to cry daily, “Unite my heart *to* fear thy name” (Psa 86:11).

Observe well the opening word of our text, “*Only* fear the LORD.” If the fear of the Lord is truly upon our hearts, *everything* else will (so to speak) take care of itself. If the fear of the Lord be upon us, pride will be abased, self-will and self-seeking will be subdued, and the evil whisperings of Satan will have no power over us. If the fear of the Lord be upon us, we shall be delivered from the fear of man, as we shall be quite indifferent whether or not we please him. If the fear of the Lord be upon us, doubtings and questionings of our salvation will be at an end, “In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence; and his children shall have a place of refuge” (Pro 14:26). “The secret of the LORD is with them that *fear him*; and he will show *them* his covenant” (Psa 25:14).

2. “*And serve him.*” Yes, *Him*, not self, not sin, not our fellows. God is the only one who has any real claims upon us, for He is our Creator, our Owner, our Lord. Him, we are commanded, under pain of everlasting woe, to *serve*. Not simply believe in Him, pray to Him, but be in complete subjection to Him. His will is to be our law, His commands the regulator of our ways. “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him *only* shalt thou serve” (Mat 4:10). We cannot “serve” two masters, as Christ affirmed, “For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other” (Mat 6:24). Note well that this call to “serve” the Lord comes *after* “fear” Him. We cannot truly serve Him unless His fear be upon us. Any so-

called service which flows not from a reverent awe of God is only the restless energy of the flesh putting itself into action.

“Serve Him *in truth*.” What is meant by this? At least three things. First, the Lord is to be served in *sincerity*, not in pretence. A form of godliness, no matter how precise and punctilious, is of no avail in His sight if the power of it be lacking. Second, the Lord requires to be served in *reality*, not in mere lip profession. “Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but *in deed and in truth*” (1Jo 3:18). Nothing is more vain than an empty formality. Third, in a *scriptural* way. “Thy word is truth” (Joh 17:17). To serve the Lord “in truth” is the opposite of following the fashions of the day, or the inclinations of our hearts. It is an obedient walk regulated by the divine precepts.

“With all your heart.” Ah, it is at the heart that God looks, and not merely at the outward appearance, as does man. His great requirement is, “My son, give me thine heart” (Pro 23:26). We do not find Him until we search for Him with all our heart (Jer 29:13). He bids us, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart” (Pro 3:5). He commands us to love Him with all the heart (Mat 22:37). So He demands that we shall “serve him with a perfect heart” (1Ch 28:9). Of Rehoboam, it is said, “And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD” (2Ch 12:14). To serve the Lord with all the heart means with undivided affections. It is the opposite of a “double heart” (1Ch 12:33). Of old, God complained against Israel, “Their heart is divided” (Hos 10:2). God requires the *throne* of our hearts that He may reign over us, that we may be out and out for Him, with no reserve, nothing kept back. “Whoever he be of you that forsaketh not *all* that he hath, he can not be my disciple” (Luk 14:33).

3. “*For consider how great things he hath done for you.*” This is the motive. We are to fear and serve Him in truth with all our hearts, not that we may gain the reputation of being very spiritual people, not in order to escape the everlasting burnings, but because of what the Lord “has done” for us. Let the realization of that be the mainspring of action. Let the remembrance *of that* move you to fear and serve Him wholeheartedly. That is the only motive which God will accept. A daily life lived to please Him out of gratitude for what He has done for you. “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, *by the mercies of God*, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Rom 12:1). God’s claims upon us are founded upon what He has done for us. Our obligations are measured by the blessings which we have received from Him.

“Consider what great things He hath done for *You*.” You, an insignificant worm of the earth (Isa 41:14), a mere “grasshopper” (Isa 40:22). You, a vile sinner, with “*no good*” in you by nature (Rom 7:18). You, who merit nothing at His hands but untempered judgment. Yet, instead of casting you into Hell years ago, *what* has He done for you? Preserved your worthless life these many years, showered His daily blessings upon you, and supplied your every need. And, if truly saved, has delivered you from the wrath to come, given you a place in His family nearer to Himself than that which the holy angels will occupy, and made you an heir of everlasting glory. Oh, that our hearts may be so melted by the realization of His amazing grace, that the love of Christ shall “constrain” us to fear and serve Him in truth with all our hearts.

“*For consider* what great things He hath done for you.” Turn them over and over in your mind, dwell on them frequently. As the man of the world is constantly scheming how to make money, or how to have “a good time”—his whole heart being wrapped up in such things—so do you make it your chief business to be occupied with the wonders of God. “*Set your affection on things above.*” Many a person on the beach shivers and is miserable while he is only paddling in the waters. Not till he plunges right in does he really enjoy himself. So it is in connection with the things of God. So long as they have a subordinate and secondary place in our thoughts and lives,

we do not really “delight” ourselves in the Lord. “Give thyself *wholly* to them” (1Ti 4:15) is a word which each Christian needs to lay to heart.

If you be a real Christian, *what* are the “great things” which the Lord has done for you? Set His heart upon you, loved you from all eternity (Jer 31:3), and written your name in the Lamb’s book of life (Luk 10:20). Spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up to the cross, to atone for your sins (Rom 8:32). Sent the Holy Spirit into your heart to regenerate and raise you up into newness of life (Gal 4:6). Given you an unfailing Lamp unto your feet and Light unto your path (Psa 119:105), to direct your steps through this dark world (2Pe 1:19). Granted you, even now, access to His throne of grace, that there you may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Heb 4:16). Blest you with His abiding Presence (as He did Daniel in the lions’ den), promising never to leave nor forsake you (Heb 13:5). Assured you that, in a soon-coming day, you shall be done with sin forever (Heb 9:28), be made like Christ (1Jo 3:2), and spend eternity with Him (1Th 4:17), beholding His glory.

Ah, my brethren and sisters, the things mentioned above are indeed “great.” Then, surely we *ought* to “consider” them day and night. We should consider them *prayerfully*, begging God to make them more real and precious to our hearts, that we may so “consider” them as to be transformed by them (2Co 3:18), that they may order all the details of our lives to His glory. The more they *are* so “considered,” the easier and the more blessed will it be *to* “fear and serve him in truth.” Then shall we find that *all* Wisdom’s ways are “pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Pro 3:17). For “*His* commandments are not grievous” (1Jo 5:3). They are so to the unregenerate, but not to those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

But what if we do not fear and serve the Lord in truth with all our hearts? That will prove that our profession is vain, that we are yet in our sins. “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1Jo 2:4). Make no mistake on this point, my reader. All around us are those who “profess that they know God, but in works they deny him,” and such are said to be “*abominable*” (Ti 1:16). And what shall be their end? This, “But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be *consumed*” (1Sa 12:25). “If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven” (Heb 12:25).

May the Lord deign to add His blessing and to Him shall be all the praise.

UNREWARDED LABOUR

1 Corinthians 3:15

There are few verses in the New Testament which have been more misunderstood and misapplied (fatally so, in many cases, we fear), than the above. In circles where “dispensational truth” has been made prominent, the popular concept which obtains is that this passage teaches there is a class of Christians who have completely forfeited their “reward,” yet, who will enter heaven. That these have no “good works” to their credit, but are, nevertheless, truly saved. This

evil doctrine has been widely propagated the last two generations, and few indeed have been the voices raised in protest. It has been advocated by so many “Bible teachers” with a reputation for orthodoxy, and has met with such a general acceptance, that for any one now to challenge it, is to court the being branded as a heretic. Notwithstanding, the servant of God must not fear the frowns of men, but proclaim that which he is assured makes most for the glory of God and the good of His people.

To affirm that 1 Corinthians 3:15 signifies there is a class of God’s children whose works shall all be burned up, is to fly in the face of the Analogy of Faith. To insist this passage means that the lives of some who have been regenerated, who are indwelt by the Spirit, and led of Him (Rom 8:14), are, nevertheless, destitute of all good works, is to blaspheme the One who performed a miracle of grace in the hearts of His own, and comes perilously nigh to committing the unpardonable sin against Him who makes the bodies of His people His temples. We are far from saying that those who have advanced this dangerous delusion were *conscious* of the dreadful implications thereof, nevertheless, *that* was the vile motive of the great Enemy, who is the real author of it. And it behooves the watchmen on Zion’s walls to sound the alarm and expose the designs of our foe.

Not only is the popular interpretation of 1 Corinthians 3:15 highly insulting to each person of the Godhead, but it is flatly contradicted by a number of plain passages in Holy Writ. Ephesians 2:10 declares that those who are saved by grace through faith are “His workmanship created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*, which God hath before ordained that *we should* [not ‘ought to’] walk in them.” What could be plainer than that? Those who are *not* walking in “good works” have never been born again. In Philippians 1:6, the Christian is assured that, “He which hath begun a good work in you *will finish* it.” Whom God justifies, He sanctifies. Where He turns a heart toward Himself, He directs its possessor into the paths of righteousness. “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith *without* works is dead” (Jam 2:20). Verily, there is nothing new under the sun. Even in James’ days, there were men who imagined that they possessed a saving faith but who were *without* those works of obedience which are its inseparable and necessary evidence.

Is it not evident then, that 1 Corinthians 3:15 does not signify what is commonly supposed? God’s holy Word does not contradict itself. It does not affirm in one passage that without holiness “no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14), and in another that a man may live an unholy life and yet be taken to heaven. Christ did not insist that, “except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:20), and then move His servant Paul to announce that some, whose daily conduct fell far below that of the Pharisees, were, nevertheless, saved. No, the teaching of Scripture is uniform and harmonious, and if we are unable to see the consistency of one passage with another, the fault lies in us—prejudice or carnality is at work. We may know for certain that if our interpretation of any verse clashes with the plain meaning of another, it is erroneous. O how much we need to “*prove* all things, hold fast that which is good” (1Th 5:21).

If, then, 1 Corinthians 3:15 does *not* teach what so many have sought to bring out of it, what is its real signification? The answer is not far to obtain, if due attention be paid to its context. Yet, let it be pointed out that, care must be taken in order to be sure we go back far enough so as to ascertain the scope of the whole passage. It is at *this* point so many expositors have erred. It is almost impossible to understand the subject which is here under discussion, if we begin only at verse 11—which is the prevailing habit these days. If we are to perceive aright the force of verses 11 to 15, attention must be paid to verses 1 to 10, so as to discover *what* is the subject which the apostle is here treating of.

At the beginning of this third chapter, the apostle returns to his charge of schisms and contentions among the Corinthians (1Co 1:11), which was the principal occasion of his writing this epistle. He reproves them for their divisions (sad manifestation of their carnality!), which were about their ministers, and points out that there was nothing in them in which to glory. Some of them were calling themselves by the name of Paul, for which reason (and for none other) he thanked God he had baptized so few of them (1Co 1:14-16). Others were exalting Apollos as the head of their party, which shows how fleshly they were (1Co 3:4). In view of this, the apostle faithfully and humbly reminded them that both himself and Apollos were “*but* ministers (servants) by whom ye believed” (1Co 3:5). He had merely “planted,” and Apollos had simply “watered,” but God was the One who gave the “increase” (1Co 3:6). Then the conclusion is drawn—“Neither is he that planteth *any thing*, neither he that watereth” unless God deigned to employ them and bless their labours (1Co 3:7). What madness was it, then, to glory in the mere instrument!

Thus, it is clear, beyond a doubt, that the opening verses of 1 Corinthians 3 treat of *the official ministry* of the public servants of God. The *same* theme is continued in the verses which immediately follow. This is clear from, “Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one” (1Co 3:8). Though there is diversity in the nature of the work of God’s servants (one evangelistic, one teaching, etc.), yet their commission is from the same Master, their motive, to glorify the same God, their aim, the good of souls. Thus, as fellow-labourers, it was sinful folly to array them one against another. It is unfortunate that the next words of verse 8 have been translated, “and every man shall receive his own reward.” Literally, the Greek signifies, “but *each* [of Christ’s appointed servants] his own reward shall receive”—and so the word “man” should be “one” throughout the whole passage. As Christ has distributed different gifts to His ministers, and allotted unto them a diversity of ministry, so they are rewarded accordingly.

“For God’s *we* are—fellow workers; God’s husbandry, God’s building *ye* are” (1Co 3:9, Bagster Interlinear). True ministers of the Gospel are labourers (not loiterers) in the Lord’s vineyard, *fellow-labourers*, whether evangelists, pastors, or teachers. God’s “husbandry” are the elect. He it is who breaks up the fallow ground of their hearts, casts in the seed of grace, makes the ground good, and causes it to bring forth fruit. “God’s building,” too—believers in a church-state are the house in which God dwells (1Co 3:16). Note carefully that, this second metaphor or figure, is carried forward into verse 12, and helps to interpret that verse.

“According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every *one* take heed how he buildeth thereupon” (1Co 3:10). In the opening clause, the apostle ascribes to the grace of God all his ministerial gifts and the success granted. In what follows, he reminds the Corinthians that he was the one who had first preached the Gospel to them, being the initial instrument of their conversion. The “foundation,” which *he* had *ministerially* laid, was what he had taught them concerning the person and work of Christ (1Co 2:2). The “another,” who built thereon, was Apollos. Upon the final words of the verse, Charles Hodge (1797-1878) rightly said, “In the whole context, he is speaking of ministers, and therefore, this clause must be considered as a warning to them. They are to take heed *how*, i.e., with what materials, they carried on the building of this spiritual temple.”

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1Co 3:11). Here again, there is nothing whatever in the Greek to justify the word “man.” It is “any *one*,” that is, any “builder,” or servant of God—any one who edifies. There is no other “foundation” to ministerially lay, than the person and work of Jesus Christ. Observe particularly how that in

Ephesians 2:20, the New Testament saints are said to be “built upon *the foundation* of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner,” that is, are doctrinally built upon the *ministry* of the apostles and prophets.

1 Corinthians 3:12—again, the proper rendering is “any one.” In the light of the context, this must refer to the preaching of those who present Christ as the only basis of the sinner’s hope. In Scripture, “gold” is an emblem of the divine glory, “silver” speaks of redemption, and “precious stones” are the scintillators of light. Those doctrines which magnify the character of God, which exemplify and amplify the redemption of Christ, and which are (under the Spirit) channels of illumination to the hearer, is what is here in view. Such doctrines are of intrinsic worth and importance, are pure and precious to the regenerated, and are durable and lasting in their effects. Contrariwise, “wood, hay, stubble,” point to empty and useless ministry which edifies not.

1 Cor 3:13—The doctrine or ministry of each preacher will, sooner or later, be made manifest, both to himself and his hearers. It needs no great length of time for a discerning mind to discover whether or not the blessing of God rests upon the preacher’s labours, whether sinners are really being turned from Satan to God, and from sin to holiness. Whether saints are becoming more unworldly, more self-denying, more Christ-like. True, there is much seeming goodness, which is “as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away” (Hos 6:4), but “the fire shall try every one’s work.” There is nothing in the passage which requires us to project this into the distant future—that blunts its *present* searching point. The “day and the fire” most probably has reference to a day of testing and tribulation, being parallel with Matthew 24:21. Faith must be tested (in *this* life). Grace must be put to the proof. Even a mild storm of persecution is usually enough to divide the sheep from the goats, and serves to identify the truly regenerated. See 1 Corinthians 11:19.

1 Corinthians 3:14—If any minister’s doctrine will bear the test of daylight (Holy Writ), and abide the trial of opposition, if it has been truly built upon the one foundation of the person and offices of Christ, that is, if it be consistent therewith, he shall “receive a reward” now, by seeing the sheep of his flock growing in grace and walking in the truth (Phi 4:1; 3Jo 1:4), and also in the future, when Christ Himself shall command His faithful servants (Mat 25:21).

1 Corinthians 3:15—If any minister’s preaching fail to stand the test of Scripture and the providential trials of God, then shall its worthlessness be manifested to those with spiritual discernment, and be repudiated by Christ. The reference here is to the figure of the “wood, hay, stubble,” which must *not* be understood of fundamental error, for it is built *upon* the “foundation” of Jesus Christ (verse 12). It is the *materials* the preacher uses. It is the stooping unto “enticing words of man’s wisdom” (oratorical effect), relying upon anecdotes or jokes to move the emotions, instead of the sword of the Spirit, largely supplanting the “foolishness of preaching” by the esthetic charms of music, and resorting to worldly methods to attract a crowd, etc., which are here in view. “He shall suffer loss.” All his fleshly labours will produce *no* fruit for eternity! Because he was himself a regenerated man, fundamentally sound on the person of Christ, he shall be “saved,” yet “so as by fire,” i.e., with difficulty (1Pe 4:17, Jude 1:23).

To sum up, 1 Corinthians 3:5-15 does *not* treat of the rank and file of God’s people, but of His official and public servants. The “works” referred to have nothing to do with the details of our walk, but respect materials and methods used by saved ministers of the Gospel. This passage no more teaches that it is possible for a man to go to heaven, than it holds out any hope that a “Modernist,” who teaches fundamental error, is a regenerated man. That the popular interpretation of the passage is so widely accepted only goes to show the *low* state of spirituality which now prevails. To give people the impression that, no matter how spiritually fruitless their

lives may be, yet, if they are “resting on the finished work of Christ,” they are sure of heaven, is a lie of the devil, and only eternity will show how many have been fatally deceived by it. Make no mistake, my reader, without holiness “no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). The only satisfactory evidence that you *are* truly resting in Christ, is a daily walk which is pleasing to Him.

THE NARROW WAY

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Mat 7:13-14). The second half of Matthew 7 forms the *applicatory* part of that most important discourse of our Lord’s, known as “the Sermon on the Mount.” One leading design of that Sermon was to show the spiritual nature and wide extent of that obedience which characterizes the true subjects of Christ’s kingdom, and which obedience is absolutely necessary for the enjoyment of that ultimate state of blessedness which divine grace has provided for them. As the Prophet of God, Christ made known that the righteousness which obtains in *His* kingdom greatly exceeds the “righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees.”

Now, the Jews imagined that they *were* all of them the subjects of the Messiah’s kingdom—that by virtue of their descent from Abraham, they were the rightful heirs of it—that the “righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees” (that system of religious and moral duty taught by them) met all the requirements of God’s law. But this delusion the Lord Jesus here exposed. Fleshly descent from Abraham could not give title unto a spiritual kingdom. That which was merely natural was no qualification for the supernatural realm. Only they were accounted the true children of Abraham who had his faith (Rom 4:16), who did his works (Joh 8:39), and who were united to Christ (Gal 3:29).

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord delineated the inward state of these who belonged to His spiritual kingdom (Mat 5:4-11), described the outward conduct by which they might be identified (Mat 5:13-16), expounded the personal righteousness which God’s justice demanded (Mat 5:17-28), and defined that utter repudiation of sin which He required from His people (Mat 5:29-30). So high are the demands of the thrice holy One, so uncompromising are the requirements of His ineffable character, that none can dwell with Him eternally who do not, in time, loathe, resist, and turn from all that is repulsive to His pure eye. Nothing short of the complete denying of self, the abandoning of the dearest idol, the forsaking of the most cherished sinful course—figuratively represented under the cutting off of a right hand and the plucking out of a right eye—is what He claims from every one who would have communion with Himself.

Such plain and pointed declarations of Christ must have seemed “hard sayings” to the multitudes who listened to Him. Such piercing and flesh-withering demands would probably cause many of His Jewish hearers to think within themselves, “Who then can be saved? This is indeed a strait gate and a narrow way.” Anticipating their secret objections, the Lord plainly declared that the gate unto salvation *is* “strait” and the way which leadeth unto life *is* “narrow.”

Yet, He went on to point out, it is your wisdom, your interest, your duty *to* enter that “gate” and walk that “way.” He acknowledged and faithfully warned them that there was a “wide gate” soliciting their entrance, and a “broad road” inviting them to walk therein, but *that* gate leads to perdition, *that* road ends in Hell.

The “strait gate” is the only gate to “life,” the “narrow way” is the *only* one which conducts to heaven. Few indeed find it. Few have the least inclination for it. But that very fact ought only to provide an additional incentive to *my* giving all diligence to enter therein. In the verses which are now to be before us, Christ defined and described the *Way of Salvation*, though we (sorrowfully) admit that modern evangelists (?) rarely expound it. What we shall now endeavor to set forth is very different from what most have been taught, but you reject it at your peril. We repeat, that in the passage we are about to consider, He who was the Truth incarnate made known the *only* way of escaping perdition and securing heaven, namely, by entering the “strait gate” and treading the “narrow way.”

I. The Strait Gate

The Greek word for “strait” signifies restrained or “narrow” and is so rendered in the Revised Version. Now a “gate” serves two purposes—it lets in and it shuts out. All who enter this narrow gate gain admittance to that “way” which “leadeth unto life.” But all who enter not by this narrow gate are eternally barred from God’s presence. The second use of this gate is solemnly illustrated at the close of the parable of the virgins. There, our Lord pictures the foolish ones as being *without* the necessary “oil” (the work of the Spirit in the heart), and while they went to buy it, the Bridegroom came, and “the door was *shut*” (Mat 25:10). And though they then besought Him to open it to them, He answered, “I know you not.”

1. What is denoted by this figure of the “narrow gate”? We believe the reference is to the searching and solemn *teaching* of Him who is Truth incarnate. It is only as the heart bows to the righteousness of God’s claims and demands upon us, as set forth by His Son, that any soul can enter that path which alone leads to Him. While the heart is rebellious against Him, there can be no approach to Him, for “can two walk together *except* they be agreed”? It is true, blessedly and gloriously true, that Christ Himself is “the Door” (Joh 10:9), and He is so in a threefold way, according to the three principal functions of His mediatorial office. He is “the Door” into God’s presence as the Prophet, the Priest, and the King.

Now, it is only as Christ is truly received as God’s authoritative Prophet, only as His holy teachings are really accepted by a contrite heart, that any one is prepared to savingly welcome Him as Priest. Christ is the “way” and “the truth” *before* He is the “life” (Joh 14:6), as He is “*first* King of righteousness, and *after that*, also King of peace” (Heb 7:2). In other words, His cleansing blood is only available for those who are willing to throw down the weapons of their warfare against God, and surrender themselves to His holy rule. The wicked must forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, if he is to be pardoned by God (Isa 55:7). And this is only another way of saying that Christ must be received as Prophet, before He is embraced as Priest.

2. Why is this gate a “narrow” one? For at least three reasons. First, because of *sin*. “The wicked shall be turned into Hell, all the nations that forget God” (Psa 9:17)—the gate of heaven is far too narrow to admit such characters. The New Testament plainly affirms the same fact, “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater,

hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them” (Eph 5:5-7). Second, because of *the Law*. There are two principal errors about the Law, and I know not which is the more dangerous and disastrous. That one can *earn* heaven by obeying it. That one may enter heaven *without* that personal and practical godliness which the Law requires. “Follow peace with all, and holiness, *without which* no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). Where there is not this personal conformity to the will of God, the strong hand of the Law will close the door of heaven. Third, because none can take *the world* along with him. This gate is far too “narrow” to admit those who love the world.

3. What is meant by “entering” this narrow gate? First, the acceptance of those teachings of truth, of duty, of happiness, which were unfolded by Christ. The honest and actual receiving into the heart of His holy, searching, flesh-withering instructions. Such acceptance is here figuratively represented as a person, with great difficulty, forcing his way through a circumscribed entrance. I say, “with great difficulty,” for Christ’s precepts and commandments are, to the last degree, unpalatable to an unrenewed heart, and cannot be willingly and gladly received without a rigid denial of self and relinquishment of sinful pleasures, pursuits, and interests. Christ has plainly warned us that it is impossible for a man to serve two masters. Self must be repudiated and Christ received as “the Lord” (Col 2:6), or He will not save us.

What is meant by “entering” this narrow gate? Second, a deliberate abandoning of the broad road, or the flesh-pleasing mode of life. Until this has been done, there is no salvation possible for any sinner. Christ Himself taught this plainly in Luke 15—the “prodigal” *must leave* the “far country” *before* he could journey to the Father’s house! The same pointed truth is taught again in James 4:8-10, “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”

Ah, my friend, to really and actually *enter* this “narrow gate” is no easy matter. For that reason, the Lord bade the people, “*Labour* not for the meat which perisheth, but *for* that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you” (Joh 6:27). Those words do not picture salvation as a thing of simple and easy attainment. Ponder also Christ’s emphatic exhortation in Luke 13:24, “*Strive to enter* in at the strait gate.” That He should utter *such* a word clearly implies the great idleness and sloth which characterizes nominal professors, as it also intimates there are formidable difficulties and obstacles to be overcome. Let it be carefully noted that the Greek word for “strive” (viz., “agonizomai”) in Luke 13:24 is the same one that is used in 1 Corinthians 9:25, “And every one that *striveth* for the mastery is temperate in all things.” And it is also rendered, “labouring fervently” in Colossians 4:12, and “fight” in 1 Timothy 6:12!

And *how* are we to “strive” so as to “enter” the narrow gate? The general answer is, “lawfully” (2Ti 2:5). But to particularize, we are to strive by prayer and supplication, diligently seeking deliverance from those things which would bar our entrance. We are to earnestly cry to Christ for help from those foes which are seeking to overcome us. We are to come constantly to the Throne of Grace, that we may there find grace to help us repudiate and turn away with loathing from everything which is abhorred by God, even though it involves our cutting off of a right hand and plucking out of a right eye, and grace to help us *do* those things which He has commanded. We must be “temperate in all things,” especially those things which the flesh craves and the world loves.

But *why* is such “striving” necessary? First, because Satan is striving to destroy thy soul. “Be sober, be *vigilant*; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1Pe 5:8), therefore, must be *resisted* “steadfast in the faith.” Second, because natural appetites are striving to destroy thee, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1Pe 2:11). Third, because the whole world is arrayed against thee, and if it cannot burn, it will seek to turn thee by alluring promises, Delilah-like guiles, fatal enticements. Unless you overcome the world, the world will overcome you to the eternal destruction of thy soul.

From what has been before us, we may plainly discover why it is that the vast majority of our fellow-men and women, yea, and of professing Christians also, *will fail to reach heaven*. It is because they prefer sin to holiness, indulging the lusts of the flesh to walking according to the Scriptures, self to Christ, the world to God. It is as the Lord Jesus declared, “Men loved darkness *rather than* light, because their deeds were evil” (Joh 3:19). Men refuse to deny self, abandon their idols, and submit to Christ *as Lord*, and without this, none can take the first step toward heaven!

II. The Narrow Way

Just as entering the “narrow gate” signifies the heart’s acceptance of Christ’s holy teaching, so to walk along the “narrow way” means for the heart and life to be *constantly regulated* thereby. Walking along the narrow way denotes a *steady perseverance* in faith and obedience to the Lord Jesus, overcoming all opposition, and rejecting every temptation to forsake the path of fidelity to Him. It is called the “narrow way” because all self-pleasing and self-seeking is *shut out*. In Genesis 18:19, it is called “the way”; in 1 Samuel 12:23, “the good and right way”; in Psalms 25:9, “his way”; in Proverbs 4:11, “the way of life”; in Isaiah 35:8, “the way of holiness”; in Jeremiah 6:16, “the good way”; in 2 Peter 2:2, “the way of truth”; and in 2 Peter 2:15, “the right way.”

The narrow way *must* be followed, no matter how much it may militate against my worldly interests. It is right here that the testing point is reached. It is much easier (unto the natural man) and far pleasanter to indulge the flesh and follow our worldly propensities. The broad road, where the flesh *is* allowed “liberty”—under the pretense of the Christian’s *not* “being under the law”—is easy, smooth, and attractive, but it ends in “destruction”! Though the “narrow way” leads to life, only FEW tread it. Multitudes make a profession and claim to be saved, but their lives give no evidence that they are “strangers and pilgrims” here, with their “treasure” *elsewhere*. They are afraid of being thought narrow and peculiar, strict and puritanic. Satan has deceived them. They imagine that they can get to heaven by an easier route than by denying self, taking up their cross daily, and *following* Christ!

There are multitudes of religionists who are attempting to *combine* the two “ways,” making the best of both worlds and serving two masters. They wish to gratify self in time and enjoy the happiness of heaven in eternity. Crowds of nominal Christians are deluding themselves into believing that they *can* do so, but they are terribly deceived. A profession which is not verified by *mortifying* the deeds of the body in the power of the Spirit (Rom 8:13) is vain. A faith which is not evidenced by complete submission to Christ is only the faith of demons. A love which does not *keep* Christ’s commandments is an imposition (Joh 14:23). A claim to being a Christian,

where there is no real yieldedness to the will of God, is daring presumption. The reason why so few will enter life is because the multitudes are not seeking it in the way of *God's* appointing. None seek it aright save those who pass through the narrow gate, and who, despite many discouragements and falls, continue to press forward along the narrow way.

Now notice, carefully, the very next thing which immediately follows our Lord's reference to the two ways in Matthew 7, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Mat 7:15). *Why* does this come in next? *Who* are the "false prophets" against which a serious soul needs to be on his guard? They are those who teach that heaven *may be* reached *without* treading the narrow way! They are those who loudly insist that eternal life may be obtained on much easier terms. They come in "sheep's clothing." They appear (to undiscerning souls) to exalt Christ, to emphasize His precious blood, to magnify God's grace. BUT, they do not insist upon repentance. They fail to tell their hearers that nothing but a broken heart which hates sin can truly believe in Christ. They declare not that a saving faith is a *living* one which purifies the heart (Act 15:9) and overcomes the world (1Jo 5:4).

These "false prophets" are known by their "fruits," the primary reference being to their "converts"—the fruits of their fleshly labours. Their "converts" are on the broad road, which is *not* the path of open wickedness and vice, but of a religion which pleases the flesh. It is that "way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Pro 14:12). Those who are on this broad road (this way which "seemeth right" to so many), have a head-knowledge of the truth, but they *walk not in it*. The "narrow way" is *bounded* by the commandments and precepts of Scripture. The broad road is that path which has *broken out beyond* the bounds of Scripture. Titus 2:12-13 supplies the test as to *which* "way" we are in, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, *denying* ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should *live* soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

Ere closing, let us anticipate and seek to remove an objection. Probably many of you are saying, "I thought *Christ* was the way to the Father (Joh 14:6). So He is, but *how*? First, in that He has removed every legal obstacle, and thereby opened a way to heaven for His people. Second, in that He has "left us an example that we should *follow* HIS steps." The mere opening of a door does not give me entrance into a house. I must tread the path leading to it, and mount the steps. Christ has, by His life of unreserved obedience to God, *shown us* the way which leads to heaven, "When he putteth forth his own sheep, HE goeth *before* them, and the sheep *follow* him" (Joh 10:4). Third, in that He is willing and ready to bestow grace and strength to walk therein.

Christ did not come here and die in order to make it *un-necessary* for *me* to please and obey God. No, indeed! "He died for all, *that* they which live should *not* henceforth live *unto themselves*, but unto Him which died for them" (2Co 5:15). "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might *deliver us from* this present evil world" (Gal 1:4). "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and *purify* unto himself a peculiar people, *zealous of* good works (Ti 2:14). Christ came here to "save his people *from* their sins" (Mat 1:21), and if you are not *now* delivered from the power of sin, from the deceptions of Satan, from the love of the world, and from the pleasing of self, then *you* are NOT saved.

May it please the God of all grace to add His blessing.

(The above is an address delivered by A. W. Pink in Glenolden (a suburb of Philadelphia) on September 28, 1931.)

THE ORDAINED LAMP

“I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed” (Psa 132:17). The first part of this Psalm records a series of prayer-petitions. From verse 11, to the close, are a number of great and precious promises relating to David and his family in the type, but mainly, and ultimately, to Christ and His New Testament church in the antitype. Let the reader constantly bear in mind this important principle and fact, namely, that everything in the Old Testament Scriptures typified or represented Gospel or eternal realities. First, God here promises to fix His residence in the church (Psa 132:13-14). Then, to bless the provision He makes for her (Psa 132:15). To give her faithful and successful ministers (Psa 132:16). That, however low the interests of Christ on earth may be brought, even though (like Himself) it may appear a root in a dry place, yet, like a tree well-planted in the ground, but sore lopt and hacked by man and Satan, it will sprout again (Psa 132:17).

In our present verse, three things are before us. First, the designation which is given unto the Saviour of sinners by the Father—He calls Him “mine anointed.” Though despised and rejected of men, though an unbelieving world see no form nor comeliness in Him, God owns Him as the Prophet, Priest, and King of His church. Compare Psalms 89:20-21. Second, the chief agency of God’s ordering for the manifestation of Christ to a lost world, “I have ordained a *lamp* for mine anointed.” This is the Gospel. The use of a lamp is to give light to people in the darkness of the night. So the proclamation of Christ’s glorious person, offices, and work, is a light shining in a dark place, until the day of glory dawns. Third, the *sovereign authority* by which this Gospel “lamp” is lighted and carried through this dark world—It is “ordained” of God. It is by divine command that His servants preach and spread the light of the Gospel. Compare Mark 16:15, 20.

This Gospel “lamp” was first set up in the purpose of God from eternity, in the “counsel of peace” (Zec 6:13 and cf. Pro 8:22-23, 31), when the whole plan of salvation through Christ was laid. Second, this “lamp” was first lighted in this lower world immediately after the fall in paradise. When a dark and dismal night of woe had spread itself over our first parents, a gleam of hope then shone out through the promise of Genesis 3:15. Third, the lamp of the Gospel shone prophetically (Gal 3:8) and typically (Heb 4:2) during all the Old Testament period. It shone, as it were, through a vail. Fourth, after the coming of Christ in the flesh, and His resurrection and ascension into heaven, the lamp of Gospel light was brightened and its blessed rays were more widely diffused, but even then (and now), according to the sovereign pleasure of God. To show how much God is concerned about this “lamp” of the everlasting Gospel, we mention several things which He had ordained concerning it.

1. God has appointed *those places* and parts of the world where the Gospel lamp shall be set up and shine, “The wind bloweth *where it listeth*...so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (Joh 3:8). It was so in Old Testament times, “He sheweth his word *unto Jacob*, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath *not* dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, *they* have not known them” (Psa 147:19-20). It was so when Christ was upon earth. To His apostles, He said, “*Go not* into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mat 10:5-6). It was so after His ascension, “Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the regions of Galatia, and were *forbidden* of the

Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit *suffered them not*" (Act 16:6-7).

That which regulates God in His providential dealings concerning the Gospel—opening doors or shutting them, sending one of His ministers to a place or withdrawing him—is whether or no there be some of those for whom Christ died in that particular locality, for the “sheep” *shall* hear His voice (Joh 10:16). Where there is no Gospel preaching for a protracted period, it is an indication that none of God’s elect are there. “Also I have *withholden* the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvests: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it *not* to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered” (Amo 4:7). *So it is* spiritually, and for the reason thus given.

2. God has appointed *how long* the Gospel lamp shall remain in each place, before it be sent to another part of the earth. He ordered how long it should shine among the Jews, namely, until Christ came. He ordained how long it should shine in each of the seven churches in Asia before He came and removed His candlestick. So, He has decreed where and when the Gospel shall continue in this country. There is probably more real Gospel preaching in China today than there is in the U.S.A. Many a church, which was once a bright testimony for Christ, is so no longer, nor does it know that “Ichabod” (“The glory is departed”) has been written over it. Many a town, which formerly was blest with the ministry of a true servant of God, is now left desolate.

3. God has appointed *which persons* should be converted and edified under the Gospel, when He sends it to any nation or congregation. The Most High has not left it to the caprice of His servants, nor to the whims of their hearers, what measure of success the proclamation of His truth shall enjoy. No, the Lord holds in His own right hand the instruments which He employs (Rev 1:16), and causes His word to be either a “savor of death unto death” or “a savor of life unto life” (2Co 2:15). Paul was bidden by the Lord to remain at Corinth, for, said He, “I have much people in *this* city” (Act 18:10). On the other hand, God suffered him not to go into Bithynia (Act 16:7).

When a servant of God settles in a new place, he knows not who are the particular ones that he has been ordained a blessing unto. His business is to preach the word to all who will hear him, leaving it with the Spirit to make whatever application He pleases. The election of grace shall obtain eternal life. The rest will be blinded (Rom 11:7). Some will prove to be wayside hearers, others, stony-ground hearers. Only a few will give evidence that they are good-ground-hearers. But that is all in the hands of “the *Lord of the harvest.*” Nor should we desire it to be otherwise. God is working out His own eternal purpose, and absolute subjection to the Master’s will is what is required of servants. A beam of the Gospel lamp will shine into one heart, when many others are left in nature’s darkness.

“Why was I made to hear His voice

And enter while there’s room?

While others make a wretched choice,

And rather starve than come.

‘Twas the same love that spread the feast,

Which sweetly forced me in;

Else I had still refused to taste,

And perished in my sin.”

4. God has ordained *by what instrument* or minister the Gospel lamp shall be brought unto a people or particular person. Paul was ordained for the Gentiles, Peter for the Jews. But every *one* of Christ’s servants is guided by the hand of the sovereign Lord to labour in this, or that, or the

other part of His vineyard. The stars are held in *His* right hand (Rev 1:16), and He causes them to shine in this or that orb of His church. And, when He pleases, He removes them from one place to another in His kingdom, where He has other work for them. And when He takes them to heaven, then they that “turn many to righteousness” shall shine “as the stars forever and ever” (Dan 12:3).

It is not by chance or “good luck” (horrible expression for any child of God to use!) that any one is privileged to sit under the ministry of a man of God to whom the Spirit blesses such to his conversion. No, when God works, He works at both ends of the line, making “all things *work together* for good” unto His own. It was sovereign grace which selected the Lord of glory to be the one who should preach the word of life to the Samaritan adulteress (Joh 4). It was sovereign grace which appointed Philip to be the Spirit’s mouthpiece to the Ethiopian eunuch (Act 8). It was sovereign grace which determined that Peter should give forth the word of salvation to Cornelius and his household (Act 10). Cornelius was a Roman, and Paul (already then saved) was the apostle unto the Gentiles, yet, Peter (the apostle to the circumcision) was the one sent to him!

5. God has ordained the *measure* of fruit which each servant of His shall reap from his labours, the degree of success which each Gospel lamp-bearer shall have. He has determined what number of souls shall be edified, and which shall be hardened by His light. “So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase” (1Co 3:7).

It is not always the most gifted ministers, nor the most godly, who are the most successful. So far as we can ascertain from the Gospel records, fewer souls were saved under the preaching of Christ Himself than under Peter’s on the day of Pentecost! Why? “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight” (Mat 11:26) must be the answer.



FEBRUARY

THE ANOINTING OF CHRIST

The theme of our present article is inseparably connected with that of the preceding one. To connect the two, it should be pointed out that Holy Writ ascribes to our blessed Saviour a number of other precious titles which are synonymous with that of “Mediator.” Among them is that of “the Christ” or “Anointed” One. But ere considering it, let us mention several others. As Mediator, Christ meets the deep longing of Job, who lamented, “Neither is there any *daysman* betwixt us, that might lay his hands upon us *both*” (Job 9:33). As Mediator, Christ is, “surety of a better testament” (Heb 7:22). So, also, is He “an advocate with the Father” (1Jo 2:1).

Another name or title of Christ’s equivalent to “the Mediator” is that of “the messenger [Angel] of the covenant” (Mal 3:1). This opens to us a most interesting subject into which we cannot now enter at length. But there are many, many passages, both in the Old Testament and the Revelation, which cannot be understood aright unless we perceive that “the angel” or “the angel [messenger] of the LORD” has specific reference to the Son of God in His mediatorial character. For instance, Jacob speaks of “the Angel which redeemed me from all evil” (Gen 48:16). “The angel of the LORD appeared” unto Moses “in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush,” proclaiming Himself to be “the God of Abraham,” etc. (Exo 3:2, 6). In Exodus 32:34, Jehovah promised Moses, “Mine Angel shall go before thee,” which is explained in Exodus 33:14, “My presence shall go with thee.”

Another remarkable passage, which presents Christ *exercising* His mediatorial office in Old Testament times, is found in Zechariah 1:12, “Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem.” There, we behold Christ making intercession for His erring people! Another blessed Scripture is that of Revelation 8:3-4, “And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand.” It is for the sake of Christ’s merits that the prayers of saints on earth find acceptance with God in heaven.

Coming now to our immediate subject—"Christ" signifies "the Anointed" One. It is His *official* title, as "Jesus" is His *personal* name. These two titles are applied to Him as our proper and surname to us. "Jesus" is the anglicized form of Joshua, which signifies "Saviour." This name "Jesus" was given to Him by God Himself (Luk 1:31). After He was conceived, but before He was born, it was said to Joseph, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins" (Mat 1:21)—thus fulfilling Isaiah 49:1! By this name, His people are constantly put in mind of the great object for which the son of God became incarnate. "Christ" refers to His *official* character—"Jesus, who is called Christ" (Mat 1:16), "A Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luk 2:11).

"Why was our Mediator called Christ? *Answer*: Our Mediator was called Christ because He was anointed with the Holy Ghost above measure, and so set apart, and fully furnished with all authority and ability to execute the office of Prophet, Priest and King of His church, in the estate both of His humiliation and exaltation" (Westminster Catechism, 1634).

As was pointed out in a previous article, the correct translation of Proverbs 8:23 is, "I was *anointed* from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." The Speaker is the eternal Son, conversing with the Father in regard to the "everlasting covenant" (Heb 13:20). He was anointed as Mediator before the universe was created, being then invested with that office. As "a lamb without blemish and without spot," He "verily was foreordained before the world" (1Pe 1:19-20). Therefore was it that He exercised this office all through the Old Testament dispensation and therefore was it that God's elect were redeemed and taken then to heaven.

"Our Saviour is called in the Old Testament the Messiah, and in the New Testament, the Christ, and both words import that He was the Anointed One. This designation is given to Him in allusion to the rite by which persons were consecrated to their offices under the former dispensation, namely, by being anointed with oil" (John Dick, 1764-1833). The inauguration of Israel's kings to the throne was by anointing with oil (1Sa 10:1; 16:13; 2Sa 5:3; 1Ki 1:39, etc). When this was done by divine appointment, it signified two things—a deputation of our Saviour's unto the kingdom, and an ability to execute the royal function. The great emphasis which the Holy Spirit has placed upon this official designation of our Saviour's may be seen from...passages wherein He is referred to as "the Christ" (Joh 20:31), "that Christ" (Joh 6:69), "very Christ" (Act 9:22), "the Lord's Christ" (Luk 2:26), "the Christ of God" (Luk 9:20).

This official title of our Saviour's denotes three things. First, the *offices* or functions which the Son of God took for the salvation of His people. These were three in number, and each was foreshadowed of old: the prophetic (1Ki 19:16; Psa 105:15), the priestly (Lev 8:12, 30; Psa 110:4), the kingly (1Sa 10:1). Second, the right which He had to undertake those functions. He who anointed the Lord Jesus was the Father (Act 10:38), thereby appointing and authorizing Him (Heb 5:5). Thirdly, His *ability* to perform those functions whereunto He was anointed. Therefore did He declare, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, *because* he hath anointed me to preach," etc. (Luk 4:18). That expression, "the Spirit of the LORD is upon me" referred to that divine endowment which had been conferred upon Him. Compare John 3:34.

The "anointing" of the Lord Jesus, then, has reference to God's solemn appointment of His Son to the mediatorial office, and, when incarnate, furnishing Him with all the requisite qualifications. Historically, this received a threefold fulfillment. First, at His miraculous conception in the womb of the virgin (Luk 1:35), when His humanity was sanctified by the Holy

Spirit and endowed with all graces—see our article on “The Work of the Spirit in the Saviour,” September 1929. Second, at His baptism, for entrance upon His public ministry (Mat 3:16; Act 10:38). The Holy Spirit descending from the opened heaven, resting upon Him in a visible form (in conjunction with the voice which proceeded from the excellent glory), denoted that the Father owned Him as His incarnate Son, and bestowed upon Him an abundant measure of heavenly influences. In this manner, He was *publicly* installed in His office and fitted for the discharge of His duties. Then was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 11:2-5.

The fullest and final anointing of the Mediator took place upon His ascension. Then was fulfilled that blessed word, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the scepter of thy kingdom is a righteous scepter. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Psa 45:6-7). It was at His ascension that Christ received the Spirit, not only in a greater “measure” (Joh 3:34) than any of His brethren, but also in a way wholly different from them. As some are puzzled by the expression, “thy God” in the above quotation, a word or two on it is called for.

“God, even thy God, hath anointed thee.” God was Christ’s “God,” first, in respect of His human nature, as He was made of a woman, made under the law. Second, in respect of His whole person, God and man, as He was designated unto the whole work of mediation. So Christ owned Himself—Matthew 27:46; John 20:17. It is in this last sense that God is here said to be Christ’s “God.” That is, His God in especial covenant, as He was appointed to be the Head and King of His Church, for therein did the Father undertake to be with Him, stand by Him, convey Him through His work, and in the end, to crown Him with glory—cf. Isaiah 49:1-11; 50:4-7!

“Hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Psa 45:7). The general reference is to the exceeding high honours which were bestowed upon Christ when He had so gloriously completed His work on earth, namely, the exalting of Him *above* all created beings and the seating of Him at God’s right hand. More specifically, the allusion is to what is mentioned in Acts 2:33, when He “received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit,” which He shed forth on His ministers and people—cf. Revelation 3:1. Christ is still exercising His mediatorial office, for He has gone into heaven “now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb 9:24). It only remains to add that, by virtue of the mystical and spiritual union which exists between Christ and His people, they too (His “fellows”) are “anointed” (2Co 1:21) with the Spirit, and, therefore, are denominated “*Christians*” (1Pe 4:16). Yea, the Church and its Head together, as a whole, is termed “Christ” (1Co 12:12; Gal 3:16).

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

50. Access to God (10:19-23)

The verses which are now to engage our attention contain the apostle's transition from the doctrinal to the practical part of the epistle, for privileges and duties are never to be separated. Having at great length discoursed upon the priestly office of Christ in the foregoing part of the epistle, he now sums up in a few words the scope and substance of all he had been saying (Heb 10:19-21), and then draws the plain inference from the whole (Heb 10:22). Like a wise master builder, he first digs till he comes to the foundation, and then calls himself and others to build upon it with confidence. Having demonstrated the vast superiority of Christianity over Judaism, the apostle now exhorts his Christian readers to avail themselves of all their blessed advantages and enjoy the great privileges which have been conferred upon them.

The apostle's great argument is concluded, and the result is placed before us in a very short summary. We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, and we have, in the heavenly sanctuary, a great Priest over the house of God. All difficulties have been removed, perfectly and forever. We have access, and He, who is the way, is also the end of the way. He is even now our great Priest, interceding for us, and our all-sufficient Mediator, providing us with every needful help.

"On this foundation rests a threefold exhortation. 1. Let us draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith. 2. Let us hold fast the profession of hope without wavering. 3. Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, labouring and waiting together, and helping one another in the unity of brethren. Faith, hope, and love—this is the threefold result of Christ's entrance into heaven, spiritually discerned. A believing, hoping, and loving attitude of heart corresponds to the new covenant revelation of divine grace" (Adolph Saphir, 1831-1891).

"In these words, the apostle enters on the last part of the epistle, which is wholly hortatory. For though there be some occasional intermixtures of doctrine consonant to those which are insisted on before, yet the professed design of the whole remainder of the epistle is to propose to, and press on the Hebrews such duties of various sorts, as the truths he had insisted on, do direct unto, and make necessary to all that believe. And in all his exhortations, there is a mixture of the *ground* of the duties exhorted to, of their *necessity*, and of the *privilege* which we have in being admitted to them, and accepted with them, all taken from the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, with the effects of them, and the benefits which we receive thereby" (John Owen, 1616-1683).

The same order of truth may be clearly seen in other epistles of the apostle Paul. In Romans, the first eleven chapters are devoted to doctrinal exposition, the next four being practical, setting forth the Christian's duties. See Romans 12:1. Likewise in Ephesians, the first three chapters set forth the sovereign grace of God, the last three the Christian's responsibilities. See Ephesians 4:1. From this, the teacher and preacher may gather important instruction, showing him *how to* handle

the word, so that the whole man may be edified. The understanding needs to be enlightened, the conscience searched and comforted, the heart inflamed, the will moved, the affections well ordered. Nothing but doctrine will produce a cold and conceited people, nothing but exhortation, a discouraged and ill-instructed people.

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Heb 10:19). “The preceding part of this epistle has been chiefly occupied with stating, proving, and illustrating some of the grand peculiarities of Christian doctrine, and the remaining part of it is entirely devoted to an injunction and enforcement of those duties which naturally result from the foregoing statements. The paragraph (verses 19-23) obviously consists of two parts—a statement of principles, which are taken for granted as having been fully proved, and an injunction of duties grounded on the admission of these principles” (John Brown, 1722-1787).

The great privilege which is here announced unto Christians is that they may draw near unto God as accepted worshippers. This privilege is presented under a recapitulation of the principal points which the apostle had been treating of, namely, first, Christians have liberty to enter the presence of God (Heb 10:19). Second, a way has been prepared for them so to do (Heb 10:20). Third, a Guide is provided to direct them in that way (Heb 10:21). These three points are here amplified by showing the nature of this “liberty.” It is with “boldness,” to enter the presence of God, and that by virtue of Christ’s blood. The “way” is described as a “new” and “living” one, and it is ready for our use because Christ has “consecrated” it. The “Guide” is presented by His function, “priest”; His dignity, “great”; His authority, “over the house of God.”

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.” To “enter into the holiest” is, as verse 22 shows, to “draw near” unto God in Christ, for “No one cometh unto the Father, but by him” (Joh 14:6). The “holiest” here is only another name for heaven, the dwelling place of God, being designated so in this instance because the holy of holies in the tabernacle and the temple was the type thereof. This is established by what was before us in Hebrews 9:24, “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself.” It is most blessed to link with Hebrews 10:19 what is said in Hebrews 9:12, “by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place.” The title of the members of His body for entering in the Sanctuary on high is the same as that of their Head’s!

The boldness to “enter into the holiest,” which is spoken of in our text, is not to be limited to the Christian’s going to heaven at death or at the return of the Saviour, but is to be understood as referring to that access unto God in spirit, and by faith, which he now has. Here again, we see the tremendous contrast from the conditions obtaining under the old and the new covenants. Under Judaism as such, the Israelites were rigidly excluded from drawing nigh unto Jehovah. His dwelling place was sealed against them. Nay, even the Levites, privileged as they were to minister in the tabernacle, were barred from the holy of holies. But now, the right has been accorded unto all who partake of the blessings of the new covenant, to enjoy free access unto God, to draw near unto His throne as supplicants, to enter His temple as worshippers, to sit at His table as happy children.

Most blessedly was this set forth by Christ in the close of that remarkable parable in Luke 15. There, we find the prodigal—having “come to himself” (verse 17)—saying, “I will arise and *go* to my Father.” (verse 18) He arose and went, and *where* do we find him? Outside the door, or looking in at the window? No, but *inside* the house. Sovereign grace had given him boldness to

“enter.” And why not? Having confessed his sins, he had received the “kiss” of reconciliation, and the “best robe” had been placed upon him, and thus, he was *fitted* to enjoy the Father’s house. In perfect accord with our Lord’s teaching in that parable, we have been told here in Hebrews 10:14, that “by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified,” and because of this, God has put His laws into their hearts, written them upon their minds, and avowed that their sins and iniquities He would “remember no more.”

Here, then, is the force of the “therefore” in our present verse. Inasmuch as Christ’s satisfaction has removed every legal obstacle, and inasmuch as the work of the Spirit in the Christian has made him “*meet to be* partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col 1:12), there is not only nothing to hinder, but every reason and motive to induce us *to* draw near unto God and pour out our hearts before Him in thanksgiving, praise, and worship. In Hebrews 4:16, we are invited to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may *obtain mercy*, and find grace to help in time of need.” But here, in Hebrews 10:19-22, it is *worship* which is more specifically in view—entrance into “the holiest,” which was the place of worship and communion. See Numbers 7:89.

A further word of explanation needs to be given on the term “boldness.” Saphir rightly pointed out that this expression “must be understood here objectively, not subjectively, else the subsequent exhortation would be meaningless.” In other words, the reference is to something outside ourselves and not to a condition of heart. Literally, the Greek signifies, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness for entrance into the holiest,” and hence, some have rendered it “the *right of* entrance.” Most probably the word is designed to point a double contrast from conditions under the old covenant. Those under it had a legal prohibition against entering the sacred abode of Jehovah, but Christians have a perfect title to do so. Again, those under Judaism were *afraid* to do so, whereas faith now perceives that we may come to God with the fullest assurance, because He has accepted us “in the beloved” (Eph 1:6). There is no valid reason why we should hesitate to draw near unto our Father in perfect freedom of spirit.

“By the blood of Jesus.” This is the meritorious cause which procures the Christian’s right of entrance into the “holiest”—the place where all the tokens of God’s grace and glory are displayed (Heb 9:3-4). The blood of the Jewish sacrifices did not and could not obtain such liberty of access into the immediate presence of God. The blood of Jesus *has* done so, both in respect unto God as an oblation, and in respect unto the consciences of believers by its application. As an oblation or sacrifice, the atonement of Christ has removed every legal obstacle between God and believers. It fulfilled the demands of His law, removed its curse, and broke down the “middle wall of partition”—in token whereof, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, when the Saviour expired. So, too, the Holy Spirit has so applied the efficacy of the blood to the consciences of Christians that they are delivered from a sense of guilt, freed from their dread of God, and enabled to approach Him in a spirit of liberty.

“By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh” (Heb 10:20). This presents to us the second inducement and encouragement for Christians to avail themselves and make use of the unspeakable privilege which Christ has secured for them. In order to understand these verses, it is necessary to bear in mind that New Testament privileges are here expressed in the Old Testament dialect. The highest privilege of fallen man is to have access unto the presence of God, his offended Lord and Sovereign. The only

way of approach is through Christ, of whom the tabernacle (and the temple) was an illustrious type. In allusion to those figures, Christ is here presented to our faith in a threefold view.

First, as a *gate* or door, by which we enter into the holiest. No sooner had Adam sinned, than the door of access to the majesty of God was bolted against him and all his posterity, the cherubim with the flaming sword standing in his way (Gen 3:24). But now the flaming sword of justice, being quenched in the blood of the Surety (Zec 13:7), the door of access is again wide open. The infinite wisdom of God has devised a way how His “banished” may be brought home again to His presence (2Sa 14:14), namely, through the satisfaction of Christ.

Second, to encourage us in our approaches to God in Christ, He is also presented to us under the figure of “a new and living way, which he hath consecrated *for us*” (Heb 10:20). “Having told us that we have ‘an entrance into the holiest,’ he now declares what the way is whereby we may do so. The only way into the holiest under the tabernacle was a passage with blood through the sanctuary, and then a turning aside of the vail. But the whole church was forbidden the use of this way, and it was appointed for no other end but typically, that in due time, there should be a way opened unto believers into the presence of God, which was not yet prepared. And this the apostle describes. 1. From the preparation of it—‘which he hath consecrated.’ 2. From the properties of it—it was a ‘new and living way.’ 3. From the tendency of it, which he expresseth, first, typically, or with respect unto the old way under the tabernacle—it was ‘through the vail.’ Secondly, in an exposition of that type—‘that is, his flesh.’ In the whole, there is a description of the exercise of faith in our access unto God by Christ Jesus” (John Owen).

In the previous verse, it was declared that heaven has been opened unto the people of God. But here, Christ is set forth more as the antitype of that “ladder” (Gen 28:12; Joh 1:51), which, being set up on earth, reaches to heaven. In this respect, Christ is styled “the way, the truth, and the life” (Joh 14:6), for He is the only true “way” which conducts unto God. That “way” is variously referred to in Scripture as the “way of life” (Pro 10:17), the “way of holiness” (Isa 35:8), the “good way” (Jer 6:16), the “way of peace” (Luk 1:79), the “way of salvation” (Act 16:17). All of these refer to the same thing, namely, the only path unto heaven. Christ Himself is that “way” in a twofold sense. First, when the heart turns away from every other object which competes for the first place in its affections, abandons all confidence in its own righteousness, and lays hold of the Saviour. Second, when grace is diligently sought to take Christ as our Exemplar, following “*his steps*” in the path of unreserved and joyful obedience to God.

The “way” to God is here said to be “a new and living” one. The word for “new” is really “newly slain,” for the simple verb, “occido,” from which it is compounded, signifies “to slay.” The avenue of approach to God has been opened unto us because Christ was put to death in this way. But this word “new” is *not* to be taken absolutely, as though this “way” had no existence previously to the death of Christ, for all the Old Testament saints had passed along it, too. No, it was neither completely “new” as to its contrivance, revelation, or use. Why then is it called “new”? In distinction from the old way of life under the covenant of works, in keeping with the new covenant, because it was now only made fully manifest (Eph 3:5), and because of its perennial vigour—it will never grow old.

This “way” unto God is also said to be a “living” one, and this for at least three reasons. First, in opposition unto the way to God under Judaism, which was by the *death* of an animal, and would be the cause of death unto any who used it, excepting the high priest. Second, because of

its perpetual efficacy. It is not a lifeless thing, but has a spiritual and vital power in our access to God. Third, because of its effect. It leads to life and effectually brings us thereunto. "It is called a living way because all that symbolizes Christ must be represented as possessing vitality. Thus, we read of Him as the living stone, the living bread, etc." (Adolph Saphir). Probably this epithet also looks to Christ's resurrection. Though slain, the grave could not hold Him. He is now "alive for ever more" (Rev 1:18), and by working in His people repentance, faith, and obedience, conducts them safely through unto life everlasting.

This new and living way unto God has been "consecrated for us" by Christ. "It is a path consecrated by Him for the service and salvation of man—a way of access to the eternal sanctuary for the sinner which has been set apart by the Redeemer for this service of men" (Albert Barnes, 1798-1870). As Christ Himself is the "way," the meaning would be, that He has dedicated Himself for the use of sinners in their dealings with God—"For their sakes I sanctify myself" (Joh 17:19). As the "way" is also to be regarded as the path which we are called upon to follow through this world as we journey to heaven, Christ has "consecrated" or fitted it for our use by leaving us an example that we should follow His steps—"When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth *before* them" (Joh 10:4).

"The phrase 'consecrated for us' giveth us to understand that Christ hath made the way to heaven fit for us, and this, by His three offices. First, as a Priest, He hath truly dedicated it, and that, by His own blood, as by the blood of sacrifices things were consecrated under the law. Christ, by His blood, has taken away our sins, which made the way to heaven impassible. Second, as a Prophet, He hath revealed and made known this way to us. This He did while He was on earth, by Himself, and since His taking into heaven, He hath done it by His ministers (Eph 4:11). Third, as a King, He causes the way to be laid out, fenced in, and made common for all His people, so as it may well be styled the King's highway" (William Gouge, 1575-1653).

"Through the vail, that is to say, his flesh." It is through the humanity of Christ that the way to heaven has been opened, renewed, and consecrated. But prior to His death, the very life which was lived by the man, Christ Jesus, only served to emphasize the awful distance which sinners were from God, just as the beautiful vail in the tabernacle shut out the Israelite from His presence. Moreover, the humanity of Christ was a sinbearing one, for the iniquities of His people had all been imputed to Him. While, then, the flesh of Christ was uncrucified, proof was before the eyes of men that the curse was not abolished. As long as He tabernacled in this world, it was evident that sin was not yet put away. The vail must be rent, Christ must die, before access to God was possible. When God rent the vail of the temple, clear intimation was given that every hindrance had been removed, and that the way was opened into His presence.

"And having an high priest over the house of God" (Heb 10:21). Here is the third great privilege of the Christian, the third inducement which is presented to him for approaching unto God, the third character in which Christ is presented unto faith. Whereas it might be objected that, though the door be opened and a new and living way consecrated, yet, we are too impotent to walk therein, or too sinful to enter into the holiest. Therefore, to obviate this, Christ is now set forth as Priest over the house of God. O what encouragement is here! As Priest, Christ is "ordained *for* men in things pertaining to God" (Heb 5:1). He is a living Saviour within the vail, interceding for His people, maintaining their interest before the Father.

“And having an high priest over the house of God.” The opening, “And,” shows that the contents of this verse form a link in the chain begun in verse 19, so that they furnish a further ground to help us in approaching unto God. The next word, “having,” while not in the Greek, is obviously understood, and as the principal verb (needed to complete the sentence) is fetched from verse 19. The adjective should be rendered “great” and not “high.” It is not a relative term, in comparison with other priests, but an absolute one, denoting Christ’s dignity and excellency. He is “great” in His person, in His worthiness, in His position, in His power, in His compassion.

To show for whom in particular Christ is the great Priest, it is here added, “over the house of God.” “The apostle doth not here consider the sacrifice of Christ, but what He is and doth after His sacrifice, now that He is exalted in heaven. For this was the second part of the office of the high priest. The first was to offer sacrifice for the people, the other was to take the oversight of the house of God. See Zechariah 3:6-7—Joshua being an eminent type of Christ” (John Owen). The “house of God” represents the whole family of God both of heaven and earth. Compare 3:7. The church here below is what is first comprised in this expression, for it is unto it that this encouragement is given, and unto whom this motive of drawing nigh is proposed. But, as it is in the heavenly sanctuary that Christ now ministers, and into which we enter by our prayers and spiritual worship, so the “house of God” includes both the church militant and the church triumphant.

When it is said that Christ is “*over* the house of God,” it is His headship, lordship, authority, which is in view. The Lord Christ presides over the persons, duties, and worship of believers. In that, all their acceptable worship is of His appointment. In that, He assists the worshippers by His Spirit for the performance of every duty. In that, He directs the government of the church, ordains its officers, and administers its laws. In that, He makes their service acceptable with God. He is King in Zion, wielding the scepter, protecting the interests of His church, and, according to His pleasure, overthrowing its enemies. It is the Lord who adds to the church those who are to be saved. He is the alone Head, and, as the wife is to be subject to her husband in all things, so the members of Christ’s mystical body are to own no other Lord. From Him we are to take our orders. Unto Him we must yet render an account.

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22). Having described the threefold privilege which Christians have been granted, the apostle now points out the threefold duty which is entailed. The first of which is here in view, namely, to enter the holiest, to draw near unto God as joyful worshippers. To “draw near” unto God is a sacerdotal act, common to all the saints, who are made priests unto God (Rev 1:6). The Greek word expressing the whole performance of all divine worship, approaching unto the Most High to present their praises and petitions, both publicly and privately.

“To draw near to God is an act of the heart or mind, whereby the soul, under the influence of the Spirit, sweetly and irresistibly returns to God in Christ as its only center of rest. There is a constant improvement of the merit and mediation of Christ in every address made to the Majesty on High. The believer, as it were, fixes himself in the cleft of the Rock of ages. He gets into the secret place of the blessed stair, by which we ascend unto heaven. And then, he lifts up his voice in drawing near to God, by the new and living way. He says with David, ‘I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy’ (Psa 43:4). And if God hides His face, the soul will wait, and bode good at His hand, saying, ‘Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him: He will

command his loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night, his song shall be with me' (Psa 42:8). And if the Lord smiles and grants an answer of peace, he will not ascribe his success to his own faith or fervour, but unto Christ alone" (Condensed from Ebenezer Erskine, 1680-1754).

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb 10:22). This is the requisite manner in which we must approach unto God. It is not sufficient to assume a reverent posture of body, or worship with our lips only. Nor is God honoured when we give way to unbelief. A "true heart" is opposed to a double, doubting, distrustful, and hypocritical heart. All dissimulation is to be avoided in our dealings with Him who "trieth the hearts and the reins"(Psa 7:9) and "whose eyes are like a flame of fire" (Rev 2:18).

God desireth truth in the inward parts, and therefore, "Son, give me thine heart" (Pro 23:26) is His first demand upon us. Nothing short of this will ever satisfy Him. But more—there must be "a true heart"—a sincere, genuine, honest desire and determination to render unto Him that which is His due. We cannot impose upon Him. Beautiful language designed for the ears of men, or emotional earnestness which is only for effect, does not deceive God. "God is spirit: and they that worship him *must* worship him in spirit and in truth" (Joh 4:24). How this condemns those who rest satisfied with the mere outward performance of duty, and those who are content to substitute an imposing ritual for real heart dealings with God! O to be able to say with David, "With my whole heart have I sought thee" (Psa 119:10).

"In full assurance of faith" (Heb 10:22)—which means, negatively, without doubting or wavering—positively, with unshaken confidence—not in myself, nor in my faith, but in the merits of Christ, as giving the unquestionable title to draw near unto the thrice holy God. "Full assurance of faith" points to the heart resting and relying upon the absolute sufficiency of the blood of Christ which was shed for my sins, and the efficacy of His present intercession to maintain my standing before God. Faith looks away from self, and eyes the great Priest, who takes my feeble praise or petitions, and, purifying and perfuming them with His own sweet incense (Rev 8:3-4), renders them acceptable to God. But let not Satan deter any timid child of God from drawing near unto Him because fearful that he neither possesses a "true heart" or "full assurance of faith." No, if he cannot consciously come *with* them, then, let him earnestly come unto the throne of grace *for* them.

"Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Here we have a description of the characters of those who are qualified or fitted to enter the holiest. A twofold preparation is required in order to draw near unto God. The individual must have been both justified and sanctified. Here, those two divine blessings are referred to under the typical terms which were obtained during the old covenant.

"Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." The Jewish cleansing or "sprinkling" with blood related only to that which was external, and could not make the conscience perfect (Heb 9:9). But the sacrifice of Christ was designed to give peace to the troubled mind and confidence before God. An "evil conscience" is one that accuses of guilt and oppresses because of unpardoned sin. It is by the exercise of faith in the sufficiency of the atoning blood of Christ—the Spirit applying experimentally its efficacious virtue—the conscience is purged. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God" (Rom 5:1). We are freed from a sense of condemnation and the troubled heart rests in Christ.

“And our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22). This figurative language is an allusion to the cleansing of the priests when they were consecrated to the service of God (Exo 29:4). The antitypical fulfillment of this is defined in Titus 3:5, as “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” But here, the emphasis is thrown on the *outward* effects of regeneration upon the daily life of the believer. We need both an internal and an external purification. Therefore are we exhorted, “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1). The sanctity of the body is emphatically enjoined in Scripture (Rom 12:1; 1Co 6:16, 20).

The whole of this 22nd verse contains most important teaching on the practical side of communion with God. While the first reference in the cleansing of the conscience and the washing of the body be to the initial experience of the Christian at his new birth, yet, they are by no means to be limited thereto. There is a constant cleansing needed, if we are to consciously draw near to the holy God. Daily do we need to confess our sins that we may be daily pardoned and “cleansed from all unrighteousness” (1Jo 1:9). An uneasy conscience is as real a barrier to fellowship with Jehovah as ceremonial defilement was to a Jew. So too, our walk needs to be incessantly washed with the water of the Word (Joh 13). The Levitical priests were not only washed at the time of induction into their holy office, but were required to wash their hands and feet *every time* they entered the sacred sanctuary (Exo 30:19-20).

It is just at this very point that there is so much sad failure today. There is so little exercise of heart before God. So feeble a realization of His high and holy requirements. So much attempting to rush into His presence without any previous preparation. “Due preparation, by *fresh* applications of our souls unto the efficacy of the blood of Christ for the purification of our hearts, that we may be meet to draw nigh to God, is required of us. This, the apostle hath special respect to, and the want of it is the bane of public worship. Where this is not, there is no due reverence of God, no sanctification of His name, nor any benefit to be expected unto our own souls” (John Owen).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

2. His Anointing

In our last article, we called attention to the time in which David’s lot was cast. The spirituality of Israel had indeed fallen to a low ebb. The law of God was no longer heeded, for “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Jdg 21:25). The terrible failure of the priesthood stands out clearly in the character of Eli’s sons (1Sa 2:12). The one, then on the throne, was such a worthless reprobate that it is written, “The LORD repented that he had made Saul king

over Israel” (1Sa 15:36). The utter contempt which the people paid to the sacred tabernacle appears in the dreadful fact that it was suffered to languish in “the fields of the wood” (Psa 132:6). Well, then, might our patriarch cry out, “Help LORD, for the godly man ceaseth” (Psa 12:1).

But though the righteous government of God caused Israel to be sorely chastised for their sins, He did not completely abandon them. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Amid the prevailing darkness, Almighty power sustained, here and there, a light unto Himself. The heart of one feeble woman laid hold of Jehovah’s strength. “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD’S, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth: and he *shall* give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his *anointed*” (1Sa 2:8-10). That was the language of true faith, and faith is something which God never disappoints. Most probably, Hannah lived not *to see* the realization of her Spirit-inspired expectations, but, in “due season,” they were realized.

How encouraging and comforting ought the above to be to the little remnant of God’s heritage in this “cloudy and dark day” (Eze 34:12)! To outward sight, there is now much, very much, to distract and dishearten. Truly, “Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth” (Luk 21:26). But, blessed be His name, “The LORD hath his way in the whirlwind” (Nah 1:3). Faith looks beyond this scene of sin and strife, and beholds the Most High upon His throne, working “all things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph 1:11). Faith lays hold of the divine promises which declare, “At evening tide it shall be light” (Zec 14:7). And, “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him” (Isa 59:19). In the meantime, God’s grace is sufficient for the feeblest who really trusts Him.

Samuel was given by God in response to the prayers of Hannah, and who can doubt that David also was the answer to the earnest supplications of those who sought Jehovah’s glory. And the Lord’s ear has not grown heavy that it can no longer hear. Yet, the *actions* of present-day professing Christians say they believe that it has! If the diligence which is now paid to the ransacking of daily newspapers in search for sensational items which are regarded as “signs of the times,” and if the time that is now given to Bible conferences was devoted to confession of sin and crying unto God to raise up a man after His own heart, whom He would use to bring back His wayward people into the paths of righteousness, it would be spent to much greater profit. Conditions are not nearly so desperate today as they were at the close of the “dark ages,” nor even as bad as they were when God raised up Whitefield. To your knees, my brethren! God’s arm is not shortened that it cannot save.

Now, not only was the raising up of David a signal demonstration of divine grace working in the midst of a people who deserved nought but untempered judgment, but, as pointed out in the preceding paper, it marked an important stage in the unfolding of God’s counsels, and a further and blessed adumbration of what had been settled upon in the everlasting covenant. This has not been sufficiently emphasized by recent writers, who, in their zeal to stress the *law* element of the Mosaic economy, have only too often overlooked the *grace* element which was exercised throughout. No “new dispensation” was inaugurated in the days of David, but a most significant

advance was made in the divine foreshadowings of that kingdom over which the Messiah now rules. The Mediator is not only the arch Prophet and High Priest, but He is also the King of kings, and *this* it is which was now to be specifically typified. The *throne*, as well as the altar, belongs to Christ!

From the days of Abraham, and onwards for a thousand years, the providential dealings of God had mainly respected that people from whom the Christ was to proceed. But now, attention is focused on that particular person whence He was to spring. It pleased God, at this time, to single out the specific man of whom Christ was to come, namely, David. “David, being the ancestor and great type of Christ, his being solemnly anointed to be king over his people, that the kingdom of His church might be continued in his family forever, may in some respects be looked on as an anointing of Christ Himself. Christ was, as it were, anointed in him, and, therefore, Christ’s anointing and David’s anointing are spoken of under *one* Scripture, ‘I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him’ (Psa 89:20). And David’s throne and Christ’s are spoken of as one, ‘And the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David’ (Luk 1:32). ‘David—knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne’ (Act 2:30)” (Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758).

The *typical* character of David’s person presents a most precious line of study. His very name signifies, “the Beloved.” His being an inhabitant of Bethlehem was ordained to point to that place where the Darling of God’s heart was to be born. His “beautiful countenance” (1Sa 16:13) spoke of Him who is “fairer than the children of men” (Psa 45:2). His occupation as a shepherd set forth the peculiar relation of Christ to God’s elect, and intimated the nature of His redemptive work. His faithful discharge of the pastoral office forecast the love and fidelity of the Great Shepherd. His lowly occupation before he ascended the throne prefigured the humiliation of the Saviour’s prior to His glorious exaltation. His victory over Goliath symbolized the triumph of Christ over the great enemy of God and His people. His perfecting of Israel’s worship, and instituting of a new ecclesiastical establishment, anticipated Christ as the Head and Law-giver of His church.

But it is in the *anointing* of David that we reach the most notable feature of our type. The very name or title “Christ” means “the Anointed” one and David was the first of Israel’s kings who thus foreshadowed Him. True, Saul also was anointed, but he furnished a solemn contrast, being a dark foreboding of the antichrist. At an earlier period, Aaron had been anointed unto the sacerdotal office (Lev 8:12), and, at a later day, we read of Elisha the prophet being anointed (1Ki 19:16). Thus, the threefold character of the Mediator’s office, as Prophet, Priest, and Potentate, was fully typed out centuries before He was openly manifested here on earth.

It is a remarkable fact that David was anointed *three* times. First, privately at Bethlehem (1Sa 16:13). Second, by the men of Judah (2Sa 2:4). Third, by the elders of Israel (2Sa 5:3). So also was that august One whom he foreshadowed. This will appear the more evident if we quote the following, “Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in [or “from”] the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of *the LORD* came upon David from that day forward” (1Sa 16:13). Concerning our Lord, His humanity was miraculously conceived and sanctified by the Spirit and endowed with all graces in the virgin’s womb (Luk 1:35). Second, He was publicly “anointed with the Spirit” (Act 10:38) at His baptism, and thus equipped for His ministry. See Isaiah 61:1. Third, at His ascension, He was “anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows” (Psa 45:6-7). It was *to this* that the anointing of David more especially pointed.

It is striking to observe that God anointed David *after* Saul, to reign in his room. He took away the crown from him who was higher in stature than any of his people, and gave it to one who resided in Bethlehem, which was “little among the thousands of Judah” (Mic 5:2). In this way was God pleased to prefigure the fact that He who, when on earth, was “despised and rejected of men,” should take the kingdom from the great ones of the earth. At a later date, this was more expressly revealed, for in the divine interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, Daniel declared, “In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it break in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter” (Dan 2:44-45).

It was the mediatorial reign of Christ which David foreshadowed, and of which he prophesied, “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of Thy kingdom is a right scepter” (Psa 45:6). That “throne” is His *mediatorial* throne, and that “scepter” is the symbol of authority over His mediatorial kingdom. Those metaphors are here applied to Christ as setting forth His kingly office, together with His dignity and dominion, for the throne whereon He sits is “the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Heb 8:1). “Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Psa 45:7). This is in contrast from the days when He was “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isa 53:3). It denotes His triumph and exaltation. It was at His ascension that He was “crowned with glory and honour” (Psa 8:5).

Just as the priestly office and work of Christ were foreshadowed by Melchizedek and Aaron, so the kingship and kingdom of the Mediator were typed out by both David and Solomon. It would lead us too far afield to enlarge upon this very much, but the interested reader will do well to ponder such Scriptures as 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 16:5; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:14-17; Acts 13:34; and Rev 3:7, 5:5. And let us not be robbed of the preciousness of these passages by the attempts of “dispensationalists” who would have us believe they belong only to the future. In many instances, their insistence of *literalizing* many portions of Holy Writ has resulted in the *carnalizing* of them, and the missing of their true and *spiritual* import. Let the reader beware of any system of interpretation which takes away from the Christian any portion of God’s Word. All Scripture is “profitable for *doctrine*” (2Ti 3:16).

Between the first and the third anointings of David, or between Samuel’s consecrating of him to the kingly office and his actually ascending the throne, there was a period of severe trials and testings, during which our patriarch passed through much suffering and humiliation. Here, too, we may discern the accuracy of our type. David’s Son and Lord trod a path of unspeakable woe between the time when the Holy Spirit first came upon Him and His being exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on High. It is indeed blessed to read through the first book of Samuel and take note of the series of wonderful providences by which God preserved David’s life until the death of Saul. But it is yet more precious to see in these so many adumbrations of what is recorded in such passages as Matthew 2:16; Luke 4:29, John 8:59; 10:31, 39, etc.

Ere passing on, let us seek to make practical application unto ourselves of what has just been referred to above. God promised Abraham a son, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed (Gen 12:3), yet he performed it not for thirty years (Gen 21:2). God anointed David king

over Israel, yet, before the kingdom was actually given to him, his faith was severely tested, and he was called on to endure many sore buffetings. He was hated, persecuted, outlawed, and hunted like a partridge on the mountains (1Sa 26:20, etc.). Yet was he enabled to say, “I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry” (Psa 40:1). So the Christian has been begotten to a glorious inheritance, but “We *must* through *much* tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22). It is only “through faith and patience [we] inherit the promises” (Heb 6:12).

Another thing which God did at that time toward furthering the great work of redemption was His inspiring David to show forth Christ and His salvation in divine songs. David was endowed with the spirit of prophecy, and is called “a prophet” (Act 2:29-30) so that here, too, he was a type of Christ. “This was a great advancement that God made in this building. And the light of the Gospel, which had been gradually growing from the fall, was exceedingly increased by it. For, whereas before there was but here and there a prophecy given of Christ in a great many ages, now, here, Christ is spoken of by David abundantly, in multitudes of songs, speaking of His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension into heaven, His satisfaction, intercession, His prophetic, kingly, and priestly office, His glorious benefits in this life and that which is to come, His union with the church, the blessedness of the church in Him, and the calling of the Gentiles. All these things concerning Christ and His redemption are abundantly spoken of in the book of Psalms” (Jonathan Edwards).

To quote again from this Spirit-taught man, “Now, first it was that God proceeded to choose a particular city out of all the tribes of Israel to place His name there. There is several times mention made in the law of Moses of the children of Israel’s bringing their oblations to the place which God should choose, as Deuteronomy 12:5-7. But God had never proceeded to it till now. The tabernacle and ark were never pitched, but sometimes in one place, and sometimes in another. But now God proceeded to choose Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem was never thoroughly conquered or taken out of the hands of the Jebusites till David’s time. It is said in Joshua 15:63, ‘As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out.’ But now, David wholly subdued it, as we have an account in 2 Samuel 5. And now, God proceeded to choose that city to place His name there, as appears by David’s bringing up the ark thither soon after, and, therefore, this is mentioned afterwards as the first time God proceeded to choose a city to place His name there (2Ch 6:5-6; 12:13).

“The city of Jerusalem is therefore called the *holy city*, and it was the greatest type of the church of Christ in all the Old Testament. It was redeemed by David, the captain of the hosts of Israel, out of the hands of the Jebusites to be God’s city, the holy place of His rest forever where He would dwell, just as Christ, the Captain of His people’s salvation, redeemed His church out of the hands of devils, to be His holy and beloved city. And, therefore, how often does the Scripture, when speaking of Christ’s redemption of His church, call it by the names of *Zion and Jerusalem*! This was the city that God had appointed to be the place of the first gathering and erecting of the Christian Church after Christ’s resurrection, of that remarkable pouring out of the Spirit of God on the apostles and primitive Christians, and the place whence the Gospel was to sound forth into all the world. The place of the first Christian Church, that was to be, as it were, the mother of all other churches in the world. Agreeably to that prophecy, Isaiah 2:3-4, ‘Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem’” (*Work of Redemption*, Jonathan Edwards).

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

8. The Scriptures and the Promises

The divine promises make known the good pleasure of God's will unto His people, to bestow upon them the riches of His grace. They are the outward testifications of His heart, who from all eternity loved them and foreappointed all things for them and concerning them. In the person and work of His Son, God has made an all-sufficient provision for their complete salvation, both for time and eternity. To the intent that they might have a true, clear, and spiritual knowledge of the same, it has pleased the Lord to set it before them in the exceeding great and precious promises, which are scattered up and down in the Scriptures, as so many stars in the glorious firmament of grace. By the which, they may be assured of the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning them, and take sanctuary in Him accordingly. And through this medium, have real communion with Him in His grace and mercy at all times, no matter what their case or circumstances may be.

The divine promises are so many declarations to bestow some good or remove some ill. As such, they are a most blessed making known and manifesting of God's love to His people. There are three steps in connection with God's love. The first, His inward purpose to exercise it. The last, the real execution of that purpose. But in between, there is the gracious *making known* of that purpose to the beneficiaries of it. While love is concealed, we cannot be comforted therewith. Now God, who is "love," not only loves His own, and will not only show His love fully to them in due time, but in the interim, He will have us *informed* of His benevolent designs, that we may sweetly rest in His love, and stretch ourselves comfortably upon His sure promises. Thereby, we are able to say, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" (Psa 139:17).

In 2 Peter 1:4, the divine promises are spoken of as "exceeding great and precious." As Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) pointed out, "Greatness and preciousness seldom go together, but in this instance, they are united in an exceeding degree." When Jehovah is pleased to open His mouth and reveal His heart, He does so in a manner worthy of Himself in words of superlative power and richness. To quote again the beloved London pastor, "They come from a great God. They come to great sinners. They work for us great results, and deal with great matters." While the natural intellect is capable of perceiving much of their greatness, only the renewed heart can taste their ineffable preciousness, and say with David, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psa 119:103).

1. We are profited from the Word when we perceive *to whom the promises belong*. They are available only to those who are in Christ. "For all the promises of God *in Him* [the Lord Jesus] are yea, and in him amen" (2Co 1:20). There can be no intercourse between the thrice holy God and sinful creatures except through a Mediator, who has satisfied Him on their behalf. Therefore must that Mediator receive from God all good for His people, and they must have it at the

secondhand through Him. A sinner might just as well petition a tree, as call upon God for mercy while he despises and rejects Christ.

Both the promises and the things promised are made over to the Lord Jesus, and conveyed unto the saints from Him, “And this is *the* [chief and grandest] promise, that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (1Jo 2:25). And, as the same epistle tells us, “This life is in his Son” (1Jo 5:11). This being so, what good can they who are not yet in Christ have by the promises? None at all! A man out of Christ is out of the favour of God, yea, he is under His wrath. The divine threatenings, and not the promises, are *his* portion. Solemn, solemn consideration is this. Those who are “without Christ” are “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and *strangers* from the covenants of *promise*, having *no* hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). Only the “children of God” are “the children of the promise” (Rom 9:8). Make sure, my reader, that you are one of them.

How terrible, then, is the blindness and how great is the sin of those preachers who indiscriminately apply the divine promises unto saved and unsaved alike! They are not only taking “the children’s bread” and casting it to the “dogs,” but they are handling the “word of God deceitfully” (2Co 4:2), and beguiling immortal souls. Nor are they who listen to and heed them little less guilty, for God holds all responsible to search the Scriptures for themselves, and test whatever they hear or read by that unerring standard. If they are too lazy to do so, and prefer to blindly follow their blind guides, then, their blood is on their own heads. Truth has to be “bought” (Pro 23:23), and those who are unwilling to pay the price must go without it.

2. We are profited from the Word when we *labour to make our own* the promises of God. To do this, we must first take the trouble to become really acquainted with them. It is surprising how many promises there are in Scripture which the saints know nothing about. the more so seeing that *they* are the peculiar treasure of believers, the substance of faith’s heritage lying in them. True, Christians are already the recipients of wondrous blessings, yet, the capital of their wealth, the bulk of their estate, is only prospective. They have already received an “earnest,” but the better part of what Christ has purchased for them lies yet in the promise of God. How diligent, then, should they be in studying His testamentary will, familiarizing themselves with the good things which the Spirit “hath revealed” (1Co 2:10), and seeking to take an inventory of their spiritual treasures.

Not only must I search the Scriptures to find out what has been made over to me by the everlasting covenant, but I need also to *meditate* upon the promise to turn them over and over in my mind, and cry unto the Lord for a spiritual understanding of them. The bee would not extract any honey from the flowers as long as he only gazed upon them. Nor will the Christian derive any real comfort and strength from the divine promises until his faith lays hold of and penetrates to the heart of them. God has given no assurance that the dilatory shall be fed, but He has declared, “The soul of the diligent shall be made fat” (Pro 13:4). Therefore did Christ say, “*Labour* not for the meat which perisheth, but *for* that meat which endureth unto everlasting life” (Joh 6:27). It is only as the promises are stored up in our minds that the Spirit brings them to remembrance at those fainting seasons when we most need them.

3. We are profited from the Word when we *recognize the blessed scope* of God’s promises. “A sort of affectation prevents some Christians from seeking religion, as if its sphere lay among the commonplaces of daily life. It is to them transcendental and dreamy. Rather a creation of pious

fiction than a matter of fact. They believe in God, after a fashion, for things spiritual, and for the life which is to be. But they totally forget that true godliness hath the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come. To them, it would seem almost a profanation to pray about the small matters of which daily life is made up. Perhaps they will be startled if I venture to suggest that this should make them question the reality of their faith. If it cannot bring them help in little troubles of life, will it support them in the greater trials of death?" (Charles Spurgeon).

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having *promise* of the life that *now is*, and of that which is to come" (1Ti 4:8). Reader, do you really believe this, that the promises of God cover *every* aspect and particular of your present life? Or, have the "dispensationalists" deluded you into supposing that the Old Testament belongs only to the fleshly Jews, and that "*our promises*" respect spiritual and not material blessings? How many a Christian has derived comfort from, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb 13:5). Well, *that is* a quotation from Joshua 1:5! So, too, 2 Corinthians 7:1 speaks of "*Having therefore these promises*," yet, one of them referred to in 2 Corinthians 6:18 is taken from the book of Leviticus!

Perhaps someone asks, "But where am I to draw the line? Which of the Old Testament promises rightfully belong unto me?" We answer, "According unto *your faith* be it unto you" (Mat 9:29). Psalm 84:11 declares, "The LORD will give grace and glory: *no* good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." *If* you are really walking "uprightly," then, you are entitled to appropriate that blessed promise and count upon the Lord giving you whatever "good thing" is truly required by you. "My God shall supply *all* your need." (Phi 4:19). If, then, there is a promise *anywhere* in His Word, which just fits your present case and situation, then make it your own as suited to your "need"! Steadfastly resist every attempt of Satan to rob you of any portion of your Father's Word.

4. We are profited from the Word when we *make a proper discrimination between* the promises of God. Many of the Lord's people are frequently guilty of spiritual theft, by which we mean that they appropriate to themselves something to which they are not entitled, but which belongs to another. "Certain covenant engagements, made with the Lord Jesus Christ, as to His elect and redeemed ones, are altogether without condition, so far as we are concerned. But many other wealthy words of the Lord contain stipulations which must be carefully regarded, or we shall not obtain the blessing. One part of my reader's diligent search must be directed toward this most important point. God will keep His promise to thee. Only see thou to it that the way in which He conditions His engagement is carefully observed of thee. Only when we fulfill the requirement of a conditional promise can we expect that promise to be fulfilled to us" (Charles Spurgeon).

Many of the divine promises are addressed to particular characters, or, more correctly speaking, to particular *graces*. For example, in Psalm 25:9, the Lord declares that He will "guide in judgment" the *meek*. But, if I am out of communion with Him, if I am following a course of self-will, if my heart is haughty, then, I am not justified in taking unto myself the comfort of this verse. Again, in John 15:7, the Lord tells us, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." But, if I am not in experimental communion with Him, if His commands are not regulating my conduct, then, my prayers will remain unanswered. While God's promises proceed from pure grace, yet, it ever needs to be remembered that grace reigns "through righteousness" (Rom 5:21), and never sets aside human responsibility. If I ignore the laws of health, I must not be surprised that sickness prevents me

from enjoying many of God's temporal mercies. In like manner, if I neglect His precepts, I have only myself to blame if I fail to receive the fulfillment of many of His promises.

Let none suppose that, by His promises, God has obligated Himself to ignore the requirements of His holiness. He never exercises one of His perfections at the expense of another. And let none imagine that God would be magnifying the sacrificial work of Christ were He to bestow its fruits upon impenitent and careless souls. There is a *balance of truth* to be preserved here. Alas, that it is now so frequently lost, and that under the pretense of exalting divine grace, men are, really, "turning it into lasciviousness." How often one hears quoted, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee" (Psa 50:15). But that verse begins with, "And," and the preceding clause is "*pay thy vows* unto the Most High!" Again, how frequently is, "I will guide thee with mine eye" (Psa 32:8) seized by people who pay no attention to the context! But, *that* is God's promise to one who has "acknowledged" his sin and confessed his "transgressions" unto the Lord (Psa 32:5), who has made the Lord his "hiding place" (Psa 32:7). If, then, I have unconfessed sins on my conscience, and have leaned on the arm of flesh or sought help from my fellows, instead of waiting *only* upon God (Psa 62:5), then, I have no right to count upon the Lord's guiding me with His eye—which necessarily presupposes that I am walking in close communion with Him, for I cannot see the eye of another while at a distance from him.

5. We are profited from the Word when we are enabled to make God's promises *our support and stay*. This is one reason why God has given them to us. Not only to manifest His love by making known His benevolent intentions, but also to the comfort of our hearts and development of our faith. Had He so pleased, He could have bestowed His blessings without giving us notice of His purpose. The Lord might have given us all the mercies we needed without pledging Himself to do so. But, in that case, we could not have been believers. Faith without a promise would be a foot without ground to stand upon. Our tender Father planned that we should enjoy His gifts twice over. First, by faith, and, then, by fruition! By this means, He wisely weans our hearts away from the things seen and perishing, and draws them onward and upward to those things which are spiritual and eternal.

If there were no promises, not only would there be no faith, but no hope either. For what is hope, but the *expectation* of the things which God has declared He will give us? Faith looks to the Word promising, hope looks to the performance thereof. Thus it was with Abraham, "Who against hope believed in hope...and being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom 4:18-20). Thus it was with Moses, "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb 11:26). Thus it was with Paul, "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Act 27:25). Is it so with you, dear reader? Are the promises of Him who cannot lie the resting place of your poor heart?

6. We are profited from the Word when we *patiently await the fulfillment* of God's promises. God promised Abraham a son, but waited many years for the performance of it. Simeon had a promise that he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ (Luk 2:26), yet it was not made good to him till he had one foot in the grave. There is often a long and hard winter between the sowing time of prayer and the reaping of the answer. The Lord Jesus Himself has not yet received a full answer to the prayer He made in John 17, nineteen centuries ago. Many of the best

of God's promises to His people will not receive their richest accomplishment until they are in glory. He who has all eternity at His disposal needs not to hurry. God often makes us tarry so that patience may have "her perfect work," yet let us not distrust Him. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come" (Hab 2:3).

"These all died in faith, not having received the [fulfillment of the] promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them" (Heb 11:13). Here is comprehended the whole work of faith—knowledge, trust, loving adherence. The "afar off" refers to the things promised—those they "saw" with the mind, discerning the substance behind the shadow, discovering in them the wisdom and goodness of God. They were "persuaded." They doubted not, but were assured of their participation in them and knew they would not disappoint them. "Embraced them" expresses their delight and veneration, the heart cleaving to them with love, and cordially welcoming and entertaining them. The divine promises were the comfort and stay of their souls in all their wanderings, temptations, and sufferings.

Various ends are accomplished by God in delaying His execution of the promises. Not only is faith put to the proof, so that its genuineness may the more clearly appear, not only is patience developed and hope given an opportunity for exercise, but submission to the divine will is fostered. "The weaning process is not accomplished. We are still hankering after the comforts which the Lord intends us forever to outgrow. Abraham made a great feast when his son Isaac was weaned, and, peradventure, our heavenly Father will do the same with us. Lie down, proud heart! Quit thine idols. Forsake thy fond dotings, and the promised peace will come unto thee" (Charles Spurgeon).

7. We are profited from the Word when we make *a right use* of the promises. First, in our dealings with God Himself. When we approach unto His throne, it should be to plead one of His promises. They are to form not only the foundation for our faith to rest upon, but also the substance of our requests. We must ask according to God's will if we are to be heard, and His will is revealed in those good things which He has declared He will bestow upon us. Thus, we are to lay hold of His pledged assurances, spread them before Him, and say, "Do as thou hast said" (2Sa 7:25). Observe how Jacob pleaded the promise in Genesis 32:12, Moses in Exodus 32:13, David in Psalm 119:58, and Solomon in 1 Kings 8:25. Do thou, my Christian reader, likewise.

Second, in the life we live in the world. In Hebrews 11:13, we not only read of the patriarchs discerning, trusting, and embracing the divine promises, but we are also informed of the *effects* which they produced upon them. "And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth," which means they made a public avowal, an open profession of their faith. They acknowledged (and by their conduct demonstrated) that *their* interests were not in the things of this world. They had a satisfying portion in the promises they had appropriated. Their hearts were set upon things above, for where a man's treasure *is*, there *will* be his heart also (Luk 12:34).

"Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Co 7:1). That is the effect they should produce in us, and *will* if faith really lays hold of them. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: *that* by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2Pe 1:4). "Now the Gospel, and the precious promises, being graciously bestowed, and powerfully applied, have an influence on

purity of heart and behaviour, and teach men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly. Such are the powerful effects of Gospel promises under divine influence as to make men inwardly partakers of the divine nature, and outwardly to abstain from and avoid the prevailing corruptions and vices of the times” (John Gill, 1697-1771).

THE TRUE GOSPEL

The Gospel is a glorious display of mercy to a lost world. Originating in the sovereign, free, and unmerited grace of God, and proclaimed to mankind as a finished salvation through the sole merits, righteousness, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. In which rich plan of redemption, there are these striking particularities eminently distinguished. As first, the Gospel considers all men, universally speaking, as lost, and all equally incapable of putting forth a helping hand toward the attainment of their own salvation. For, it is the unalterable sense of Scripture, that it was, “When we were without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom 5:6). Observe the expression. Not simply when we were maimed or crippled in our faculties by reason of sin. Not when some strength remained, however small, which, when cooperating with other aid, might have procured our recovery. But when all possible resources in ourselves were lost, “without strength”—or, (as elsewhere more strongly expressed) when we were altogether “dead in trespasses and sins,” as if some mighty mountain had fallen upon our nature, and crushed all our powers.

And this view of mankind, in which the Gospel considers our nature as universally lost, represents it also as universally undeserving, in every instance, of divine favour. This forms a second striking feature in the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus makes no distinction in the objects of its clemency, as if one man became more worthy of grace than another. For the positive language of Scripture on this point is that “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). And however gratifying it may be to the unmortified pride of nature, when at any time making comparative views of man with man, to fancy one more excellent than his neighbor, the Gospel knows of no distinction but what grace hath made among creatures of universal depravity and corruption. Such notions may float on the imagination of the vain and unawakened, who are strangers to the plague of their own hearts, but they lose their very existence before God. The debtor of five hundred, or the debtor of fifty pence, being both alike insolvent and unable to pay, are both alike equally exposed to the prison, and must continue so forever, unless the goodness of the Almighty Creditor should pass an act of grace, and frankly forgive them their respective debts. Indeed, the dear Lord of His people, as if to encourage the most timid mind, when overpowered with the sense of multiplied transgressions, and to prevent all despondency, mercifully taught in this view of nature’s insolvency, in this very parable of the debtors, that as to the greatness or littleness of the debt, it is the same, both as it respects the state

of the sinner's mind in violating the divine precept, and as it concerns the divine mind in the exercise of mercy. The difference is wholly on the part of man, and not on the part of God. "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Our gratitude for pardoning love will be in proportion to the sense we have of its extent. For, though it may well be supposed that all ransomed debtors, when their fetters are broken off and the prison doors thrown open, will sing, "To the praise and glory of His grace" (Eph 1:6), by whom their salvation is procured, yet his will be the loudest note whose recovery hath been the most gracious, the most undeserved, and unexpected.

And what sums up and completes this finished view of the Gospel, is the third prominent character of it, in superadding to both of these gracious properties, this striking particularity, that it is altogether unconditional on the part of God, and requires no previous qualification or worth on the part of man. Indeed, the highly favoured objects of such bounty, as is shown in the Gospel, being all along considered as "without strength, and dead in trespasses and sins; and having the sentence of death in themselves, that they should not trust in themselves, but in him who raiseth the dead" (2Co 1:9). It would be a contradiction in terms to suppose that characters so described should be capable of anything to help, or bring anything to recommend them to the divine favour. For even "repentance and faith," those most essential qualifications of the mind, for the participation and enjoyment of the blessings of the Gospel (and which all real disciples of the Lord Jesus cannot but possess) are never supposed as a condition which the sinner performs to entitle him to mercy, but merely as evidences that he is brought, and hath obtained mercy. They cannot be the conditions of obtaining salvation, for, like the Gospel itself, both faith and repentance are the immediate result of divine operation, and are the gift of God.

The same hand which bestows the Gospel, bestows also faith and repentance, or the sinner would never obtain them. The blessed Redeemer of mankind is called both the author and finisher of faith, and is said to be exalted to give repentance and remission of sins. And when His servant, the apostle, declares that believers are saved by grace through faith, he as positively declares also that this is the gift of God. "Unto you [he says], it is given to believe" (Phi 1:29). I could as easily create a world, as create either faith or repentance in my own heart. Both are of divine origin, and, like the light, and the rain and the dew of heaven, "which tarrieth not for man, neither waiteth for the sons of men" (Mic 5:7), are from above, and "come down from the Father of lights, from whom alone cometh every good and every perfect gift" (Jam 1:17).

This view of the Gospel (and which certainly is the only true view of it) serves to place it in that light which corresponds with our purest and most exalted notions of the beneficence of God, and answers to all the necessities of man. For it consists of nothing but invitations, promises, assurances, and the strongest declarations of mercy, followed up by innumerable instances of those who have been made the happy partakers of it, from one end of the Bible to the other. It seems to court the observation, to solicit the attention, and to invite the acceptance of the miserable and the wretched to its warmest embraces. And, that no broken-hearted sinner might despair in fancying himself placed beyond the reach of this rich tide of mercy, which flows continually without ebbing, it is not enough to say, that it washes on the shore of the undeserving, but it reaches to the ground of the ill-deserving. Not barely to those who have done nothing to merit mercy, but even to those who have done everything to merit punishment. It arises, therefore, above high water-mark, overflows all bounds, overtops even the tallest mountains of corruption,

and demonstrates what one of the apostles declared, and thousands of sinners have found to be true, that “Where sin abounded, grace hath much more abounded” (Rom 5:20).

Such being undeniably the state of the case in reference to the Gospel, and which, on account of the boundless extent of its mercy, is very properly termed “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” it next follows, that to preach the Gospel under any limitations, restrictions, or reserve whatever, in proposing *conditions* to the sinner as *constituting his title* to a participation of its blessings, is to invert the very order of the Gospel. And, instead of holding forth salvation to the *lost*, is only to propose strength to the *whole*. Just as absurd would it be in a physician to send away his patient, when labouring under some desperate disease, with a recommendation to do *his utmost* towards his own cure, and then, come to him to finish it—as it is in the minister of the Gospel to propose to the sinner to *do his best*, by way of healing the disease of the soul, and then, come to the Lord Jesus to perform his recovery. The only previous qualification is to know our misery, and the remedy is prepared. And as the Lord Jesus Himself, when upon earth, in opening His commission in the synagogue of Nazareth, declared that, “He was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to give deliverance to the captives, to give sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luk 4:18-19), it must follow, by an undeniable inference, that the office to which He hath appointed His servants, who minister in His name, is to preach freely and fully the same Gospel of salvation.

I consider, therefore, the several churches of Christ on earth as so many market-places of public resort, established for this express purpose, where *proclamation* is continually supposed to be made to the poor, and to the wretched, the weary, and heavy-laden, to come with their several wants unto Him, who alone can supply them, and give rest unto their souls, without money and without price. And it is very certain, that the various ordinances of worship, which the Lord Jesus hath appointed in His church, are for this purpose, and this only—that they may become so many channels of communication, between Christ and His people, by which empty, needy, distressed, and burdened sinners may bring their wants and their cares, their sorrows and their sins, before the Lord, and receive a suitable supply out of His abundant fulness, and “grace for grace” (Joh 1:16). And were I to drop into a church of Christians, professing the eternal truths of the Gospel, and found not evidences of these things, but discovered that moral essays were supplying the place of evangelical truths, that the person of the Lord Jesus, and His precious offices to lost souls, were not made the great topic of discourse, I should be led to conclude that I had mistaken my path, and had fallen into a synagogue of the Jews, and not the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My brother in the ministry (if peradventure one of the sacred order should condescend to be among my readers) shall I intreat you not to be offended with this statement of the case, neither hastily turn away from the serious consideration of a subject which involves, in its final consequences, the everlasting welfare both of ourselves and our people? Do not fancy that this doctrine leads to licentiousness, or that any poor *self-condemned* and heart-broken sinner, can possibly adopt the horrible maxim of “continuing in sin that grace may abound” (Rom 6:1). And for characters of a different description, with whom both the awful threats of the law, and the sweet allurements of the Gospel have lost all their influence, there can be no apprehension. They wrest *whatever* is preached, as they do also the “Scriptures themselves, unto their own destruction” (2Pe 3:16). And, would any man, in compliment to such persons, hold forth a restrained, mutilated, half-preached Gospel?

For my part, I am not afraid to imitate Him in whose service I minister, by preaching a full, free, and finished salvation, through the sole merits, death, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And while I trace the footsteps of mercy in His history when upon earth, in going about the streets of Jerusalem, constantly inviting sinners to come to Him for life and salvation—while I see Him now with the eye of faith on His throne of glory, calling unto such persons in all the ends of the earth, to “look unto him and be saved” (Isa 45:22)—while every ordinance of worship is uniformly directed to follow up the Saviour’s declaration of mercy, that, “If any man thirst and come to him, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (Joh 7:37-38)—and while the “Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17)—I am not afraid to echo these glorious proclamations of grace, nor fear I to exceed my commission in declaring that, “He can and will save to the uttermost them that come to God by him; and that all that do come he will in no wise cast out.” Nay, in the market-days of His church, were I to perceive a case of more than ordinary wretchedness, in some poor *self-loathing* sinner, who, like the publican Christ describes, dared not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, I should particularly direct my message to *him*, and say, “To *you* is the word of this salvation *sent*.” For the only difference known in the church of the Lord Jesus is that which arises from a penitential sense of wretchedness, and faith in divine mercy. And where these qualities have the precedence, the most famished and the most hungry, after the person and righteousness of the Redeemer, are first to be supplied. But while I feel a growing confidence in thus publishing salvation according to the directions of the Saviour, forgive me if I add, I cannot but be awfully concerned for those who restrain the truths of redemption, and preach Gospel-mercies as if they were the *sale*, and not the *free gift* of God.

My poor brother, for whom I write, whose heart the Lord hath touched with a sense of sin, and a desire of salvation, and whose self-condemnation every action subscribes to, hear the call of grace. And while the heavenly voice sweetly sounds, “Return, thou backslider, and I will heal your backsliding” (Jer 3:22), let your whole soul echo back to the gracious invitation, “Behold I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God.” But from man, I turn to the Lord. I know that everything is alike ineffectual unless directed to the heart from above. Will the Lord be graciously pleased to commission my feeble call with His divine power, and send it to the heart of some poor self-condemned and despairing sinner! And if the success of my embassy be never known upon earth, it will open a new source of thanksgiving and joy, when the writer and reader shall meet before the throne of glory, mutually striving which hath most cause to sing the loudest note to the praise of redeeming grace, in ascribing “Salvation to God and the Lamb” (Robert Hawker, 1753-1827).

THE TWO BUILDERS

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth* them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth them not*, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it” (Mat 7:24-27).

Our present passage is intimately related to what was before us in Matthew 7:13-14. Ere considering its details, let me summarize what we took up last night, amplifying a little some of the principal points. All mankind are *travellers*, journeying to a future destiny. But the great majority conduct themselves as though they will live on and on, forever in this world. The “ways” in which they walk are many and varied, but all may be reduced to two—the narrow way, which “leadeth unto life,” and the broad road, which “leadeth to destruction.” The latter has everything to commend itself to the nature of fallen man. It exactly suits his depraved inclinations, all the desires of his soul lying in that direction. It is easy to enter, for it has a “wide gate.” There is no lack of company, for the vast majority both of the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate, are found therein. Thus, those who are on the broad road have the majority on their side, and with most people, that is a great matter. But the “end thereof are the ways of *death*” (Pro 14:12).

Now, the narrow way is exceedingly hard and disagreeable to the flesh. Great difficulty attends the entrance upon it, for to “enter” it, all idols must be given up without a single reserve, and *that* is terribly hard work to a corrupt heart. But self *has to be* “denied,” the “cross” taken up, and Christ “followed,” if heaven is to be reached. Such a task is likened to the “cutting off” of a right hand, and the “plucking out” of a right eye (Mat 5:29-30). Great difficulty attends our progress along the narrow way. There will be fierce opposition from the world, particularly from the *religious* world. Professing Christians will be all the time tempting you to *compromise*, and Satan will tell you that *they* are not strictly conforming their lives to the commands and precepts of Scripture, so why should *you*? So, too, there will be sore temptations from within—deceit in the heart, which loves to call the sweet “bitter,” light “darkness,” liberty “bondage and legality.” Moreover, you will have *very little* company. You will meet with scarcely any that encourage you to live as a “stranger and pilgrim” in this world, few who make it the one business of their lives to *please God*.

Not only does great difficulty attend the entrance upon and continuance in this narrow way, but especially does great difficulty attend our *enduring to the end* along this path and winning through to heaven. Many make a start. Some go on for quite a distance, but only a fractional minority *persevere* in practical godliness and actually *overcome* the flesh, the world, and the devil. Let me prove this to you from Scripture. Of old, God said, “O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the

early dew *it goeth away*” (Hos 6:4). How accurately and how solemnly, do these words describe many whom we knew some years ago!

“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth [lasteth] *for a while*: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended” (Mat 13:20-21). This passage finds its fulfillment in the large number of those who “make a profession,” who claim to have “accepted Christ as their personal Saviour,” and whose beaming countenances and joyous words seem to show that they have been saved. But alas, all is not gold that glitters. The *sequel* is disappointing. They do not wear. When the time of testing arrives, they are “weighed in the balances and *found wanting*.”

“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (Joh 6:66). The words, “no more,” clearly show that these disciples had once “walked” outwardly with Christ. That is, they had taken their place among those who profess to be His followers. But now, they were offended, and so deserted His cause. Nor were they ever recovered from their backsliding. “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2Ti 4:10). Here was one who had, for a brief season, companied with the apostle Paul. But the self-denying discipline which this demanded was too much for him, and the allurements of the world proved too strong and attractive. What force do these Scriptures give to that pointed exhortation, “Let *us labour* therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (Heb 4:11)!

Yes, my friends, this narrow way which leads to heaven *is* difficult, and those who tell you that the saving of the soul is an easy and simple matter are “false prophets” (Mat 7:15), deceivers (2Ti 3:13), blind leaders of the blind. The narrow way is *difficult* to enter, difficult to tread, difficult to follow unto the end. It is a “fight” (1Ti 6:12). That is why the question is asked, “And if the righteous *scarcely* be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1Pe 4:18). That is why Christ declared, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Mat 19:24). This it is which supplies the key to Luke 14:26-33, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he *cannot* be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth *the cost*, whether he hath sufficient to finish it?...Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able...So *likewise*, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be *my* disciple.”

Let me now refer you to other passages wherein this same narrow way which “leadeth unto life” is referred to under various names or titles. “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep *the way* of the Lord, to do justice and judgment” (Gen 18:19). “And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them *the way*” (Exo 13:21). “They have turned aside quickly out of *the way*” (Exo 32:8). “That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep *the way* of the LORD” (Jdg 2:22). “God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and *the right way*” (1Sa 12:23). “And he forsook the LORD God of his fathers, and walked not in *the way of the LORD*” (2Ki 21:22). “Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make *thy way* straight before my face” (Psa 5:8). “The meek will he teach *his way*” (Psa 25:9). “Blessed are the undefiled *in the way*, who walk in the law of the LORD” (Psa 119:1). “I

will run *the way of thy commandments*, when thou shalt enlarge my heart” (Psa 119:32). “I have taught thee in *the way of wisdom*” (Pro 4:11). “I lead in *the way of righteousness*” (Pro 8:20). “He is in *the way of life* that keepeth instruction” (Pro 10:17). “And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the *way of holiness*; the unclean shall not pass over it” (Isa 35:8). “Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not *the way of the LORD*” (Jer 5:4). “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is *the good way*, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk therein’” (Jer 6:16). “And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom *the way of truth* shall be evil spoken of...Which have forsaken *the right way*...For it had been better for them not to have known *the way of righteousness*, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2Pe 2:2, 15, 21). All of these passages refer to the same narrow “way.”

Now, let us turn to Matthew 7:24-27 (carefully comparing Luke 6:47-49), which records Christ’s concluding words in His Sermon on the Mount. This passage suggests four questions. First, *whom* do the two “builders” represent? Second, what is the “house” here a figure of? Third, exactly what is denoted by the “foundation”? Fourth, what is pictured by the “rain, floods, and winds”?

1. The Two Builders

The two builders represent two classes of professing Christians, one of which are “wise,” the other “foolish.” Hence, they correspond with the “wise” and “foolish” virgins of Matthew 25. While in the case of the two groups of “virgins,” there was a real and vital difference between them, yet outwardly and in a superficial way, they had not a little in common. All went forth to “meet the Bridegroom,” all posed as “virgins,” all carried in their hands the “lamp” of profession. That wherein they differed was not apparent till *the time of testing* came. The foolish had “no oil” in their vessels—no supernatural work of the Spirit had been wrought in their hearts. So it is here. The two builders had three things in common.

First, each of them was alike impressed with *the need* of erecting a building. What, then, is signified by the “house” here? If we attend to all the details of the passage, there should be no difficulty in interpreting this figure aright. The “house” here denotes a shelter, a shelter from the approaching storm, or in other words, a refuge from the wrath to come. Thus, both of these men represent to us those who had been impressed of their need of a Saviour.

Second, each of them was alike resolved *to set about the obtaining of* that which they felt they needed. Neither of them procrastinated, nor neglected their welfare. In this respect, both of them were very different from the great crowds of sinners who read or listen to the preaching of God’s Word without any personal concern. Each of these men went to work, or made it their aim to get saved, for *that is* what the building of the house against the coming storm sets forth.

Third, each of them *finished* his house, and apparently was quite satisfied that a *secure refuge* had been obtained. This it is which is so very solemn and searching in our passage. There is a large class of people in Christendom today, who have been alarmed by thoughts of eternal punishment, and who suppose that they have fled to Christ for refuge, but who are sadly

mistaken. “The Lord is far from the wicked” (Pro 15:29), and can only be approached as our hearts repudiate and turn with loathing away from all that is abhorrent to Him. But this is what the vast majority will not do. They continue to hug their idols and please the flesh until they land in hell. Here, all in common between the two builders ends. Let us now ponder some contrasts.

2. The Two Buildings

1. The second one built his “house” *much more quickly* than did the first. Perhaps you ask, “What ground have I for saying so?” The answer is very simple. The second man did no labourious digging, for he merely erected his house upon the sand. Thus, he clearly represents those sinners who get saved easily (without much trouble), or *think* they do—they will yet discover that that “salvation,” which they got so cheaply, is worth nothing! O my friends, those preachers who are telling people that *all* they have to do is consent to God’s verdict that they are lost sinners, and then accept Christ as their personal Saviour, are chloroforming thousands into hell. Yes, that is plain speaking, but our degenerate and apostate age calls for it.

2. Thus, the second man built his “house” *with far less trouble* than did the first, of whom it is said that he “digged deep” (Luk 6:48). I have no doubt that the one who erected his building on the sand considered his neighbor very foolish to toil and sweat as he did. Probably he prided himself on the *ease* with which his house went up. In like manner, there are many complacent persons in Christendom today who look down with disdain on those who are deeply distressed as to whether or no they have sinned beyond the possibility of divine forgiveness, and who find that to “forsake all” for Christ is the hardest thing in the world. Yes, there are those who despise the few who are giving diligence to make their “calling and election sure” (2Pe 1:10), being too dilatory to “*prove their own selves*” (2Co 13:5), and to take thorough pains to examine whether *their* repentance is genuine, and *their* faith that of “God’s elect” (Ti 1:1).

3. But though the second man got through his task much more quickly and easily than the other one, yet *his* “house” had *no real* and solid *foundation* to rest upon! The plough of the law had never done its work in his conscience. His heart had never been changed and renewed. He had a theoretical knowledge of the truth, but no deep, inward acquaintance with it, no experience of its transforming power.

4. Let us now look at the other builder, who digged deep and founded his house on the rock. *Whom* does he represent? The Lord Himself has here told us, “Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine [in the Sermon on the Mount], and doeth them” (Mat 7:24). It is the man who (by divine grace—diligently sought) conforms his whole inner and outer life to *the teachings of Christ*, whose whole character was formed and whose entire conduct is regulated by them. Such a one has a *Scriptural* ground upon which to base his hope, and none others have. The truly saved man is the *converted* one, who has undergone a complete round-about-face. Who is no longer “conformed to this world,” but who has been “transformed by the renewing of his mind” (Rom 12:2).

3. The Two Buildings Tested

Whether your profession be genuine or no, it will be tested. Whether it be wheat or chaff, the fan of the great Winnower will surely be brought into operation upon all that lies on His threshing floor. “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God [the sphere of Christian profession]; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1Pe 4:17). This “judgment” or testing is twofold, as is the meaning of the storm which beat upon the “house”—in *this* life, and also in the Day to come. In our present passage, the testing is of a threefold character.

1. “The rain descended” (Mat 7:25) from heaven. Here, we have a figure of *afflictions from God*. The Lord sends trials and tribulations so as to test us out. He has various ways of proving people—disappointments, sorrows, thwarting our plans, sickness, financial losses, the death of loved ones. The response of the heart, the manner in which we act in times of adversity, reveals our true state. If unregenerate, we are unable to bear up under the afflictions of divine providence. If we have no genuine faith, our unbelieving heart will betray itself by acting as the worldling does—seeking to drown the sorrow in fleshly pleasures, or sinking in despair.

2. “The floods came,” (Mat 7:25) or as Luke 6:48 says, “The flood *arose*.” Thus, it is a thing of the earth which is here in view, namely, *opposition from the world*. These also soon test the professor, and show whether or no his claim to being a Christian is genuine. That opposition from the world assumes many forms. Sometimes, it is ridicule—and how often have the gibes and sneers of the godless tumbled down the “house” of those who made a fair show in the flesh! In other cases, it is reproach and slander, unfair boycotting, open persecution. Only those who have “digged deep,” and have a rock foundation, will bear up under them. Not that the ones exposed always drop their Christian profession entirely. Far from it! Often they retain *the name*, but, to escape the “reproach of Christ,” hide their light under a bushel.

3. “And the winds blew and beat upon that house” (Mat 7:25). Here it is the Prince of the power of the air who is at work. In other words, it is *the power of Satan* testing the one who claims to have been saved. He employs many tactics. Alluring baits, subtle temptations, as well as fierce attacks, are used by him. He beguiles with error, and only those who are established in the truth can withstand him. He attracts by the world, and only they whose “treasure” is in heaven scorn his gilded baubles. He suggests a compromise, the serving of two masters, and only those who have truly “received Christ Jesus *the Lord*” (Col 2:6) resist him.

4. “And it fell, and great was the fall thereof” (Mat 7:27). It was erected on the “sand,” which will bear no weight. The “sand” here stands not only for false doctrinal views (trusting in our own doings to earn heaven thereby), but also for a false basis of hope, a false ground of confidence. There is no other way of being saved from sin and self except by repenting and being *converted*. Nothing short of a complete surrender of the heart and life to Christ’s authority, speaking in His Word, will ensure any soul’s reaching heaven. If we are strangers to the transforming power of Christ’s teachings, we shall eternally perish.

Ere closing, let me anticipate and honestly meet a plain question. Then, does this passage teach salvation by works? Yes, and No! Yes, in the sense that none will enter heaven *without* good works to their account. Genuine Christians are a people whom God has “created in Christ

Jesus unto good works” (Eph 2:10). When speaking of the resurrection, Christ declared, “And shall come forth, they that have *done good*, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (Joh 5:29). But, No, in the sense that any of our works are the *meritorious cause* of salvation. The worthiness and work of Christ alone entitles any sinner to the inheritance of the saints in light. Nevertheless, none can scripturally furnish evidence that *they* possess that title, save those who are “zealous of good works” (Ti 2:14). “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith *without* works is DEAD” (Jam 2:20).

The above is an address delivered by the editor in Glenolden on September 29, 1931.

PRAISE THE LORD

Once again, the God of all grace has granted the petitions of His people, and responded to that simple faith that He *would* supply all our need. On November 18 (the usual date), we closed the books of this magazine for 1931, with a balance to the good of \$8.89 (37/-), and this, without asking anyone for a penny. “Great is thy faithfulness” (Lam 3:23). The Lord *never* fails those who trust in Him with all their heart and lean not unto their own understanding (Pro 3:5), though He may test our faith and try our patience. The God of Elijah still lives and reigns.

We trust that the many prayer-helpers, which God has so graciously given us, will join the editor and his helpmate in fervent praise and thanksgiving unto Him who says, “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine” (Hag 2:8). In these degenerate days of soliciting help and begging money for what poses as “The Lord’s work” (sure proof it is not such, for God *always* maintains what is of Himself!), we pray this testimony will rebound to the glory of God and encourage many of His dear people. O that He may speedily deliver His sheep from the hungry wolves who now seek to rob them of their fleece.

It is a holy privilege to have fellowship with any work which is truly of God. It is a solemn thing to help support anything which is of the devil posing as an angel of light. The Lord grant each of us all necessary discernment. Many an enterprise which began “in the Spirit” has ended “in the flesh.” The Lord has departed from numerous churches and institutions which once enjoyed His presence and blessing. To support such is to oppose Him and not to help His cause. Beware of all who *solicit* money!



MARCH

THE PROPHETIC OFFICE OF CHRIST

The *general office* with which our Redeemer was invested by His Father is that of *Mediator* between God and men. To discharge that great office, it was necessary that He become incarnate, that He should take into union with His divine person a holy and perfect humanity. The manner in which He was fitted for the discharge of His office was by His “anointing,” by receiving the Holy Spirit without measure. The character of His mediatorial office involved the threefold functions of the prophet, priest, and king, which was typed out in Old Testament times by the anointing of prophets, priests, and kings—none other being formally and officially anointed. These three functions are not three separate offices, but are the varied activities of the one office of Mediator. Nor are they separate functions capable of successive and isolated performance. “They are rather like the several functions of the one living human body—as of the lungs in inhalation, as of the heart in circulation, and of the brain and spinal column in innervation. They are functions distinct, yet, interdependent and so, together constitute one life. So the functions of prophet, priest, and king mutually imply one another. Christ is always a prophetic Priest, a priestly Prophet, and He is always a royal Priest and priestly King, and together they accomplish one redemption, to which they are equally essential” (Archibald A Hodge, 1823-1886).

The exercise of this threefold function of the mediatorial office was requisite for the complete deliverance of Christ’s people by the circumstances in which the Fall had placed them. In other words, the moral condition, in which they lay as sinners, makes it evident that not one of the three branches of His mediatorial office could be dispensed with. His people were immersed in ignorance, guilt, pollution, and bondage. “Their ignorance is removed by the discharge of His prophetic office, their guilt by His priestly, and their pollution and bondage by His kingly office. As a Prophet, He dispels the darkness of their understandings. As a Priest, He atones for their sins. As a King, He delivers them from the bondage of depravity. He reveals God to us as a Prophet. He brings us near to God as a Priest. He renews us after the image of God as King” (John Dick, 1764-1833). Therefore are we told that God has made Christ to be unto us “wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1Co 1:30).

Coming now more directly to the prophetic office of Christ, or, more accurately, the prophetic function of His mediatorship, a “prophet” is one who speaks for another. See Exodus 7:1 and compare Exodus 4:14-16. In spiritual concerns, a “prophet” is one who speaks to men from God. Hence, he must be a “seer” (1Sa 9:9), one who discerns the needs of men and who

knows the mind of God, and, hence, is qualified to speak in God's name. Thus, a "prophet" is one who speaks in an eminent and extraordinary manner. He speaks by divine inspiration, whether the subject relates to the past, the present, or the future. When the term is applied to Christ, it is used in its utmost latitude, to denote that He is the great Messenger of God, the Revealer of His counsels, the full and final Manifestation of the divine character, so that He could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (Joh 14:9).

Of old, God declared unto Moses, "I will raise them up a *Prophet* from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him" (Deu 18:18-19). This was one of the great Messianic predictions. It announced that the supreme Spokesman of God should be of Israel, according to the flesh. That He should be like unto Moses, the typical mediator. That He would deliver the whole message of God, and that they who despised Him would do so at their imminent peril.

In all things, Christ has the pre-eminence. As Prophet, He far excels all other prophets. First, unto each of them was communicated only a fraction of heavenly knowledge. But of the Mediator, it is written, "For it pleased the Father that in him should *all* fulness dwell" (Col 1:19). Second, they received the Spirit only in measure—He, "without measure" (Joh 3:34). Third, they were unable to fully understand their own message (1Pe 1:11). Christ had a perfect comprehension of the whole truth of God. Fourth, they could not add one word, with the same authority and infallibility, to what they had spoken or written. But He, having "*all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3) stored up within Himself, did at all times and places give forth the mind and will of God as He would, so that what He spoke had its whole authority from *His* speaking it, and not from an agreement unto anything previously revealed. Finally, Christ was not simply the Messenger, but in His own person was also the Message itself. "The law was *given by* Moses, but grace and truth *came by* [were perfectly embodied in and personified by] Jesus Christ" (Joh 1:17). He was Himself all that He spake (Joh 8:25).

"When contemplating Jesus Christ simply as a divine person, we must consider Him as the uncreated source of all intelligence and wisdom. He is 'the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world' (Joh 1:9). In His mediatorial character, however, He speaks not properly in His own name, but in the name of Him who gave Him His commission, and brings to us the Father's message. Hence, we say that He was invested with the prophetic office, implying that He acted a subordinate part, and by the authority of Another. What has now been stated is conformable to His own declarations of which the following are a specimen. 'My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me' (Joh 7:16). 'For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak' (Joh 12:49) (John Dick).

The *exercise* of Christ's prophetic function may be considered in three distinct periods. The first, from the Fall to His birth. For, although He was not incarnate, He was the appointed Saviour of His people, and, as far as was consistent with His present state, He acted the part of a mediator. The assumption of our nature was not indispensably necessary to prepare Him for giving instruction to men, although every gracious communication to His people pre-supposed that event as afterwards to take place, and was made in the view of it. The theophanies, or appearances of a divine person in human form, who delivered commands and promises to the patriarchs, anticipated and adumbrated the divine incarnation.

The second period extended from the birth of Christ, or more properly, from His baptism, when He entered upon His public ministry, to His death. During this period, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, “declared” Him unto men with His own lips (Joh 1:18). The eternal *Word* had become flesh to reveal the invisible God. He was the “brightness [or “outshining”] of his glory” (Heb 1:3), for in Christ incarnate is God alone fully manifested (1Ti 3:16). The “Wonderful, Counsellor” had now been born among men (Isa 9:6). The “messenger of the covenant” had come suddenly to His temple (Mal 3:1). God’s great “Apostle” (Heb 3:1) had been sent unto men. The people themselves acknowledged Him as such, saying, “A great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people” (Luk 7:16). “Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that *prophet* that should come into the world” (Joh 6:14). “Many of the people therefore...said, Of a truth this is *the Prophet*” (Joh 7:40).

The third period extends from the ascension of Christ, or rather from the day of Pentecost, when He poured out the Holy Spirit upon His apostles, to the end of the world. But this period may be sub-divided into two portions, according to the difference in the mode of administration. In the first, He instructed the Church by *extraordinary* means. The apostles were inspired by Christ and fitted by the Spirit to deliver unto the world the revelations made to them. “When he ascended upon high, he...gave gifts unto men...and he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets” (Eph 4:8, 11). Thus, there was no difference in respect of authority between the doctrine of the apostles and that delivered by Christ Himself. They are equally *His Word*, and to be received with the same submission of mind, and the same undoubting confidence.

The last period of the ministry of Christ as Prophet reaches from the close of divine revelation until the end of time. During this interval, He exercises His office by *ordinary* means, that is, by the Scriptures, which men are required to read and understand, by His ministers, who are appointed to expound and apply them, and by His Spirit, through whose agency the understanding is enlightened, the affections inflamed, the will moved to action, the soul fed and built up, the life reformed and transformed. Therefore, do we find the Scriptures representing Christ as *still* addressing us from on High. “If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven” (Heb 12:25). Whatever knowledge of God and His will, of the purpose and power of His grace, of the realization of the world to come, is found among men, has been derived from the prophetic ministry of the Lord Jesus.

“As there is but one sun in the heavens, from which light has flowed to irradiate every region of the earth, throughout the successive generations of mankind, so, our Redeemer is the one source of all the spiritual wisdom which has enlightened men from the beginning of the world in whatever form it has been communicated—whether as a record of the past, or a prediction of the future, a disclosure of mysteries which reason could not discover, or an authoritative publication of the will of the Supreme. And, hence, originates the *unity* of revelation, the harmony that *binds together* the Jewish and the Christian Scriptures, the *identity* in respect of substance, of the religions of the antediluvians and the men of the present age. For, great as the difference seems to be upon a superficial view, it is reduced to this single point, that the germ contained in the first notices of it has now developed itself, and yields fruits in abundance” (John Dick, from whom the four preceding paragraphs are also condensed).

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

51. Christian Perseverance (10:23-24)

The verses which are now to be before us are a continuation of those which we pondered in our last article, the whole forming a practical application to the doctrine which the apostle had been expounding in the body of this epistle. In Hebrews 10:17-21, a summary is given of the inestimable blessings and privileges which Christ has secured for His people, namely, their sins and iniquities being blotted out from before the face of the Judge of all (Heb 10:17-18), the title to approach unto God as acceptable worshippers (Heb 10:19-21), and the divine provision for their spiritual maintenance—a great Priest over the house of God (Heb 10:21). Then, in Hebrews 10:22-24, the duties and responsibilities of Christians are briefly epitomized, and that, in such terms as we may the better perceive the intimate connection between the results secured by the great Oblation and the corresponding obligations on its beneficiaries.

The passage we are now engaged with is a hortatory one. As we pointed out in our last, the method which is generally followed by the Holy Spirit is to first display the riches of divine grace, and, then, to set forth the response which becomes its objects. So it is here. All that is found in Hebrews 10:22-24 looks back to and derives its force from the, “Therefore,” at the beginning of verse 19. There is a threefold privilege named—Divine grace has given freedom unto all Christians to approach the heavenly mercy-seat (Heb 10:19). It has bestowed this title through Christ’s having “consecrated” for them the way into God’s presence (Heb 10:20). And this blessing is permanent, because there abides a great Priest to mediate for them (Heb 10:21). Agreeing thereto, there is a threefold responsibility resting upon the saint, set forth thus, “Let us draw near” (Heb 10:22). “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith” (Heb 10:23). “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love” (Heb 10:24).

The first part of this threefold exhortation matches the first blessing named in the preceding verses. Because the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ has made a perfect and effectual atonement for all the sins of His people, (thereby removing the one great legal barrier which excluded them from the presence of the thrice Holy One), let them freely “draw near” unto their reconciled God, without fear or doubting. The second part of this exhortation agrees with the second great blessing specified. Since Christ has “consecrated for us” a new and living way in which to walk, having left us an example that we should follow His steps, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering” (Heb 10:23). The third member of the composite exhortation corresponds to the third privilege enumerated. Since we have a great Priest over the house of God, “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (Heb 10:24), and thus, conduct ourselves becomingly as in His house.

The order in the three parts of this exhortation calls for our closest attention. The first treats of our relation to God—the worshipping of Him in spirit and in truth, and in order to this, the maintaining of a good conscience and the separating of ourselves from all that pollutes. The second deals with our conduct before men in the world—the refusal to be poisoned by their unbelief and lawlessness, and this by a steady perseverance in the path of duty. The third defines

our responsibility toward fellow-Christians—the mortifying of a selfish spirit, by keeping steadily in view the highest welfare of our brethren and sisters, seeking to encourage them by a godly example, and thus, stirring them up unto holy diligence and zeal both Godward and manward. Thus, we may see how very comprehensive is the scope of this exhortation, and admire its beautiful arrangement. How much we often miss through failing to carefully note the *connection* of Scripture!

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised” (Heb 10:23). There is some uncertainty as to the Greek here. Some manuscripts having, “faith,” others, “hope.” Both the Revised Version and Bagster’s Interlinear have “the confession of our [the] hope.” It seems to us that the Authorized Version is to be preferred. For while it is true that if we adopt the alternative, we then have “faith” in verse 22, “hope” in verse 23, and “love” in verse 24, yet this is more than offset by the weighty fact that *perseverance in the faith* is the theme which is steadily followed by the apostle, not only throughout the remainder of this tenth chapter, but also throughout the eleventh. We shall, therefore, adhere to our present version, excepting that “confession” is preferable to “profession.”

“Let us hold fast the profession of faith without wavering” (Heb 10:23). The duty here pressed is the same as that which the apostle has spoken of in each parenthesis in his argument (compare Heb 2:1-3; 3:6 to 4:12; 5:11 to 6:20)—the doctrinal section giving force and power unto it. “Faith is here taken in both the principal acceptations of it, namely, that faith whereby we believe, and the faith or doctrine which we do believe. Of both which, we make the same profession—of one, as the inward principle, of the other, as the outward rule. This solemn profession of our faith is two-fold—initial, and by the way of continuation in all the acts and duties required thereunto. The first is a solemn giving up of ourselves unto Christ, in a professed subjection unto the Gospel, *and* the ordinances of divine worship therein contained” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

“Let us hold fast the profession of faith without wavering” (Heb 10:23). Three questions here call for consideration. Namely, first, what is meant by “the confession of our faith”? Second, what is signified by “holding it fast”? Third, what is denoted by holding it fast “without wavering”? As the theme here treated of is of such vital importance, and as it is dealt with so very unsatisfactorily by many present-day preachers, we will endeavor to exercise double care as the Spirit is pleased to enable us.

The “confession of our faith” is that solemn acknowledgment which is made by a person when he publicly claims to be a Christian. It is the avowal that he has renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil, for Christ. It is the declaration that he disowns his own wisdom, righteousness, and will, and receives the Lord Jesus as his Prophet, Priest, and King. His Prophet to instruct him in the will of God. His Priest to meet for him the claims of God. His King to administer in and over him the government of God. It is the owning that he hates sin and desires to be delivered from its power and penalty. That he loves holiness and longs to be conformed to the image of God’s Son. It is the claiming that he has thrown down the weapons of his warfare against God, and has now completely surrendered to His just demands upon him. It is the testifications that he is prepared to deny self, take up his cross daily, and follow that example which Christ has left him as to how to *live for God* in this world. In a word, it is the publishing abroad that he has from his very heart “received Christ Jesus *the Lord*” (Col 2:6). And let it be said plainly and emphatically, that no one acknowledging *less* than this is scripturally entitled to be regarded as a Christian.

“The apostle spends the whole remainder of the epistle in the pressing and confirming of *this* exhortation, on a compliance wherewith the *eternal* condition of our souls *doth depend*. And this he doth, partly by declaring the means whereby we may be helped in the discharge of this duty—

partly by denouncing the eternal ruin and sure destruction that will follow the neglect of it—and partly by encouragements from their own former experiences, and the strength of our faith—and partly by evidencing unto us, in a multitude of examples, how we may overcome the difficulty that would occur unto us in this way, with other various cogent reasonings, as we shall see, if God pleaseth, in our progress” (John Owen).

To “*hold fast* the confession of our faith” means to continue in and press forward along the path we profess to have entered, and that, notwithstanding, all the threats of persecutors, sophistical reasonings of false teachers, and allurements of the world. Your very safety depends upon this, for if you deny the faith, you are “worse than an infidel” (1Ti 5:8) who has never professed it. God plainly warns us that, if after we have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we are again entangled therein and overcome, then, “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2Pe 2:20-21). It is one thing to *make* “confession of faith,” it is quite another to “hold fast” the same. Multitudes do the former, exceedingly few the latter. It is easy to avow myself a Christian, but it is most difficult indeed to *live* the life of one.

Concerning the force of the Greek word rendered “hold fast,” John Owen stated that there is included in the sense of it, “First, a supposition of great difficulty, with danger and opposition against this holding the profession of our faith. Second, the putting forth of the utmost of our strength and endeavors in the defence of it. Third, a constant perseverance in it, denoted by its being termed ‘keep’ in 1 Corinthians 15:2—possess it with constancy.” If our readers could only realize the mighty power and inveterate enmity of those enemies who are seeking to destroy them, none would deem such language too strong. Sin within is ever seeking to vanquish the Christian. The world without is constantly endeavoring to draw him away from the path of godliness. Our adversary the devil is going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. That wonderful allegory of Bunyan’s, by no means overdrew the picture when he represented the pilgrim as being menaced by mighty giants and a dreadful Apollyon, which must either be slain by him, or himself be destroyed by them.

Sad indeed is it to witness so many young professing Christians just starting out on their arduous journey to heaven, being told that the words, “He that endureth to the end shall be saved” applies not to them, but only to the Jews. And that, while unfaithfulness on their part will forfeit some “millennial” crown, yet, so long as they have accepted Christ as their personal Saviour, no matter how they might indulge the flesh or fraternize with the world, heaven itself cannot be missed. Little wonder that there is now such a deplorably low standard of Christian living among those who listen to such soul-ruinous error. Not so did teachers of the past, who firmly held the eternal security of Christ’s redeemed, pervert that blessed truth. No, they preserved the balance by insisting that God only preserved His people *in the path of obedience* to Him, and that they who forsake that path make it evident that *they* are *not* His people, no matter what their profession, and no matter what past “experience” they had.

To illustrate what we have in mind, an article appearing in a recent issue of a periodical, on the subject of the security of a Christian, begins thus: “The person who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who died for all sin on the cross, and has accepted Him as his own personal Saviour, is saved. And more, can never again, under any circumstances or conditions whatsoever, no matter what he may do or not do, be lost.” Such an unqualified, unguarded, unbalanced statement as that is misleading, and dangerous to the highest degree. The more so, as nothing that follows in the article in any wise modifies it. But more—Stated thus, it is unscriptural. God’s

Word says, “Whose house are we, *if* we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the *end*” (Heb 3:6). And again, “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die” (Rom 8:13). That is, die eternally, suffer the “second death,” for “life” and “death” throughout the epistle of the Romans is *eternal*.

Such a statement as the above (made thoroughly in good faith, we doubt not, yet by one who is the unwitting victim of a school of extremists) leaves completely out of sight the Christian’s *responsibility*. Yea, altogether repudiates it. Side by side with the blessed truth of divine preservation, the Scriptures uniformly put the solemn truth of Christian perseverance. Are the Lord’s people told that they are, “*Kept by the power of God through faith*” (1Pe 1:5)? So are they also exhorted to, “*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*” (Pro 4:23). “*Keep himself unspotted from the world*” (Jam 1:27). “*Keep yourselves from idols*” (1Jo 5:21). “*Keep yourselves in the love of God*” (Jude 1:21). And it is not honest to quote one class of these texts and *not* quote, with *equal* diligence and emphasis, the other.

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.” The one-sided teaching of a certain school today renders such an exhortation as this, as not only superfluous, but meaningless. If my *only* concern (as so many are now affirming) is to trust in the finished work of Christ, and rely upon the promise of God to take me to heaven, if I have committed my soul and its eternal interests into the hands of God, so that it is now only *His* responsibility to guard and preserve me, then, it is quite unnecessary to bid me guard myself. How absurd are the reasonings of men, once they depart from the truth! As well might I argue that, because I have committed my body into the hands of God, and am counting upon Him to keep me in health, that, therefore, no matter how I neglect the laws of health, no matter what I eat or do not eat, He will infallibly preserve me from sickness and death. Not so. If I drink poison, I shall come to an untimely grave. Likewise, if I live after the flesh, I shall die.

The apostles believed in no *mechanical* salvation. They busied themselves in “*confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith*” (Act 14:22). According to the lopsided logic of many teachers today, it is quite *un-necessary* to exhort Christians to “continue in the faith.” They *will* do so. But be not wise above what is written, and deem not yourselves to be more consistent than the apostles. They “*exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord*” (Act 11:23). Yea, “*persuaded them to continue in the grace of God*” (Act 13:43). The beloved Paul held no such views that, because his converts had been genuinely saved, there was, therefore, no need for him to be any further concerned about their *eternal* welfare. Rather did he send Timothy, “to know your faith, *lest* by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be *in vain*” (1Th 3:5). So Peter warned the saints, “Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness” (2Pe 3:17).

Should we be asked, “Then, do you no longer believe in the absolute and eternal security of the saints?” Our answer is, we do, as it is set forth in Holy Writ. But we most certainly do not believe in that wretched perversion of it which has now become so current and popular. The Christian preservation set forth in God’s Word is not merely a remaining on earth for some time after faith and regeneration have been produced, and then being admitted, *as a matter of course*, to heaven, *without a regard* to the moral history of the intervening period. No, Christian perseverance is a continuing in faith and holiness, a remaining steadfast in believing and in bringing forth all the fruits of righteousness. It is persisting in that course which *the converted* one has entered. A perseverance unto the end in the exercise of faith and in the practice of godliness. Men who are influenced more by selfish considerations of their own safety and security, than they are with God’s commands and precepts, His honour and glory, are not Christians at all.

The *balance* between divine preservation and human perseverance was well presented by John Owen when he wrote, “It is true our persistency in Christ doth not, as to the issue and event, depend absolutely on our own diligence. The unalterableness of our union with Christ, on the account of the faithfulness of the covenant of grace, is that which doth and shall eventually secure it. But yet *our own* diligent endeavor is such an *indispensable means* for that end, as that without it, it will *not* be brought about. Diligence and endeavor in this matter are like Paul’s mariners, when he was shipwrecked at Melita. God had before given him the lives of all that sailed with him in the ship (Act 27:24), and he ‘believed that it should be even as God had told him.’ So now the preservation of their lives depended absolutely on the faithfulness and power of God. *But yet*, when the mariners began to fly out of the ship, Paul tells the centurion that, unless the men stayed, they could not be saved (Act 27:31). But what need he think of ship-men, when God had promised and taken upon Himself the preservation of them all? He knew full well that *He* would preserve them, but *yet* that He would do so *by* the use of means.

“If we are in Christ, God hath given us the lives of our souls, and hath taken upon Himself, in His covenant, the preservation of them. But *yet* we may say, with reference unto the *means* that He hath appointed, when storms and trials arise, *unless we use* our diligent endeavours, *we* cannot be saved. Hence, are the many cautions which are given not only in this epistle, wherein they abound, but in other places of Scripture also, that we should take heed of apostasy and falling away. As ‘Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall’ (1Co 10:12). ‘Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown’ (Rev 3:11)...consider what it is to ‘abide in Christ.’ What watchfulness, what diligence, what endeavour, are required thereunto. Men would have it to be a plant that needs neither watering, manuring, nor pruning, but one which will strive alone of itself. Is it any wonder if we see so many either decaying or unthrifty professors? And so many that are utterly turned off from their first engagements!” (John Owen, Vol. 25, pages 171-173).

From the last two sentences quoted above, we may perceive that the same evil against which we are here contending—a *carnal* security, which Scripture *nowhere* warrants—had an existence in the palmy days of the Puritans. Verily, there is no new thing under the sun! Nearly three hundred years ago, that faithful teacher and prince of expositors had to protest against the one-sided perversion of the precious truth of the divine preservation of the saints. But no wonder! The devil plainly revealed his methods when he pressed upon Christ the divine promise that God had given His angels charge to “bear thee up” (Mat 4:6), but the Saviour refused to recklessly ignore the requirements of self-preservation! From John Calvin’s comments upon John 8:31, we extract the following, “If, therefore, we wish that Christ should reckon us to be His disciples, we must endeavour to persevere.”

Scripture, not logic, is our rule of faith, and not one or two statements taken out of their contexts, but the whole analogy of faith. Error is truth perverted, truth distorted, truth out of proportion. To short-sighted human reason, there appears to be a clash between divine justice and divine mercy, between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility, between law and grace, between faith and good works. But he, who is really taught of the Spirit, is enabled to discern their perfect consistency. “As *sorrowful*, yet always *rejoicing*” (2Co 6:10) is a puzzling paradox to the carnal mind. To read that the Son makes His people “free,” and yet, that He requires them to, “take his yoke” upon them, is an enigma unto many. To “*rejoice with trembling*” (Psa 2:11) seems a contradiction in terms to some carping minds. No less contradictory appears God’s promise to *keep* His people, and His requiring to *keep themselves* under pain of eternal damnation. Yet, the last mentioned are just as *consistent* as are the other things referred to throughout this paragraph.

“For he is faithful that promised” (Heb 10:23). At first glance, it is not very easy perhaps to perceive the precise relation of these words to the preceding exhortation. That they are added by way of encouragement seems fairly obvious, for the more that we spiritually ponder the veracity of the Promiser, the more will our faith be strengthened. The more we realize that we have to do with One who cannot lie, the greater confidence shall we have in His Word. Instead of being unduly occupied with the difficulties of the way, we need to look off unto Him, who has so graciously given us His “exceeding great and precious promises” (2Pe 1:4) to cheer and gladden us. Yet, this hardly explains the immediate connection between the two parts of this verse, nor does it answer the question as to whether or not any *particular* promise is here in view.

“For he is faithful that promised” (Heb 10:23). Perhaps the bearing which these words have upon the preceding injunction has been brought out as well by Albert Barnes (1798-1870) as any. “To induce them to hold fast their profession, the apostle adds this additional consideration. God, who had promised eternal life to them, was faithful to all that He had said. The argument here is, (1) That since *God* is so faithful to us, we ought to be faithful to Him. (2) The fact that *He* is faithful is an *encouragement* to us. We are dependent on Him for grace to hold fast our profession. If He were to prove unfaithful, we should have no strength to do it. But this He never does, and we may be assured that, *all* that He has promised, He will perform. To the service of *such* a God, therefore, we should adhere without wavering.”

If we compare Hebrews 4:1 and 6:15, light is cast upon *what* specific “promise” is here contemplated. In the former, we read, “Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” In the latter, we are told, “And so, after he [Abraham] had patiently endured [persevered] he obtained the promise.” It is to be most particularly noted that, all through this epistle, “salvation” is viewed as a *future* thing. *This* is an aspect of salvation (a vitally important one, too) which is mostly omitted from present-day preaching and teaching. In the Hebrews (as likewise in the epistles of Peter), the saints are contemplated as being yet in the wilderness, which is the place of testing and of danger. It is only those who diligently heed the solemn warning of Hebrews 3:12, who win through, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (Heb 10:24). The opening, “And,” serves two purposes. It is a plain indication that the contents of this verse are closely related to what has just been before us. It is a pointed intimation that we ought to be as considerate and careful about the spiritual edification of other saints as we are of our own. Thus, there are two things here which claim our consideration—the precise nature of the duty enjoined, and the connection between it and the exhortation of Hebrews 10:23.

“And let us consider one another” (Heb 10:24). There are no fewer than eleven Greek words used in the New Testament which are all rendered by our one English term, “consider.” Four of them being simple verbs, and seven of them compounds for the purpose of particular emphasis. The first signifies the serious observing of a matter—Acts 15:6. The second, a careful deliberation—Hebrews 7:4. The third, to narrowly spy or investigate as a watchman—Galatians 6:1. The fourth, to turn a matter over in the mind—2 Timothy 2:7. The first simple verb is compounded in Acts 12:12, and means to seriously consult with one’s self about a matter. The second simple verb is compounded in Hebrews 13:7, and means to diligently review a thing. The fourth simple verb is compounded in Acts 11:6, and means to thoroughly weigh a matter so as to come to a full knowledge of it. This is the one used in our present text. In Mark 6:52 is a different compound. The disciples failed to compare things together. In Hebrews 12:3, another compound signifies to reckon up—*all* that Christ suffered. In John 11:50 is a similar compound—to reckon

thoroughly. In Matthew 6:28, “consider the lilies” means to learn thoroughly so as to be instructed thereby. The practical lesson to be learned from all this is that the things of God call for our utmost attention.

“And let us consider one another” (Heb 10:24). Let us diligently bear in mind, and continually have in view, the good of our fellow-pilgrims. The term, “consider,” is very emphatic, being the same as in Hebrews 3:1, where we are bidden to, “Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession Christ Jesus.” Here, it signifies a conscientious care and circumspection over the spiritual estate and welfare of the other Christians. They are brethren and sisters in Christ, members of the same family. A tie far nearer and dearer than any earthly one unites you to them and them to you. “Consider” not only their blessed relation to you, but also their circumstances, their trials, their temptations, their infirmities, their needs. Seek grace to be of service, of help, of blessing to them. Remember that they have their conflicts too, their discouragements, their falls. “Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees” (Heb 12:12).

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (Heb 10:24). Here is expressed the chief design, or end, of our consideration for one another. It is to provoke, or stir up, unto the performance of duties, to strengthen zeal, to inflame affections, to excite unto godly living. We are to provoke one another by means of a godly example, by suitable exhortations, by unselfish acts of kindness. We are to fire one another “unto love,” which is not a mere sentiment or natural affability, but a holy principle of action, which seeks the highest good of its object. Christian love is righteous, and never winks at sin. It is faithful, which shrinks not from warning or rebuking where such is necessary. “And good works” is to be the issue, the fruit, of godly love. “And this is love, that we walk after His commandments” (2Jo 1:6).

The relation between this exhortation in Hebrews 10:24 and the one in verse 23 is very intimate. Love and good works are both the effects and evidences of the sincere confession of saving faith, and, therefore, a diligent attendance unto them is an essential means of constancy in our confession. Christian perseverance is nothing less than a continuance in practical godliness, in the path of obedience to Christ, and love unto His brethren. Therefore are we called upon to watch over one another with a view to steadfastness in the faith and fruitfulness in our lives.

No Christian liveth unto himself (Rom 14:7). Each one of us is either a help or a hindrance, a blessing or a curse unto those we associate with. *Which* is it? The Lord stir up both writer and reader to a more unselfish and loving concern for the spiritual good of those who are fellow-members of the same Body.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

3. His Entering Saul’s Service

In our last article, we contemplated David's anointing. In our present study, an entirely different experience in his varied career is before us. The two halves of 1 Samuel 16 present a series of striking contrasts. In the former, we behold David called to occupy the throne. In the latter, he is seen entering the place of service. There, we see the Spirit of the Lord coming upon David (1Sa 16:13), here, we behold the Spirit of the Lord departing from Saul (1Sa 16:14). In the one, David is anointed with the holy oil (1Sa 16:13). In the other, Saul is troubled with an evil spirit (1Sa 16:14). Samuel was "mourning" (1Sa 16:1). Saul is "refreshed" (1Sa 16:23). Samuel approached Jesse with a heifer for sacrifice (1Sa 16:2). Jesse sends David to Saul with bread, wine, and a kid for feasting (1Sa 16:20). David was acceptable in God's sight (1Sa 16:12). Here, he found favour in Saul's eyes (1Sa 16:22). Before he was tending the sheep (1Sa 16:11), now he is playing the harp in the palace (1Sa 16:23).

God did not set David upon the throne immediately. After his "anointing," came a season of testing. The coming of the Spirit upon him was followed by his having to face the great Enemy. Thus it was with David's Son and Lord, the One whom, in so many respects, he foreshadowed. After the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him at His baptism, Christ was tempted of the devil for forty days. So here—the next thing we read of is David's being sent to calm Saul who was terrified by an evil spirit, and shortly after that, he goes forth to meet Goliath—figure of Satan. The principle which is here illustrated is one that we do well to take to heart. Patience has to be tested, humility manifested, faith strengthened, before we are ready to enter into God's best for us. We must use rightly what God has given us, if we desire Him to give us more.

"But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him" (1Sa 16:14). Exceedingly solemn is this, the more so when we consider that which precedes it. In 1 Samuel 15:1-3, the Lord had, through Samuel, given a definite commission unto Saul to "utterly destroy Amalek, and all that they had." Instead of so doing, he compromised. "But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them" (1Sa 15:9). When faced by God's faithful prophet, the king's excuse was "The people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD" (1Sa 16:15). Then it was that Samuel said, "Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and in sacrifices, as in *obeying* the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is *better* than sacrifice, to hearken than the fat of rams" (1Sa 16:22).

Saul had openly defied the Lord by deliberately disobeying His plain commandment. Wherefore, the prophet said unto him, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou has rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (1Sa 15:23). And now, we come to the dreadful sequel. "The Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him" (1Sa 16:14). Having forsaken God, God forsook him. Rightly did Matthew Henry (1662-1714) say upon this verse, "They that drive the good Spirit away from them do, of course, become a prey to the evil spirit. If God and His grace do not rule us, sin and Satan will have possession of us."

"But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him" (1Sa 16:14). Great care needs to be taken against our reading into these words what is really not in them. Otherwise, we shall make one part of Scripture contradict another. The Holy Spirit had never been given to Saul as the Spirit of regeneration and sanctification. But, He had been given to him as a Spirit of prophecy (See 1Sa 10:10 and contrast 1Sa 28:6), and as a Spirit of wisdom for temporal rule, thus fitting him for the discharge of his royal duties. In like manner, when we read that, "God gave him *another* heart" (1Sa 10:9). This must not be confounded with "a new heart" (Eze 36:26)—the "another heart" was not in a moral and spiritual sense, but only in

a way of wisdom for civil government, prudence to rule, courage to fight against his enemies, fortitude against difficulties and discouragements.

It is a serious mistake to suppose that because the Holy Spirit has not come as the Spirit of regeneration and sanctification unto many professors, that, therefore, He has not come to them at all. Many *are* “made partakers of the Holy Spirit” as the Spirit of “enlightenment” (Heb 6:4), or spiritual aspirations (Num 24:2; 23:10 etc.), of deliverance from the “pollutions of the world” (2Pe 2:20), who are never brought from death unto life. There are common operations of the Spirit as well as special, and it behooves all of us to very seriously and very diligently examine our hearts and lives for the purpose of discovering whether or not the Holy Spirit indwells us as a *Sanctifier*, subduing the flesh, delivering from worldliness, and conforming to the image of Christ. “When men grieve and quench the Spirit by wilful sin, He departs, and will not strive” (Matthew Henry).

The servants of Saul were uneasy over the king’s condition, realizing that an evil spirit from God was tormenting him. They, therefore, suggested that a man who had skill in playing the harp should be sought out, saying, “And it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well” (1Sa 16:16). Such is the best counsel which poor worldlings have to offer unto those in trouble. As Matthew Henry says, “How much better friends had they been to him, if they had advised him, since the evil spirit was from the Lord, to make his peace with God by true repentance, to send for Samuel to pray with him, and intercede with God for him. Then might he not only have had some present relief, but the good Spirit would have returned.”

How many whose consciences have convicted them of their careless, sinful, godless ways, and who have been startled by the presence of an eternity in hell, have been ruined forever by following a course of drowning the concerns of the soul by regaling and delighting the senses of the body. “Eat, drink, and be merry” (Ecc 8:15) is the motto of the world, and every effort is made to stifle all anxiety about the near prospect of a time arriving when, instead of being able to go on so doing, not even a drop of water will be available to ease their unbearable sufferings. Let the younger readers seriously ponder this, “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee unto judgment” (Ecc 11:9).

The suggestion made by his servants appealed to Saul, and he gave his consent. Accordingly, one of them told him, “Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him” (1Sa 16:18). A high character is here accorded David, as one well fitted for the strange part he was to play. Not only was his person suited for the court, not only was he skilled upon the harp, but he was known for his courage and wisdom. The terming of him, “a mighty valiant man,” intimates that his single-handed victory over the lion and the bear (1Sa 17:37) had already been noised abroad. Finally, it was known that “the LORD is with him.” How this illustrates and demonstrates the fact that one who has received the Spirit, as the Spirit of regeneration and sanctification, gives clear evidence of it to others! Where a miracle of grace has been wrought in the heart, the fruits of it will soon be unmistakably manifested to all around. Very searching is this. Can those with whom we come into daily contact *see* that “the Lord is with” the writer and the reader? O to let our light “so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat 5:16).

“Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep” (1Sa 16:19). Little did Saul think that, in giving this order, he was inviting to his

palace the very one of whom Samuel had said, “The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, better than thou” (1Sa 15:28)! How marvelously does God, working behind the scenes, bring His own purpose to pass! Verily “Man’s goings are of the LORD,” and well may we say “How can a man then understand his own way?” (Pro 20:24). Yet, while we are quite incapable of analyzing either the philosophy or psychology of it, let us admire and stand in awe before Him of whom it is written, “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are *all things*: to whom be glory forever.” Amen (Rom 11:36).

“Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, send me David thy son, which is with the sheep” (1Sa 16:19). What a *testing* for David was this! He, who had been anointed unto an office wherein he would command and rule over others, was now called on to serve. Lovely is it to mark his response. There was no unwillingness, no delay. He promptly complied with his father’s wishes. It was also a testing of his courage. Might not Saul have learned his secret, and now have designs upon his life? Might not this invitation to the palace cover a subtle plot to destroy him! Ah, “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them” (Psa 34:7), and where God is truly feared, the fear of man disappears.

“And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul” (1Sa 16:20). What a beautiful typical picture is here presented to us. It was the dire need of poor Saul which moved Jesse to send forth his anointed son. So it was a world lying in sin unto which the Father sent His Beloved. Behold David richly laden with presents for the king. Jesse sent him forth not with weapons of warfare in his hands, but with tokens of his good will. So the Father sent forth His Son, “not to condemn the world” (Joh 3:17), but on an errand of grace and mercy unto it.

“And David came to Saul” (1Sa 16:12). Yes, at his father’s bidding, he freely left his home. Though the anointing oil was upon him, he went forth not to be ministered unto, but to minister. How blessedly this foreshadowed Him of whom it is written, “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death...” (Phi 2:6-8) O that writer and reader may be so filled with His Spirit, that not only shall we uncomplainingly, but joyfully, perform our Father’s bidding.

“And David came to Saul” (1Sa 16:12). Admire, again, the wondrous working of God. David had been called to reign over Israel, but the time had not yet arrived for him to occupy the throne. An unsophisticated shepherd-boy needed training. Observe, then, how the providence of God ordered it that, for a season, he should dwell in the royal court. Thus, having full opportunity to note its ways, observe its corruptions, and discover its needs. And, mark it well, this was brought about *without* any scheming or effort either on his own part or of that of his friends. An evil spirit from the Lord troubled the king. His courtiers were exercised, and proposed a plan to him. Their plan met with Saul’s approval. David was mentioned as the one who should be sent for. The king assented. Jesse raised no demurs. David was made willing, and thus, working secretly but surely, God’s purpose was accomplished. It is only the eye of faith that looks above the ordinary happenings of daily life and sees the divine hand ordering and shaping them for the accomplishment of God’s counsels and the good of His people.

An important principle is here illustrated. When God has designed that any Christian should enter *His* service, His providence concurs with His grace to prepare and qualify him for it, and often it is by means of God’s providences that the discerning heart perceives the divine will. God opened the door into the palace without David having to force or even so much as knock upon it.

When *we* assume the initiative, take things into our own hands, and attempt to hew a path for ourselves, we are acting in the energy of the flesh. “Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass....Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him” (Psa 37:5-7). Obedience to these exhortations is not easy to flesh and blood, yet, they must be complied with if we are not to miss God’s best. The more we appropriate and act upon such divine precepts, the more clearly will the hand of God be seen when it intervenes on our behalf. The feverish activities of natural zeal only raise a cloud of dust which conceals from us the beauties of divine providence.

“And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armour bearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight” (1Sa 16:21-22). Here, too, we may perceive and admire the secret workings of God’s providence. “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: *He* turneth it whithersoever He will” (Pro 21:1). It was the divine purpose, and for David’s good, that he should spend a season at the court. Therefore did the Lord incline Saul’s heart toward him. How often we lose sight of this fact. How apt we are to attribute the favour and kindness of people toward us to anything rather than to the Lord! O my reader, if God has given you favour in the eyes of your congregation, or your employer, or your customers, give Him the glory and the thanks for it.

“And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him” (1Sa 16:23). Here, we see the readiness of David to perform every task which God allotted him. In this, he evidenced his moral fitness for the important role he was yet to fill. “Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things” (Mat 25:21), expresses an important principle in the government of God, and one which we do well to take to heart. If I am careless in fulfilling my duties as a Sunday school teacher, I must not be surprised if God never calls me to the ministry. And if I am unfaithful in teaching and disciplining my own children, I must not be surprised if God withholds His power and blessing when I seek to teach the children of others.

The power of David’s harp to quieten the spirit of Saul and to temporarily drive away the demon, ought not to be attributed either to the skill of the player or to the charm of music. Instead, it must be ascribed alone to the Lord, who was pleased to *bless* this means to these ends. The instrument, be it weak or strong, likely or unlikely, is utterly powerless in and of itself. Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but there will be no increase unless *God gives it*. In view of 1 Samuel 17:55-56, some have concluded that what has been before us, in the closing verses of chapter 16, is placed out of its chronological order. But there is no need to resort to such a supposition. Moreover, 1 Samuel 17:15 plainly refutes it. How long David remained in the palace we know not, but probably for quite some time. After which, he returned again unto his humbler duties in the sheepfold.

SAVING FAITH

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

The condition of life as made known by Christ in Mark 16:16 is double—the principal one, faith—the accessory one, baptism. Accessory, we term it, because it is not absolutely necessary to life, as faith is. Proof of this is found in the fact of the omission in the second half of the verse. It is *not*, “He that is not baptized shall be damned,” but “He that believeth not.” Faith is so indispensable that, though one be baptized, yet believeth not, he shall be damned. As we have said above, the sinner is already condemned. The sword of divine justice is drawn even now, and waits only to strike the fatal blow. Nothing can divert it but saving faith in Christ. My reader, continuance in unbelief makes hell as certain as though you were already in it. While you remain in unbelief, you are “having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12).

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

1. Its Counterfeits

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

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

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

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

It is indeed searching and solemn to make a close study of Scripture upon this point, and discover how much is said of unsaved people in a way of having faith in the Lord. In Jeremiah 13:11, we find God saying, “For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to *cleave* unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD,” and to “cleave” unto God is the same as to “trust” Him. See 2 Kings 18:5-6. Yet, of that very same generation God said, “This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing” (Jer 13:10).

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

Again, the term “lean” is used to denote not only trust, but dependency on the Lord. Of the Spouse, it is said, “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, *leaning upon* her Beloved?”

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

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

To *rely upon* God, on the ground of His “covenant,” was far more than resting upon a divine promise. Yet, unregenerate men may do even this. A case in point is found in Abijah, king of Judah. It is indeed striking to read and weight what he said in 2 Chronicles 13, when Jeroboam and his hosts came up against him. First, he reminded all Israel that the Lord God had given the kingdom to David and his sons forever “by a *covenant* of salt” (2Ch 13:5). Next, he denounced the sins of his adversary (2Ch 13:6-9). Then, he affirmed the Lord to be “our God” and that He was “with him and his people” (2Ch 13:10-12). But Jeroboam heeded not, but forced the battle upon them. “Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter” (2Ch 13:17), “because they *relied upon* the LORD God of their fathers” (2Ch 13:18). Yet, of this same Abijah, it is said, “He walked in all the sins of his father,” etc. (1Ki 15:3). Unregenerate men may rely upon God, depend upon Christ, rest on His promise, and plead His covenant.

“The people of Nineveh [who were heathen] *believed* God” (Jon 3:5). This is striking, for the God of heaven was a stranger to them, and His prophet a man whom they knew not—why then should they trust his message? Moreover, it was not a promise, but a threatening, which they believed. How much easier then is it for a people, now living under the Gospel, to apply to themselves a promise, than the heathen a terrible threat! “In applying a threatening, we are like to meet with more opposition, both from within and from without. From within, for a threatening is like a bitter pill, the bitterness of death is in it. No wonder if that hardly goes down. From without, too, for Satan will be ready to raise opposition. He is afraid to have men startled, lest the sense of their misery denounced in the threatening should rouse them up to seek how they may make an escape. He is more sure of them while they are secure, and will labour to keep them off the threatening, lest it should awaken them from dreams of peace and happiness, while they are sleeping in his very jaws.

“But now, in applying a promise, an unregenerate man ordinarily meets with no opposition. Not from within, for the promise is all sweetness. The promise of pardon and life is the very marrow, the quintessence of the Gospel. No wonder if they be ready to swallow it down greedily. And Satan will be so far from opposing, that he will rather encourage and assist one who has no

interest in the promise, *to* apply it. For this, he knows, will be the way to fix and settle them in their natural condition. A promise misapplied will be *a seal upon the sepulchre*, making them sure in the grave of sin, wherein they lay dead and rotting. Therefore, if unregenerate men may apply a threatening, which is in these respects more difficult, as appears they may by the case of the Ninevites, why may then not be apt to apply [appropriate] a Gospel promise, when they are not like to meet with such difficulty and opposition?" (David Clarkson, 1621-1686, for sometime co-pastor with John Owen, to whom we are indebted for much of the above).

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

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

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

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

The devil deceives more souls by this one thing than by all his other devices put together. Take this present article as an illustration. How many a Satan-blinded soul will read it and then say, "It does not apply to *me*. I know that *my* faith *is* a saving one!" It is in this way that the devil

turns aside the sharp point of God's convicting Word, and secures his captives in their unbelief. He works in them a sense of false security, by persuading them that they *are* safe within the ark, and induces them to ignore the threatenings of the Word and appropriate only its comforting promises. He dissuades them from heeding that most salutary exhortation, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; *prove* your own selves" (2Co 13:5). O my reader, heed that word now.

In closing this first article, we will endeavour to point out some of the particulars in which this non-saving faith is defective, and wherein it comes short of a faith which does save. First, with many it is because they are willing for Christ to save them from hell, but are not willing for Him to save them from *self*. They want to be delivered from the wrath to come, but they wish to retain their self-will and self-pleasing. But He will not be dictated unto. You must be saved on *His* terms, or not at all. When Christ *saves*, He saves from *sin*—from its power and pollution, and, therefore, from its guilt. And the very essence of sin is the determination to have my *own* way (Isa 53:6). Where Christ saves, He subdues this spirit of self-will, and implants a genuine, a powerful, a lasting desire and determination to please Him.

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

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

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

PRAYER

Prayer is an ordinance of God, and that to be used both in public and in private. Yea, such an ordinance as brings those that have the spirit of supplication into great familiarity with God, and is also so prevalent an action, that it getteth of God, both for the person that prayeth, and for them that are prayed for, great things. It is the opener of the heart of God, and a means by which the soul, though empty, is filled. By prayer, the Christian can open his heart to God, as to a friend, and obtain fresh testimony of God's friendship to him. I might spend many words in distinguishing between public and private prayer, as also between that in the heart, and that with the vocal voice. Something also might be spoken to distinguish between the gifts and graces of prayer. But as eschewing this method, my business shall be at this time only to show you the very heart of prayer, without which, all your lifting up both of hands, and eyes, and voices, will be to no purpose at all.

1. What Prayer Is

Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God hath promised, or according to the Word, for the good of the Church, with submission, in faith, to the will of God.

1. For the first of these, it is a sincere pouring out of the soul to God. Sincerity is such a grace as runs through all the graces of God in us, and through all the actings of a Christian, and hath the sway in them too, or else their actings are not anything regarded of God, and so of and in prayer, of which particularly David speaks, when he mentions prayer. "I cried unto the LORD with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear me" (Psa 66:17-18). Part of the exercise of prayer is *sincerity*, without which God looks not upon it as prayer in a good sense. "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13). The want of this made the Lord reject their prayers in Hosea 7:14, where He saith, "They have not cried unto me with their heart, [that is, in sincerity], when they howled upon their beds." But for a pretense, for a show, in hypocrisy, to be seen of men, and applauded for the same, they pray. Sincerity was that which Christ commended in Nathaniel when he was under the fig tree, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is *no guile*" (Joh 1:47). Probably, this good man was pouring out of his soul to God in prayer under the fig tree, and that in a sincere and unfeigned spirit before the Lord. The prayer that hath *this* in it, as one of the principal ingredients, is the prayer that God looks at. "The prayer of the *upright* is his delight."

And why must sincerity be one of the essentials of prayer which is accepted of God, but because sincerity carries the soul in all simplicity to open its heart to God, and to tell Him the case plainly, without equivocation—to condemn itself plainly, without dissembling—to cry to God heartily, without complimenting. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." Sincerity is the same in a corner alone, as it is before the face of all the world. It knows not how to wear two masks, one for an appearance before men, and another for a short snatch in a corner. But it must have God, and be with Him in the duty of prayer. It is not a lip-labour that it doth regard, for it is

the heart that God looks at, and that from which prayer comes, if it be that prayer which is accompanied with sincerity.

2. It is a sincere and *sensible* pouring out of the heart or soul. It is not, as many take it to be, even a few babbling, prating, complimentary expressions, but a sensible feeling there is in the heart. Prayer hath in it a sensibleness of divers feelings. Sometimes a sense of sin, sometimes of mercy received, sometimes of a readiness of God to give mercy, etc.

(1) A sense of the want of mercy, by reason of the danger of sin. The soul, I say, feels, and from feeling, sighs, groans, and breaks at the heart. For right prayer bubbleth out of the flesh by reason of some heavy burden that lieth upon it. David roars, cries, weeps, faints at heart, fails at the eyes, loseth his moisture, etc. Hezekiah mourns like a dove. Ephraim bemoans himself. Peter weeps bitterly. Christ hath strong crying and tears—and all this from a sense of the justice of God, the guilt of sin, the pains of hell and destruction. “The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of LORD” (Psa 116:3-4). And in another place, “My sore ran in the night” (Psa 77:2). Again, “I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long” (Psa 38:6). In all these instances, and in hundreds more that might be named, you may see that prayer carrieth in it a sensible, feeling disposition, and that first, from a sense of sin.

(2) Sometimes there is a sweet sense of mercy received, encouraging, comforting, strengthening, and enlivening, enlightening mercy, etc. Thus, David pours out his soul, to bless and praise and admire the great God for His loving kindness to such poor vile wretches. “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed as the eagles” (Psa 103:1-5). And thus is the prayer of saints sometimes turned into praise and thanksgiving, and yet are prayers still. This is a mystery; God’s people pray with their praises, as it is written, “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phi 4:6). A sensible thanksgiving for mercy received, is a mighty prayer in the sight of God. It prevails with Him unspeakably.

(3) In prayer, there is sometimes in the soul a sense of mercy to be received. This again sets the soul all on a flame. “Thou, O LORD of hosts, [said David] hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray unto thee” (2Sa 7:27). This provoked Jacob, David, Daniel, with others, even a sense of mercies to be received, which caused them, not by fits and starts, nor yet in a foolish frothy way to bubble over a few words written in a paper, but, mightily, fervently, and continually, to groan out their conditions before the Lord, as being sensible. Sensible, I say, of their wants, their misery, and the willingness of God to show mercy.

3. Prayer is a sincere, sensible, and *affectionate* pouring out of the soul unto God. O! the heat, strength, life, vigour, and affection that is in right prayer! “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God (Psa 42:1). I have longed for thy precepts (Psa 119:40); I have longed after thy salvation (Psa 119:1774). My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God (Psa 84:2). My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times” (Psa 119:20). Mark ye here, “my soul longeth.” It longeth, etc.! O what affection is here discovered in prayer! The like you have in Daniel, “O LORD, hear; O LORD, forgive; O LORD, hearken and do; defer not, for thy own sake, O my God” (Dan 9:19). Every syllable carrieth a mighty vehemency in it. This is called

the “fervent,” or the working prayer by James. And so again, “And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly,” or had His affections more and more drawn out after God for His helping hand. O! how wide are the most of men with their prayers from this prayer, that is prayer, in God’s sight! Alas! The greatest part of men make no conscience at all of the duty. And, as for them that do, it is to be feared that many of them are very great strangers to a sincere, sensible, and affectionate pouring out their hearts or souls to God, but even content themselves with a little lip-labour and bodily exercise, mumbling over a few imaginary prayers. When the affections are indeed engaged in prayer, then, the whole man is engaged, and that in such sort, that the soul will spend itself to nothing, as it were, rather than it will go without that good desire, even communion and solace with Christ. And hence, it is that the saints have spent their strength, and lost their lives, rather than go without the blessing.

All this is too evident by the ignorance, profaneness, and spirit of envy that reigns in the hearts of those men that are so hot for the forms, and not the power of praying. Scarce one of forty among them know what it is to be born again, to have communion with the Father through the Son, to feel the power of grace sanctifying their hearts. But for all their prayers, they still live abominable lives, full of malice, envy, deceit, persecuting of the dear children of God. O what a dreadful after-clap is coming upon them! which all their hypocritical assembling themselves together, with all their prayers, shall never be able to help them against, or shelter them from.

It is a pouring out of the heart or soul. There is, in prayer, an unbosoming of a man’s self, an opening of the heart to God, an affectionate pouring out of the soul in requests, sighs, and groans. “All my desires are before thee [said David]; my groanings are not hid from thee (Psa 38:9). My soul thirsteth for God, even for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God (Psa 42:2) ? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me” (Psa 42:4) Mark, “I pour out my soul.” It is an expression signifying that in prayer there goeth the very life and strength to God. As in another place, “Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your hearts before him” (Psa 62:8). This is the prayer to which the promise is made, for the delivering of a poor creature out of thralldom.

This sheweth also the excellency of the spirit of prayer. It is the great God to which it retires. “When shall I come and appear before God” (Psa 42:2)? And it argueth, that the soul that thus prayeth indeed, sees an emptiness in all things under heaven, that in God alone there is rest and satisfaction for the soul. “In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear to me, and save me. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort...For thou art my rock and my fortress” (Psa 71:1-3). Many in a wording way speak of God, but right prayers make God his hope, stay, and all. Right prayers see nothing substantial, and worth the looking after, but God.

4. It is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart to God, *through Christ*. This “through Christ” must needs be added, or else it is to be questioned whether it be prayer, though in appearance it be never so eminent and eloquent. Christ is the way through whom the soul hath admittance to God, and without whom it is impossible that so much as one desire should come into the ears of the Lord of hosts. “If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it” (Joh 14:14). This was Daniel’s way in praying for the people of God. He did it in the name of Christ. “Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, *for the LORD’S sake*” (Dan 9:17). But now, it is not every one that maketh mention of Christ’s name in prayer, that doth indeed and in truth, effectually pray to God. This coming to God through Christ is the hardest part that is found in prayer. A man may more easily be sensible of His works, aye, and sincerely to desire mercy, and

yet, not be able to come to God by Christ. The man that comes to God by Christ must first have the knowledge of Him. “LORD, [saith Moses] show me now thy way, that I may know thee” (Exo 33:13).

This Christ, none but the Father can reveal. And to come through Christ, is for the soul to be enabled of God to shroud itself under the shadow of the Lord Jesus, as a man shroudeth himself under a thing for safeguard. Hence, it is that David so often terms Christ his shield, buckler, fortress, rock of defence, etc. Not only because by Him he overcame his enemies, but because through Him, he found favour with God the Father. The man, then, that comes to God through Christ must have faith, by which he puts on Christ, and in Him appears before God. Now, he that hath faith is joined to Christ and made a member of Him, and therefore, he, *as* a member of Christ, comes to God, so that God looks on that man as a member of Christ’s body, united to Him by election and conversion. So that now, he comes to God in Christ’s merits, in His blood, righteousness, victory, intercession, and so stands before Him accepted in the Beloved.

5. Prayer is a pouring out of the heart to God through Christ *by the strength of the Spirit*. For these things do so depend one upon another, that it is impossible that it should be prayer, without these be a joint concurrence of them. For though it be never so famous, yet, without these things, it is only such prayer as is rejected of God. For without a sincere, sensible, affectionate, pouring out of the heart to God, it is but lip-labour. And, if it be not through Christ, it falleth far short of ever sounding well in the ears of God. So also, if it be not in the strength and assistance of the Spirit, it is but like the strange fire offered by the sons of Aaron. But, I shall speak more to this under the second head, and therefore, in the meantime, merely say that, that which is not petitioned through the teaching and assistance of the Spirit, it is not possible that it should be according to the will of God.

6. Prayer is a pouring out of the heart to God, through Christ, in the strength of the Spirit, *for such things as God hath promised*. Prayer must be within the compass of God’s Word. It is blasphemy, or at best, vain babbling, when the petition is beside the Book. David, therefore, in his prayers, kept his eye on the Word of God. “My soul cleaveth to the dust: quicken me according to thy word” (Psa 119:25,). “My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen me according to thy word” (Psa 119:28,). “Remember thy word unto thy servant, on which thou hast caused me to hope” (Psa 119:49). Indeed, the Holy Spirit doth not immediately quicken and stir up the heart of the Christian without, but by, in, and through, the Word. By bringing that to the heart and by opening of that, whereby the man is provoked to go to the Lord, and to tell Him how it is with him, and also to argue and supplicate according to the Word. Thus it was with Daniel, that mighty prophet of the Lord. He, understanding by the Scriptures, that the captivity of Israel was near at hand, made his prayer to God, “I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the LORD God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth” (Dan 9:2-3).

So that I say, as the Spirit is the helper and governor of the soul when it prayeth according to the will of God, so He guideth by and according to the Word of God and His promise. Hence, it is that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself did make a stop, although His life lay at stake for it, “I could now pray to my Father, and He should give me more than twelve legions of angels; but how then should the Scripture be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” (Mat 26:53-54). As one should say, were there but a word for it in Scripture, I should soon be out of the hands of mine enemies, I should be helped by angels, but the Scripture will not warrant this kind of praying, for that saith otherwise. The Spirit, by the Word, directs as well in the manner, as in the matter, of praying.

7. Prayer must be *with submission in faith to the will of God*. It is required of us that we say, “Thy will be done,” as Christ hath taught. Therefore, the people of the Lord, in all humility, are to lay themselves and their prayers, and all that they have, at the foot of their God, to be disposed of by Him as He, in His heavenly wisdom, seeth best. Yet not doubting, but God will answer the desire of His people that way which shall be most for His glory and their advantage. When the saints, therefore, do pray with submission to the will of God, it doth not argue that they are to doubt or question God’s love and kindness to them. But, because they are at all times not so wise, but that sometimes Satan may get advantage by tempting them to pray for that which, if they had it, would neither prove to God’s glory nor His people’s good. Yet, this is the confidence we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He heareth us, whatsoever we ask we know that we have the petition that we ask Him, that is, if we ask in the spirit of grace and supplication (John Bunyan, 1628-1688, to be continued, D.V.).

THE CURE FOR DESPONDENCY

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?” (Psa 42:5). When the Psalmist gave utterance to these words, his spirit was dejected and his heart was heavy within him. In the checkered career of David, there was not a little which was calculated to sadden and depress. The cruel persecutions of Saul, who hunted him as a partridge upon the mountains, the treachery of his trusted friend, Ahithophel, the perfidy of Absalom, and the remembrance of his own sins, were enough to overwhelm the stoutest. And David was a man of like passions with us. He was not always upon the mountain-top of joy, but sometimes spent seasons in the slough of despond and the gorge of gloom.

But David did not give way to despair, nor succumb to his sorrows. He did not lie down like a stricken beast and do nought but fill the air with his howlings. No, he acted like a rational creature, and like a man, looked his troubles squarely in the face. But he did more, he made diligent inquiry, he challenged himself, he sought to discover the cause of his despondency. He asked, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” He desired to know the reason for such depression. This is often the first step toward recovery from dejection of spirit. Repining and murmuring get us nowhere. Fretting and wringing our hands bring no relief either temporally or spiritually. There needs to be self-interrogation, self-examination, self-condemnation.

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” We need to seriously take ourselves to task. We need to fearlessly face a few plain questions. What is the good of giving way to despair? What possible gain can it bring me? To sit and sulk is not “redeeming the time” (Eph 5:16). To mope and mourn will not mend matters. Then, let each despondent one call his soul to account, and inquire what adequate cause could be assigned for peevishness and fretting. “We may have great cause to mourn for sin, and to pray against prevailing impiety, but, our great dejection, even under the severest outward afflictions or inward trials, springs from unbelief and a rebellious will. We should, therefore, strive and pray against it.” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” Cannot you discover the real answer without asking counsel from others? Is it not true that, deep down in your heart, you already know, or at least suspect, the root of your present trouble? Are you “cast down” because of distressing circumstances which your own folly has brought you into? Then, acknowledge with the Psalmist, “I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me” (Psa 119:75). Is it because of some sin, some course of self-will, some sowing to the flesh, that you are now of the flesh reaping corruption? Then, *confess* the same to God and plead the promise found in Proverbs 28:13, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them *shall* have mercy.” Or are you grieved because Providence has not smiled upon *you* so sweetly as it has on some of your neighbors? Then, heed that injunction, “Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity” (Psa 37:1).

Perhaps the cases suggested above do not exactly fit that of some of our readers. Not a few may say, “My soul is cast down and my heart is heavy because my finances are at so low an ebb, and the outlook is so dark.” That is indeed a painful trial, and one which mere nature often sinks under. But, dear friend, there is a cure for despondency even when *so* occasioned. He who declares, “The cattle upon a thousand hills are mine” (Psa 50:10), still lives and reigns! Cannot He who fed two million Israelites in the wilderness for forty years, minister to you and your family? Cannot He who sustained Elijah in the time of famine, keep you from starving? “If God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?! (Mat 6:30).

Returning to our opening text, let us observe how that David not only succumbed not to his sorrows, interrogated his soul, and rebuked his unbelief, but he also preached to himself. “Hope thou in God!” Ah, *that* is what the despondent needs to do. Nothing else will bring real relief to the heart. The immediate outlook may be dark, but the divine promises are bright. The creature may fail you, but the Creator will not, if you truly put your trust in Him. The world may be at its wits’ end, but the Christian needs not be so. There is One who is “a very present help in trouble” (Psa 46:1), and He never deserts those who really make Him their refuge. The writer has proved this, many, many a time, and so may the reader. The fact is that present conditions afford a grand opportunity for learning the sufficiency of divine grace. Faith cannot be exercised when everything needed is at hand to sight.

“Hope thou in God.” In His *mercy*—you have sinned, sinned grievously in the past, and now you are receiving your just deserts. True, but if you will penitently confess your sins, there is abundant mercy with the Lord to blot them all out (Isa 55:7). In His *power*—every door may be shut against you, every channel of help be closed fast, but nothing is too hard for the Almighty! In His *faithfulness*—men may have deceived you, broken their promises, and now desert you in the hour of need. But He, who cannot lie, is to be depended upon. O doubt not *His* promises. In His *love*—“Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (Joh 13:1).

“For I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance” (Psa 42:5). Such is ever the blessed assurance of those who truly hope *in God*. They know that, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all” (Psa 34:19). God has told them that, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psa 30:5). So, Christian reader, when the fiery trial had done its work, and your *bonds* are burned off (Dan 3:25), you will thank Him for the trials which are now so unpleasant. Then, hopefully, anticipate the future. Count upon God, and He will not fail you.

Let each Christian reader, who is not now passing through deep waters, join with the writer in fervent prayer to God, that He will graciously sanctify the “present distress” unto the spiritual good of His own people, and mercifully supply their temporal needs.

SOUND THE ALARM

“Dear Brother Pink: We are members of the _____ Baptist Church, and our pastor is a very good preacher, sound, and preaches *all* the truth, including God’s sovereignty in salvation. The Sunday school is much given to social activities, such as the church sponsoring a baseball team, and many social gatherings in the church with much to eat, and Sunday school drives for membership. I was an elder, and refused to act again, on the ground that it is unscriptural to indulge in such things. I also had a class in Sunday school, but, on account of so much social doings, was led to resign same....I do not wish to grieve the Holy Spirit, and want to know from a Scriptural standpoint whether or not I have taken the right stand. I feel that the church-house was dedicated to our Lord, and do not think that eating and social gatherings have any place there. The pastor justifies his position by, ‘in eating and drinking do all to the glory of God.’”

The above letter is a very recent one, and while we continue to receive such inquiries, we believe it to be our God-appointed duty to go on sounding the alarm. We replied to this Brother by saying, we were thankful to learn he had resigned from the diaconate and given up his class in the Sunday school, and urged him to have his name taken off the church-register and cease from attending its services, pressing upon him such Scriptures as Exodus 23:2, Revelation 18:4, etc. We told him that his pastor would be far less dangerous if he ceased preaching the Truth, and instead, spent his time in the pulpit by reading from Mark Twain. If such pastors would only put off their religious masks, honest souls would know where to place them. But alas, they will not. Such wolves will continue to masquerade in sheep’s clothing.

But how terribly Satan must have succeeded in pulling the wool over peoples’ eyes, when, merely because the pastor preaches “orthodox sermons,” they will retain their membership in “churches” (?) where the Lord of glory is so blatantly insulted. Think of a pastor daring to justify such heathenish practices as turning a building set apart for divine worship into a restaurant and show-house by quoting 1 Corinthians 10:31! What a proof that he is a blind leader of the blind! No man indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God would so wickedly pervert His Word. One verse of Scripture is quite sufficient to expose the false application made of 1 Corinthians 10:31, namely, “What? Have ye not *houses* to eat and to drink in, or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not” (1Co 11:22).

Our object in referring to the above case is to warn, admonish, and intreat others who are yet members of such “churches” to immediately sever all connection with them. We doubt not that many of the readers of this magazine are yet found in similar associations as the above-mentioned Brother. To such, we would faithfully and lovingly point out, you are dishonouring Christ, you are disobeying the plain commandments of God, you are endangering your own soul. There is no

third alternative. To have fellowship with anything which does not honour Christ, *must* be to *dishonour* Him. To deliberately ignore such a plain word as, “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: *from such turn away*” (2Ti 3:5), is to disobey God. To partake of the sins of such a worldly “church” is to court a receiving of her “plagues” from God (Rev 18:4).

So many will reply to the above by saying, “But what are we to do? Other churches are the same. If we leave the one where we now are and unite with another, we shall find it no better.” True, that is almost universally the case today. Things are far, far worse than many real Christians will acknowledge. Many writers and preachers imagine they are performing a helpful service by gathering data to show that the world is getting worse and worse—that all forms of crime are on the increase, that communism is undermining the foundations of government, and that the masses are seething with discontent. But they would spend their strength to much better effect, if they strove to set before their people a personal example of self-denial and practical godliness, and sought to purge their churches of worldly attractions and unregenerate members. If an ungrieved Spirit were again at work in the churches, conditions would soon improve in the world.

It is not that we are urging our readers to come out from imperfect churches. There has never been a perfect church on this earth, and never will be. But there is a vast difference between an imperfect church and a hypocritical and counterfeit church. There is a vast difference between a little company of real saints, who, though full of infirmities and failures, are, nevertheless, desirous of pleasing the Lord in *all* things, and who are prayerfully *striving* so to do, and a large number of thinly-veneered worldlings, where the *only* difference between them and honest worldlings is that, the former cloak their self-pleasing and fleshly lives under a profession of the holy name of Christ, while the latter sail under their true colours. There is a vast difference between a church which pretends to stand for the fundamentals of the Christian faith, and one which acknowledges (walks in) “the truth *which is after godliness*” (Ti 1:1).

Not a few are now seeking to shelter behind the state of the Corinthian church. When it is pointed out that God’s Word requires His people to separate themselves from all that is openly dishonouring to Him, to “have *no* fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph 5:11), some will reply, “Look at the sad state the Corinthian church was in, yet the apostle did not exhort the real Christians there to forsake it!” Our first reply is, we are making an evil use of God’s Word when we seek to pit one portion of it against another; 2 Corinthians 6:14, 17 [and] 2 Timothy 3:5, etc., must not be negated by reasonings. But secondly, let it be very carefully observed and duly noted that the Corinthian church *heeded* the apostle’s admonitions. It was because of its condition that he addressed to them the first epistle. The *response* which they made to it is plainly stated in *Second* Corinthians 7:8-12! From a church which *heeds* the admonitions of God’s servants, *corrects* what is wrong, and *sorrows* with a godly repentance, we counsel none to depart.

The fact is that those who are turning a deaf ear today unto such commands as Acts 2:40, 1 Timothy 6:5, Hebrews 13:13, and seek to excuse their disobedience by the state of the Corinthian church, belong to “churches” (?) *entirely different from* that New Testament assembly. What resemblance is there between a semi-worldly and semi-religious organization, and that Corinthian church which maintained a godly discipline (2Co 2:6-10)? Does any real Christian suppose that if the apostle Paul were on earth today, he would write to these modern clubs (which call themselves Christian churches), “Forasmuch as ye are *manifestly declared to be* the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart” (2Co 3:3), or, “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be

of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you” (2Co 13:11)?

In order to avoid all ambiguity, let us define the character of those “churches” (?) from which all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity should come out. We will not attempt to give a full list, but mention only the more glaring cases. First, where a majority of the members are obviously unregenerate (2Ti 3:5). Scripture forbids us being “unequally yoked together” (2Co 6:14), and throws upon us the responsibility of individually deciding, by means of the Word, where such would be the case. Second, where any of the fundamentals of the Faith are repudiated in the pulpit (Rom 16:17). It is an awful sin for any Christian to support error. Third, where Christ is dishonoured and His Spirit quenched by employing worldly means to attract and hold worldly people (Joh 17:16). Nothing is more dishonouring to our Lord than linking His holy name with that which He hates. Fourth, where a Scriptural discipline is not being maintained. It is no place for a child of God to be in where little or no attempt is made to deal with members whose daily walk is manifestly a libel upon the cause of Christ.

Perhaps someone may ask, “But am I not forbidden to set up myself as a judge of other people?” Certainly, you are so forbidden. I am first to judge myself, unsparingly, by the Word (1Co 11:31), confessing to God every deviation from it and seeking grace to conform all the details of my life to its holy precepts. Then, (and not till then) it is my privilege and duty to *measure* everything I come into contact with by that same unerring Word. And, if I am truly in subjection to it, it will not be at all difficult for me to discover all that is opposed to it. Certainly, it is not God’s will that any of His children should be *deceived* and imposed upon by hypocrites, nor need they be. Certainly He does not wish me to love as brethren and sisters in Christ those who are the children of the devil. Yet, I must do so if I cannot distinguish one from the other!

Suppose I am a young Christian about to be engaged to a girl that is an out and out worldling, and someone calls my attention to 2 Corinthians 6:14. If I answered by saying, “Oh, but I must not judge her!” would I not be reducing that verse to a meaningless absurdity? Or, suppose I am contemplating going into a business partnership with a man who goes to church every Sunday, but to movies, dances, and card parties every other night of the week. And a faithful servant of God reminds me of 2 Corinthians 6:14. If I answered, “But I have no right to judge him,” would I not be guilty of wicked equivocation? Certainly, I would. Then, why brand me as a Pharisee, and denounce me as guilty of exercising an “holier than thou” spirit, if I act on the same principle in connection with the *church-yoke*? I *must* measure professing Christians by the Word if I am to obey 2 Timothy 3:5.

And what remains for us to add, but this—Beloved brethren and sister in Christ, cry unto God that He will so deepen His work of grace in your hearts that the honour and glory of His Son shall regulate you in all things. Ask Him for grace to separate from all that dishonours Him. You will never regret it. The Lord has promised, “Them that honour me, I will honour” (1Sa 2:30). When you have obeyed 2 Corinthians 6:17 and Hebrews 13:13, God will *confirm* your decision. As a sister in New Zealand has just written, “I did not know how dreadful things were in the church until I came out.”



APRIL

THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST

“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin” (Heb 5:1). Thus, a priest is a person who officiates in the name of others, approaching unto God to make atonement for them by sacrifice. The design of his ministrations is to render the Object of our worship propitious, to avert His wrath from men, and to procure their restoration to His favour. As Prophet, Christ treats with men, in the name of God, making known to them His counsels and commands. As Priest, He treats with God in the name of men, prevailing upon Him to admit them to His friendship.

That Christ should officiate as Priest was determined upon in the eternal counsels of God. He was “set forth [or “foreordained”] to be a propitiation” (Rom 3:25). That is, to be a propitiatory sacrifice to make satisfaction for the sins of His people, which is one part of Christ’s priestly office, on which redemption by His blood is founded. To which He was “verily foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1Pe 1:18-20). The sufferings and death of Christ were all according to the “determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Act 2:23), and whatsoever the Jews and Gentiles did to Him was none other than what God’s “hand and thy counsel determined before to be done” (Act 4:27-28). All that He endured was in the execution of His priestly office, of which the decree of God was the spring.

To this priestly office, Christ was called of God. He did not glorify Himself to be called a Priest, but His Father called Him to take upon Him this office (Heb 5:5), invested Him with it (Pro 8:23), swore Him into it (Psa 110:4), in the counsel and covenant of peace (Zec 6:13), and this, to show the importance, dignity, validity, and perpetuity of His priesthood. To all which Christ agreed, saying, “Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not” (Psa 40:6)—I foresee that the blood of beasts offered by sinful men, will not be, in the issue, acceptable to Thee, nor sufficient to atone for sin—“But a body hast thou prepared me” (Heb 10:5) in purpose, counsel, and covenant, which I am willing, in due time, to assume and offer up a sacrifice unto divine justice—“Lo, I come... to do thy will, O God” (Heb 10:7).

Christ is clearly set forth as Priest in the prophecies of the Old Testament. “And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house” (1Sa 2:35). He was to be One who was to stand up with “Urim and

Thummim” (Neh 7:65). He would be “a priest upon his throne” (Zec 6:13). He would be “a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek” (Psa 110:4). He was to make His soul “an offering for sin” and make “intercession for the transgressors” (Isa 53:10, 12). It is very striking to notice that, in some of His theophanic manifestations during Old Testament times, He appeared in the vestments of a priest “clothed with linen” (Eze 9:2, Dan 10:5).

“Concerning His priesthood, we have briefly to remark, that the end and use of it is, that He may be a Mediator, pure from every stain and by His holiness may render us acceptable to God. But because the righteous curse prevents our access to Him, and God in His character of Judge is offended with us—in order that our Priest may appease the wrath of God, and procure His favour for us, there is a necessity for the intervention of an atonement. Wherefore, that Christ might perform this office, it was necessary for Him to appear with a sacrifice. For even under the Law, the priest was not permitted to enter the sanctuary without blood. That the faithful might know that, notwithstanding the interposition of the priest as an intercessor, yet it was impossible for God to be propitiated without the expiation of sin” (John Calvin’s “Institutes,” Book 2, chapter 15, 1509-1564).

It is in the epistle to the Hebrews, and there alone in the New Testament, that the theme of Christ’s priesthood is unfolded. The reason for this being that, it was to the Jews only God had entrusted the sole representation of it in their typical priesthood. In that epistle, we are shown how Christ fulfilled all that was foreshadowed of Him both by Aaron and by Melchizedek. Unto those desiring to make a fuller study for themselves, we would point out, it is most important to observe that it is not until *after* the apostle had shown how Christ had fulfilled what Aaron foreshadowed (Heb 5:1-4), that He is saluted “an high priest after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb 5:10). We would also emphasize the fact that our Lord is *not* said to be “an high priest *of* the order of Melchizedek,” but “after the order of.” The difference between the two expressions is real and radical. The word “of” would have necessarily *limited* His priesthood to a certain order, but that could not be. *His* priesthood is not restricted to any human order nor could any one man fully prefigure, still less perform, all that pertains to Christ’s priesthood.

Both the typical persons of Aaron and Melchizedek were required to adumbrate the varied excellencies and activities of our great High Priest. The former sets forth in fullest detail the *nature* of His sacerdotal functions. There is no record in Scripture that Melchizedek offered any sacrifice unto God, officiated in any holy place (the tabernacle not being built till the days of Moses), or that he made intercession for transgressions—all of which are the very things which pertained to Christ’s priestly office. But Aaron *did* offer a propitiatory sacrifice unto God (Lev 16), enter into the holy of holies, bore the names of Israel in the breastplate of judgment over his heart, and carried the sweet incense into the very presence of Jehovah. Supplementing this, Melchizedek presaged the dignity of Christ’s person. He was a *royal* priest, and his office independent of human heredity. The “without father, without mother” of Hebrews 7:3, denoting that he owed not his sacerdotal office unto fleshly ancestry, as did the Levitical priests.

Socinians (Unitarians) and others, who are infected with their poison, quote Hebrews 8:4 to prove that Christ only entered upon the discharge of His sacerdotal office after His ascension. “For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law.” But this means, first, that had Christ’s office been of the *same kind* as the Levitical, which functioned all the days of His flesh, He could not have been a Priest—because the office was vested in a tribe to which He did not belong. And, second, that *if the whole* of His sacerdotal functions were to be executed on earth, He must be excluded from the priestly office—

because He had no legal access into the holy of holies in the earthly temple at Jerusalem. *There* His blood could not be presented.

That Christ entered upon His priestly office, and that He exercised its functions, *before* His ascension, is abundantly established by the plainest evidence of Scripture. First, He was made “a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God *to make* reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Heb 2:17), and Romans 5:10 affirms that “We were reconciled to God by *the death* of his Son”! Second, “We have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens” (Heb 4:14), who “*was* [namely, in the time of His humiliation] tempted,” etc. (Heb 4:15). Third, in the days of His flesh, He “*offered up* [language which always denotes a *priestly* act] prayers and supplications” (Heb 5:7). Fourth, “For such a high priest became us...who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice...for this he did once, when he offered up himself” (Heb 7:26-28). Fifth, at Calvary, the Lord Jesus was not only the Lamb of God bearing judgment, but He was also His Priest officiating at the altar. “For *every* high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat *also to offer*” (Heb 8:3)—He “*offered himself* without spot to God” (Heb 9:14). Sixth, “But Christ being come an high priest...by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place” (Heb 9:11-12). Finally, if Christ was not a priest before His entrance into heaven, if He did not enter therein on the ground of the sacrifice which He offered to God on the cross, then, all the analogy between the type of Leviticus 16 and the Antitype is utterly destroyed.

“How doth Christ execute the office of Priest? Answer—Christ executeth that office of a priest in His once offering Himself a sacrifice without spot to God, to be a reconciliation for the sins of His people, and in making continual intercession for them” (Westminster Catechism). In this answer, the two great branches of the Mediator’s sacerdotal work are briefly described. The second duty of His priestly office was typified by the entrance of Aaron into the holy of holies, where he sprinkled the blood of the atoning sacrifice, and burned incense before the mercy-seat. The antitype of this is Christ’s entrance into heaven, “There to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb 9:24). As Aaron’s entrance into the holiest was *after* the sacrifice had been slain, so it was with our Lord. Concerning the needs-be for and the nature of His intercession, who are the subjects, and what is its design, we have treated of in our articles on “The Intercession of Christ,” which began in the November 1930 issue.

Because of the perfect union between His Deity and humanity, Christ is “a merciful and faithful high priest” (Heb 2:17). To be “merciful” is to be compassionate, ever ready, under the influence of a tender sympathy, to support, comfort, and deliver. Having trod the same path as His suffering and tried people, Christ is able to enter into their afflictions. He is not like an angel, which has never experienced pain. He is Man, nor have His sympathies been impaired by His exaltation to heaven. The same human heart beats within the bosom of Him who sits at God’s right hand, as caused Him to weep over Jerusalem! To be “faithful” means that His compassions are regulated by holiness. His sympathies are exercised according to the requirements of God’s truth. There is a perfect balance between His maintenance of God’s claims and His ministering to our infirmities.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

52. Apostasy (10:25-27)

We have now reached one of the most solemn and fear-inspiring passages to be found, not only in this epistle, but in all the Word of God. May the Holy Spirit fit each of our hearts to approach it in that godly trembling which becomes those who have within their own hearts the seeds of apostasy.

Let it be duly considered at the outset that the verses, which are now to be before us, were addressed not to those who made no profession of being genuine Christians, but instead, unto them whom the Spirit of truth owned as “Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb 3:1). Nevertheless, *He* now dehorts them from stepping over the brink of that awful precipice which was before them, and faithfully warns of the certain destruction which would follow did they do so. Instead of replying to this with arguments drawn from the eternal security of God’s saints, let us seek grace to honestly face the terrible danger which menaces each of us while we remain in this world of sin, and to use all necessary means to avoid so fearful and fatal a calamity.

In the past, dear reader, there have been thousands who were just as confident that *they* had been genuinely saved, and were truly trusting in the merits of the finished work of Christ to take them safely through to heaven, as *you* may be. Nevertheless, they are now in the torments of hell. Their confidence was a carnal one. Their “faith,” no better than that which the demons have. Their faith was but a natural one, which rested on the bare letter of Scripture. It was not a supernatural one, wrought in the heart by God. They were too confident that their faith *was* a saving one, to thoroughly, searchingly, frequently, *test* it by the Scriptures, to discover whether or not it was bringing forth those *fruits* which are inseparable from the faith of God’s elect. If they read an article like this, they proudly concluded that it belonged to someone else. So cocksure were they that they were born again so many years ago, they refused to heed the command of 11 Corinthians 13:5, “Prove your own selves.” And now, it is too late! They wasted their day of opportunity, and the “blackness of darkness” (Jud 1:13) is their portion forever.

In view of this solemn and awful fact, the writer earnestly calls upon himself and each reader to get down before God and sincerely cry, “Search me, O God: reveal me to myself. If I am deceived, undeceive me ere it be eternally too late. Enable me to measure myself faithfully by Thy Word, so that I may discover whether or not my heart has been renewed, whether I have abandoned every course of self-will and truly surrendered to Thee. Whether I have so repented that I hate all sin, and fervently long to be free from its power, loathe myself and seek diligently to deny myself. Whether my faith is that which overcomes the world (1Jo 5:4), or whether it be only a mere notional thing which produces no godly living. Whether I am a fruitful branch of the vine, or only a cumberer of the ground. In short, whether I be a *new* creature in Christ, or only a painted hypocrite.” If I have an honest heart, then, I am willing, yea, anxious, to face and know the *real* truth about myself.

Perhaps some readers are ready to say, “I already know the truth about myself. I believe what God’s Word tells me. I am a sinner, with no good thing dwelling in me. My only hope is in

Christ.” Yes, dear friend, but Christ *saves* His people *from* their sins. Christ sends His Holy Spirit into their hearts, so that they are radically changed from what they were previously. The Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in the hearts of those He regenerates, and that love is manifested by a deep desire and sincere determination to *please Him* who loves me. When Christ saves a soul, He saves not only from hell, but from the power of sin. He delivers him from the dominion of Satan, and from the love of the world. He delivers him from the fear of man, the lusts of the flesh, the love of self. True, He has not yet *completed* this blessed work. True, the sinful nature is not yet eradicated, but one who is saved has been delivered from the dominion of sin (Rom 6:14). Salvation is a supernatural thing, which changes the heart, renews the will, transforms the life, so that it is evident to all around that a *miracle* of grace has been wrought.

Thus, it is not sufficient for me to ask, “Have I repudiated my own righteousness, have I renounced all my good works to fit me for heaven, am I trusting alone to Christ?” Many will earnestly and sincerely affirm these things, who yet give no evidence that they have passed from death unto life. Then, what more is necessary for me to ascertain whether or not my faith be a truly saving one? This—There are certain things which “*accompany* salvation” (Heb 6:9), things which are inseparable from it. And for *these*, I must look and be sure I have them. A bundle of wood that sends forth neither heat nor smoke has no fire under it. A tree which, in summer, bears neither fruit nor leaves is dead. So, a faith which does not issue in godly living, in an obedient walk, in spiritual fruit, is not the faith of God’s elect. O my reader, I beg you to diligently and faithfully examine yourself by the light of God’s unerring Word. Claim not to be a child of Abraham, unless you do the *works* of Abraham (Joh 8:39)!

What is apostasy? It is a making shipwreck of the faith (1Ti 1:19). It is the heart’s departure from the living God (Heb 3:12). It is a returning to and being overcome by the world, after a previous escape from its pollutions through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2Pe 2:20). There are various steps which precede it. First, there is a *looking back* (Luk 9:62), like Lot’s wife, who, though she had outwardly left Sodom, yet her heart was still there. Second, there is a *drawing back* (Heb 10:38). The requirements of Christ are too exacting to any longer appeal to the heart. Third, there is a *turning back* (Joh 6:66). The path of godliness is too narrow to suit the lustings of the flesh. Fourth, there is a *falling back*, which is fatal. “That they might go, and fall backward, and be broken” (Isa 28:13).

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb 10:25). This verse forms the transition between the subject of Christian perseverance, treated of in Hebrews 10:23-24, and that of apostasy, which is developed in verse 26 and onwards—though it is much more closely related to the latter than to the former. Most of the commentators are astray on this point, through failing to observe the absence of the word, “And,” at the beginning of it, and because they perceive not the significance of the word “forsake.” In reality, the contents of this verse form a faithful warning against apostasy. First, the Hebrews are cautioned against forsaking public worship. Second, it is pointed out that “some” had already done so. Third, they are bidden to exhort one another with increased diligence.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.” Before attempting an exposition of these words, let us first relieve them of a false application which some seek to make of them today. Just as of old, Satan made a wrong use of Psalm 91:11-12 in his tempting of the Saviour (Mat 4:6), so he does with the verse before us. Few are aware of how often the devil brings a Scripture before our minds. When a Christian is seeking to be out and out for Christ, the devil

will quote to him, “Be not righteous overmuch” (Ecc 7:16). Likewise, when a child of God resolves to obey 11 Timothy 3:5 and Hebrews 13:13, and separates from all who do not *live* godly, the enemy reminds him of “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Heb 10:25). Romanists used the same text in the early days of the Reformation, and charged Luther and his friends with disobeying this divine command. But, God’s Word does not contradict itself. It does not tell us in one place, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2Co 6:14), and here, bid the “sheep” to fraternise with “goats.” When rightly understood, this verse affords no handle to those who seek to discourage faithfulness to Christ.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.” John Owen (1616-1683) rightly pointed out that, “There is a synecdoche [a part put for the whole] in the word ‘assembling,’ and it is put for the whole worship of Christ, because worship was performed in their assemblies; and he that forsakes the assemblies, forsakes the worship of Christ, as some of them did when exposed to danger.” What is here dehorted is the total relinquishment of Christianity. It is not, “Cease not to *attend* the assembly,” but, “forsake not,” *abandon* not the assembling of yourselves together. It is not the sin of sloth or of schism which is here considered, but that of apostasy. If a professing Christian forsook the Christian churches and became a Mohammedan, he would disobey this verse. But, for one who puts the honour of Christ before everything else, to turn his back upon the so-called churches, where He is now so grievously dishonoured, is *not* a failure to comply with its terms.

The Greek word for, “forsake not,” is a *very* strong and emphatic one, being a double compound, and signifies, “to abandon in time of danger.” It is the word used by the agonizing Redeemer on the Cross, when He cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou *forsaken* me?” (Mat 27:46) It was used by Him, again, when He declared, “Thou wilt not *leave* my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Act 2:27). It is the word employed by Paul in 11 Timothy 4:10, “For Demas hath *forsaken* me, having loved this present world.” It is found in only one other place in this epistle, where it is in obvious antithesis from the verse now before us, “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor *forsake* thee” (Heb 13:5). Thus, it will appear that a total and final abandonment of the public profession of Christianity is what is here warned against.

One may, therefore, discern how that Hebrews 10:25 supplies a most appropriate link between verses 23-24 and verse 26. Verse 25 prescribes another means to enable the wavering Hebrews to remain constant in the Christian faith. If they were to, “Hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering,” and if they were to, “Consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (Heb 10:24), then, they must not “forsake the assembling” of themselves together. The word for “assembling together” is a double compound, and occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in 11 Thessalonians 2:1, “Our gathering together unto him,” that is, unto Christ. This also shows that the “assembling together” here is under one Head, and that the “forsaking” is because *He* has been turned away from.

To enforce the above caution, the apostle adds, “as the manner of some is.” The Greek word for, “manner,” signifies, “custom,” and is so translated in Luke 2:42. This supplies additional confirmation that the evil, against which the Hebrews were dehorted, was no mere occasionally absenting themselves from the Christian churches, but a deliberate, fixed, and final departure from them. In John 6:66, we read that, “From that time, many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” John also wrote of those who “went out from us, but they were not of us” (1Jo 2:19). Whilst at the close of his labours, Paul had to say, “All they which are in Asia be

turned away from me” (2Ti 1:15). So here, some who had made a profession of the Christian faith had now abandoned the same and gone back to Judaism. It was to warn the others, against this fatal step, that the apostle now wrote as he did. Compare 1 Corinthians 10:12, Romans 11:20.

“But exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb 10:25). Here is the positive side of our verse. This is another of the means appointed by God to confirm Christians in their holy confession. To “exhort one another” is a duty to which all Christians are called. Alas, how rarely is it performed these evil days. Yet, from the human side, such failure is hardly to be wondered at. The vast majority of professing Christians wish to be petted and flattered, rather than exhorted and cautioned. Most of them are so hypersensitive that the slightest criticism offends them. One who seeks grace to be faithful and to act in *true* “love” to those whom he supposes are his brethren and sisters in Christ, has a thankless task before him, so far as man is concerned—he will soon lose nearly all his “friends” (?), and sever the “fellowship” (?) which exists between him and them. But this will only give him a little taste of “the fellowship of *His* sufferings” (Phi 3:10). Hebrews 3:13 is still God’s command!

“And so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb 10:25). There seems little room for doubt that the first reference here is to the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth, which was now very nigh, for this epistle was written within less than eight years before Jerusalem was captured by Titus. That terrible catastrophe had been foretold, again and again, by Israel’s prophets, and was plainly announced by the Lord Jesus in Luke 21. The approach of that dreadful “day” could be plainly *seen* or perceived by those possessing spiritual discernment. The continued refusal of the Nation to repent of their murder of Christ, and the abandoning of Christianity for an apostate Judaism by such large numbers, clearly presaged the bursting of the storm of God’s judgment. This very fact supplied an additional motive for genuine Christians to remain faithful. The Lord Jesus promised that His followers should be preserved from the destruction of Jerusalem, but *only* as they attended to His cautions in Luke 21:8, 19, 34, etc., only as they persevered in faith and holiness, Matthew 24:13. The particular motive unto diligence, here set before the Hebrews, is applicable to other Christians just to the extent that they find themselves in similar circumstances.

“For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins” (Heb 10:26). The general truth here set forth is that, should those who have been converted and become Christians apostatize from Christ, their state would be hopeless. This is presented under the following details. First, because of the nature of this sin, namely, a deliberate and final abandonment of the Christian faith. Second, the ones warned against the committal of it. Third, the terrible aggravation of it did such commit it. Fourth, the unpardonableness of it.

“For if we sin willfully” (Heb 10:26). The causal particle whereby this verse is premised has at least a threefold force. First and more immediately, it points the plain and inevitable conclusion from what has just been said in Hebrews 10:25. They who “forsake” and abandon the Christian assemblies, with all that they stand for, commit a sin for which the sacrifice of Christ avails not. Should it be said that Scripture declares, “The blood of Christ cleanseth from *all* sin,” the reply is that it only says, “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth *us* from all sin,” and none of those spoken of throughout that verse (1Jo 1:7) ever commit *this* sin! Moreover, that very same epistle plainly teaches there is a sin for which the blood of Christ does not avail. See 1 John 5:16. Second, and more generally, a reason is here adduced as to why Christians need to heed the exhortations given in Hebrews 10:22-25—the duties therein prescribed are the means which God

has appointed for preserving His people against this unpardonable crime. Third and more remotely, a solemn warning is here given against a wrong use being made of the precious promise recorded in Hebrews 10:17—that blessed declaration is not designed to encourage a course of carelessness and recklessness.

“For if we sin willfully” (Heb 10:26). “The word *sin* here is plainly used in a somewhat peculiar sense. It is descriptive not of sin generally, but of a particular kind of sin—apostasy from the faith and profession of the truth, once known and professed. ‘The angels that sinned’ are the apostate angels. The apostasy described is not so much an act of apostasy as a state of apostasy. It is not, ‘If we have sinned, if we have apostatized,’ but, ‘If we *sin*, if we apostatize, if we continue in apostasy’” (John Brown, 1722-1787). English translators prior to the Authorized Version read, “if we sin *willingly*,” the change being made in 1611 to *avoid* giving countenance to the supposition that there is no recovery after *any* voluntary sin. The Greek word will not permit this change. The only other occurrence of it, in 1 Peter 5:2, clearly gives its scope, “Taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly.”

“For if we sin willingly,” that is, voluntarily, of our own accord, where no constraint is used. The reference is to a definite decision, where an individual deliberately determines to abandon Christ and turn away from God. “In the Jewish law, as in indeed the case everywhere, a distinction is made between sins of oversight, inadvertence, or ignorance (Lev 4:2, 13, 22; 5:15; Num 15:24, 27-29; compare Act 3:17; 17:30), and sins of presumption, sins that are deliberately and intentionally committed (see Exo 21:14; Num 15:30; Deu 17:12; Psa 19:13). The apostle here has reference, evidently, to such a distinction, and means to speak of a decided and deliberate purpose to break away from the restraints and obligations of the Christian religion” (Albert Barnes, 1798-1870).

“For if we sin willingly,” etc. Who are the ones that are here warned against this terrible sin? Who are they that are in danger of committing it? The answer is—*all* who make a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus. But are genuine Christians in any such danger? Looked at from the standpoint of God’s everlasting covenant, which He made with them in the person of their Sponsor, which covenant is, “Ordered in all things, and sure” (2Sa 23:5)—No. But considered as they are in themselves, mutable creatures (as was *unfallen* Adam), without any strength of their own—Yes. Viewed as those who still have the sinful nature within them—Yes. Contemplated as those who are yet the objects of Satan’s relentless attacks—Yes. But it may be said, “God sees His people *only* in Christ.” Not so, is the reply. Were that the case, He would never chasten (Heb 12:5-10) us! God views the Christian both in Christ legally *and* in this world actually. He addresses us as responsible beings (2Pe 1:10) and regulates the manifestations of His love for us according to our conduct (Joh 14:23).

It is to be carefully noted that the apostle Paul did not say, “If *ye* sin willingly,” but, “If *we*,” thus including himself. Two reasons may be suggested for this. First, to soften a little the severity of this terrible warning. He shows there is no respect of persons in this matter. Were he to commit this dreadful sin himself, he, too, would suffer the same unmitigable doom. Hereby, he sets all preachers and teachers a godly example. Such was his general custom. Compare the “we” in Hebrews 2:3; 3:6, 14; 12:25, and the “us” in 4:1, 11! Second, to emphasize the unvarying outworking of this law. No exceptions are made. The apostle includes himself to show that even he himself could not look to escape the divine vengeance here denounced, if he fell into the sin here described.

“After that we have received the knowledge of the truth” (Heb 10:26). These words not only serve to identify the ones who are cautioned against apostasy, but are added to emphasize the enormity of the sin. It would not be through ignorance or lack of knowledge, but after being enlightened, they abandoned Christianity. The “Truth” rather than the “Gospel” is here specifically mentioned, so as to heighten the contrast—it is for a *lie* that Christ is rejected. The word “knowledge” here is a compound and signifies “acknowledgment,” and is so rendered in Titus 1:1, Philemon 1:6. Owen says, “The word is not used anywhere to express the mere conceptions or notions of the mind about this, but such acknowledgment of it as arises from some sense of its power and excellency.” To “receive” this acknowledgment of the truth includes an act of the mind in understanding it, an act of the will in consenting, and an act of the heart in embracing it.

“Wherefore the sin, here intended, is plainly a relinquishment and renunciation of the truth of the Gospel, and the promises thereof, with all duty thereunto belonging, after we have been convinced of its truth, and avowed its power and excellency. There is no more required but that this be ‘willingly’—not upon a sudden surprisal and temptation, as Peter denied Christ—not on those compulsions and fears which may work a present dissimulation, without an internal rejection of the Gospel—not through darkness, ignorance making an impression for a season on the minds and reasonings of men, which things, though exceedingly evil and dangerous, may befall them who yet contract not the guilt of this crime. But, it is required thereunto, that men who thus sin, do it by choice, and of their own accord, from the internal [de]pravity of their own mind, and an evil heart of unbelief to depart from the living God—that they do it by, and with the preference of another way of religion, and a resting therein before or above the Gospel” (John Owen).

The unpardonableness of this sin is affirmed in the words, “There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins” (Heb 10:26). A similar passage, which throws light on our present verse, is found in 1 Samuel 3:14, “And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever.” As there were certain sins which in Old Testament times, from their heinousness and the high-handed rebellion of their perpetrators, had no sacrifice allowed them, but “died without mercy” (Heb 10:28), so it is now with those who apostatize from Christ. There is no relief appointed for them. No means for the expiation of their sin. They voluntarily and finally reject the Gospel, forfeit all interest in the sacrifice of Christ.

Ere leaving this verse, let it be said emphatically that there is nothing in it which in anywise conflicts with the blessed truth of the eternal security of God’s *saints*. The apostle did not here say the Hebrews had apostatized, nor did he affirm they *would* do so. No, instead, he faithfully points out the sure, dreadful, and eternal consequences *did* they do so. “For IF we sin willingly.” It was to keep them from it that he here sets it down by way of supposition, just as in Romans 8:13, he says, “For *if* ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.” As to how far a person may go in the taking up of Christianity, and as to what the Spirit may work in him *short of* actual regeneration, and, then, that one apostatize, only God knows. And, as to how close a real Christian may come to *presumptuous* (Psa 19:13) sinning, and yet remain innocent of “the great transgression,” only God can decide. We are only in the place of safety while we maintain the attitude of complete dependency upon the Lord and of unreserved subjection to Him. To indulge the flesh is *dangerous*. To persist in a course of self-gratification is *highly* dangerous, and to remain therein unto the end, would be *fatal*.

“But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Heb 10:27). The positive punishment of apostates is here announced. “When a man under that law had contracted the guilt of any such sin, as was indispensably capital in its punishment, for the legal expiation thereof, no sacrifice was appointed or allowed, such as murder, adultery, blasphemy. He had nothing remaining but a fearful expectation of the execution of the sentence of the law against him. And, it is evident that, in this context, the apostle argues from the less unto the greater. If it was so that this was the case of him who so sinned against Moses’ law, how much more must it be so with them that sin against the Gospel, whose sin is incomparably greater, and the punishment more severe?” (John Owen).

The divine punishment which shall be visited upon apostates is first spoken of under the general term “judgment,” as in Hebrews 9:27. This signifies that it will be a righteous sentence proportioned unto their awful crime. There will be a full and open trial, with an impartial judicial condemnation of them. The term is also used to express the punishment itself (Jam 2:13; 2Pe 2:3). Both meanings are probably included here. There is no mean between pardon and damnation. The sure approach of this judgment is referred to as “a certain fearful looking-for of” it. The word, “certain,” here signifies something which is not fully defined, as in “a certain woman” (Mar 5:25), “a certain nobleman” (Joh 4:46). It, therefore, denotes the “judgment” is inexpressible, such as no human heart can conceive or tongue portray. “Fearful,” intimates the punishment will be so dreadful that, when men come to apprehend it, they are filled with horror and dismay. “Looking-for,” shows that the apostates already have an earnest of God’s wrath in their consciences, even now.

“And fiery indignation,” or “fierceness of fire,” as in the American Revised Version, or more literally, “of fire fervor” (Bagster’s Interlinear). This describes more closely the *nature* of the “judgment” awaiting them. The terms used denote the resistless, tormenting, destroying efficacy of God’s terrible wrath, and emphasizes its dreadful fierceness. God is highly incensed against the apostates, and inconceivably and indescribably dreadful will be His dealings with them. It will express and answer to His *infinite* justice, holiness, and power. “For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire” (Isa 66:15). No doubt the reference in our verse is to the final judgment at the last day, and the eternal destruction of God’s enemies. A solemn and graphic shadowing forth of this was given by God when His sword and fiery judgment fell upon the Jews in A.D. 70, destroying their church-state by fire and sword.

“Which shall devour the adversaries” (Heb 10:27). There is probably an allusion here to the dreadful fate which overtook Nadab and Abihu, concerning whom it is written, “And there went out fire from the LORD, and *devoured* them” (Lev 10:2). And also the judgment visited upon Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, when, “The ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up,” so that they went down “alive into the pit” (Num 16:30-33). The “adversaries” are those who are actuated by a principle of hostile opposition to Christ and Christianity. They are enemies of God, and God will show Himself to be their Enemy. God’s wrath shall “devour them as to all happiness, all blessedness, all hopes, comfort, and relief at once, but it shall not consume their being. This is that which this fire shall ever prey upon them, and never utterly consume them” (John Owen). From such a doom, may divine grace deliver both writer and reader.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

4. His Slaying of Goliath

When Samuel denounced Saul's first great sin and announced that his kingdom should not continue, he declared, "The LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart" (1Sa 13:14). To this, allusion was made by the apostle Paul in his address in the synagogue at Antioch, "He raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will" (Act 13:22). A truly wondrous tribute was this unto the character of David, yet one which the general course of his life bore out. The dominant characteristic of our patriarch was his unfeigned and unsurpassed devotion to God, His cause, and His Word. Blessedly is this illustrated in what is now to be before us. The man after God's own heart is the one who is out and out for Him, putting His honour and glory before all other considerations.

1 Samuel 17:15 supplies a precious link between what was considered in our last lesson and what we are now about to ponder. There, we are told, "But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem." Knowing that he was to be the next king over Israel, natural prudence would suggest that his best policy was to remain at court, making the most of his opportunities, and seeking to gain the goodwill of the ministers of state. But, instead of so doing, the son of Jesse returned to the sheepfold, leaving it with God to work out His will concerning him. No seeker after self-aggrandisement was David. The palace, as such, possessed no attractions for him. Having fulfilled his service unto the king, he now returns to his father's farm.

"Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh" (1Sa 17:1). Josephus (Antiq. 50:6, c. 9, sect. 1) says that this occurred not long after the things related in the preceding chapter had transpired. It seems likely that the Philistines had heard of Samuel's forsaking of Saul, and of the king's melancholy and distraction occasioned by the evil spirit, and deemed it a suitable time to avenge themselves upon Israel for their last slaughter of them (1Sa 14). The enemies of God's people are ever alert to take advantage of their opportunities, and never have they a better one than when their leaders provoke God's Spirit and His prophets leave them. Nevertheless, it is blessed to see here how that God makes the "wrath of man" to praise Him (Psa 76:10).

"And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines" (1Sa 17:2). The king had been relieved, for a season at least, of the evil spirit. But the Spirit of the Lord had not returned to him, as the sequel plainly evidences. A sorry figure did Saul and his forces now cut. "And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath...And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? Am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together. When Saul and all

Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid” (1Sa 17:4, 8-11). Ere pondering the haughty challenge which was here thrown down, let us point out (for the strengthening of faith in the inerrancy of Holy Writ) a small detail which exhibits the minute accuracy and harmony of the Word.

In Numbers 13, we read that the spies sent out by Moses to inspect the promised land, declared, “The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the *giants*, the sons of *Anak*, which come of the giants” (Num 13:32-33). Now, link up with this, Joshua 11:21-22, “And at that time came Joshua, and cut off *the Anakims* from the mountains...there was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in *Gath*, and in Ashdod, there *remained*.” Here, in our present passage, it is stated, quite incidentally, that Goliath belonged to “Gath”! Thus, in the mouth of three witnesses—Moses, Joshua, and Samuel—is the word established, concurring as they do in a manner quite artless, to verify a single particular. How jealous was God about His Word! What a sure foundation faith has to rest upon!

Goliath pictures to us the great enemy of God and man, the devil, seeking to terrify and bring into captivity those who bear the name of the Lord. His prodigious size (probably over eleven feet) symbolized the great power of Satan. His accoutrements (compare the word “armour” in Luke 11:22!) figured the fact that the resources of flesh and blood cannot overcome Satan. His blatant challenge adumbrated the roaring of the lion, our great adversary, as he goes about “seeking whom he may devour” (1Pe 5:8). His declaration that the Israelites were but “servants to Saul” (1Sa 17:8) was only too true, for they were no longer in subjection to the Lord (1Sa 8:7). The dismay of Saul (1Sa 17:11) is in solemn contrast from his boldness in 1 Samuel 11:5-11 and 14:47, when the Spirit of the Lord was upon him. The terror of the people (1Sa 17:11) was a sad evidence of the fact that the “fear of the LORD” (1Sa 11:7) was no longer upon them. But all of this only served to provide a background from which the courage of the man after God’s own heart might the more evidently appear.

The terrible giant of Gath continued to menace the army of Israel twice a day for no less than forty days—a period which, in Scripture, is ever associated with probation and testing. Such a protracted season served to make the more manifest the impotency of a people out of communion with God. There was Saul himself, who “from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people” (1Sa 9:2). There was Jonathan who, assisted only by his armour-bearer, had, on a former occasion, slain twenty of the Philistines (1Sa 14:14). There was Abner, the captain of the host (1Sa 14:50), a “valiant man” (1Sa 26:15), but he too declined Goliath’s challenge. Ah, my reader, the best, the bravest of men, are no more than what God makes them. When He renews not his courage, the stoutest heart is a coward. Yet, God does not act arbitrarily, rather is cowardice one of the consequences of lost communion with Him, “The righteous are bold as a lion” (Pro 28:1).

Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity. But He does not always, nor generally, act immediately, when we are brought low. No, He “*waits* to be gracious” (Isa 30:18), and that, that our helplessness may be the more fully realized, that His delivering hand may be seen the more clearly, and that His merciful interposition may be the more appreciated. But even at this time, when all seemed lost to Israel, when there was none in her army that dared to pick up the gauntlet which Goliath had thrown down, God had His man in reserve, and in due time, he appeared on the scene and vindicated the glorious name of JEHOVAH. The instrument chosen seemed, to

natural wisdom and military prudence, a weak and foolish one, utterly unfitted for the work before him. Ah, it is just such that God uses, and why? That the honour may be His, that “No flesh should glory in his presence” (1Co 1:29). Before considering the grand victory which the Lord wrought through David, let us carefully ponder the training which he had received in the school of God. This is deeply important for our hearts.

It was away from the crowds, in the quietude of pastoral life, that David was taught the wondrous resources which there are in God available to faith. There, in the fields of Bethlehem, he had, by divine enablement, slain the lion and the bear (1Sa 17:34-35). This is ever God’s way. He teaches in secret that soul which He has elected shall serve Him in public. Ah, my reader, is it not just at this point that we may discover the explanation of our failures? It is because we have not sufficiently cultivated the “secret place of the most High” (Psa 91:1). *That* is our primary need. But do we really esteem communion with God our highest privilege? Do we realize that walking with God is the source of our strength?

There had been direct dealings between David’s soul and God out there in the solitude of the fields, and it is only thus that any of us are taught how to get the victory. Have you yet learned, my brother or sister, that the closet is the great battlefield of faith! It is the genuine denying of self, the daily taking up of the cross, the knowing how to cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and the bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2Co 10:5). Let the foe be met and conquered in private, and we shall not have to mourn defeat when we meet him in public. O may the Holy Spirit impress deeply upon each of our hearts the vital importance of coming forth from the presence of God as we enter upon any service unto Him. *This* it is which regulates the difference between success and failure. Note how the blessed Redeemer acted on this principle—Luke 6:12-13, etc.!

“And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren; And carry these ten cheeses unto the Captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge” (1Sa 17:17-18). Another beautiful type is this of our Saviour going about His Father’s business, seeking the good of His *brethren*. A similar one is found in Genesis 37:13-14. But without staying to develop this thought, let us observe how God was directing all things to the accomplishment of His purpose. Jesse had eight sons (1Sa 16:10-11), and only three of them had joined Saul’s army (1Sa 17:13), so that five of them were at home. Yet, David, the youngest, was the one sent—though Jesse knew it not, God had work for *him* to do. Nothing happens by chance in this world. *All* is controlled and directed from on High (Joh 19:11).

“And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle” (1Sa 17:20). How this evidenced the readiness and eagerness of David to obey his father’s orders! Again, we may look from the type to the Antitype, and hear Him say, “Lo, I come...to do thy will, O God” (Heb 10:7). Blessed is it to mark that David was as mindful of his father’s sheep as he was of his commands. His leaving them “with a keeper,” evidenced his care and fidelity in the discharge of his office. His faithfulness in a few things fitted him to be ruler over many things. He, who is best qualified to command, is the one who had, previously, learned to obey.

“God’s providence brought him to the camp very seasonably, when both sides had set the battle in array, and as it should seem were more likely to come to an engagement than they had yet been all the forty days (1Sa 17:21). Both sides were now preparing to fight. Jesse little

thought of sending his son to the army just in that critical juncture, but the wise God orders the time, and all the circumstances, of actions and affairs, so as to serve His design of securing the interests of Israel, and advancing the man after His own heart” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

Though he had only just completed a long journey, we are told that David “ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren” (1Sa 17:22). This reminds of Proverbs 22:29, “Seest thou a man diligent in business? he shall stand before kings.” As David talked with his brethren, Goliath came forth again and repeated his challenge. The whole army was “sore afraid” (1Sa 17:24), and though reminding one another of the promised reward awaiting the one who slew the giant, none dared to venture his life—such inducements as Saul offered, sink into utter insignificance when *death* confronts a man. David mildly expostulated with those who stood near him, pointing out that Goliath was defying “the armies of the living God” (1Sa 17:26).

“And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab’s anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? And with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightiest see the battle” (1Sa 17:28). How this reminds us of what is said of David’s Son and Lord in John 1:11, etc. There is a lesson here which every true minister of Christ does well to take to heart, for by so doing he will be forearmed against many a disappointment and discouragement. Sufficient for the disciple to be as his Master! If the incarnate Son was not appreciated, his agents should not expect to be. “For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal 1:10). Not only will men, in general, be displeased, but even the people of God, when in a low state, will neither understand nor value the actings of *faith*. The man of God must be prepared to be misinterpreted and to stand alone.

Blessed is it to mark David’s reply to the cruel taunt of his brother. It was a real testing of his meekness, but when he was reviled, he reviled not again. Nor did he attempt any self-vindication, or explanation of his conduct—such had been quite wasted upon one with such a spirit. First, he simply asked, “What have I done?” What fault have I committed to be thus chided? Reminding us of our Lord’s meek reply under a much stronger provocation, “Why smitest thou me?” (Joh 18:23). Second, he said, “Is there not a cause?” (1Sa 17:29). This, he left with him. *There* was a cause for his coming to the camp. His father had sent him. The honour of Israel—sullied by Goliath—required it. The glory of God necessitated it. Third, he “turned from him toward another” (1Sa 17:30).

David’s speaking to one and another soon reached the ears of Saul, who accordingly sent for him (1Sa 17:31). To the king, he at once said, “Let no man’s heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine” (1Sa 17:32). Only to be met with this reply, “Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him” (1Sa 17:33). Ah, “Those that undertake great and public services must not think it strange if they be discountenanced and opposed by those from whom they have reason to expect support and assistance. But must humbly go on with their work, in the face, not only of their enemies’ threats, but of their friends’ sleights and suspicions” (Matthew Henry). The language used by him in the presence of the king was not the bravado of a boaster, but the God-honouring testimony of a man of faith. Saul and his people were in despair as the consequence of their being occupied with the things of sight. The man of faith had a contemptuous disdain for Goliath because he viewed him from God’s viewpoint—as His enemy, as “uncircumcised.” Note how he attributed his previous successes to the Lord, and how he improved them to count upon Him for further victory. See 1Samuel 17:37.

The response made by Saul unto David's pleading was solemnly ludicrous. First, he said, "Go, and the Lord be with thee" (1Sa 17:37), which were idle words on such lips. Next, we read that "Saul armed David with his own armour" (1Sa 17:38) (i.e., with some that he kept in his armoury), in which he had far more confidence than in God. But David quickly perceived that such was unsuited to him. The one, who has much to do with God in secret, cannot employ worldly means and methods in public. The man of faith has no use for carnal weapons. Such things as ecclesiastical titles, dress, ritualistic ceremonies, which are imposing to the eye of the natural man, are but bubbles and baubles to the spiritual. "And David put them off him" (1Sa 17:39), and advanced to meet the haughty Philistine with only a sling and five smooth stones. Should it be asked, "But are we not justified using *means*?" The answer is, Yes, the means which *God* supplies (the "smooth stones"), but not that which man offers—"his armour."

"When the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him" (1Sa 17:42). First, Eliab had taunted, then Saul had sought to discourage, and now, Goliath scorns him. Ah, the one who (by grace) is walking by faith must not expect to be popular with men, for they have no capacity to appreciate that which actuates him. But true faith is neither chilled by a cold reception nor cooled by outward difficulties. It looks away from both, unto Him with whom it has to do. If God be "for us" (Rom 8:31), it matters not who be against us. Nevertheless, faith has to be *tested*—to prove its genuineness, to strengthen its fiber, to give occasion for its exercise. Well may writer and reader pray, "Lord, increase our faith."

The Philistine blustered, "cursed David by his gods" (1Sa 17:43), and vowed he would give his flesh unto the fowls and beasts. But it is written, "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong" (Ecc 9:11). And again, "God resisteth the proud" (Jam 4:6). The response made by David at once revealed the secret of his confidence, the source of his strength, and the certainty of his victory, "I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied" (1Sa 17:45). Ah, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Pro 18:10).

The reader is so familiar with the blessed sequel that little comment on it is required. Faith, having brought God into the scene, could announce the victory in advance (1Sa 17:46). One stone in its hand was worth more than all the Philistine's armour on the giant of unbelief. And why? Because that stone, though flung by David's sling, was directed and made efficacious by the hand of God. It is pitiable to find how some of the best commentators missed the real point here. Verse 5 begins the description of Goliath's armour by saying, "He had a helmet of brass upon his head" (1Sa 17:5). Some have suggested this fell off when he lifted up his hand to curse David by his gods (1Sa 17:43). Others supposed he left the visor open that he might see the better. But David's stone did not enter his eye, but his "forehead"—Divine power sent it through the helmet of brass! In David's cutting off his head (1Sa 17:51), we have a foreshadowment of what is recorded in Hebrews 2:14.

SAVING FAITH

2. Its Nature

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

There is in Christendom today a very large number of people who have been taught that nothing the sinner can do will ever merit the esteem of God. They have been informed, and rightly so, that the highest moral achievements of the natural man are only “filthy rags” (Isa 64:6) in the sight of the thrice holy God. They have heard quoted so often such passages as, “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8-9). “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Ti 3:5), that they have become thoroughly convinced that heaven cannot be attained by any doings of the creature. Further, they have been told so often that *Christ alone* can save any sinner, this has become a settled article in their creed, from which neither man nor devil can shake them. So far so good.

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

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

They created their own difficulty, by supposing that faith in Christ necessarily saves. It does not. There *is* a faith in Christ which saves, and there is also a faith in Christ which *does not* save.

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

Probably most of our readers have been brought up under the teaching that there are only two classes of people in this world, believers and unbelievers. But such a classification is most misleading and is utterly erroneous. God’s Word divides earth’s inhabitants into *three* classes, “Give none offence, neither to [1] the Jews, nor [2] to the Gentiles, nor [3] to the church of God” (1Co 10:32). It was so during the Old Testament times, more noticeably so from the days of Moses onwards. There was, first, the “Gentile” or heathen nations, outside the commonwealth of Israel, which formed by far the largest class. Corresponding with that class, today, are the countless millions of modern heathen, who are “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” (2Ti 3:4). Second, there was the nation of Israel, which has to be subdivided into two groups, for as Romans 9:6 declares, “They are *not* all Israel, which are of Israel.” By far, the larger portion of the nation of Israel were only the nominal people of God, in outward relation to Him. Corresponding with this class is the great mass of empty professors bearing the name of Christ. Third, there was the spiritual remnant of Israel, whose calling, hope, and inheritance was heavenly. Corresponding to them, in this day, are the genuine Christians, God’s “*little flock*” (Luk 12:32).

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

The same three classes are clearly discernible (to the anointed eyes) in the world today. First, there are the vast multitudes who make no profession at all, who see nothing in Christ that they should desire Him—people who are deaf to every appeal, and who make little attempt to conceal their hatred of the Lord Jesus. Second, there is that large company who are attracted by Christ in a natural way. So far from being openly antagonistic to Him and His cause, they are found among His followers. Having been taught much of the truth, they “believe in Christ,” just as children reared by conscientious Mohammedans believe firmly and devoutly in Mohammed. Having received much instruction concerning the virtues of Christ’s precious blood, they trust in its merits to deliver them from the wrath to come. And yet, there is nothing in their daily lives to

show that they are *new* creatures in Christ Jesus! Third, there is the “few” (Mat 7:13-14) who deny themselves, take up the cross daily, and follow a despised and rejected Christ in the path of loving and unreserved obedience unto God.

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

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

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

Take, first, the case of Adam. There was something more than a mere negative failing to believe God’s solemn threat that, in the day he should eat of the forbidden fruit, he would surely die, “By one man’s *disobedience* many were made sinners” (Rom 5:19). Nor did the heinousness of our first parents’ sin consist in listening to the lie of the serpent, for 1 Timothy 2:14 expressly declares, “Adam *was not* deceived.” No, he was determined to have his own way, no matter what God had prohibited and threatened. Thus, the very first case of unbelief in human history consisted, not only in negatively failing to take to heart what God had so clearly and so solemnly said, but also in a deliberate defiance of and rebellion against Him.

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

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

Unbelief is not simply an infirmity of fallen human nature, but is a heinous crime. Scripture, everywhere, attributes it to love of sin, obstinacy of will, hardness of heart. Unbelief has its root in a depraved nature, in a mind which is enmity against God. Love of sin is the immediate cause of unbelief, “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (Joh 3:19). “The light of the Gospel is brought unto a place or people. They come so near it as to discover its end or tendency, but as soon as they find that it aims to part them and their sins, they will have no more to do with it. They like not the terms of the Gospel, and so perish in and for their iniquities” (John Owen). If the *Gospel* were more clearly and faithfully preached, fewer would profess to believe it!

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

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

Nor is the brief definition which we have given above, of what it means to really “come” to Christ, any forced or novel one of our own. In his book, “Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ,” John Bunyan (1628-1688) wrote, “Coming to Christ is attended with an honest and sincere forsaking all for Him (here, he quotes Luke 14:26, 17). “By these and like expressions elsewhere, Christ describeth the true comer. He is one that casteth all behind his back. There are a great many pretended comers to Jesus Christ in the world. They are much like the men you would read of in Matthew 21:30, that said to his father’s bidding, ‘I go, sir,’ and went not. When Christ calls by His Gospel, they say, ‘I come, Sir,’ but they still abide by their pleasures and carnal delights.” C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892), in his sermon on John 6:44, said, “Coming to Christ embraces in it repentance, self-abnegation, and faith in the Lord Jesus, and so sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of those great steps of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnest prayers to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of His Gospel.” In his sermon on John 6:37, he says, “To come to Christ signifies to turn from sin and to trust in Him. Coming to Christ is a leaving of all false confidences, a renouncing of all love to sin, and a looking to Jesus as the solitary pillar of our confidence and hope.”

Saving faith consists of the complete surrender of my whole being and life to the claims of God upon me, “But first gave their own selves to the Lord” (2Co 8:5). It is the unreserved acceptance of Christ as my absolute Lord, bowing to His will, and receiving His yoke. Possibly, someone may object, “Then why are Christians exhorted as they are in Romans 12:1?” We answer, all such exhortations are simply a calling on them to *continue as they began*, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (Col 2:6). Yes, mark it well, that Christ is “received” as LORD. O how far, far below the New Testament standard is this modern way of begging sinners to receive Christ as their own personal “Saviour.” If the reader will consult his concordance, he will find that in *every passage* where the two titles are found together, it is *always* “Lord and Saviour,” and never vice versa. See Luke 1:46-47, 11 Peter 1:11; 2:20; 3:18.

Until the ungodly are sensible of the exceeding sinfulness of their vile course of self-will and self-pleasing, until they are genuinely broken down and penitent over it before God, until they are willing to forsake the world for Christ, until they have resolved to come under His government—for such to depend upon Him for pardon and life is not faith, but blatant presumption. It is but to add insult to injury. And for one such to take His holy name upon their polluted lips and profess to be His followers is the most terrible blasphemy, and comes perilously nigh to committing that

sin for which there is no forgiveness. Alas, alas, that modern evangelism is encouraging and producing just such hideous and Christ-dishonouring monstrosities.

Saving faith is a believing on Christ with the *heart*, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness” (Rom 10:9-10).

There is no such thing as a saving *faith* in Christ where there is no real *love* for Him, and by “real love,” we mean a love which is evidenced by *obedience*. Christ acknowledges none to be His friends save those who do whatsoever He commands them (Joh 15:14). As unbelief is a species of rebellion, so saving faith is a complete subjection to God. Hence, we read of “faith obedience” (Rom 16:26). Saving faith is to the soul what health is to the body. It is a mighty principle of operation, full of life, ever working, bringing forth fruit after its own kind.

PRAYER

2. Praying with the Spirit

“I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also” (1Co 14:15). Now, to pray with the Spirit—for that is the praying man, and none else, so as to be accepted of God—is for a man (as aforesaid) sincerely, and sensibly, with affection, to come to God through Christ—which sincere, sensible, and affectionate coming must be by the working of God’s Spirit. There is no man, nor church in the world, that can come to God in prayer, but by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph 2:18). Therefore, Paul saith, “We know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to... God” (Rom 8:26-27). Because there is, in this Scripture, so full a discovery of the spirit of prayer, and of man’s inability to pray without it, I shall, in a few words, comment upon it.

“For we.” Consider, first, the person speaking, even Paul, and in his person, all the apostles. We apostles, we extraordinary officers, the wise master-builders, that have, some of us, been caught up into Paradise. “We know not what we should pray for.” We know not the matter of the things for which we should pray, neither the object to whom we pray, nor the medium by or through whom we pray. None of these things know we, but, by the help and assistance of the Spirit. Should we pray for communion with God through Christ? Should we pray for faith, for justification by grace, for a truly sanctified heart? None of these things know we. “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1Co 2:11).

Again, as they know not the matter of prayer, without the help of the Spirit, so neither know they the manner thereof without the same, and, therefore, he adds, “We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit helpeth our infirmities.” They could not so well and so fully come off in the manner of performance of this duty, as these, in our days, think they can. The apostles, when they were at the best, yea, when the Holy Spirit assisted them, yet then they were feign to come off with sighs and groans, thus falling short of expressing their minds.

Mark the, “as we ought.” We cannot do so by all the art, skill, cunning, and devise of men or angels. It must be the Spirit itself that helpeth our infirmities. Many ask and have not, because they ask amiss, and so are never the nearer enjoying those things they petition for. It is not to pray at random which causes God to answer. While prayer is being made, God is searching the heart to see from what root and spirit it doth arise. And He that searcheth the heart, knoweth (that is, approveth) the meaning of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. In that which is according to His will only, He heareth us. And none, but the Spirit, can teach us so to act. He alone being able to search out all things, even the deep things of God. Without which Spirit, though we have a thousand prayer-books, yet we would not know what we should pray for as we ought, being accompanied with those infirmities that make us absolutely incapable of such a work. Which infirmities, although it is a hard thing to name them all, yet some of them are these that follow:

1. Without the Spirit, man is so infirm that he cannot, with all other means whatsoever, be enabled to think one right saving thought of God, of Christ, of His blessed things. And, therefore, He saith of the wicked, “God is not in all their thoughts” (Psa 10:4), unless it be that they imagine Him altogether such a one as themselves. “That every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5). They, then, not being able to conceive aright of God to whom they pray, of Christ through whom they pray, nor of the things for which they pray, how shall they be able to address themselves to God, without the Spirit helping this infirmity. The Spirit itself is the revealer of these things to poor souls, and that which doth give us to understand them.

Right prayer must, as well in the outward part of it, in the outward expression, as in the inward intention, come from what the soul doth apprehend in the light of the Spirit. Otherwise, it is condemned as vain and an abomination, because the heart and tongue do not go along jointly in the same. Neither, indeed, can they, unless the Spirit help our infirmities. This, David knew full well, and made him cry, “O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise” (Psa 51:15). I suppose there is none can imagine but that David could speak and express himself as well as others, nay, as any in our generation, as is clearly manifested by his word and his works. Nevertheless, when this good man, this prophet, comes into God’s worship, then, the Lord must help, or he can do nothing. He should not speak on right word, except the Spirit itself gave utterance.

2. It must be praying with the Spirit, that is, the effectual praying, because, without that, men are senseless, hypocritical, cold, and unseemly in their prayers. And so they, with their prayers, are both rendered abominable to God. It is not the excellency of the voice, nor the seeming affection and earnestness of him that prayeth, that is in anything regarded of God without it. For man, as man, is so full of manner of wickedness, that, as he cannot keep a word or thought, so much less a piece of prayer clean and acceptable to God, and for this cause, the Pharisees with their prayers, were rejected. No question, but they were well able to express themselves in words, and also for length of time, too, they were very notable. But, they had not the Spirit of Jesus

Christ to help them, and, therefore, they did what they did with their infirmities or weaknesses only. And so fell short of a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of their souls to God, through the strength of the Spirit. *That* is the prayer that goeth to heaven that is sent thither in the power of the Spirit.

3. Nothing but the Spirit can show a man his misery by nature, and so put a man into a posture of prayer. Talk is but talk, and so it is but mouth-worship, if there be not a sense of misery, and that effectually, too. O the cursed hypocrisy that is in most hearts, and that accompanieth many thousands of praying men that would be so looked upon in this day, and all for want of a sense of their misery! But now the Spirit, that will sweetly show the soul its misery, where it is, and what is like to become of it, also, the intolerableness of that condition. For it is the Spirit that doth effectually convince of sin and misery, without the Lord Jesus, and so puts the soul into a sweet, serious, sensible, affectionate way of praying to God according to His Word.

4. If men did see their sins, yet, without the help of the Spirit, they would not pray. For they would run away from God with Cain and Judas, and utterly despair of mercy, were it not for the Spirit. When a man is indeed sensible of his sin and God's curse, then, it is a hard thing to persuade him to pray. For, saith his heart, "There is no hope. It is in vain to seek God. I am so vile, so wretched, and so cursed a creature, that I shall never be regarded." Now, here comes the Spirit, and stayeth the soul, helpeth it to hold up its face to God, by letting into the heart some small sense of mercy, to encourage it to God, and hence, He is called the Comforter.

5. It must be in, or with, the Spirit. For without that, no man can know how he should come to God the right way. Men may easily say they come to God in His Son. But it is the hardest thing of a thousand to come to God aright and in His own way, without the Spirit. It is the Spirit that searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. It is the Spirit that must show us the way of coming to God, and also what there is in God that makes Him desirable. "I pray thee, [saith Moses] show me now thy way that I may know thee" (Exo 33:13). "He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you" (Joh 16:15).

6. Because without the Spirit, though a man did see his misery, and also the way to come to God, yet he would never be able to claim a share in either God, Christ, nor mercy, without God's approbation. O how great a task is it for a poor soul that comes sensible of sin, and the wrath of God, to say in faith, but this one word, Father! I tell you, however hypocrites think, yet the Christian that is so indeed, finds all the difficulty in this very thing—it cannot say that God is its Father. Oh! Saith he, "I dare not call Him Father," and hence, it is that the Spirit is sent into the hearts of God's children for this very thing, to cry Father. It being too great a work for any man to do knowingly and believingly without it! When I say knowingly, I mean knowing what it is to be a child of God and to be born again. And when I say believingly, I mean, for the soul to believe, and that from good experience, that the work of grace is wrought within him. This is the right calling of God, "Father," and not as many do, to say in a babbling way, the Lord's prayer, as it lieth in the words of the book.

Here is the life of prayer, when a man, being made sensible of sin and how to come to the Lord for mercy, he comes, I say, in the strength of the Spirit, and crieth, "Father." That one word spoken in faith is better than a thousand prayers, as men call them, written and read, in a formal, cold, lukewarm way. O how far short are they of being sensible of this, who count it enough to teach themselves and their children to say the Lord's prayer, the creed, etc. When, as God knows, they are senseless of themselves, their misery, or what it is to be brought to God through Christ. Ah, poor soul! Study your misery, and cry to God to show you your blindness and ignorance,

before you be too rife in calling God your Father, or learn your children so to say. And know, that to say God is your Father, in a way of prayer, without an experience of the work of grace on your souls, is to say you are Jews and are not, and so do lie.

Give me leave a little to reason with thee. It may be thy great prayer is to say, “Our Father which art in heaven,” etc. Dost thou know the meaning of the very first words of this verse? Art thou truly born again? Hast thou received the Spirit of adoption? Dost thou see thyself in Christ and canst thou come to God as a member of Him? Or, art thou ignorant of these things, and yet darest say, “*Our* Father!” Is not the devil *thy* father, and dost thou not do the deeds of the flesh, and yet darest thou say to God, “Our Father.” Nay, art thou not a desperate persecutor of the children of God? Hast thou not cursed them in thine heart many a time? And yet out of thy blasphemous throat thou sufferest these words to come, even, “Our Father”? He is *their* Father whom thou hatest. But, as the devil presented himself among the sons of God, when they were to present themselves before the Father, so it is now. Because the saints are commanded to say, “Our Father,” therefore, all the blind, ignorant rabble in the world must also use the same words.

And dost thou indeed say, “Hallowed be Thy name,” with thy heart? Dost thou study, by all honest and lawful ways, to advance the name, holiness, and majesty of God? Doth thy heart *and* life agree with this passage? Dost thou strive to imitate Christ in all the works of righteousness which God doth command of thee? It *is* so, if thou be one that can truly, with *God’s* allowance, cry, “Our Father.” And dost thou not clearly make it appear that thou art a cursed hypocrite, by condemning that with thy daily practice, which thou pretendest in thy praying with thy dissembling tongue?

Wouldest thou have “the kingdom” of God “come” indeed, and also *His* will be done in earth as it is done in heaven? Nay, notwithstanding thou, according to the *form*, sayest, “Thy kingdom come,” yet would it make thee ready to run mad, to hear the trumpet sound, to see the dead arise to reckon for all the deeds thou hast done in the body? Nay, are not the very thoughts of it altogether displeasing to thee? And if God’s will *should* be done on earth as it is in heaven, must it not be *thy ruin*? There is never a rebel in heaven against God, and if He should so deal on earth, must He not whirl thee down to hell? And so of the rest of thy petitions. Ah! How sadly would these men look, and with what terror would they walk up and down the world, if they did but know the lying and blaspheming that proceedeth out of their mouth, even in their most pretended sanctity? The Lord awaken you, and learn you, poor souls, in all humility, to take heed that you be not rash and unadvised with your heart, and much more with your mouth, when you appear before God.

7. It must be a prayer with the Spirit, if it be accepted, because there is nothing but the Spirit that can lift up the soul or heart to God in prayer. “The preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD” (Pro 16:1). That is, in every work for God (and especially in prayer), if the heart run with the tongue, it must be prepared by the Spirit of God. Indeed, the tongue is very apt (of itself) to run without either fear or wisdom. But when it is the answer of the heart, and that, such a heart as is prepared by the Spirit of God, then it speaks so as God commands and doth desire. They are mighty words of David where he saith that he “lifteth his heart and his soul to God.” It is a great work for any man without the strength of the Spirit, and therefore, I conceive that this is one of the great reasons why the Spirit of God is called, “The Spirit of grace and supplications” (Zec 12:10). Because it is He which helpeth the heart when it supplicates indeed, to do it, and therefore, saith Paul, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (Eph 6:18), and “I will pray with the Spirit” (1Co 14:15). Prayer, unless

the heart be in it, is like a sound without life, and a heart, unless it be lifted up of the Spirit, will never pray to God.

8. As the heart must be lifted up by the Spirit, if it pray aright, so also must it be *held by* the Spirit when it is up, if it *continue* to pray aright. I do not know what or how it is with others' hearts, whether they be lifted up by the Spirit of God, and so continued, or no, but this I am sure of—first, it is impossible that all the prayer books that men have made in the world should lift up or prepare the hearts. *That* is the work of the great God Himself. And, second, I am sure that they are as far from keeping it up, when it is up. And indeed, here is the life of prayer—to have the heart *kept with God* in the duty. It was a great matter for Moses to keep his hands lifted up to God in prayer, but how much more than to keep the heart up!

The want of this is that which God complains of, that, “This people draw nigh unto me with their mouth, and *honour* me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Mat 15:8). And verily, may I but speak my own experience, and from that tell you the difficulty of praying to God as I ought. It is enough to make you poor, blind, carnal men to entertain strange thoughts of me. For, as for my heart, when I go to pray, I find it loth to go to God, and when it is with Him, so loth to stay with Him that many times I am forced in my prayers, first, to beg of God that He would take my heart and set it on Himself in Christ, and when it is there, that He would keep it there. Nay, many times I know not what to pray for, I am so blind, nor how to pray, I am so ignorant. Only, blessed be grace, the Spirit helps our infirmities. Oh! The starting-holds that the heart hath in times of prayer! None knows how many byways the heart hath, and back-lanes, to slip away from the presence of God. How much pride also, if enabled with expressions. How much hypocrisy, if before others. And how little conscience is there made of prayer between God and the soul in secret, unless the Spirit of supplication be there to help. When the Spirit gets into the heart, then there is prayer indeed, and not till then.

9. The soul that doth rightly pray, it must be in and with the help and strength of the Spirit, because it is impossible that a man should express himself in prayer without it. When I say it is impossible for a man to express himself in prayer without it, I mean that it is impossible that the heart in a sincere and sensible, affectionate way, should pour out itself before God with those groans and sighs that come from a truly praying heart, without the assistance of the Spirit. It is not the mouth that is the main thing to be looked at in prayer, but whether the heart be so full of affection and earnestness in prayer with God, that it is impossible to express their sense and desire. For then a man yearns indeed, when his desires are so strong, many, and mighty, that all the words, tears, and groans, that can come from the heart, cannot utter them.

A man that truly prays one prayer shall, afterward, never be able to express with his mouth or pen the unutterable desires, sense, affection, and longing that went to God in that prayer. The best prayers have often more groans than words, and those words that it hath are but a lean and shallow representation of the heart, life, and spirit of that prayer. You do not find any words of prayer, that we read of, come out of the mouth of Moses when he was gone out of Egypt and was followed by Pharaoh, and yet he made heaven ring again with his cry, but it was the inexpressible and unsearchable groans and cryings of his soul in and with the spirit. God is the God of spirit, and His eyes look further than at the outside of any duty whatsoever.

The nearer a man comes in any work that God commands him, to the doing of it according to His will, so much the more hard and difficult it is, and the reason is, because man, as man, is not able to do it. But prayer (as aforesaid) is not only a duty, but one of the most eminent duties, and therefore, so much the more difficult.

10. It must be with the Spirit or else there will be a failing in the act itself, so there will be a failing, yea, a fainting, in the prosecution of the work. Prayer is an ordinance of God that must continue with a soul so long as it is on this side glory. But, as I said before, it is not possible for a man to get up his heart to God in prayer. So, it is as difficult to keep it there without the assistance of the Spirit. And if so, then for a man to continue some time in prayer with God, it must of necessity be with the Spirit. Christ tells us that, “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luk 18:1). And again tells us that this is one definition of a hypocrite, that either he will not continue in prayer, or else if he do, it will not be in the power, that is, in the spirit of prayer, but in the form, or a pretense only. It is the easiest thing of a hundred to fall from the power to the form, but it is the hardest thing of many to keep in the life, spirit, and power of any one duty, especially prayer. *That* is such a work, that a man without the help of the Spirit cannot so much as pray once, much less continue.

Jacob did not only begin, but held to it, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me” (Gen 32:26). So did the rest of the godly. But this could not be without the spirit of the prayer. It is by one Spirit that we have access unto the Father (Eph 2:18). That same is a remarkable place in Jude, when he stirreth up the saints by the judgment of God upon the wicked, to stand fast and continue to hold out in the faith of the Gospel, as one excellent means thereto, without which he knew they would never be able to do it. Saith he, “Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, *praying in the Holy Ghost*” (Jude 1:20). As if he had said, “Brethren, as eternal life is laid up for the persons which hold out only, so you cannot hold out unless you continue praying in the Spirit.” The great cheat that the devil deludes the world with is to make them continue in the form of any duty, the form of preaching, of hearing, of praying, etc. These are they that have “a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2Ti 3:5) John Bunyan, 1660.

THE EYE OF FAITH

“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine *eye* seeth thee” (Job 42:5). What did Job signify by this? Obviously, his words are not to be understood literally. No, by employing a common figure of speech, he meant that the mists of unbelief (occasioned by self-righteousness) had now been dispelled, and faith perceived the being of God as a glorious and living reality. “Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD” (Psa 25:15), by which is meant that his *faith* was constantly in exercise. Of Moses, it is said that, “He endured, as *seeing* him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). That is, his heart was sustained through faith’s being occupied with the mighty God.

Faith is frequently represented in Scripture under the metaphor of bodily sight. Our Lord said of the great patriarch, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he *saw* it, and was glad” (Joh 8:56), meaning that his *faith* looked forward to the day of Christ’s humiliation and exaltation. Paul was commissioned unto the Gentiles to “open their eyes,...to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God” (Act 26:18), or, in other words, to be

the divine instrument of their conversion through preaching to them the Word of faith. To some of his erring children, he wrote, “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose *eyes* Jesus Christ hath been evidently [plainly] set forth, crucified among you” (Gal 3:1).

Now, what we wish to point out in this article is that when Scripture speaks of faith, under the notion of bodily sight, its writers were doing something more than availing themselves of a pertinent and suitable figure of speech. The Author of Scripture is the One who first formed the eye—that marvelous organ of vision—and without a shadow of doubt, He *so* fashioned it as to strikingly adumbrate in the visible that which now plays so prominent a part in the Christian’s dealing with the invisible. Everything in the material world shadows forth some great reality in the spiritual realm, as we should perceive had we but sufficient wisdom to discern the fact. A wide field is here opened for observation and meditation, but we shall now confine ourselves to a single example, namely, the eye of the body as it symbolizes the faith of the heart.

1. The eye is a *passive* organ. The eye does not send out a light from itself, nor does it give anything unto the objects it beholds—what can the eye communicate to the sun, moon, and stars when it gazes upon them! No, the eye merely *receives* the print or image of them into the mind (on the retina, which is then transmitted to the brain) without adding anything to them. Just so is it with faith. It gives nothing to God or to what it beholds in the Word of His grace. It simply *receives* or takes them into the heart as they are presented to the soul’s view in the light of the divine revelation. What did the bitten Israelites communicate unto the brazen serpent when they looked unto it and were healed? As little do we add unto Christ when we “look” unto Him and are saved (Isa 45:22).

2. The eye is a *directing* organ. The man that has the light of day and his eyes open can see his way, and is not so likely to stumble into ditches or fall into a precipice as a blind man, or one who walks at nighttime. So it is with faith. “The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble,” but “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Pro 4:18-19). Of Christians, it is said that, “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2Co 5:7). By “*looking off* unto Jesus” (faith’s viewing our Exemplar), we are enabled to run the race which is set before us.

3. The eye is a very *quick* organ, taking up things at a great distance. Within a fraction of a moment, I can turn my gaze from things lying on the ground, and focus it upon the mountains which are many miles away. Nay, more, I can look away altogether from the things of earth and mount up among the stars, and in a second view the entire expanse of the heavens. What an optical marvel is that! Equally wonderful is the power of faith. It is indeed a quick-sighted grace, taking up things at a great distance, as the faith of the patriarchs did, who saw the things promised “afar off” (Heb 11:13). So too, in a moment, faith may look back to an eternity past and view the everlasting springs of electing love, active on its behalf before the foundations of the earth were laid, and then, in the same breath, it can turn itself towards an eternity yet to come, and take a view of the hidden glories of an invisible world within the veil.

4. The eye, though it be little, is a very *capacious* organ. The man that has the light of day, and has his eyes open, may see all that comes within the range of his vision. He may look around and see things behind and forward and view things ahead, downward upon the waters in a well or a stream at the bottom of a deep ravine, upwards and gaze upon the bodies in the distant heavens. So is it with faith. It extends itself unto everything that lies within the vast compass of God’s Word. It takes knowledge of things in the distant past. It also apprehends things that are yet to

come. It looks into hell, and penetrates into heaven. It is able to discern the vanity of the world all around us.

It is true that there may be a genuine faith that takes in but little of the light of divine revelation at first. Yet, here again, the earthly adumbration accurately shadows forth this spiritual truth. The eye of an infant takes in the light and perceives external objects, but with a good deal of weakness and confusion, until, as it grows more, its vision extends further and further. So it is with the eye of faith. At first, the light of spiritual knowledge is but dim. The babe in Christ is unable to see afar off. But as faith grows, it takes in more of God, more of Christ, more of things above. It wades deeper and deeper into the divine mysteries, until it comes, at length, to be swallowed up in open vision (Joh 17:24).

5. The eye is a very *assuring* faculty. Of the five bodily senses, this is the most convincing. What are we more sure of than what we see with our eyes! Some fools may seek to persuade themselves that matter is a mental delusion, but no one in his right mind will believe them. If a man sees the sun shining in the heavens, he *knows* that it is day. In like manner, faith is a grace which carries in its very nature a great deal of certainty. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the *evidence* of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). Sceptics may deny the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, but when the eye of faith has gazed upon its supernatural beauties, the point is settled once for all. Others may regard the Christ of God as a pious myth, but once the saint has really beheld the Lamb of God, it can say, “I *know* that my Redeemer liveth.”

6. The eye is an *impressing* organ. What we see leaves an impression upon our minds. That is why we need to pray often, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity” (Psa 119:37). That is why the prophet declared, “Mine eye affecteth mine heart” (Lam 3:51). If a man looks steadily at the sun for a few moments, an impression of the sun is left in his eye, even though he turn his eyes away from it, or shut them. In like manner, real faith leaves an impression of the Sun of righteousness upon the heart, “They looked unto him, and were lightened” (Psa 34:5). Even more definite is 11 Corinthians 3:18, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are *changed into the same image* from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” As the mighty power of Christ will, in a coming day, transform the bodies of His people from mortality to life and from dishonour to glory, so also does the Holy Spirit now exert a moral transforming power on the character of those who are His, and that by calling faith into exercise, the activity of which more and more conforms the soul to the image of God’s Son.

7. The eye is a *wondrous* organ. Those, who are competent to express an opinion, affirm that this particular member is the most curious and remarkable of any part of the human body. There is much of the wisdom and power of the Creator to be discovered in the formation of the visive faculty. So too, faith is a grace that is curiously and wondrously wrought in the soul. There is more of the wisdom and power of the divine Workman discovered in the formation of the grace of faith than in any other part of the new creature. Thus, we read of the “work of faith with power” (2Th 1:11). Yea, that the same exceeding great and mighty power which was put forth by God in the raising of Christ from the dead is exerted upon and within them that believe (Eph 1:19).

8. The eye of the body is a very *tender* thing. It is soon hurt and easily damaged. A very tiny cinder will cause pain and make it weep—and it is very striking to note that *that* is the very way to recovery—it weeps out the dust or mote that gets into it. So too, faith is a most delicate grace, thriving best in a pure conscience. Hence, the apostle speaks of, “Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience” (1Ti 3:9). The lively actings of faith are soon marred by the dust of sin, or

by the vanities of the world getting into the heart where it is seated. And where ever true faith is, if it be hurt by sin, it vents itself in a way of godly sorrow.

[For most of the above, we are indebted to a sermon preached by Ebenezer Erskine, 1680-1754].



MAY

THE KINGLY OFFICE OF CHRIST

Christ is King in a twofold sense. First, as He is God, second, as He is God-man Mediator. As God, He is King by *nature*. As Mediator, He is so by *office*. As the second person in the Trinity, Christ is “*over all*, God blessed forever” (Rom 9:5). Being the Creator, He has the right of dominion over all His creatures. “But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an *everlasting* King” (Jer 10:10). All that God is essentially, Christ is too. As Mediator, His kingdom is limited and special, concerning only the elect of God and others, as they may have to do with them. And therefore, in *this* relation, Christ is called, “The King of *saints*” (Rev 15:3), for they bow to His scepter and delight in His rule.

That Christ is “King” appears, first, from the Father’s designation and ordination of Him to this office. “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion” (Psa 2:6). The primary reference in this is to the setting up of Christ (Pro 8:23) in God’s eternal purpose over His Church—note the “I will declare *the decree*” in Psalm 2:7. God calls Him, “*My king*,” because of His choosing Him. As God appointed Christ to be a King, so He also appointed a kingdom to Him. This was observed by Christ, “And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me” (Luk 22:29).

Second, it appears from the types and shadows which prefigured Christ in His kingly office. “Melchizedek was a type of Him; not only in his priestly office, but in his kingly office; both offices meeting in him, as they do in Christ, who is a priest upon His throne. From his quality as a king, he had his name Melchizedek, meaning ‘king of righteousness,’ and such a one is Christ, Who reigns in righteousness; and from the place of His government, ‘king of Salem,’ that is, ‘king of peace’; agreeable to which one of Christ’s titles is ‘Prince of peace’ (Isa 9:6). David was an eminent type of Christ in His kingly office, for his wisdom and military skill, his courage and valour, his wars and victories, and the equity and justice of his government. Hence, Christ, his antitype, is often (with respect to the Jews in the latter days) called, ‘*David* their king’ (Jer 30:9; Eze 33:23; 37:3-24; Hos 3:5). Solomon also was a type of Christ as king. Hence, Christ, in the Song of Solomon, is called, ‘Solomon’ (Song 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11-12), because of His great wisdom, His immense riches, the largeness and peaceableness of His kingdom” (John Gill, 1697-1771).

Third, it appears from the prophecies concerning Him in this connection. In the first of all, it was said that the woman’s seed should bruise the serpent’s head, that is, destroy the devil and all his works (1Jo 3:8). *That* is an act of Christ’s kingly power and is expressive of Him as a

victorious Prince and triumphant Conqueror over all believers and His people's enemies. Balaam foretold, "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a *Scepter* shall rise out of Israel" (Num 24:17). Isaiah announced, "The government shall be upon his shoulder" (Isa 9:6). Jeremiah affirmed, "The days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper" (Jer 23:5). Daniel owned Him as, "Messiah the Prince" (Dan 9:25). Zechariah declared, "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation" (Zec 9:9).

We shall now proceed to show that the purpose of God has been accomplished, the types realized, and the prophecies fulfilled—that Christ is King in truth and in deed. First, He was so *before* His incarnation, during the Old Testament dispensation. He was King over the people of *Israel*, not as a body politic, but as a "Church" (Act 7:38). He it was from Whose right hand went the fiery law, when He spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai. He was the "Angel" that went before them to guide and direct, to rule and govern them, Whose voice they were to obey (Exo 23:20-21). He it was who appeared to Joshua, with drawn sword in His hand, to be the Captain of the Lord's hosts, fight their battles for them and settle them in the land of Canaan (Jos 5). He it was who said to Samuel, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not *reign* over them" (1Sa 8:7).

Christ was King in the days of His humiliation. He was "born King of the Jews" (Mat 2:2). Nathanael made the following noble confession of faith concerning Him, "Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (Joh 1:49). When He entered Jerusalem in a very public manner, He was greeted with, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the LORD" (Luk 19:38). He displayed His kingly power by commanding the elements, rebuking disease, expelling demons, all of which were subject to His imperial will. He exercised His kingly prerogative by displaying His legislative authority, "I say unto you" (Mat 5). Before He left this earth, He appointed ordinances and commissioned His ministers (Mat 28).

Upon His ascension to heaven, He was "made both Lord and Christ" (Act 2:36), that is, He was both publicly declared to be so and made *more manifest* as such. He was highly exalted, and given a name above every name, "angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1Pe 3:22). He, then, received the promise of the Holy Spirit and His gifts from the Father, which He plentifully bestowed upon His apostles, whom He sent forth into all the world, preaching His Gospel with great success and causing them to triumph in Him in every place where they came. "The Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mar 16:20). As King, He made the arrows of His Word sharp in the hearts of His enemies, the rod of His strength (the Gospel) went forth out of Zion, making many willing to submit themselves unto Him in the day of His power, whereby His kingdom was greatly strengthened in this world.

There are those who emphatically deny that Christ has yet taken unto Himself His kingly office, supposing He will not do so until the millennium. This is a serious error. Every mark of royalty is *now* to be found in Christ. Were kings "anointed" (1Sa 10:1, 2Sa 2:4)? So has Christ been "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows" (Heb 1:9). Were kings coronated at the time of their inauguration? So has Christ been "*crowned with glory and honour*" (Heb 2:7). Do kings sit on thrones when in state (1Ki 2:19; 10:18)? So Christ "is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Heb 8:1). Do kings hold scepters in their hands as an ensign of their royalty? So Christ has "a scepter of righteousness" (Heb 1:8). Do kings appear in robes of majesty and state? So Christ is arrayed with majesty itself, "clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breasts with a *golden* girdle. His head and his hairs white like wool,

as white as snow; and his eyes as a flame of fire” (Rev 1:13-14). Do kings appoint ambassadors to represent their interests abroad? So the apostles announced, “We are ambassadors for Christ” (2Co 5:20). Are kings possessed of authority and might to execute their wills? So Christ declared, “All power *is* given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Mat 28:18).

Even *now*, Christ is “prince of the kings of the earth” (Rev 1:5). Even *now*, He has “the key of David” and *uses* it, by opening doors which none can shut, and shutting doors which none can open (Rev 3:7). God has already exalted Him with His right hand “to be a *Prince* and a Saviour” (Act 5:31). God has already “given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man” (Joh 5:27). Ever since His ascension, He has been “upholding all things by the word of his power” (Heb 1:3). Today, He is “the King eternal, immortal, *invisible*, the only wise God” (1Ti 1:17). But “in his times he shall *show*, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1Ti 6:15).

And what is the practical application which must be made to us individually of what has been before us? This is Christ *our* “King”? or is the language of our hearts, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luk 19:14)? Ah, my readers, this is no mere academical inquiry, or one for “dispensationalists” to fight over. It is a question of vital moment, and our real answer to it evidences whether we are really *saved* or no. If Christ be not my “King” in a practical way, then (no matter what my profession), I am a *rebel against* Him. Can I truly say His will is my law, His Word my rule of life, His scepter the authority I own? Can I truthfully say, “‘Other lords beside thee *have had* dominion over me’ (Isa 26:13), but, henceforth, I own no other King but Thee, no rule but Thine”? Bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him, *in your heart and life*, “Lord of all.”

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

53. The Apostates’ Doom (10:28-31)

The verses, which are now to be before us, complete the section begun in Hebrews 10:26, the sum of which is the apostates’ doom. They fall naturally into two parts, the one containing a description of their sin, the other, a declaration of their punishment. For the purpose of solemn emphasis, each of these is repeated. In Hebrews 10:26 and in verse 27, the punishment of it is affirmed. In verses 28-29, the apostle confirms the equity of the forenamed judgment by an argument drawn from the Mosaic law, under which he shows the terrible character of the sin which is here in view. In Hebrews 10:30-31, he establishes the certainty of the punishment by an appeal to the character of God as revealed in His Word. This repetition, in a subject so solemn, is well calculated to awe every thoughtful reader, and ought to produce the most searching effect upon his conscience and heart.

As we have pointed out in preceding articles, this section (Heb 10:26-31) was introduced by the apostle for the purpose of enforcing the exhortation found in verses 22-24, the sum of which

is, a call unto Christians to persevere in a state and practice of godliness. Grossly has this passage been perverted by theological factions belonging to two extremes. The one has misused it in the endeavour to bolster up their false doctrine of regenerated people falling from grace and being eternally lost. Without now going into that subject, it is sufficient to say that Hebrews 10:26-31 contains not a word which *directly* supports the chief contention of the Arminians. What we have in this passage is only hypothetical, “For *if* we sin willingly,” i.e. deliberately, fully, and finally abandon the profession of Christianity—*not* that the Holy Spirit here says any of the regenerate Hebrews *had* or *would* do so. A similar, and still more pointed case, is found in those words of Christ’s, “Yet ye have not known him: but I know him: and *if* I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you” (Joh 8:55).

The second party, of those who have misunderstood this passage, are Calvinists possessing more zeal than wisdom. Anxious to maintain their ground against the Arminians, most of them have devoted their energies to show that regenerated Christians do not come within the scope of Hebrews 10:26 at all. That instead, it treats only of nominal professors, of those having nothing more than a head-knowledge of the truth, and making merely a lip-profession of the same. And thus has the great enemy of souls succeeded in getting some of the true servants of God to blunt the sharp edge of this solemn verse, and nullify its searching power over the conscience of the saints. It is sufficient refutation of this theory to point out that the apostle is here addressing those who were “partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb 3:1), and in the “we” of Hebrews 10:26, *included* himself! We will not take any notice of a third theory of modern “dispensationalists,” who affirm that none but *Jews* could commit the sin here mentioned, beyond saying that our space is too valuable to waste in exposing such trifling with Holy Scripture.

But what has been pointed out above presents a serious difficulty to many. We may state it thus—If it be impossible for truly regenerated people to ever perish, then why should the Holy Spirit move the apostle to so much as hypothetically describe their irremediable doom *if* they should apostatize? Such a difficulty is occasioned, in the first place, through a *one-sided* conception of the Christian—through considering him only as he exists in the purpose of God, and not also remembering what he still is in himself. Unless the latter be steadily held in mind, we are in grave danger of denying, or at least ignoring, the Christian’s *responsibility*. That the Christian *is* to be viewed in this twofold way is abundantly clear from many Scriptures. For example, in the purpose of God, the Christian is already “glorified” (Rom 8:30), yet he certainly is not so in himself! Here, in Hebrews 10:26, etc. (as in many other passages) the Christian is *not* addressed from the viewpoint of God’s eternal purpose, but as he yet is in himself—in need of solemn warnings, as well as exhortations.

Again, the difficulty which so many one-sided thinkers find in this subject is to be attributed to their failure in duly recognizing the *relation* which God has appointed between His own eternal counsels and the accomplishment of the same through wisely ordained *means*. There are some who reason (most superficially) that if God has ordained a certain soul to be saved, he *will* be, whether he exercised faith in Christ or no. Not so! 2 Thessalonians 2:13 clearly proves the contrary—the “end” and the “means” are there inseparably joined together. It is quite true that where God has appointed a certain individual “unto salvation,” He will infallibly give him a saving faith, but that does not mean that the Holy Spirit will believe *for* him. No, the individual will, must, *exercise* the faith which has been given him. In like manner, God has eternally decreed that every regenerated soul shall get safely through to heaven, yet He certainly has not ordained that any shall do so whether or not they use the means which He has appointed for their

preservation. Christians are “kept by the power of God *through faith*” (1Pe 1:5). *There* is the human responsibility side.

Looked at as he still is in himself, the Christian is eminently liable to make shipwreck of the faith (1Ti 1:19). He still has within him a nature which craves the vanities of the world, and that craving has to be denied, or he will never reach heaven. He is yet in the place of terrible danger, menaced by deadly temptations, and it is only as he constantly watches and prays against the same that he is preserved from them. He is the immediate and incessant object of the devil’s malice, for he is ever going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. And it is only as the Christian takes unto himself (appropriates and uses) the armour of God’s providing, that he can withstand the great enemy of souls. It is because of these things that he urgently needs the exhortations and warnings of Holy Writ. God has faithfully pointed out to us what lies at the end of every path of self-will and self-indulgence. God has mercifully placed a hedge across each precipice which confronts the professing Christian, and woe be to him if he disregards those warnings and pushes through that hedge.

In this solemn passage of Hebrews 10, the apostle is pointing out the sure and certain connection there is between apostasy and irrevocable damnation, thereby, warning all who bear the name of Christ to take the most careful and constant pains in *avoiding* that unpardonable sin. To say that real Christians need no such warning because they *cannot* possibly commit *that* sin is, we repeat, to lose sight of the connection which God Himself has established between His predestined *ends* and the *means* whereby they are reached. The end unto which God has predestined His people is their eternal bliss in heaven, and one of the means, by which that end is reached, is through their taking heed to the solemn warning He has given against that which would prevent their reaching heaven. It is not wisdom, but madness, to scoff at those warnings. As well might Joseph have objected that there was no need for him and his family to flee into Egypt (Mat 2), seeing that it was *impossible* for the Christ Child to be slain by Herod!

What each of us needs to watch against is the first buddings of apostasy, the first steps which lead to that sin of sins. It is not reached at a single bound, but is the fatal culmination of a diseased heart. Thus, while the writer and the reader may be in no immediate danger of apostasy itself, we *are* of that which, if allowed and continued in, would certainly lead to it. A man who is now enjoying good health is in no immediate danger of dying from tuberculosis, yet if he recklessly exposed himself to the wet and cold, if he refrained from taking that nourishing food which supplies strength to resist disease, or had he a heavy cough on the chest and made no effort to break it up, then would he very likely fall a victim to consumption. So it is spiritually. Nay, in the case of the Christian, the *seed* of eternal death is already in him. That seed is *sin* and it is only as grace is daily and diligently sought, for the thwarting of its inclinations and suppressing of its activities, that it is hindered from fully developing to a fatal end.

A small leak neglected will sink a ship just as effectually as the most boisterous sea. So one sin indulged in and not repented of, will terminate in eternal punishment. Well did John Owen (1616-1683) say, “We ought to take heed of every neglect of the Person of Christ and of His authority, lest we enter into some degree or other of the guilt of this great offense.” Or, still better, well may both writer and reader earnestly cry unto God, “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression” (Psa 19:13). Rightly did C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) say on this verse, “Secret sin is a steppingstone to presumptuous sin, and *that* is the vestibule of ‘the sin which is unto death’” (Treasury of David). To sin “presumptuously” is to knowingly and deliberately ignore God’s commandments, defying His authority, and recklessly going on in a

course of self-pleasing regardless of consequences. When one has reached that terrible stage, he is but a short step indeed from committing the sin for which there is no forgiveness, and then to be abandoned by God both in this world and in that which is to come.

As this solemn subject is so vitally related to our eternal welfare, and as the pulpit and religious press of today maintain a guilty silence thereon, let us briefly point out some of the steps which inevitably lead to “presumptuous” sinning. When a professing Christian ceases to maintain a daily repentance and confession to God of all known sins, his conscience is already asleep and no longer responsive to the voice of the Holy Spirit. If over and above this, he comes before God as a worshipper, to praise and thank Him for mercies received, he is but dissembling, and mocking Him. If he continues in a state of impenitence, thus allowing and siding with the sin into which, at first, he was unwittingly and unwillingly betrayed, his heart will be so hardened that he will commit new sins deliberately, against light and knowledge, and that with a high hand, and thus be guilty of *presumptuous* sins, of openly defying God.

The terrible thing is that, in these degenerate times, the consciences of thousands have been drugged by preachers (whom it is greatly to be feared are themselves spiritually dead, and helping forward the work of Satan) that have presented “the eternal security of the saints” in such an unscriptural way, as to convey to their poor hearers the impression that, provided they once “accepted Christ as their personal Saviour,” heaven is now their certain portion, that guilt can nevermore rest upon them, and that no matter what sins they may commit, nothing can possibly jeopardize their eternal interests. The consequence has been—and this is no imaginary fear of ours, but a patent fact of observation on every side—that a carnal security has been imparted, so that in the midst of fleshly gratification and worldly living, it is, humanly speaking, quite impossible to disturb their false peace or terrify their conscience.

All around us are professing Christians sinning with a high hand against God, and yet suffering from no qualms of conscience. And why? Because while they believe that some “millennial crown” or “reward” may be forfeited should they fail to deny self and daily take up their cross and follow Christ, yet they have not the slightest realization or fear that *they* are hastening to hell as swiftly as time wings its flight. They fondly imagine that the blood of Christ covers all their sins. Horrible blasphemy! Dear reader, make no mistake upon this point, and suffer no false prophet to cause you to believe the contrary, the blood of Christ covers *no sins that have not been truly repented of and confessed to God with a broken heart*. But presumptuous sins are not easily repented of, for they *harden* the heart and make it steel itself against God. In proof note, “But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent” (Zec 7:11-12).

Rightly then does Thomas Scott (1747-1821) say on Hebrews 10:26, “We cannot too awfully alarm the secure, self-confident, and presumptuous, as every deliberate sin against light and conscience, is a step towards the tremendous precipice described by the apostle.” Alas, alas, Satan has, through the “Bible teachers,” done his work so well that, unless the Holy Spirit performs a miracle, it is impossible to “alarm” such. The great masses of professing Christians of our day regard God Himself much as they would an indulgent old man in his dotage, who so loves his grandchildren as to be blind to all their faults. The ineffably holy God of Scripture is no longer believed in. But multitudes will yet find, to their eternal sorrow, that it is “a *fearful* thing” to fall into *His* hands. We make no apology for this lengthy introduction, for our aim is not so much to write a commentary on this epistle, as it is to reach the consciences and hearts of poor, misguided,

and deluded souls, who have been fearfully deceived by the very men whom they have regarded as the champions of orthodoxy.

“He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Heb 10:28-29). Having named the principal means for the Christian’s maintenance of constancy in the faith (Heb 10:22-25), the apostle proceeded to enforce his exhortations to perseverance, and against backsliding and apostasy, by some weighty considerations. First, from the terrible character of the sin of apostasy. It is a sinning willingly after a knowledge of the truth has been received and assented to, verse 26. Second, from the dreadful state of such, no sacrifice avails for them, naught but judgment awaits them, verses 26-27. Third, from the analogy of God’s severity in the past, verses 28-29. Fourth, from what Scripture affirms of God’s vindictive justice, verses 30-31.

“He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses.” The apostle proceeds to confirm the sentence passed upon the apostate Christian in Hebrews 10:26-27, by an appeal to God’s awful, but righteous, justice in the past. If the despiser of the Mosaic law was dealt with so unsparingly, how much more severe must be the punishment meted out to those who scorn the authority of the Gospel! The Greek word for “despise” means to utterly reject a thing, to set aside or cast it off, to treat it with contempt. The one, who thus flouted the divine legislation through Moses, was he who renounced its authority, and determinately and obstinately refused to comply with its requirements. Such a one suffered the capital punishment. Probably such passages as Deuteronomy 13:6-9 and 17:2-7 were before the apostle’s mind.

“Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?” (Heb 10:29). The apostle’s inspired logic here is the very reverse of that which obtains in the corrupt theology of present-day Christendom. The popular idea in these degenerate times is that, under the Gospel regime (or “dispensation of grace”), God has acted, is acting, and will act much more mildly with transgressors, than He did under the Mosaic economy. The very opposite is the truth. No judgment from heaven one-half as severe, as that which overtook Jerusalem in A.D. 70, is recorded in Scripture from Exodus 19 to Malachi 4! Nor is there anything in God’s dealings with Israel, during Old Testament times, which can begin to compare with the awful severity of His “wrath” as depicted in the book of Revelation! Every despiser of the *Lordship* of Christ shall yet discover that a far hotter place has been reserved for him in hell, than what will be the portion of lawless rebels who lived under the old covenant.

“Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?” There are degrees of heinousness in sinning (Joh 19:11), and so there are degrees in the punishment of their perpetrators (Luk 12:47-48). Here, this solemn truth is presented in the interrogative form (cf. Heb 2:3) so as to search the conscience of each reader. If I have been favoured with a knowledge of the Gospel (denied to half the human race), if I have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit (which is more than multitudes of Romanists are), if I profess to have received Christ as my Saviour and have praised Him for His redeeming grace—what punishment can fitly meet my crimes if I now despise His lordship, flout His authority, break His commandments, walk with His enemies, and go on sinning presumptuously, till I end by committing the “great transgression”?

“Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith He was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Heb 10:28-29).

Instead of contenting himself with a general declaration of the equity of God's dealings with apostates, the apostle here adduces additional particulars of the crime before him. In this verse, we have brought before us the awful aggravations of the sin of apostasy, showing what is implied and involved in this unpardonable transgression. Three things are specified, at each of which we shall briefly glance.

First, "who hath trodden under foot the Son of God." Once more, we would call attention to the varied manner in which the Holy Spirit refers to the Saviour in this epistle. Here, it is not "Jesus," or "Christ," but the "Son of God," and that, because His purpose is to emphasize the infinite dignity of the One slighted. It is not a mere man, nor even an angel, but none less than the second Person of the holy Trinity who is so grievously insulted! Backsliding and apostasy is a treating of the Lord of glory with the utmost contempt. What could be worse? The figure here employed is very expressive and solemn. To "tread under foot" is the basest use to which a thing can be put. It signifies a scornful spurning of an object as a thing that is worthless, and is applied to swine trampling pearls under their feet (Mat 7:6). O my reader, when we deliberately ignore the claims of God's Son and despise His commandments, we are treading His authority beneath our feet.

Second, "and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing." Here, as John Owen rightly pointed out, "The second aggravation of the sin spoken of is its opposition to the *office* of Christ, especially His priestly office, and the sacrifice He offered thereby, called here 'the blood of the covenant.'" In our exposition of chapter 9, we sought to show in what sense the blood of Christ was "the blood of the covenant." It was that whereby the new covenant and testament were confirmed and made effectual unto all its grace, to those who believe, being the foundation of all God's actings toward Christ in His resurrection, exaltation, and intercession (cf. Heb 13:20). Now, the backslider and apostate does, by his conduct, treat that precious blood as though it were a worthless thing. There are many degrees of this frightful sin. But, O my reader, whenever we give rein to our lusts and are not constrained by the love of Christ to render Him that devotion and obedience which are His due, we are, in fact, despising the blood of the covenant.

Third, "and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace." (Heb 10:29). This is the greatest aggravation of all. "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven him" (Luk 12:10). It is by the Spirit the Christian was regenerated, enlightened, convicted, and brought to Christ. It is by the Spirit the Christian is led and fed, taught and sanctified. What reverence is due Him as a divine Person! What gratitude as a divine benefactor! How dreadful the sin, then, which treats Him with insolence, which scorns to attend unto His winsome voice, which despises His gracious entreaties! While the grossest form of the sin here referred to is malignantly imputing unto Satan the works of the Spirit, yet there are milder degrees of it. O my reader, let us earnestly endeavor to keep from grieving Him (Eph 4:30), and more completely yield ourselves to be "led" (Rom 8:14) by Him along the highway of practical holiness.

Saith the Lord Almighty, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor [in spirit] and of a contrite spirit, and *trembleth* at my word" (Isa 66:2). Surely if there is a passage anywhere in Holy Writ which should cause each of us to "tremble," it is the one now before us! Not tremble lest we *have* already committed this unpardonable sin, for they who have done so are beyond all exercise of conscience, being given up by God to hardness of heart. No, but tremble *lest* we should begin a course of backsliding, which, if unarrested, would certainly lead thereto. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1Co 10:12). O my reader,

make this your daily prayer, “Hold up my goings in *thy* paths, that my footsteps slip not” (Psa 17:5).

“For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the LORD. And again, The Lord shall judge His people” (Heb 10: 30) In this verse, further confirmation is supplied of the awful severity and the absolute certainty of the punishment of apostates. Once more, we have an example of a most important principle which regulated the apostle in his ministry, both oral and written. In Hebrews 10:28-29, he had given a specimen of spiritual reasoning drawing a clear and logical inference from the less to the greater. Yet decisive and unanswerable as this was, he rested not his case upon it, but instead, established it by quoting from the Holy Scriptures. Let servants of God today act upon the same principle, and give a definite “Thus saith the Lord” for all they advance.

“For we know him that hath said” (Heb 10:30). Here, our attention is directed unto the divine character, what God is in Himself. Nothing behoves us more than to frequently and fully consider *who it is* with whom we have to do. Our conception of the divine character plays an important part in moulding our hearts and regulating our conduct. Therefore it is that we find the apostle, in another place, praying that the saints may be “increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10). It is a most profitable exercise for the soul to be often engaged in contemplating the divine attributes, pondering God’s all-mighty power, ineffable holiness, unimpeachable veracity, exact justice, absolute faithfulness, and terrible severity. Christ Himself has bidden us, “Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mat 10:28). The better God’s character be known, the more we heed that exhortation of Christ’s, the clearer shall we perceive that there is nothing unsuited to the holiness of God in what Scripture affirms concerning His dealings with the wicked. It is because the true nature of sin is so little viewed in the light of God’s awful holiness that so many fail to recognize its *infinite* demerits.

“For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense saith the LORD.” The reference is to Deuteronomy 32:35, though the apostle does not quote word for word as we now have that text. Moses was there reminding of the office which God holds as the Judge of all the earth. As such, He enforces His righteous law and inflicts it’s just punishment on wilful and impenitent sinners. Though, in His unsearchable wisdom, He is often pleased to forbear for a while—for He “endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” (Rom 9:22). Nevertheless, God will yet pay to every transgressor the full wages which their sins have earned. God bore long with the Antediluvians, but at the end, He destroyed them by the flood. Wondrous was His patience toward the Sodomites, but at His appointed season, He rained down fire and brimstone upon them. With amazing forbearance, He tolerates the immeasurable wickedness of the world, but the day is swiftly approaching when He will avenge Himself upon all who now so stoutly oppose Him.

“And again, The Lord shall judge his people” (Heb 10:30). A most important example is here given as a guide to teach us how Scripture is to be *applied*. The reference is to what is recorded in Deuteronomy 32:36, but there it is God’s care exercised on behalf of His people, while here it is His vengeance upon their enemies. Some have caviled at the appositeness of the apostle’s quotation. Yet they should not. Each *particular* Scripture has a *general* application, and is *not* to be limited unto those first addressed. If God undertakes to protect His people, He will certainly exercise judgment on those who apostatize. He did so in the past (see 1Co 10:5), He will do so in the future (2Th 1:7-8). The rule which is established by this quotation from Deuteronomy is that all Scripture is equally applicable unto all cases of the like nature. What God says concerning

those who are the enemies of His people, becomes applicable to His people *should* they break and reject His covenant.

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31). Here is the unescapable conclusion which must be drawn from all that has been before us. This word “fearful” ought to make every trifler with sin tremble as did Belshazzar when he saw the hand writing upon the wall. To “fall into the hands of” is a metaphor denoting the utter helplessness of the victim when captured by his enemy. The One into whose hands the apostate falls is “the living God.” “A mortal man, however incensed he may be, cannot carry his vengeance beyond death; but God’s power is not bounded by so narrow limits” (John Calvin, 1509-1564). No, forever and ever will God’s wrath burn against the objects of His judgment. Nor will the supplications of sinners prevail upon Him. See Proverbs 1:28, Ezekiel 8:18.

By the penitent and obedient, God is loved and adored. But by the impenitent and defiant, He is to be dreaded. The wicked may now pride themselves that, in the day of judgment, they will placate God by their tears, but they will then find that, not only His justice, but His outraged mercy also calls aloud for His vengeance upon them. Men may now be beguiled by visions of a “larger hope,” but in that day, they shall discover it is only another of Satan’s lies. O how the “terror of the Lord” (2Co 5:11) ought to stir up God’s servants to warn and persuade men before the day of grace is finally closed. And how it should make each one of us walk softly before God, sparing no pains to make our calling and election “sure.” It is only as we “*add*” to our faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and love that we have scriptural assurance that *we* shall “never fall” (2Pe 1:5-10).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

5. His Early Experiences

Had we sought a topical title for this article, “The Prince of Popularity” might well have been selected. The 17th chapter of 1 Samuel closes by recounting the memorable victory of David over Goliath, the Philistine giant. The 18th chapter informs us of a number of things which formed the sequel to that notable achievement. There is much which those who are ambitious and covetous of earthly honour do well to take to heart. An accurate portrayal is given of different phases and features of human nature that is full of instruction for those who will duly ponder the same. Much is condensed into a small compass, but little imagination is required in order to obtain a vivid conception of what is there presented. One scene after another is passed in rapid review, but amid them all, the man after God’s own heart equitted himself admirably. May the Lord enable each of us to profit from what is here recorded for our learning.

“And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (1Sa 18:1 and cf. verses 3-4). Let us admire here the tender grace of God, and behold an illustration of a blessed

principle in His dealings with us. Jonathan was the son of Saul, and therefore (ordinarily), heir apparent to the throne. But, as we have seen, David had been anointed unto that position. There was, therefore, occasion for Jonathan to look upon David as his rival, and to be filled with jealousy and hatred against him. Instead, his heart is united unto him with a tender affection. This should not be attributed to the amiability of his character, but is to be ascribed unto Him in whose hand are all our hearts and ways.

What we have just called attention to above is not sufficiently recognized and pondered in these evil days—No, not even by the people of God. There is nothing recorded of Jonathan which really shows that he was a saved man, but not a little to the contrary—particularly in the closing scenes of his life. When, then, the heart of a man of the world is drawn out to a saint, when he shows kindness unto him, we should always discern the secret workings of God's power, graciously exercised for us. He, who employed ravens to feed His servant Elijah (1Ki 17), often moves the hearts and minds of unregenerate people to be kind toward His children. It was the Lord who gave Joseph "favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison" (Gen 39:21), the Israelites "favour in the sight of the Egyptians" (Exo 3:21) at the time of their exodus, and Esther in the sight of King Ahasuerus (Est 5:2). It is so still, and we only honour God when we perceive and own this and praise Him for it.

David's finding favour in the eyes of Jonathan was the more noteworthy, in that, the envy and enmity of Saul was soon stirred against him. What a mercy from God was it, then, for David to have a true friend in his enemy's household! The value of it will come before us later. It was by this means that our hero received warning and his safety was promoted. In like manner, there are few of God's children unto whom He does not, in critical seasons, raise up those who are kindly disposed toward them, and who in various ways help and succour them. Thus it has been in the life of the writer, and we, doubt not, with many of our readers also. Let us admire the Lord's goodness and adore His faithfulness in thus giving us the sympathy and assistance of unsaved friends in a hostile world.

"And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house" (1Sa 18:2). The purpose of God concerning David was beginning to ripen. First, He had so over-ruled things that Saul had sent for him to attend the king occasionally in his fits of melancholia. But now, David was made a permanent member of the court. This was but fitting, in view of the promise which had been made to him by the king before he encountered Goliath, that if victorious, Saul's daughter should be given to him to wife (1Sa 17:25). Thus was David being fitted for his royal duties. It is blessed when we are able to realize that each providential change in our lives is another step toward the accomplishing of the divine counsels concerning us.

"And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants" (1Sa 18:5). Beautiful is it to behold here the humility and fidelity of the one upon whom the anointing oil already rested. Diligently had he fulfilled his trust in the sheepfold at Bethlehem, dutifully did he now carry out the orders of the king. Let this be duly laid to heart by any who are tempted to chafe under the situation which they now occupy. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Ecc 9:10), defines the duty of each one of us. The teaching of the New Testament is, of course, the same. "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit" (Rom 12:11). Whatever position you occupy, dear reader, no matter how humble or distasteful, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Col 3:23).

"And behave himself wisely" (1Sam 18:14). How very few do so! How many have, through injudicious conduct, not only hindered their spiritual progress, but ruined their earthly prospects.

Such a word as the one now before us needs to be turned into prayer—believing, fervent, persevering. Especially is that counsel timely unto the young. We need to ask God to enable us to carry ourselves wisely in every situation in which He has placed us, that we may redeem the time, be on our guard against temptations, and perform each duty to the very best of our ability. “Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Mat 10:16), does not mean be compromisers and temporisers, tricky and deceitful, but take into consideration the fickleness of human nature and trust none but God. In David’s behaving himself “wisely,” he points again unto Him of whom God said, “Behold, my servant shall deal prudently” (Isa 52:13).

Saul now set David “over the men of war.” Though not made commander-in-chief, some high military office was given him, possibly over the king’s bodyguard. This was a further step toward the equipping of David for his life’s work. There was much fighting ahead of him, powerful enemies of Israel which had to be conquered. Thus was God making all things “work together” for his good. What a change from the obscurity and peace of pastoral life to becoming a courtier and soldier. “And he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul’s servants” (1Sa 18:5). God gave their future ruler favour in the eyes both of the common people and of the court. How this reminds us of what is recorded of the Antitype, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luk 2:52).

“And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1Sa 18:6-7) How this incident served to make manifest the low spiritual state into which the nation of Israel had now sunk. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Mat 12:34). The language we employ is a sure index to the condition of our souls. “They are *of* the world: therefore *speak* they of the world” (1Jo 4:5). It is indeed distressing, yet ought not to be surprising, that so very, very few professing Christians, in their general conversation with each other, “minister grace unto the hearers” (Eph 4:29). Not surprising, because the great majority of them are strangers to the power of godliness.

The language used by the women of Israel, when celebrating the death of Goliath and the defeating of the Philistines, gave plain indication that their hearts and minds were occupied only with the human victors. “*God* is not in all his thoughts” (Psa 10:4). Alas that this is so often the case today. We are living in an age of hero worship, and Christendom itself is infected by this evil spirit. Man is eulogized and magnified on every hand, not only out in the world, but even in the so-called churches, Bible conferences, and religious periodicals—seen in the advertising of the speakers, the printing of the photos, and the toadying to them. O how little hiding behind the cross, how little self-effacement there is today. “Cease ye from *man*” (Isa 2:22) needs to be placed in large letters over the platforms of all the big religious gatherings in this man-deifying age. No wonder the Holy Spirit is “grieved” and “quenched,” yet where are the voices being raised in faithful protest?

“And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1Sa 18:7). What a sad contrast was this from what we find recorded in Exodus 15! A far greater overthrow of the enemy was witnessed by Israel at the Red Sea than what had just taken place in the valley of Elah (1Sa 17:19). Yet we do not find the mothers of these women of Israel magnifying Moses and singing *his* praises. Instead, we hear Miriam saying to her sisters, “Sing ye to the LORD, for *he* hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea” (Exo 15:21). JEHOVAH was there given His true place,

the victory being ascribed to Him and not to the human instruments. See to it, dear reader, that, no matter what the common and evil custom be to the contrary, you give *all* the glory to Him unto whom alone it rightfully belongs.

“And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?” (1Sa 18:8). The song of the women was not only dishonouring to God, but was impolitic as well. As we saw in verse 5, David “behaved himself *wisely*,” but the conduct of Israel’s daughters was in sharp contrast therefrom. The honouring of David above Saul was more than the king’s proud heart could endure. The activity of the “flesh” in the women acted upon the “flesh” in him. Unable to rejoice in what God had wrought through another, Saul was envious when he heard the superior praises of David being sung. He could not tolerate the thought of being second.

Perhaps someone may be inclined to raise the question, “Why did not God restrain those women from exalting David in song above Saul (as He could easily have done), and thus prevented the rising of the king’s jealousy?” Several answers may be returned to this query. It subserved God’s purpose and promoted the spiritual good of David. God often withholds His curbing hand in order that it may the better appear what is in fallen man and unregenerate man. Were He not to do so, the distinction between the children of God and the children of the devil would not be so evident. Moreover, David was being flattered, and flattery is ever a dangerous thing. Therefore, does God often wisely and mercifully check our proud hearts from being unduly elated thereby, by causing some to think and speak evil of us.

“For every great and good work a man must expect to be envied by his neighbor. No distinction or pre-eminence can be so unexceptionably obtained, but it will expose the possessor to slander and malice, and perhaps to the most fatal consequences. But such trials are very *useful* to those who love God. They serve as a counterpoise to the honour put upon them, and check the growth of pride and attachment to the world. They exercise them to faith, patience, meekness, and communion with God. They give them a fair opportunity of exemplifying the amiable nature and tendency of true godliness, by acting with wisdom and propriety in the most difficult circumstances. They make way for increasing experience of the Lord’s faithfulness, in restraining their enemies, raising them up friends, and affording them His gracious protection. And they both prepare them for those stations in which they are to be employed and open their way to them. For, in due time, modest merit will shine forth with double lustre” (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

Ere passing on, let it be remembered that each detail of this chapter, and everything in the Old Testament Scriptures, is “written for our learning” (Rom 15:4). Especially does it need to be emphasized, for the benefit of the young, that lavish commendations from those who admire and love us, in such a world as this, often prove a real injury. And in all cases, everything should be avoided which can excite envy and opposition—except the performance of our duty to God and man. “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you” (Luk 6:26). During the twelve years he was in the pastorate, the writer deemed it expedient to retire into the vestry as soon as the service was over. The “flesh” loves to hear the eulogies of the people, but they are not conducive to humility. “Seekest thou great things for thyself? *seek them not*” (Jer 45:5).

“And Saul eyed David from that day and forward” (1Sa 18:9). Perceiving that David was looked upon favourably by the people (1Sa 18:5), jealous of the praise which was accorded him (1Sa 18:7), fearful that he might soon lose the kingdom (1Sa 18:8), Saul now regarded the slayer of Goliath with a malignant eye. Instead of looking upon David with esteem and gratitude, as he should have done because of this gallant behaviour, he jealously observed his ways and actions,

biding his time to do him injury. What a solemn example does this provide of the inconstancy of poor human nature! Only a little before, Saul had “loved him greatly” (1Sa 16:21), and now he hated him. Beware, my reader, of the fickleness of the human heart. There is only One who can truthfully say, “I change not” (Mal 3:6).

If David was counting upon the stability of Saul’s affection for him, if he concluded that his military prowess had established him in the king’s favour, he was now to meet with a rude awakening. Instead of gratitude, there was cruel envy. Instead of kindly treatment, his very life was sought. And this, too, is recorded for our instruction. The Holy Scriptures not only unveil to us the attributes of God, but they also reveal to us the character of man. Fallen human nature is faithfully depicted as it actually is. The more attentively God’s Word be pondered and its teachings and principles absorbed, the better will we be fortified against many a bitter disappointment. There is no excuse for any of us being deceived by people. If we took to heart the solemn warnings which the Bible furnishes, we should be far more upon our guard, and would heed such exhortations as are found in Psalms 146:3, Proverbs 17:18, Jeremiah 9:4, 17:5, and Micah 7:5.

“And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul’s hand. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice” (1Sa 18:10-11). How swiftly troubles follow on the heels of triumphs! What a contrast between hearing the acclaiming songs of the women and dodging a murderous weapon! And yet, how true to life! Well, then, does each of us need to seek grace that we may learn to hold everything down here with a light hand. Rightly did one of the Puritans counsel, “Build not thy nest in any earthly tree, for the whole forest is doomed to destruction.” It is only as the heart is set upon things above that we find an object which will never disappoint nor pall.

“The evil spirit came from God upon Saul.” Yes, the wicked as well as the righteous, evil spirits as well as holy angels, are under the absolute and immediate control of God, cf. Judges 9:23. But let us not miss the solemn *connection* between what is recorded in verse 9 and in verse 10. When we indulge jealousy and hatred, we give place to the devil (Eph 4:26-27). “And he prophesied.” All prophesyings are not inspired by the Holy Spirit, that is why we need to heed 1 John 4:1. Observe the enemy’s subtlety. No doubt Saul’s prophesying was designed to take David off his guard. He would least expect an attempt on his life at such a time. Blessed is it to note that, after avoiding the deadly weapon cast at him, David did not pick it up and hurl it at Saul. Instead, he quietly withdrew from his presence. May like grace be granted unto both writer and reader when tempted to retaliate upon those who wrong us.

SAVING FAITH

3. Its Difficulty

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

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

So many have been argued into a believing that they are saved! In reality, their “faith” sprang from nothing better than a superficial process of logic. Some “personal worker” addresses a man, who has no concern whatever for the glory of God and no realization of his terrible hostility against Him. Anxious to “win another soul to Christ,” he pulls out his New Testament and reads to him 1 Timothy 1:15. The worker says, “You are a sinner,” and this man, assenting, he is at once informed, then that verse includes “*You*.” Next, John 3:16 is read and the question is asked, “Who does the word ‘whosoever’ include?” The question is repeated until the poor victim answers, “You, me, everybody.” Then, he is asked, “Will you believe it? Believe that God loves you, that Christ died for you?” If the answer is, “Yes,” he is at once assured that he is now saved. Ah, my reader, if *this* is how you were “saved,” then it was with “*enticing* words of man’s wisdom” and *your* “faith” stands only “in the wisdom of men” (1Co 2:4-5), and not in the power of God!

Multitudes seem to think that it is about as easy for a sinner to purify his heart (Jam 4:8) as it is to wash his hands—to admit the searching and flesh-withering light of divine truth into the soul, as the morning sun into his room by pulling up the blinds—to turn from idols to God, from the world to Christ, from sin to holiness, as it is to turn a ship right round by the help of her helm.

O my reader, be not deceived on this vital matter. To mortify the lusts of the flesh, to be crucified unto the world, to overcome the devil, to die daily unto sin and live unto righteousness, to be meek and lowly in heart, trustful and obedient, pious and patient, faithful and uncompromising, loving and gentle, in a word, to be a Christian, *to be Christlike*, is a task far, far beyond the poor resources of fallen human nature.

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

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

After the young ruler had departed from Christ, sorrowing, the Lord turned to His disciples and said, "How *hard* is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a *rich* man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mar 10:24-25). What place is given to such a passage as this in the theology (if "theology" it is fit to be called) which is being taught in the "Bible Institutes" to those seeking to qualify for evangelistic and personal work? None at all! According to their views, it is just as easy for a millionaire to be saved as it is for a pauper, since *all* that either has to do is "rest on the finished work of Christ." But those who are wallowing in wealth think not of God. "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me" (Hos 13:6)!

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

And *why* is it "impossible" for the natural man to exercise saving faith? Let the answer be drawn from the case of this young ruler. He departed from Christ sorrowing, "for he had great possessions." He was wrapped up in them. They were his idols. His heart was chained to the things of earth. The demands of Christ were too exacting. To part with all and follow Him was more than flesh and blood could endure. Reader, what are *your* idols? To him, the Lord said,

“One thing thou lackest.” What was it? A yielding to the imperative requirements of Christ, a heart surrendered to God. When the soul is stuffed with the dregs of earth, there is no room for the impressions of heaven. When a man is satisfied with carnal riches, he has no desire for spiritual riches.

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

“How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” (Joh 5:44). Do these words picture the exercise of saving faith as the simple matter which so many deem it? The word, “honour,” here signifies approbation or praise. While those Jews were making it their chief aim to win and hold the good opinion of each other, and were indifferent to the approval of God, it was impossible that they should come to Christ. It is the same now. “Whosoever therefore will be [desires and is determined to be] a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jam 4:4). To come to Christ effectually, to believe on Him savingly, involves the turning our backs upon the world, alienating ourselves from the esteem of our godless (or religious) fellows, and identifying ourselves with the despised and rejected One. It involves bowing to His yoke, surrendering to His Lordship, and living henceforth for *His* glory. And *that* is no small task.

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

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

“And if the righteous with difficulty is saved, the ungodly and sinner where shall appear?” (1Pe 4:18, Bagster’s Interlinear). Matthew Henry (1662-1714) said, “It is as much as the best can do to secure the salvation of their souls. There are so many sufferings, temptations, and difficulties to be overcome; so many sins to be mortified; the gate is so strait, and the way so narrow, that it is as much as the righteous can do to be saved. Let the absolute necessity of salvation balance the difficulty of it. Consider your difficulties are greatest at first. God offers His grace and help. The contest will not last long. Be but faithful to the death and God will give you the crown of life, Revelation 2:10.” So also John Lillie (1812-1867), “After all that God has done by sending His Son, and the Son, by sending the Holy Spirit, it is only with difficulty, exceeding difficulty, that the work of saving the righteous advances to its consummation. The entrance into the kingdom lies through much tribulation—through fightings without and fears within—through the world’s seductions and its frowns—through the utter weakness and continual failures of the flesh, and the many fiery darts of Satan.”

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

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

The terrible thing is that so many preachers today, under the pretense of magnifying the grace of God, have represented Christ as the Minister of *sin*, as One who has, through His atoning sacrifice, procured an indulgence for men to continue gratifying their fleshly and worldly lusts. Providing a man professes to believe in the virgin birth and vicarious death of Christ, and claims to be resting upon Him alone for salvation, he may pass for a real Christian almost anywhere today, even though his daily life may be no different from that of the moral worldling who makes no profession at all. The devil is chloroforming thousands into hell by this very delusion. The Lord Jesus asks, “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say?” (Luk 6:46), and insists “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Mat 7:21).

The hardest task before most of us is not to learn, but to unlearn. Many of God’s own children have drunk so deeply of the sweetened poison of Satan, that it is by no means easy to get it out of

their systems. And while it remains in them, it stupefies their understanding. So much is this the case that, the first time one of them reads an article like this, it is apt to strike them as an open attack upon the sufficiency of Christ's finished work, as though we were here teaching that the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb needed to be plussed by something from the creature. Not so. Nothing but the merits of Immanuel can ever give any sinner title to stand before the ineffably holy God. But what we are now contending for is *when* does God impute to any sinner the righteousness of Christ? Certainly not while he is opposed to Him.

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

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

"Many people think that when we preach salvation, we mean salvation from going to hell. We do mean that, but we mean a great deal more. We preach salvation from *sin*. We say that Christ is able to save a man and we mean by that that He is able to save him from sin and to make him holy, to make him a new man. No person has any right to say, 'I am saved,' while he continues in sin as he did before. How can you be saved from sin while you are living in it? A man that is drowning cannot say he is saved from the water while he is sinking in it. A man that is frost-bitten cannot say, with any truth, that he is saved from the cold while he stiffened in the wintry blast. No, man, Christ did not come to save thee *in* thy sins, but to save thee *from* thy sins. Not to make the disease so that it should not kill thee, but to let it remain in itself mortal, and nevertheless, to remove it from thee and thee from it. Christ Jesus came, then, to heal us from the plague of sin, to touch us with His hand and say, 'I will, be thou clean'" (Mat 8:3) (Charles H. Spurgeon, on Matthew 9:12, 1834-1892).

They, who do not yearn after holiness of heart and righteousness of life, are only deceiving themselves when they suppose they desire to be saved by Christ. The plain fact is all that is wanted by so many today is merely a soothing portion for their conscience, which will enable them to go on comfortably in a course of self-pleasing, which will permit them to continue their worldly ways without the fear of eternal punishment. Human nature is the same the world over. That wretched instinct which causes multitudes to believe that the paying a papist priest a few dollars procures forgiveness of all their past sins, and an "indulgence" for future ones, moves other multitudes to greedily devour the lie that, with an unbroken and impenitent heart, by a mere

act of the will, they may “believe in Christ,” and thereby obtain not only God’s pardon for past sins, but an “eternal security,” no matter what they do or do not do in the future.

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

RECEIVING CHRIST

“He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power [the right] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (Joh 1:11-12). This implies great and weighty things.

1. It implies and necessarily includes *the right understanding* of gospel terms. These must be known, pondered, and duly considered before the will can savingly open, in an act of consent, to Christ’s offer. I desire this may be specially observed, because multitudes are mistaken about this thing. He that does not consider, does not consent. You must exercise your understandings upon the terms and articles of Christianity, or else your consent is rash, blindfold, and unstable. This, in Luke 14:31, is called, “consulting.” The consent of faith is the result of previous consultations and debates in the mind. The soul that comes to Christ must take up religion in his most sedate and serious thoughts. Turn both sides of it, the dark as well as the bright side of religion, to the eye of the mind. Balance all the losses as well as gains. If I open to Christ, this I shall gain, but that I must lose. I cannot separate Christ from sufferings. Christ will separate me from my sins. If I seek Him, I must let them go, if I profess Christ. Providence will, one time or other, bring me to this dilemma. Either Christ or earthly comforts must go. It is necessary, therefore, that I now propound to myself what providence may, one time or other, propound to me.

He hath set down His terms in Matthew 16:24, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” This self-denial deserves serious consideration, for Christ requires that I give up my life, my liberty, my estate, my relations, and also my own righteousness, which is as hard to be parted with as any of the former. I must take up my cross and I must follow Christ whithersoever He goes. I know not what religion may cost me before I die. All this it has cost others, and there is no bringing down Christ’s terms lower than He has laid them. I must come up to them. They will not come down to me. If I like them not, as Christ has

left them, the treating between Him and me is ended. “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me” (Mat 10:37-38). Where, by “worthiness,” we are not to understand the meritoriousness of these acts, but the necessary qualifications of the will, and the due preparation of one coming to Christ. These previous consultations and debates in the mind prepare the will to make a serious and well-advised choice of Christ. And for want of this, there are such swarms of hypocrites and apostates in the world.

2. It implies *such a sense of misery in us*, and of the necessity and excellency of Christ, as determines the will to the choice of Him, notwithstanding all the difficulties which have fallen or commonly fall under consideration in the mind. When the soul sees that, in Christ which preponderates over all sufferings, all losses, and reproaches, and then determines, I will have Christ though I sacrifice all that is dear to me in the world for Him—this is to be truly willing to open to Christ. It is true, the enjoyments of this world are understood by Christians as much as other men. They have a feeling sense of the sweetness of earthly enjoyments. Their souls have as much affection to the body as other men. They understand the charming language of the world, and their dear relations in it, as well as others. Only they see a greater necessity of Christ and a greater worth in Christ, then they do in these things. You read that in the famine of Jerusalem, they gave their pleasant things for meat to relieve their souls—jewels, bracelets, gold, and silver, anything for bread (Lam 1:11). They understood the worth of those things, knew the cost of them, but parted with them to preserve life. So it is here. No earthly enjoyment, of what value so ever it be, has such an excellency in it, such an absolute necessity to us of enjoyment, as Christ has.

Objection. But O, saith the soul, who can do this? I am willing to have Christ and to come up to every term He has laid down in the gospel. I am willing to part with every sin and to endure any suffering for Christ. But O, I tremble to think, if it should come to a prison, a stake, to an actual separation from all the comforts and relations in this world—what shall I do for strength to go through such difficult work as this? Here is the great difficulty in the way of many souls. They find a willingness, but fear the want of strength.

Answer. How or where you shall find strength, to endure these things for Christ, is not the question now before you. God will take care for that and it shall be given you in that hour. So others have found who have had the same fears you have. I say, the question is not whether you are able, but whether you are heartily willing. Christ asks but your will. He will provide ability. The greatest believer in this world cannot say, “I am able to suffer this or that for Christ.” But the least believer in the world must say, “I am willing, the Lord assisting me, to endure and suffer all things for His sake.”

3. That which perfects the whole action is *an entire choice* of Jesus Christ *upon all the terms* prescribed by Him. The *entireness* of the choice, without halving or dividing, excepting or reserving, makes the consent full and effectual. There is a twofold consent of the will to Christ.

There is a *partial* consent which is always hypocritical, defective, and ineffectual. The hypocrite is really willing to have the pardon of Christ, the glory purchased by Him, but to part with his beloved lusts, and to give up his earthly enjoyments, his will cannot consent to. There is a full and entire consent of the will, called a believing with *all* the heart (Act 8:37). Now, this entirety and fulness of the will’s choice is that which closeth the union between Christ and the soul, and frees a man from the danger of hypocrisy. And there are three things which make the consent to the choice of Christ complete.

(1) We heartily consent to be Christ's when we give up all we are and have to Him. So that, against this choice of Christ, we look upon ourselves thenceforth as not our own, but bought with a price to glorify God in our body and soul, which are His (1Co 6:19-20). Soul and body are all that we are, and both these parts of ourselves, do now pass, by an act of our own consent, into the Redeemer's right. We are not to have the disposal of them. That belongs to Him who purchased them. You know that, in all purchases, property is altered. You did live as your own, followed your own wills and passions, were under the dominion and at the beck of every lust, but now, the case is altered. "For we ourselves also *were* sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another" (Ti 3:3). So many lusts, so many lords! But now, we have given ourselves to Christ, no more to be swayed this way or that against His Word and the voice of your conscience. Thus, our souls and bodies are His, hallowed, dedicated to Christ, temples for God to dwell in. And thus, all other things follow of course. If I am the Lord's, then, my time, my talents, and all that I have are His.

(2) You must derive and draw all you want from Him. God hath stored up in Christ all you want, a full supply for every need, and made it all-communicable to you. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1Co 1:30). All the believer's springs are in Christ. Have I any difficult business to do that requires courage? Then I must repair to Christ, the fount of wisdom. Am I under guilt? Then I must repair to Christ for righteousness. Is my soul burdened by corruption? Then I must go to Christ for sanctification. Do I groan under troubles of soul or body, temptations or afflictions? Then I must relieve myself by the faith and hope of that complete redemption and final deliverance procured by Christ from all these. If you consent to be Christ's, you must not look for justification, partly from His righteousness and partly from your own graces and duties, but must make mention of His righteousness, even of His only (Psa 71:6). If there is but one conduit in a town, and not a drop of water to be had elsewhere, then all the inhabitants of that town repair thither for water. In the whole city of God, there is but one fount, and that is Christ. There is not a drop of righteousness, holiness, strength, or comfort to be had elsewhere. Then, we draw all from Christ, when we *live upon Him* as the new-born infant doth upon the mother's breast.

(3) Our consent to and choice of Christ is entire and full when we are ready *to deny ourselves* and part with anything we have for His sake, reckoning nothing lost to us which goes to the glory of Christ. How dear soever our liberties, estates, or lives are to us, if the Lord has need of them, we must let them go. Thus, you read, "They loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev 12:11). These three things show saving faith to be another manner of thing than the world generally understands it to be. And it is impossible for any man's will to open and receive Christ upon terms of such deep self-denial as these until there has been a conviction of sin and misery, and discovery of Christ in His glory and necessity, and the drawing power of the Spirit upon the soul.

Conviction of our sin and misery makes these terms of religion acceptable. Sinners stand debating with Christ, excepting and objecting against His terms, until the Lord has shaken, by conviction over hell, and made them see the dreadful danger they are in. And then, they cry, "What shall we do?" (Act 2:37)—Prescribe any means, impose upon us the greatest difficulties, we are willing to comply with them!

Nor will our souls ever comply with these terms of the gospel until a discovery has been made to them of Jesus Christ in His glory and necessity. When a man feels his wants, and sees a complete remedy, his will then complies readily and freely. The convinced sinner sees a full and

suitable supply in Christ for all his wants, a complete Saviour, in whom there is nothing defective, but in all respects, according to the wants of the sinner's heart.

To all this must be added the powerful drawings of the Spirit, by which the will comes to Christ, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (Joh 6:44). When these things are felt on the soul, it hears Christ's voice, His powerful call, which breaks asunder all the bonds between a man and his earthly enjoyments. And without these things, the will is not to be persuaded to comply with the difficulties of religion. (John Flavel, 1630-1691).

PRAYER

3. Praying with the Spirit and with the Understanding

The apostle puts a clear distinction between praying with the Spirit, and praying with the Spirit and the understanding. "I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding *also*" (1Co 14:15). This distinction was occasioned through the Corinthians not observing that it was their duty to do what they did to the edification of themselves and others too, whereas they did it for their own commendation. So I judge, for many of them, having extraordinary gifts, as to speak with divers tongues, etc., therefore, they were more for those mighty gifts, than they were for the edifying of their brethren—which was the cause why Paul wrote this chapter to them—to let them understand that, though extraordinary gifts were excellent, yet to do what they did for the edification of the church, was more excellent.

It is expedient, then, that the understanding should be occupied in prayer, as well as the heart and mouth. That, which is done with understanding, is done more effectually, sensibly, and heartily. This made the apostle pray for the Colossians that God would fill them "with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col 1.9), and for the Ephesians that God would give them "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened" (Eph 1:17-18). and so for the Philippians, that their love might "abound yet more and more in knowledge and all judgment" (Phi 1:9).

A suitable understanding is good in everything a man undertakes, either civil or spiritual. And therefore, it must be desired by all them that would be a praying people. In my speaking of this, I shall show you what it is *to pray* "with understanding." Understanding is to be taken both for speaking in our mother-tongue and also experimentally. I pass the first, and treat only on the second. For the making of right prayers, it is to be required that there should be a good or spiritual understanding in all them who pray to God.

1. To pray with understanding is to pray as being instructed by the Spirit, in the understanding of the want of those things which the soul is to pray for. Though a man be in never so much need of pardon of sin and deliverance from wrath to come, yet if he *understand not* this, he will either not desire them at all, or else be so cold and lukewarm in his desires after them, that God will

even loathe his frame of spirit in asking for them. Thus, it was with the church of Laodicea. They lacked knowledge of spiritual understanding. They knew not that they were poor, wretched, blind, and naked. The cause whereof made them, and all their services, so loathsome to Christ, that He threatens to spew them out of His mouth. Men without understanding may say the same words in prayer as others do, but if there be an understanding in the one, and none in the other, there is a mighty difference in speaking the very same words.

2. Spiritual understanding perceiveth in the heart of God a readiness and willingness to give those things to the soul that it stands in need of. David, by this, could discern the very thoughts of God towards him. And thus it was with the woman of Canaan. She did, by faith and a right understanding, recognize (beyond all the rough carriage of Christ) the tenderness and willingness in His heart, which caused her to be vehement and earnest, yea, restless, until she did enjoy the mercy she stood in need of. There is nothing will press the soul more to seek after God and cry for pardon than an understanding of His willingness to save sinners. If a man should see a pearl worth a hundred pounds lie in a ditch, yet if he understood not the value of it, he would lightly pass it by. But if he once got the knowledge of it, he would venture up to the neck for it. So it is with souls concerning the things of God. If a man once gets an understanding of the *worth* of them, then his heart, nay, the very strength of his soul, runs after them, and he will never leave crying till he have them. The two blind men in the gospel, because they did certainly know that Jesus, who was passing by them, was both able and willing to heal their infirmity, therefore, thy cried. And the more they were rebuked, the more they cried.

3. The understanding being enlightened, way is made for the soul to come to God with suitable arguments, sometimes in a way of expostulation, as Jacob, sometimes in a way of supplication. Yet not in a verbal way only, but even from the heart, there is forced by the Spirit, through the understanding, such effectual arguments as moveth the heart of God. When Ephraim gets a right understanding of his own unseemly carriages towards the Lord, then he begins to bemoan himself. And in bemoaning of himself, he used such arguments with the Lord, that it affects His heart, draws out forgiveness, and makes Ephraim pleasant in His eyes through Jesus Christ our Lord. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed [or had a right understanding of myself], I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." These be Ephraim's bemoanings of himself. At which, the Lord breaks forth into these heart-melting expressions, saying, "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him" (Jer 31:18-20). Thus, you see that, as it is required to pray with the Spirit, so it is to pray with the understanding also.

To illustrate what hath been spoken by a similitude. Set the case that there come two a-begging to your door. The one is a poor, lame, wounded, and almost starved creature. The other is a healthy, lusty person. These two use the same words in their begging. The one saith, he is almost starved, so doth the other. But yet, the man that is indeed the maimed person, he speaks with more feeling and understanding of his misery than does the other, and it is discovered more by his affectionate speaking, his bemoaning himself. His pain and poverty make him speak more in a spirit of lamentation than the other, and he shall be pitied sooner than the other, by all that have the least measure of natural affection or pity. Just so is it with some. There are some, who out of custom and formality, go and pray. There are others who go in the bitterness of their spirits.

The one prays out of bare notion and naked knowledge. The other hath his words forced from him by the anguish of his soul. Surely *that* is the man who God will look at, “Even him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isa 66:2).

4. An understanding well enlightened is of admirable use also, both as to the matter and manner of prayer. He that hath his understanding well exercised, to discern between good and evil, and in it is placed a sense, either of the misery of man or the mercy of God, that soul hath no need of the writings of other men, to teach him by form or prayer. For as he that feels pain needs not to be taught to cry, “Oh!” even so he that hath his understanding opened by the Spirit needs not to be taught by other men’s prayers as that he cannot pray without them. The present sense, feeling, and pressure that lieth upon his spirit, provoke him to groan out his requests upon the Lord. When David had the pains of hell catching hold on him, and the sorrows of hell compass him about, he needed no bishop in a surplice to learn him to say, “O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul” (Psa 116:4), or to look into a book to give him a form of prayer to use. It is the nature of the heart of sick men, in their pain, to vent itself for ease by dolorous groans and complainings to them that stand by. Thus it was with David. And thus, blessed be the Lord, it is with them that are endued with the grace of God.

5. It is necessary that there be an enlightened understanding to the end that the soul be kept in a continuation of the duty of prayer. The people of God are not ignorant how many wiles, tricks, and temptations the devil hath to make a poor soul, who is truly willing to be earnest of seeking the face of God, and to think that He is not willing to have mercy on such a one as he. “Ay,” saith Satan, “thou mayest pray indeed, but thou shalt not prevail. Thou seest thine heart is hard, cold, dull, and dead. Thou dost not pray with the Spirit. Thou dost not pray in good earnest. Thy thoughts are running after other things, when thou pretendest to pray to God. Away, hypocrite, go no further. It is but in vain to strive any longer.” Here now, if the soul be not well informed in its understanding, it will presently cry out, “The Lord hath forsaken me.” Whereas, the soul rightly informed and enlightened, saith, “I will seek the Lord, and wait. I will not leave off, though the Lord keep silence, and speak not one word of comfort. He loved Jacob dearly, and yet He made him wrestle before he had the blessing.” Seeming delays in God are no tokens of His displeasure. He may hide His face from His dearest saints. He loves to keep His people praying and to find them ever knocking at the gate of heaven. And so the soul says, “It may be, the Lord is trying me or that He loves to hear me groaning out my condition before Him.”

The woman of Canaan would not take seeming denials for real ones. She knew the Lord was gracious, and the Lord will avenge His people, though He bear long with them. The Lord hath waited longer upon me than I have waited upon Him. Thus it was with David. “I waited patiently,” saith he. That is, it was long before the Lord answered me, though at the last, He inclined His ear unto me and heard my cry. And the most excellent remedy for this is an understanding well informed and enlightened. Alas! How many poor souls are there in the world that truly fear the Lord who, because they are not well informed in their understanding, are often ready to give up all for lost, upon almost every trick and temptation of Satan! The Lord pity them and help them to pray with the Spirit and with the understanding also. Much of my own experience could I here discover, when I have been in my fits of agonies of spirit, I have been strongly persuaded to leave off and to seek the Lord no longer. But being made to understand what great sinners the Lord hath had mercy on, and how large His promises were still to sinners, and that it was not the whole but the sick, not the righteous but the sinner, not the full but the empty, that He extended His grace and mercy unto. This made me, through the assistance of His Holy Spirit, to cleave to Him, to hang upon Him, and yet to cry, though for the present, He made

no answer. The Lord help all His poor, tempted, and afflicted people to do the like, to continue, though it be long.

And now to answer a query or two. 1. But what would you have us poor creatures to do that know not how to pray? The Lord knows I know not either how to pray or what to pray for. *Answer:* Poor heart! Canst thou see thy misery? Hath God showed thee that thou art by nature under the curse of His law? If so, do not mistake, I know thou dost groan, and that most bitterly. I am persuaded thou canst scarcely be found doing anything in thy calling, but prayer breaketh from thy heart. Have not thy groans gone up to heaven? I know it is thus, and so also doth thine own sorrowful heart witness thy tears, forgetfulness of thy calling, etc. Is not thy heart so full of desires after the things of another world, that many times thou dost even forget the things of this world? Read Job 23:12.

2. Yea, but when I go into secret, and intend to pour out my soul before God, I can scarce say anything at all. *Answer:* (1) Ah, sweet soul, it is not thy words that God so much desires. His eye is on the brokenness of thine heart, and it is *that* which makes the very bowels of the Lord run over—"a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (2) The stopping of thy words may arise from overmuch trouble in thy heart. David was so troubled sometimes that he could not speak. But this may comfort all such sorrowful hearts as thou art, but though thou canst not, through the anguish of thy spirit, speak much, yet the Holy Spirit stirs up in thine heart groans and sighs. When thy mouth is hindered, yet the Spirit is not! Moses made heaven ring again with his prayer, yet we read not of one word that came from his mouth (Exo 14:15). If thou wouldest more fully express thyself before the Lord, study thy filthy estate, God's promises, the heart of Christ, which thou mayest know by His blood-shedding, by the mercy He has extended to great sinners formerly, and plead thine own vileness by way of bemoaning—Christ's blood, by way of expostulation—and in thy prayers, let the mercy He hath extended to other great sinners, together with His rich promises of grace, be much upon thy heart. Yet let me counsel thee. Take heed that thou content not thyself with words. Do not think God looks only at them, but whether thy words be few or many, let thine heart go with them and then shalt thou seek Him and find Him, when thou shalt seek Him with thy whole heart.

Objection: But though you have seemed to speak against any other way of praying but by the Spirit, yet here you yourself can give directions how to pray. *Answer:* We ought to prompt one another forward to prayer, though we ought not to make for each other forms of prayer. To exhort to pray with Christian direction is one thing and to make stinted forms for the tying up the Spirit of God to them is another thing. The apostle gives us no form to pray withal, yet directs to prayer. *Objection:* But if we do not use forms of prayer, how shall we teach our children to pray? *Answer:* My judgment is that men go the wrong way to learn their children to pray, and going about so soon to learn them in any set of words, as is the common use of poor creatures to do. To me, it seems a better way for people betimes to tell their children what cursed creature they are, and how they are under the wrath of God by reason of original and actual sin. Also to tell them the *nature* of God's wrath, and the *duration* of the misery, which if they conscientiously do, they would sooner learn their children to pray than they do. The way that men learn *to pray* is by conviction for sin, and this is the way to make our sweet babes do so too. But the other way, namely, to be busy in learning children forms of prayer, before they know anything else, is the next way to make them cursed hypocrites and to puff them up with pride. Teach your children their wretched state. Tell them of hell-fire, of their sins, of damnation, and salvation. The way to escape the one, and to enjoy the other (if you know yourselves), and this will make tears run down your sweet babes' eyes, and hearty groans flow from their hearts, and *then* also you may

tell them to whom they should pray, and through whom they should pray. You may tell them also of God's promises, and His former grace extended to sinners, according to the Word.

Ah! Poor sweet babes, the Lord open their eyes and make them holy Christians. Said David, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD" (Psa 34:11). He did not say, "I will muzzle you up in a *form* of prayer," but, "I will teach you the fear of the LORD," which is to see their sad state by nature, and to be instructed in the truth of the gospel, which doth, through the Spirit, beget prayer. And every one that in truth learns it, and the more you learn them this, the more will their hearts run out to God in *prayer*. God never accounted Paul a "praying" man, until he was convinced and converted. No more will it be with anyone else.

Objection: But we find that the disciples desired that Christ should teach them to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And that, therefore, He taught them that form called, "The Lord's Prayer." *Answer:* 1. To be taught by Christ is that which, not only they, but we desire. And seeing He is not here in His person to teach us, He does so by His Word and Spirit, for the Spirit has been sent to supply His room when He went away, John 14:16, 16:7. As to that called a form, I cannot think that Christ intended it as a stinted form of prayer. First, because He Himself layeth it down diversely as may be seen by comparing Matthew 6 and Luke 11. Had He intended it as a set form, it must have been so laid down in so many words and no more. Second, we do not find the apostles observed it as such, neither did they admonish others so to do. By those words, "Our Father," etc., Christ instructed His people what *rules* they should observe in their prayers to God: (1) that they should pray in faith, (2) to their Father in the heavens, (3) for such things as are according to His will, etc. Pray thus, or "after this manner."

Objection: But Christ bids prayer for the Spirit. This implies that men without the Spirit pray, notwithstanding, and are heard. *Answer:* The speech of Christ there is directed to His own. Christ, in telling them that God would give His Holy Spirit to them that asked Him, is to be understood of giving *more of* the Holy Spirit. It was the disciples who were spoken to, which had a measure of the Spirit already. Christians ought to pray for more of the Spirit, though God hath endued them with it already

Question: Then, would you have none pray, but those who know they are disciples of Christ? *Answer:* Yes. Let every soul that would be saved pour out itself to God, though it cannot, through temptation, conclude itself a child of God. If the grace of God be in him, it will be as natural for him to groan out his condition as it is for a sucking child to cry for the breast. Prayer is one of the first things that discovers a man to be a Christian. But yet, if it be right, it is such a prayer as this: First, to desire God in Christ for Himself, for His holiness, love, wisdom, and glory. For right prayer, as it runs on to God through Christ, so it centers in Him, and in Him alone. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire [long for and seek after] besides thee" (Psa 73:25). Second, that the soul might enjoy continually communion with Him, both here and hereafter, "For in this we do earnestly groan" (2Co 5:2), "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Psa 17:15). Third, right prayer is accompanied with a continual labour after that which is prayed for, "My soul waiteth for the LORD more than they that watch for the morning" (Psa 130:6). "I will rise now, and...seek him whom my soul loveth" (Song 3:2). For mark, I beseech you, that there are two things which provoke to prayer—the one is a detestation to sin and the things of this life. The other is a longing desire after communion with God, in a holy and undefiled state and inheritance. Compare but this one thing with most of the prayers that are made by men, and you shall find them but mock prayers, and the breathings of an abominable spirit. For even the most of men either pray not at all or else only endeavour to mock God and the world by so doing. Do but compare their prayers and *the course of their lives* together, and you

may easily see that the thing pleaded in their prayer is the least looked after by their lives. O sad hypocrites! John Bunyan (To be continued, D.V.). ❧

JUNE

THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST

We would ask those of our readers who are sticklers for mathematical precision to kindly bear with us this time. According to their logical order, the next article in this series should have been upon the Kingdom of Christ, but at the moment, we feel strongly led to write upon another and different glory of the Saviour's. When outward circumstances are sorely trying to flesh and blood, when the soul is cast down by the dark providences of God, when one is out of employment and troubled as to how to make ends meet, it is by no means an easy task to fix one's attention upon a deep doctrinal discussion, though where one is enabled to "gird up the loins of his mind," such is often a good mental and spiritual tonic. But, having in view the "present distress" and the pinch of it, which many of our readers are now feeling, when at a time that it almost seems as though "every man's hand is against" them, probably a simple meditation upon the precious subject of the compassion of Christ will prove more timely.

Oh, dear reader, how deeply thankful we should be that Christ is *compassionate*! That He is not so far away as to know nothing about the painful trials through which we are now passing, nor so high above us as to be incapable of entering sympathetically into our ways, nor yet so changed in Himself, from what He was during the days of His humiliation, as to be no longer moved to pity. So far from this being the case, the Holy Spirit has graciously assured us that, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb 4:15). These words open to us a soul-refreshing view of the personal affection and tenderness of our all-loving Christ to the Church which is His body.

If we consult the records, which God has so graciously given us of the life of His incarnate Son in this scene of sin, suffering, and sorrow, a most blessed unveiling of the heart of Christ is there set before us. "But when He saw the multitudes, he was *moved with compassion* on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Mat 9:36). Here we see our Lord's tender yearning over the souls of people. "And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick" (Mat 14:14). In this, we see His kindly solicitude for the welfare and comfort of the body. When the poor leper came to Christ for healing, we are told, "Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean" (Mar 1:41). When the two blind beggars besought His mercy, we read, "Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes" (Mat 20:34). When the Lord beheld the bereaved widow of Nain, "He had compassion on her,

and said unto her, Weep not” (Luk 7:13). Truly, “Thou, O LORD, art a God *full* of compassion” (Psa 86:15).

Nor has the resurrection and ascension of Christ wrought any change in His heart. Essentially, He is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb 13:8). The compassion of Christ is such that the grievances of His people touch His heart as if they were His own. How plainly this is brought out in Acts 9:4, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?” Saul trod but on the feet, but the Head complained! Behold His tender compassion to Stephen, evidenced by granting a vision of Himself (Act 7:56). Mark it again toward the apostle Paul, quieting his fears on the tempest-tossed ocean (Act 27:23). Observe it too toward the apostle John, a lonely exile on Patmos, seen in the wondrous revelation sent unto him and by His own reassuring hand (Rev 1:17).

Yet, in spite of these definite Scriptures, not a few, under the stress of painful trials, find it difficult to harmonize their sorrows and sufferings with an all-compassionate Christ, who has the power to deliver out of them, but does not do so. To carnal reason, it often appears that the Lord Jesus would be exercising more tenderness and manifesting more sympathy were He to speedily bring us out of difficulties and distresses. At such times, Satan asks, “Would *you* allow a dearly beloved one to languish day after day, and month after month, were you able to relieve him?” Ah, dear friend, the Lord of glory is not to be judged by feeble sense. “No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is *before* them” (Ecc 9:1), that is, by things seen. Many of the wicked now have all that the natural heart can wish, while many of the righteous scarcely have a dollar to call their own. We are to walk *by faith*, and not by sight, and faith allows nothing to raise a doubt as to the tender concern of Christ for His own.

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb 4:15). The Greek word for “touched” means to condole with, to suffer with others, as in 1 Corinthians 12:26. 1. Christ *knows* all about our infirmities, sufferings, and sorrows. This He does actually, none of them being too small to escape His notice, “Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?” (Psa 56:8). 2. He knows them *experimentally*. He has been exercised by the same trials. He knows the smart, the weight, the grievousness of them. He knows from actual experience what it is to be “wearied” (Joh 4:6), to be “an hungered” (Mat 4:2), and to say, “I thirst” (Joh 19:28). He knows what poverty is (2Co 8:9), yea, to have not where to lay His head (Mat 8:20). He knows what it means to lack sympathetic friends (Mat 26:40), and to be troubled by horrible suggestions from Satan.

3. Not only is Christ cognizant of, and possessed of an experimental acquaintance with, the sorrows through which His people pass, but He is *affected* by them, “touched” with the feeling of their infirmities (Heb 4:15). What a remarkable word is that in Isaiah 63:9, “In all their affliction he was afflicted”! Christ Himself has a compassionate sense of what His people suffer. 4. Moreover, His sympathy is accompanied with a desire to succour (Heb 2:18) and relieve them, to do that which is best for them in every circumstance. 5. It is also to be borne in mind that Christ is affected by the infirmities of His people, as One who is deeply and intimately concerned in them. It is not the compassion of a stranger, of one who is unrelated by near and dear ties, but that of a Friend (Pro 18:24), a Brother (Heb 2:12), a Husband (2Co 11:2), a Father (Isa 9:6).

What a terrible sin is it, then, for any Christian to call into question the tenderness of our great High Priest toward His people. Yet is it one which that wretched unbelief, still remaining in us, is ever prone to commit. As this is the practical crux in the application of our subject, let us endeavour to throw some light on the seeming difficulty. Here is one of Christ’s blood-bought people lying upon a bed of sickness, languishing in pain. Here is another nursing such a one, fearing that, in a short time, she will be called upon to give up her loved one. Here is another who

is out of work, with half a dozen little mouths to feed. Each one cries unto the Lord for deliverance from these trying circumstances, but instead of relief coming, matters seem to get worse. Are these things, such experiences, consistent with an omnipotent Christ who is full of compassion?

First of all, let the sorely-exercised heart seek to realize (by faith resting on God's holy and unerring Word) that the Lord Himself has *sent* the affliction and that for our spiritual good. O fellow Christian, if the chastening hand of the Lord be now making you smart, it is because He is dealing with you, not in wrath, but in *love* (Heb 12:5). What a difference it makes unto a weeping soul to know that the rod too is wielded by tender compassion! Then, let each of us seek grace to say with Him who has left us an example, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (Joh 18:11).

Second, let us earnestly endeavour to recognize His merciful design in each trial He sends us. He "doth not afflict willingly" (Lam 3:33), but because *we* have given Him occasion to. When the heart has become too much attached to the world, our affections unduly set upon things below, the Lord turns our carnal sweets into bitters, and our temporal fountains into "broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer 2:13), so as to wean us from them. When temporal prosperity was our portion, how cold were our hearts toward the Lord. How little real praying we did. But as He says, "In their affliction they will seek me early" (Hos 5:15)! Ah, my reader, has not this been your experience! Men *cry* unto the Lord "in their trouble" (Psa 107:13). Then, thank Him for them, if they are stirring you up to pray. Again, just as drenching rains, roaring winds, and biting frosts, are necessary for the good of vegetation, so trials and tribulations must be our portion if the graces of patience and submission are to flourish in our souls.

Third, admire and be thankful for the blessed compassion which Christ has manifested by *bestowing grace*, which has enabled you to bear whatever burden He has seen fit to lay upon your frail shoulders. But for *His* sustaining strength, you would have utterly sunk beneath the load. Of old, God purposely brought His people into a howling desert, so as to manifest the sufficiency of His resources to minister unto them. O let us not murmur, as did they, and unbelievably ask, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" (Psa 78:19). Rather, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall [not necessarily *remove* it, but] *sustain thee*" (Psa 55:22). Rest on the Lord, seek His grace, plead His promises, and thou shalt find that the Lord is "a very present help in trouble" (Psa 46:1).

Remembering what He Himself passed through down here, the Lord Jesus has a tender and continuing sympathy with His suffering members. He has a deep compassion for each of His tried saints, even when He does not see well to set them free at once from their pains. For not only has He their spiritual and ultimate good in view, but, what is yet more blessed, *His* affections never move Him to ignore the sovereign and all-wise will of the Father. Then, let not the deferring of the deliverance, the postponing of relief, cause any to call into question that love which passeth knowledge. Rather, let us rest with calm confidence on that sure word, "His compassions fail not. They are new every morning" (Lam 3:22-23).

"That the God of glory should have such respect to contemptible creatures, as not only to suffer for, but also to suffer with them; that He should have compassion on us in infirmities, which are the effects of sin, or in themselves sinful, and show tenderness where there is just and proper occasion for His indignation and severity; that He should concern Himself, not only in those cases where common friends will stand by us, but in our weaknesses, where others will be ashamed of us; in dangers and sufferings, where others will be afraid; in the sad circumstances of our lives, when others withdraw, and where his own best friends on earth deserted Him—that He

should have such regard for those who are infinitely below Him, and whom He might pass by with as much disregard as we do flies or grasshoppers—for we are incomparably less to Him than these are to us—if these things were in our thoughts, what occasion of wonder will they offer to us! How admirable is Christ hereby represented to us! How worthy of all admiration!” (David Clarkson, 1621-1673).

Finally, let it be pointed out, what a source of encouragement is there in the precious fact of Christ’s compassion for us to address ourselves unto Him in all our straits and weaknesses. If He be so concerned in us and our trials, if He be so affected in Himself with a sense of them, and have both in His person and priestly office such a propensity to relieve us, then, how gladly, promptly, and continuously should we ply Him for help and succour. This is the very use which the inspired apostle makes of this truth, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). The Lord graciously add His blessing.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

54. The Path of Tribulation (10:32-34)

God has not promised His people a smooth path through this world. Instead, He has ordained that, “We must through much tribulation” enter His kingdom (Act 14:22). Why should it be otherwise, seeing we are now in a territory which is under His curse. And what has brought down that curse, but *sin*. Seeing, then, that there still is a world of sin, both without and within each one of us, why should it be thought strange if we are made to taste the bitterness of its products! Suppose it were otherwise, what would be the effect? Suppose this present life were free from sorrows, sufferings, separations. Ah, would we not be content with our present portion? Wisely, then, has God ordered it that we should be constantly reminded of the fact, “*This is not your rest: because it is polluted*” (Mic 2:10). Trials and tribulations are needful if there is to be wrought in us “a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phi 1:23).

The word, “tribulation,” is derived from the Latin, “tribulum,” which was a flail used by the Romans to separate the wheat from the chaff. How much “chaff” remains even in the one who has been genuinely converted! How much of the “flesh” mingles with and mars his spiritual exercises! How much, which is merely “natural,” is mixed with his youthful zeal and energetic activities! How much of carnal wisdom and leaning unto our own understanding there is, till God is pleased to deepen His work of grace in the soul! And one of the principal instruments which He employs in that blessed work is the “tribulum” or flail. By means of sore disappointments, thwarted plans, inward fightings, painful afflictions, does He “take forth the precious from the vile” (Jer 15:19), and remove the dross from the pure gold. It is by weaning us from the things of earth that He fits us for setting our affections on things above. It is by drying up creature-streams of satisfaction that He makes His children thirst for the Fountain of living water.

Tribulation worketh patience” (Rom 5:3). Patience is a grace which has both a passive and an active side. Passively, it is a meekly bowing to the sovereign pleasure of God, a saying, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (Joh 18:11). Actively, it is a steady perseverance in the path of duty. This is one of the great ends which God has in view in the afflicting of His children—to effect in them “a meek and quiet spirit” (1Pe 3:4). “Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience” (Rom 5:3-4). It is one thing to obtain a theoretical knowledge of a truth by means of reading. It is quite another to have a real and inward acquaintance with the same. As the tried and tempest-tossed soul bows meekly to the providential dealings of God, he experimentally learns what is “that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom 12:2). “And experience, hope” (Rom 5:4), which is a firm expectation of a continuance of sustaining grace and final glory. Since then our sufferings are one of the means which God has appointed for the Christian’s sanctification, preparing us for usefulness here, and for heaven hereafter, let us glory in them.

But let us lift our thoughts still higher. “Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Heb 12:3). Ah, it is unto *His* image which the saint is predestinated to be conformed (Rom 8:29), first in suffering, and then in glory. Let each troubled and groaning child of God call to remembrance the afflictions through which the Man of sorrows passed! Is it not fitting that the servant should drink of the cup which his Master drank? O my brethren, the highest honour God confers upon any of us in this life is when He permits us to suffer a little for Christ’s sake. O for grace to say with the beloved apostle, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2Co 12:9). “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye” (1Pe 4:14).

“No man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto” (1Th 3:3). Yet afflictions do not come upon all saints in the same form, nor to the same degree. God is sovereign in this, as in everything else. He knows what will best promote the spiritual good of His people. All is ordered by Him in infinite wisdom and infinite love. As has been well said, “God had one Son without sin, but none without sorrow.” Yet the sorrow is not unmixed. God tempers His winds unto the lambs. With every temptation or trial, He provides a way to escape. In the midst of sorest trouble, His all-suffering grace is available. The promise is sure, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee” (Psa 55:22), and where faith is enabled to rest in the Lord, His sustaining power is realized in the soul.

Afflictions are not all that the Lord sends His people. He daily loadeth them with His benefits (Psa 68:19). The smilings of His face greatly outnumber the frowns of His providence. There are far more sunny days than cloudy ones. But our memories are fickle. When we enter the wilderness, we so quickly forget our exodus from Egypt and deliverance at the Red Sea. When water gives out (Exo 17:1), we fail to call to remembrance the miraculous supply of manna (Exo 16:15). It was thus with the apostles. When they had forgotten to take bread, the Lord Jesus tenderly remonstrated with them, saying, “O ye of little faith...Do ye not understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?” (Mat 16:5-10). O how much peace and joy we lose in the present through our sinful failure in not calling to remembrance the Lord’s past deliverances and mercies.

“Thou shalt remember *all* the way which the LORD thy God led thee” (Deu 8:2). Sit down and *review* God’s previous dealings with thee. Bring before your hearts His tender patience, His unchanging faithfulness, His powerful interpositions, His gracious gifts. There have been times in the past, when your own folly brought you into deep waters of trouble, but God did not cast you

off. You fretted and murmured, but God did not abandon you. You were full of fears and unbelief, yet God suffered you not to starve. He neither dealt with you after your sins, nor rewarded you according to your iniquities. Instead, He proved Himself to be *unto you* the “God of *all* grace” (1Pe 5:10). There were times in the past, when every man’s hand and heart appeared to be against you, when the enemy came in like a flood, and it looked very much as though you would be drowned. But help *was* at hand. In the *fourth* watch of the night, the Lord Jesus appeared on the waters, and you were delivered. Then *remember* this, and let the realization of past deliverances comfort and stay your heart in the midst of the present emergency.

Many are the appeals made unto us in the Word of God to do this very thing. Varied and numerous are the motives employed by the Holy Spirit in the Scripture of truth to stir up God’s children unto constancy of heart and the performance of duty when “circumstances” seem to be all against them. Every attribute of God is made a distinct ground for urging us to run with perseverance the race that is set before us. The promises of God are given to cheer, and His warnings to stir up our hearts unto a fuller compliance with His revealed will. Rewards are promised to those who overcome the flesh, the world, and the devil, while eternal woes are threatened unto those failing to do so. Faith is to be stimulated by the record given of God’s grace which sustained fellow-pilgrims in by-gone days. Hope is to be stirred into action by the glorious goal which the Word holds up to view. And, as we have said, fresh courage for the present is to be drawn by us from calling to mind God’s goodness in the past. It is *this* particular motive which the apostle pressed on the Hebrews in the passage which is now to be before us.

“But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions” (Heb 10:32). In vv. 16-21, the apostle had given a brief summary of the inestimable privileges which are the present portion of the regenerated people of God. In Heb 10:22-24, he had exhorted them to make a suitable response to such blessings. In Heb 10:25-31, he had fortified their minds against temptations to apostasy, or to wilful and presumptuous sins. He now bids them to recall the earlier days of their profession, and to consider what they had already ventured, suffered, and renounced for Christ, and how they had been supernaturally sustained under their trials. The force of this was, disgrace not your former conduct by now casting away your confidence which hath great recompense of reward.

“But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated”(Heb 10:32). The beginnings of God’s work of grace in their souls is here spoken of as being “illuminated.” The Holy Spirit had revealed to them their depravity and impotency, their lost and miserable state by nature. He had brought before them the unchanging demands of God’s righteous law and their utter failure to meet those claims. He had pointed them to the Lord Jesus, who, as the Sponsor and Surety of His people, had assumed all their liabilities, kept the law in their stead, and died for their sins. “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). Thus, He had granted unto them an experimental acquaintance with the Gospel, so that they had felt in their own consciences and hearts the power of its truth. How unspeakably solemn is it to note that this too had been the experience of the apostates in Hebrews 6:4-6, for the very word here rendered “illuminated” is there translated, “enlightened.”

Right after their illumination by God, they were called upon to feel something of the rage of His enemies. At the beginning of this dispensation, those who made profession of Christianity were hotly persecuted, and the believing Hebrews had not escaped. This, the apostle would remind them of, “After ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions”(Heb 10:32). As soon as God had quickened their hearts and shone upon their understandings so that they

embraced His incarnate Son as their Lord and Saviour, earth and hell combined against them. By nature, we are in the dark, and while in it, we met with no opposition from Satan or the world. But when, by grace, we determined to follow the example which Christ has left us, we were soon brought into the fellowship of His sufferings. By such experiences, we are reminded that God has called us to the combat, that as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, we are to “endure hardness” (2Tim 2:3), and need to take unto ourselves the armour which God has provided (Eph 6:10-18)—not to speculate about, but to *use* it.

The attitude toward and the conduct of the Hebrew Christians, under this “great fight of afflictions” during the days of their “first love,” is here summed up, first, in the one word, “endured.” They had not fainted or given way to despondency, nor had they renounced their profession. They failed in no part of the conflict, but came off conquerors. This they had been enabled unto by the efficacious grace of God. They had been wondrously and blessedly supported under their sufferings. From Acts 8, we learn that when the church at Jerusalem was sorely persecuted, its members so far from abandoning Christianity, were scattered abroad, and “went everywhere preaching the word” (v. 4). How greatly was the Captain of their salvation honoured by this valour of His soldiers. It is a noticeable fact of history that *babes* in Christ have often been the bravest of all in facing suffering and death. Perhaps because the great and glorious change involved in the passing from death unto life is *fresh* in their minds than in that of older Christians. Now, it was to the recollection of these things unto which the apostles here called the flagging and tempted Hebrews.

“But call to remembrance.” “It is not the bare remembrance he intends, for it is impossible men should absolutely forget such a season. Men are apt enough to remember the times of their sufferings, especially such as are here mentioned, accompanied with all sorts of injurious treatments from men. But the apostle would have them *so* call to mind, as to consider withal, what support they had under their sufferings, what satisfaction in them, what deliverance from the, that they might not despond upon the approach of the like trials and evils on the same account. If we remember our sufferings only as unto what is evil and afflictive in them, what we lose, what we endure, and undergo, such a remembrance will weaken and dispirit us, as unto our future trials. Hereon, many cast about to deliver themselves for the future, by undue means and sinful compliances, in a desertion of their profession, the thing the apostle was jealous of concerning these Hebrews. But if, withal, we call to mind what was the cause for which we suffered, the honour that is in such sufferings, outbalancing all the contempt and reproaches of the world, the presence of God enjoyed in them, and the reward proposed unto us, the calling these things to mind, will greatly strengthen us against future trials, provided we retain the same love unto, and valuation of the things for which we suffered, as we had in those former days” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

The remembrance, then, of past warfare, if it had been carried on faithfully and diligently under the banner of Christ, is at length useful to us, not as a pretext for sloth, as though we had already served our time, but to render us more active in finishing the remaining part of our course. For Christ has not enlisted us on this condition, that we should after a few years ask for a discharge, like soldiers who have served their time, but that we should pursue our warfare even unto the end” (John Calvin, 1509-1564). It, therefore, becomes a solemn and searching question for each of us to face. To what extent am I *now* being antagonized by the world? Something must be seriously wrong with me if I have the good-will of everybody. God’s Word emphatically declares, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus *shall* suffer persecution” (2Ti 3:12).

“Partly, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used” (Heb 10:33). In this verse, the apostle mentions one or two features of what their “great fight or affliction” had consisted. Some of them were made a public spectacle to their neighbours, by the malicious accusations brought against them, and by the derision and punishment laid upon them. While others were the “partners” of those who were cruelly treated. The principal reference here is to the loss which they had sustained in their characters and reputations, and unto many people (especially those of a sensitive temperament), this is a sore trial. Almost anything is easier to bear than obloquy and disgrace. But sufficient for the disciple to be as his Master. They slandered Him, and said He had a demon.

Reproach and slander are exceedingly trying, and if we are not upon our guard, if we fail to gird up the loins of our minds (1Pe 1:13), we are likely to be so cast down by them as to be incapacitated for duty. Despondency and despair are never excusable in the Christian and must be steadily resisted. We need to make up our minds that if, by grace, we are determined to follow the example which Christ has left us, we shall have many enemies—especially in the religious world—who will scruple at no misrepresentations of our motives and actions. We must learn to undervalue our reputations and be content to be regarded as “the offscouring of all things” (1Co 4:13). We must seek grace to emulate Him, who “set my face like a flint” (Isa 50:7), who “endured the cross, *despising* the shame” (Heb 12:2). Unless we cultivate His spirit, we shall be at a great disadvantage when sufferings come upon us.

Not only had the Hebrew Christians suffered personally, but they had fellowship also in the sufferings of others. This is a Christian duty and, we may add, a privilege. As members of the same family, as fellow-pilgrims toward the better country, as called to serve together under the same banner, it is only meet that we should bear “one another’s burdens” (Gal 6:2), and “weep with them that weep” (Rom 12:15). Of Moses, it is recorded that he, “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb 11:24-25). To be a companion of those who suffer for Christ is an evidence of our love for His brethren, of courage in suffering, and of readiness to succour those who are persecuted because of the Gospel. We do well to frequently ponder Matthew 25:42-45.

“For ye had compassion of me in my bonds” (Heb 10:34). The apostle here makes grateful acknowledgment of the sympathy which the Hebrews had shown him in an hour of need. The historical reference may be to the time when he lay bound in chains at Jerusalem (Act 21:33), when their love for him was shown by their prayers, and perhaps letters and gifts. It is the bounden duty for Christians to express in a practical way their compassion for any of Christ’s suffering servants, doing everything in their power to succour, support, and relieve them. Equally so is it the duty of God’s ministers to thankfully own the kindness shown them. Christ Himself will yet publicly bear witness unto the services of love which have been shown unto His brethren (Mat 25:34-40).

“For ye had compassion of me in my bonds” (Heb 10:34). These words supply one of the many proofs that the apostle Paul was the author of this epistle. For of the other persons, whom some have fancied wrote it, such as Luke, Barnabas, Clement, etc., there is no hint anywhere in Scripture, nor we believe in ecclesiastical history, of any of them suffering bonds in Judea. But the lying of Paul in bonds and imprisonments was renowned above all others. Hence, he styled himself in particular, “Paul, prisoner of Jesus Christ” (Phm 1:1), and gloried in this peculiar honour as “an ambassador in bonds” (Eph 6:20), and as such, desired the saints at Colosse to

remember him at the throne of grace (Col 4:3). Thus, his “bonds,” being above all others so familiar, such a subject of the churches’ prayers, this reference here in Hebrews 10:34, at once identifies the writer.

“And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods” (Heb 10:34). This supplies further information upon the deportment of the Hebrews under their trials. They had not only patiently “endured” the great fight of affliction, but were happy in being counted worthy to suffer for Christ—a blessed triumph was that of the mighty grace of God over the weakness of the flesh. God is able to strengthen in the inner man, “with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (Col 1:11). Ordinarily, few things are more calculated to distress the minds of men than their being cruelly plundered of those things for which they have laboured hard, and which they and their families still need. Wailing and lamentations commonly accompany them. Blessed is it when the heart is brought to hold lightly all earthly comforts and conveniences, for it is easier then to part with them should we be called upon to do so.

“Knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance” (Heb 10:34). This clause supplies the key to the previous one, showing the ground of their joy. Faith looked away from things seen to those unseen, reckoning that “The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom 8:18). “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2Co 4:17). Where the heart’s affections are truly set upon things above (Col 3:2), few tears will be shed over the loss of any earthly baubles. True, it is *natural* to mourn when rudely deprived of material possessions, but it is *supernatural* to rise above such grieving.

The true riches of the Christian are not accessible to human or Satanic plunderers. Men may strip us of all our worldly possessions, but they cannot take from us the love of God, the salvation of Christ, the comforts of the Holy Spirit, the hope of eternal glory. Said one, who was waylaid by a bandit, who demanded his money or his life, “Money, I have none on me. My *life* is hid with Christ in God.” The poor worldling may give way to despair when business is bad, bonds deteriorate, and banks smash, but no child of God ought ever to do so. He has been begotten unto an inheritance which is “incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven” (1Pe 1:4). Yet it is only as faith is in exercise, as the heart is really occupied with our heavenly portion, that we *enjoy* them, and regard all else as but “vanity and vexation of spirit”(Ecc 1:14).

“What was it that enabled them thus to bear up under their sufferings? They knew in themselves that they had in heaven a better and a more enduring substance. Observe, first, the happiness of the saints in heaven is ‘substance,’ something of real weight and worth—all things here are but shadows. Secondly, it is a better substance than anything they can have or lose here. Thirdly, it is an enduring substance. It will outlive time and run parallel with eternity. They can never spend it. Their enemies can never take it from them, as they did their earthly goods. Fourthly, this will make a rich amends for all they can lose and suffer here. In heaven, they shall have a better life, a better estate, better liberty, better society, better hearts, better work, everything better” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

“Knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance”(Heb 10:34). Let us now weigh carefully the first three words of this clause. These Hebrew saints had a firm conviction of heart concerning their heavenly portion. It does not say, “Knowing from God’s promises,” but, “Knowing in *yourselves*.” This presents a side of the truth, an aspect of Christian assurance, which is rarely dwelt upon in these days. Instead, it is widely ridiculed and denied, many insisting that the only basis of assurance is the bare letter of Scripture. It is quite true that

the foundation of our confidence is the written Word, but that is *not* the *only* ground, any more than a marriage certificate is the sole proof which a woman has that the man who loves, cherishes, and lives with here is her husband. No, one has only to read impartially through the first epistle of John in order to discover that he, who is walking with God and enjoying the light of His countenance, has many evidences that he is a new creature in Christ Jesus.

“Knowing in yourselves.” The one who is following on to know the Lord (Hos 6:3), not only has the testimony of God’s Word without, but he has also the witness of the Spirit within him, that he is a child and heir of God (Rom 8:16-17). In his regeneration and begun-experimental sanctification, he has received “the firstfruits of the Spirit” (Rom 8:23). In consequence, he now has new desires, new conflicts, new joys, new sorrows. Faith purifies his heart (Act 15:9). He has received the Spirit of adoption, whereby he cries, “Abba Father”(Rom 8:15). From what he finds in his own heart, he *knows* that he is heaven-born and heaven-bound. Let those, who are strangers to a supernatural work of grace in their own hearts, mock and scoff all they please. Let them sneer at introspection, call it mysticism, or anything else they wish, but one who is scripturally assured of the Spirit’s work within him, refuses to be laughed-out of his surest proof that he is a child of God.

Granted that many have been and are deluded—acknowledging that the unregenerate heart is “deceitful above all things”(Jer 17:9).—admitting that the devil has lulled thousands into hell by means of happy feelings within them—yet none of these things alter or affect to the slightest degree the fact that it is both the duty and privilege of every genuine Christian to know *in himself* that he has passed from death unto life. Provided he be denying self, taking up his cross, and following Christ in the path of obedience, he will have cause for rejoicing in the testimony of a good conscience (2Co 1:12). But if he yields to the lusts of the flesh, fellowships an ungodly world, and gets into a backslidden state, then the joy of his salvation will be lost. Nothing, then, is of greater practical importance than that the Christian should keep clean and unstained his inward evidences that he is journeying toward heaven.

“Such, then, are the things which the apostle wishes the Hebrew Christians to ‘call to remembrance.’ It is easy to see how the calling of these things to remembrance was calculated to serve his purpose—to guard them from apostasy, and establish them in the faith and profession of the Gospel. It is as if he had said, ‘Why shrink from suffering for Christianity now? Were you not exposed to suffering from the beginning? When you first became Christians, did you not willingly undergo sufferings on account of it? And is not Christianity as worthy of being suffered for as ever? Is not Jesus the same yesterday, and today, and forever? Did not the faith and hope of Christianity formerly support you under your sufferings, and make you feel that they were but the light afflictions of a moment? And are they not as able to support you now as then? Has the substance in heaven become less real, or less enduring? And have you not as good evidence now as you had then that to that persevering Christian such treasure is laid up? Are you willing to lose all the benefit of the sacrifices you have made, and the sufferings you have sustained? And they will all go for nothing if you endure not unto the end!’ These are considerations all naturally suggested by the words of the apostle, and all well calculated to induce them ‘to hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering’” (John Brown, 1722-1787).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

6. His Early Experiences (Continued)

Human nature is very apt to turn eyes of envy upon those who occupy exalted positions. It is commonly supposed that they, who are stationed in seats of eminence and honour, enjoy many advantages and benefits which are denied those beneath them. But this is far more imaginary than real, and where true, is offset by the added responsibilities incurred and the more numerous temptations which are there encountered. What was before us in our last article ought to correct the popular delusion. David, on the plains of Bethlehem, was far better off than David in the king's household. Tending the sheep was less exacting than waiting upon Saul. Amid the green pastures, he was free from jealous courtiers, the artificial etiquette of the palace, and the javelin of a mad monarch. The practical lesson to be learned by us is to be contented with the lowly position which the providence of God has assigned us. And why should those who are joint-heirs with Christ be concerned about the trifles and toys of this world?

Resuming now at the point where we broke off, we next read, "And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul" (1Sa 18:12). The word for "afraid" here is a milder one than that employed in verse 15, and might be rendered, "apprehensive." The king was becoming increasingly uneasy about the future. Consequent upon his disobedience, the prophet of God had plainly told Saul, "Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king," and then he added, "The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou" (1Sa 15:23, 28). While he was probably ignorant of David's anointing (1Sa 16:13), it is plain that Saul was now growing more fearful that the man who had vanquished Goliath was he whom Jehovah had selected to succeed him.

First, it was evident to all that the Lord had given the young shepherd the victory over Goliath, for none had dared, in his own courage, to engage the mighty giant. Second, David's behaving himself so wisely in every position assigned him, and his being "accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants" (1Sa 18:5), indicated that he would be popular with the masses were he to ascend the throne. Third, the song of the women caused the jealous king to draw his own conclusion, "They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands, and what can he have more *but the kingdom?*" (1Sa 18:8). And now that his personal attack upon David's life had been frustrated (1Sa 18:11), Saul was apprehensive, for he saw that the Lord was with David, while he knew that He had forsaken himself.

"And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him" (1Sa 18:12). The proofs that the special favour of God rested upon David were too plain and numerous for Saul to deny. Jehovah was protecting and preserving, prospering and succeeding David, giving him victory over his enemies and acceptance in the sight of the people. Ah, my reader, when the smile of the Lord is resting upon any of His saints, even the wicked are obliged to take note of and acknowledge the same. The chief captain of Abimelech's host admitted to Abraham, "God is *with thee* in all that thou doest" (Gen 21:22). What a testimony was that from a heathen! When Joseph

was in the house of Potiphar, we are told, “And his master *saw* that the LORD was with him” (Gen 39:3). Can those among whom our lot is cast perceive that the special blessing of heaven is resting upon us? If not, our hearts ought to be deeply exercised before God.

“And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul”(1Sa 18:12). An additional cause of Saul’s alarm was the knowledge that the Lord had departed from him, and therefore was he destitute of strength of mind and courage, wisdom and prudence, and had become mean and abject, and exposed to the contempt of his subjects. The reference is to 1Sa 16:14. A solemn warning is this for us. It was because of his rebellion against the Lord, that Saul was now deserted of God. How often God withdraws His sensible and comforting presence from His people, through their following of a course of self-will. “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest* myself to him” (Joh14:21).

“Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people” (1Sa 18:13). Solemn indeed is it to behold how Saul acted here. Instead of humbling himself before God, he sought to rid himself of the man whose presence condemned him. Instead of judging himself unsparingly, for the sin which had caused the Spirit of God to leave him, the wretched king was loth to look any more at the one upon whom Jehovah’s favour manifestly rested. How differently did sinning David act at a later date! Behold him as he cries, “For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight....Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me” (Psa 51:3-4, 11). Ah, here is the great difference between the unregenerate and the regenerate. The one harden themselves in their sin, the other are broken before God on account of it.

“Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people”(1Sa 18:13). But let us admire again the hand of God over-ruling, yea, directing, the reprobate monarch’s actions to the carrying out of His own designs. Though it was hatred of his person that caused the king to remove David from the court, and perhaps partly to please his subjects and partly because he hoped he might be slain in battle, that our hero was now made captain over a regiment. Yet this only served the more to ingratiate him with the people, by affording him the opportunity of leading them to victory over their enemies. Abundant opportunity was thus afforded to all Israel to become acquainted with David and all his ways.

Let us also take note of another line in the typical picture here. Though anointed king of Israel (1Sa 16:13), David was, nevertheless, called upon to endure the hatred of the ruling power. Thus it was with David’s Son and Lord. The One who lay in Bethlehem’s manger was none other than “Christ [‘The Anointed’] the Lord” (Luk 2:11), and “born King of the Jews” (Mat 2:2). Yet the king of Judea sought His life (Mat 2:16)—though fruitlessly, as in our type. So too at a later date, when His public ministry had begun, we read that, “The Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him” (Mat 12:14). Blessed is it to see how that, instead of attempting to take things into his own hands, David was content to quietly wait the time which God had appointed for his coronation. In like manner, our blessed Lord willingly endured the “sufferings” before He entered into His “glory.” May divine grace grant unto us all needed patience.

“And David behaved himself wisely in all ways; and the LORD was with him” (1Sa 18:14). Observe that little word, “all,” and turn it into prayer and practice. Whether on the farm, in the court, or on the battlefield, the man after God’s own heart conducted himself prudently. Here too,

he foreshadowed Him of whom it was declared, “He hath done *all things well*” (Mar 7:37). Let this ever be our desire and aim. “And the LORD was with him,” protecting and prospering. That word in 11 Chronicles 15:2 still holds good, “The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.” If we diligently seek to cultivate a daily walk with God, all will be well with us.

“Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them” (1Sa 18:15-16). When the God-forsaken king perceived that he had gained no advantage against David, but that instead, he succeeded in all his undertakings, and was more and more in favour with the people, Saul was greatly alarmed, lest the hour was drawing near when the kingdom should be rent from him and given to his rival. When the wicked discern that the awe and blessing of God is upon the righteous, they are “afraid” of them. Thus, we read that “Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy” (Mar 6:20). When it is known that God is in the assemblies of His saints, even the great ones of the earth are convicted and rendered uneasy. See Psalms 48:2-6.

“And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD’S battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him” (1Sa 18:17). This was said not in friendship and good-will to David, but as designed to lay a snare for him. Thoroughly obsessed with envy, the king was unable to rest. If it could be accomplished without incurring direct guilt, he was determined to encompass David’s destruction. Formerly, he had made a personal attack upon his life (1Sa 18:11), but now he feared the people, with whom David was so popular (1Sa 18:16). So Saul deemed it wiser to devise this vile plot. He would have David work out his own doom. Remarkable is it to note that this was the very way in which Saul’s own career was ended—he was slain by the Philistines. See 1 Samuel 31:1-5.

“Only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD’S battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him” (1Sa 18:17). Was this incident before David when he wrote, “The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords” (Psa 55:21)! How unspeakably dreadful was this. Here was a man, with murder in his heart, deliberately plotting the death of a fellow-creature. Yet, at that very moment, talking about “fighting the *LORD’S* battles”! O how often is the vilest hypocrisy cloaked with spiritual language! How easy it is to be deceived by fair *words*! How apt would be the bystanders, who heard this pious language of Saul, to conclude that the king was a very godly man. Ah, my reader, learn well this truth—It is *actions* which speak louder than words.

“And David said unto Saul, Who am I? and what is my life, or my father’s family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?” (1Sa 18:18). Some of the commentators have supposed that Saul promised David his daughter to wife at the time when he went forth to engage Goliath, but there is nothing in Scripture which directly supports this. What is recorded in 1 Samuel 17:25 were the words of Israel and not of the king—they *supposed* he would do this and more. When Saul’s proposal was made known to him, the modesty and humility of David was at once manifested. Some think that the reference made by David to his “family,” had in view his descent from Ruth the Moabitess.

It is blessed to behold the lowly spirit which was displayed by David on this occasion. No self-seeking time-server was he. His heart was occupied in faithfully performing each duty assigned him, and he aspired not after earthly honours and fleshly advantages. “Who am I?” at once evidenced the mean estimate which he entertained of himself. Ah, *that is* the man whom the

Lord uses and promotes. “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (Jam 4:6). “And what is my life?” breathes the same sentiment. The pitting of *my* life against the Philistine is no equivalent to receiving the *king’s* daughter in marriage. Here again, we see the subject of these articles adumbrating the perfections of his Lord. “Learn of me; for I am meek and *lowly in heart*” (Mat 11:29) gives us what the modesty of David but imperfectly represented. Let writer and reader earnestly seek grace to heed that word, “Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly” (Rom 12:3).

“But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul’s daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife” (1Sa 18:19). What was the word of such a man worth? Be very slow, dear reader, in resting upon the promises of a fallen creature. No doubt the perfidy of the king, in so grossly affronting David, was designed to anger him. Such shameful treatment was calculated to stir up to mutiny one who had the right to claim the fulfillment of Saul’s agreement. And thus, the king thought he could gain an advantage against him. It is striking and solemn to discover that the curse of God rested upon that marriage, for the five sons born by Merab to the Meholathite (brought up by Michal) were delivered into the hands of the Gideonites, and “hanged” (2Sa 21:8-9).

“And Michal Saul’s daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him” (1Sa 18:20-21). A new opportunity now presented itself unto the wicked king’s purpose. Michal, another of his daughters, fell in love with David. He, therefore, proposed to give her to him for wife instead of Merab, hoping that he would now have the opportunity of bringing about his death. But let us look beyond the devil-possessed monarch, and behold and admire the wondrous ways of Him who maketh “all things work together for good” (Rom 8:28) to them that love Him. Just as of old, the Lord turned the heart of the daughter of Pharaoh unto Moses and thus foiled the evil designs of her father to destroy all the male children of the Hebrews, so He now drew out the affections of Michal unto David, and used her to thwart the murderous intentions of Saul. See 1 Samuel 19:11-17. What a proof that all hearts are in God’s hands!

Conscious that his own word would have no weight with him, the king slyly employed his servants to gain David’s confidence. They were commanded to commune with him “secretly,” and to assure him, “The king hath *delight* in thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king’s son-in-law” (1Sa 18:22). When the secret restraints of God are withdrawn from them, “The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecc 8:11). They will scruple at nothing, but employ any and every means to hand for accomplishing their evil designs. They will flatter and praise or criticize and condemn, advance or abase the object of their spleen as best serves their purpose.

When David was informed of the king’s intention, his reply again evidenced the lowliness of his heart. “Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king’s son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?”—by the king (1Sa 18:23). From what follows, it seems evident that David was here pointing out his inability to bring to the king’s daughter the dowry that might be expected. Compare Genesis 29:18, 27; Exodus 22:16-17. Beautifully has Matthew Henry, in his comments on this verse, pointed out, “If David thus magnified the honour of being son-in-law to the king, how highly then should we think of it to be the sons (not in-laws, but in Gospel) to the King of kings! ‘Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us’ (1Jo 3:1)! Who are we that we should be thus dignified?” Utterly unable as we were to bring any “dowry” to recommend us unto God.

When his servants made known unto Saul David's reply, the real design of the king became apparent. "The condition of the marriage must be that he kill a hundred Philistines, and, as proof that those he had slain were uncircumcised, he must bring in their foreskins cut off. This would be a great reproach upon the Philistines, who hated circumcision, as it was an ordinance of God. And perhaps David's doing this would the more exasperate them against him, and make them seek to be revenged on him, which was the thing Saul desired and designed" (Matthew Henry). Even to such a stipulation, David did not demur. Knowing that God was with him, jealous of His glory to slay His enemies, he went forth and killed double the number required. Verily, God maketh the wrath of man to praise Himself (Psa 76:10).

SAVING FAITH

4. Its Communication

From the human viewpoint, things are now in a bad state in the industrial and social realms. Sad is it to see so many able-bodied men anxious for work, but unable to obtain employment. But from the spiritual viewpoint, things are in a far worse state in the religious realm. Sad is it to see the anti-Christian cults flourishing on every side, but far more grievous is it for those who are taught of God to discover that much of the so-called, "Gospel," which is now being preached in many "Fundamentalist churches" and "Gospel halls," is but a Satanic delusion. The devil knows the his captives are quite secure while the grace of God and the finished work of Christ are "faithfully" proclaimed to them, so long as the only way in which sinners *receive* the saving virtues of the atonement is unfaithfully concealed. Whilst God's peremptory and unchanging demand for repentance is left out, whilst Christ's own terms of discipleship (i.e. how to become a Christian, Act 11:26) in Luke 14:26-27, 33 are withheld, and whilst saving faith is frittered down to a mere act of the will, blind laymen will continue to be led by blind preachers, only for both to fall into the ditch.

Things are far, far worse even in the "orthodox" sections of Christendom than the majority of God's own children are aware. Things are rotten even at the very foundation, for with very rare exceptions, *God's* way of salvation is no longer being taught. Tens of thousands are "ever learning" points in prophecy, the meaning of the types, the significance of the numerals, how to divide the "dispensations," who are, nevertheless, "never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2Ti 3:7) of salvation itself—"never able," because unwilling to pay the price (Pro 23:23), which is a full surrender to God Himself. So far as the writer understands the present situation, it seems to him that what is needed today is to press upon the serious attention of professing Christians such questions as, "*When* is it that God *applies* to a sinner the virtues of Christ's finished work? *What is it* which I am called upon to do in order to appropriate to myself the efficacy of Christ's atonement? What is it which gives me an actual entrance into the good of His redemption?"

The questions formulated above are only three different ways of framing the same inquiry. Now, the popular answer which is being returned to them is, "Nothing more is required from any sinner than that he simply *believe on* the Lord Jesus Christ." In the preceding articles of this series, we have sought to show that such a reply is misleading, inadequate, faulty, and that, because it ignores all the other Scriptures which set forth what God requires from the sinner. It leaves out of account God's demand for repentance (with all that that involves and includes) and Christ's clearly-defined terms of discipleship in Luke 14. To restrict ourselves to any one Scripture term of a subject, or set of passages using that term, results in an erroneous conception of it. They who limit their ideas of regeneration to the one figure of the new birth, lapse into serious error upon it. So they who limit their thoughts on how to be saved to the one word, "Believe," are easily misled. Diligent care needs to be taken to collect *all* that Scripture teaches on any subject if we are to have a properly balanced and accurate view thereof.

To be more specific. In Romans 10:13, we read, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Now, does this mean that all who have, with their lips, cried unto the Lord, who have in the name of Christ besought God to have mercy on them, been saved by Him? They, who reply in the affirmative, are only deceived by the mere sound of words, as the deluded Romanist is when he contends for Christ's bodily presence in the bread, because He said, "This *is* my body" (Mat 26:26). And how are we to show the Papist is misled? Why, by comparing Scripture *with Scripture*. So here. The writer well remembers being on a ship in a terrible storm off the coast of Newfoundland. All the hatches were battened down, and for three days, no passenger was allowed on the decks. Reports from the stewards were disquieting. Strong men paled. As the winds increased and the ship rolled worse and worse, scores of men and women were heard calling upon the name of the Lord. Did He save them? A day or two later, when the weather cleared, those same men and women were drinking, cursing, card-playing!

Perhaps someone asks, "But does not Romans 10:13 say what it means?" Certainly it does, but no verse of Scripture yields its meaning to lazy people. Christ Himself tells us that there are many who call Him, "Lord," to whom He will say, "Depart from me" (Mat 7:22-23). Then, what is to be done with Romans 10:13? Why, diligently compare it with *all* other passages which make known what the sinner must do ere God will save him. If nothing more than the fear of death or horror of hell prompts the sinner to call upon the Lord, he might just as well call upon the trees. The Almighty is not at the beck and call of any rebel, who, when he is terrified, sues for mercy. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Pro 28:9)! "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and *forsaketh them* shall have mercy" (Pro 28:13). The only "calling upon his name" which the Lord heeds is that which issues from a broken, penitent, sin-hating heart, which thirsts after holiness.

The same principle applies to Acts 16:31 and all similar texts. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." To a casual reader, that seems a very simple matter, yet a closer pondering of those words should discover that more is involved than at first sight appears. Note that the apostles did not merely tell the Philippian jailor to, "Rest on the finished work of Christ," or "Trust in His atoning sacrifice." Instead, it was a *Person* that was set before him. Again, it was not simply, "Believe on the Saviour," but, "*the Lord Jesus Christ*." John 1:12 shows plainly that to "believe" is to "receive," and to be saved, a sinner must receive One who is not only a Saviour but "Lord," yea, who must be received *as* "Lord" *before* He becomes the Saviour of that person. And *to* receive "Christ Jesus *the Lord*" (Col 2:6) necessarily involves the renouncing of our own sinful lordship, the throwing down of the weapons of our warfare against Him, and the submitting to His yoke and rule. And before any human rebel is brought to do *that*, a miracle of divine grace

has to be wrought within him. And this brings us more immediately to the present aspect of our theme.

Saving faith is not a native product of the human heart, but is a spiritual grace communicated from on high. "It is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8). It is "of the operation of God" (Col 2:12). It is by "the power of God" (1Co 2:5). A most remarkable passage on this subject is found in Ephesians 1:16-20. There we find the apostle Paul praying that the saints should have the eyes of their understanding enlightened, that they might know, "What is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward, who believe according to the working of His mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." Note the strong expressions here used. Not merely the power of God, or the greatness of it, but the "exceeding greatness of his power to usward." Note, too, the standard of comparison. We "believe *according* to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead."

God put forth His "*mighty power*" when He resurrected Christ. There was a mighty power seeking to hinder, even Satan and all his hosts. There was a mighty difficulty to be overcome, even the vanquishing of the grave. There was a mighty result to be achieved, even the bringing to life One who was dead. None but God Himself was equal to a miracle so stupendous. Strictly analogous is that miracle of grace which issues in saving faith. The devil employs all his arts and power to retain his captive. The sinner is dead in trespasses and sins, and can no more quicken himself than he can create a world. His heart is bound fast with the grave clothes of worldly and fleshly lusts, and only omnipotence can raise it into communion with God. Well may every true servant of the Lord emulate the apostle Paul and pray earnestly that God *will* enlighten His people concerning this wonder of wonders, so that instead of attributing their faith to an exercise of their own will, they may freely ascribe all the honour and glory unto Him to whom alone it justly belongs.

If only the professing Christians of this untoward generation could begin to obtain some adequate conception of the *real condition* of every man by nature, they might be less inclined to cavil against the teaching that nothing short of a miracle of grace can ever qualify any sinner to believe unto the saving of his soul. If they could only see that the heart's attitude toward God of the most refined and moral, is not one whit different than that of the most vulgar and vicious. That he who is most kind and benevolent toward his fellow-creatures, has no more real desire after Christ than has the most selfish and brutal. Then it would be evident that divine power must operate to change the heart. Divine power was needed to create, but much greater power is required to regenerate a soul. Creation is only the bringing of something out of nothing, but regeneration is the transforming not only of an unlovely object, but one who *resists* with all its might the gracious designs of the Heavenly Potter.

It is not simply that the Holy Spirit approaches a heart in which there is no love for God, but He finds it filled with enmity against Him, and incapable of being subject to His law (Rom 8:7). True, the individual himself may be quite unconscious of this terrible fact, yea, ready to indignantly deny it. But that is easily accounted for. If he has heard of little or nothing but the love, the grace, the mercy, the goodness of God, it would indeed be surprising if he hated Him. But once the *God of Scripture* is made known to him in the power of the Spirit, once he is made to realize that God is the Governor of this world, demanding unqualified submission to all His laws, that He is inflexibly just, and "will by no means clear the guilty" (Exo 34:7) that He is sovereign, and loves whom He pleases and hates whom He wills, that so far from being an easy-going, indulgent Creator, who winks at the follies of His creatures, He is ineffably holy, so that His righteous wrath burns against all the workers of iniquity—then will people be conscious of

indwelling enmity surging up against Him. And nothing but the all-mighty power of the Spirit can overcome that enmity and bring any rebel to truly love the God of Holy Writ.

Rightly did Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) the Puritan say, “A wolf will sooner marry a lamb, or a lamb a wolf, than ever a carnal heart will be subject to the law of God, which was the ancient husband of it—Romans 7:6. It is the turning of one contrary into another. To turn water into wine, there is some kind of symbolizing, yet that is a miracle. But to turn a wolf into a lamb, to turn fire into water, is a yet greater miracle. Between nothing and something, there is an infinite distance, but between sin and grace, there is a greater distance than can be between nothing and the highest angel in heaven....To destroy the power of sin in a man’s soul is as a great a work as to take away the guilt of sin. It is easier to say to a blind man, See, and to the lame man, Walk, than to say to a man that lies under the power of sin, Live, be holy, for there is that that will not be subject.”

In 11 Corinthians 10:4, the apostle describes the character of that work in which the true servants of Christ are engaged. It is a conflict with the forces of Satan. The weapons of their warfare are “not carnal”—as well might modern soldiers go forth equipped with only wooden swords and paper shields, as preachers think to liberate the devil’s captives by means of human learning, worldly methods, touching anecdotes, attractive singing, etc. No, “their weapons” are the “Word of God” and “all prayer” (Eph 6:17-18). And even these are only mighty “through God,” that is, by His direct and special blessing of them to particular souls. In what follows, a description is given of wherein the might of God is here seen, namely, in the powerful opposition which it meets with and vanquishes, “to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”(2Co 10:4-5).

Herein lies the power of God, when He is pleased to thus put it forth in the saving of a sinner. The heart of that sinner is fortified against Him. It is steeled against His holy demands, His righteous claims. It is determined not to submit to His law, nor to abandon those idols which it prohibits. That haughty rebel has made up his mind that he *will not* turn away from the delights of this world and the pleasures of sin, and give God the supreme place in his affections. But God has determined to overcome his sinful opposition, and transform him into a loving and loyal subject. The figure here used is that of a besieged town—the heart. Its “strongholds”—the reigning power of fleshly and worldly lusts—are “pulled down.” Self-will is broken, pride is subdued, and the defiant rebel is made a willing captive to “the obedience of Christ”! “Mighty through God” points to this miracle of grace.

There is one other detail pointed by the analogy drawn in Ephesians 1:19-21 which exemplifies the mighty power of God, namely, “and set him [Christ] at his own right hand in the heavenlies.” The members of Christ’s mystical body are predestinated to be conformed to the glorious image of their glorified Head. In measure, now—perfectly, in the day to come. The ascension of Christ was contrary to *nature*, being opposed by the law of gravitation. But the power of God overcame that opposition, and translated His resurrected Son bodily into heaven. In like manner, His grace produces in His people that which is contrary to nature, overcoming the opposition of the flesh, and drawing their hearts unto things above. How we would marvel if we saw a man extend his arms and suddenly leave the earth, soaring upward into the sky. Yet still more wonderful is it when we behold the power of the Spirit causing a sinful creature to rise above temptation, worldliness, and sin, and breathe the atmosphere of heaven—when a human soul is made to disdain the things of earth and find its satisfaction in things above.

The historical order in connection with the Head, in Ephesians 1:19-20, is also the experimental order with regard to the members of His body. Before setting His Son at His own

right hand in the heavenlies, God raised Him from the dead. So, before the Holy Spirit fixes the heart of a sinner upon Christ, He first quickens him into newness of life. There must be *life* before there can be sight, believing, or good works performed. One who is physically dead is incapable of doing anything. So he who is spiritually dead is incapable of any spiritual exercises. First, the giving of life unto dead Lazarus, and then, the removing of the grave clothes which bound him hand and foot. God must regenerate before there can be a new creature in Christ Jesus (2Co 5:17). The washing of a child follows its birth.

When spiritual life has been communicated to the soul, that individual is now able to see things in their true colours. In God's light, he sees light (Psa 36:9). He is now given to perceive (by the Holy Spirit) what a lifelong rebel he has been against his Creator and Benefactor. That instead of making God's will his rule, he has gone his own way. That instead of having before him God's glory, he has sought only to please and gratify self. Even though he may have been preserved from all the grosser outward forms of wickedness, he now recognizes that he is a spiritual leper, a vile and polluted creature, utterly unfit to draw near, still less to dwell with, Him who is ineffably holy. And such an apprehension makes him feel that *his* case is hopeless.

There is a vast difference between hearing or reading of what conviction of sin is, and being made to feel it in the depths of one's own soul. Multitudes are acquainted with the theory, who are total strangers to the experience of it. One may read of the sad effects of war and may agree that they are indeed dreadful. But when the enemy is at one's own door, plundering his goods, firing his home, slaying his dear ones, he is far more sensible of the miseries of war than ever he was (or could be) previously. So an unbeliever may hear of what a dreadful state the sinner is in before God and how terrible will be the sufferings of hell. But when the Spirit brings home to his own heart its actual condition, and makes him feel the heat of God's wrath in his own conscience, he is ready to sink with dismay and despair. Reader, do *you* know anything of such an experience?

Only thus is any soul prepared to truly appreciate Christ. They that are whole need not a physician. The one, who has been savingly convicted, is made to realize that none but the Lord Jesus can heal one so desperately diseased by sin. That He alone can impart that spiritual health (holiness) which will enable him to run in the way of God's commandments. That nothing but His precious blood can atone for the sins of the past and naught but His all-sufficient grace can meet the pressing needs of the present and future. Thus, there must be discerning faith, before there is coming faith. The Father "draws" to the Son (Joh 6:44) by imparting to the mind a deep realization of my desperate need of Christ, by giving to the heart a real sense of the inestimable worth of Him, and by causing the will to receive Him on His own terms.

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

9. The Scriptures and Joy

The ungodly are ever seeking after joy, but they find it not. They busy and weary themselves in the pursuit of it, yet all in vain. Their hearts being turned from the Lord, they look downward for joy, where it is not. Rejecting the substance, they diligently run after the shadow, only to be mocked by it. It is the sovereign decree of heaven that nothing can make sinners truly happy but God in Christ. But this they will not believe, and therefore, they go from creature to creature, from one broken cistern to another, inquiring where is the best joy to be found. Each worldly thing which attracts them, says, “It is found in me,” but each disappoints. Nevertheless, they go on seeking it afresh today in the very thing which deceived them yesterday. If after many trials, they discover the emptiness of one creature-comfort, then they turn to another, only to verify our Lord’s word, “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again” (Joh 4:13).

Going now to the other extreme—There are some Christians who suppose it is sinful to rejoice. No doubt, many of our readers will be surprised to hear this, but let them be thankful that they have been raised in sunnier surroundings, and bear with us a moment while we labour with those less favoured. Some of our readers have been taught—largely by implication and example, rather than by plain inculcation—that it is a duty to be gloomy. They imagine that feelings of joy are produced by the devil appearing as an angel of light. They conclude that it is well-nigh a species of wickedness to be happy in such a world of sin as we are in. They think it is presumptuous to rejoice in the knowledge of sins forgiven, and if they see a young Christian so doing, they tell him it will not be long ere he is floundering in the Sough of Despond. To all such, we tenderly urge the prayerful pondering of the remainder of this article.

“Rejoice evermore” (1Th 5:16). It surely cannot be unsafe to do what God has commanded us. The Lord has placed no embargo on rejoicing. No, it is Satan who strives to make us hang up our harps. There is no precept in Scripture bidding us, “Grieve in the Lord always, and again I say grieve.” But there is an exhortation which bids us, “Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright” (Psa 33:1). Reader, if you be a real Christian (and it is high time you tested yourself by Scripture and make sure of the point), then Christ is yours, all that is in Him is yours. He bids you, “Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink *abundantly*, O beloved” (Song 5:1). The only sin you may commit against His banquet of love is to stint yourself. “Let your soul delight itself *in fatness*” (Isa 55:2) is spoken not to those already in heaven, but to saints still on earth. This leads us to say that:

1. We are profited from the Word when we perceive that *joy is a duty*. “Rejoice in the Lord alway: again I say, Rejoice” (Phi 4:4). The Holy Spirit here speaks of rejoicing as a personal, present, and permanent duty for the people of God to carry out. The Lord has not left it to our option whether we should be glad or sad, but has made happiness an obligation. Not to rejoice is a sin of omission. Next time you meet with a radiant Christian, do not chide him, ye dwellers in Doubting Castle, but chide yourselves. Instead of being so ready to call into question the divine spring of his mirth, judge yourself for your doleful state.

It is not a carnal joy which we are here urging, by which we mean a joy which comes from carnal sources. It is useless to seek joy in earthly riches, for frequently, they take unto themselves wings and fly away. Some seek their joy in the family circle, but that remains entire only for a few short years at most. No, if we are to “Rejoice evermore,” it must be in an object that lasts for evermore. Nor is it a fanatical joy we have reference to. There are those with an excitable temperament, who are only happy when they are half out of their minds, but terrible is the reaction. No, it is an intelligent, steady, heart delight in God Himself. Every attribute of God, when contemplated by faith, will make the heart sing. Every doctrine of the Gospel, when truly apprehended, will call forth gladness and praise.

Joy is a matter of Christian duty. Perhaps the reader is ready to exclaim, “My emotions of joy and sorrow are *not* under my control. I cannot help being glad or sad as circumstances dictate.” But, we repeat, “Rejoice in the Lord” is a divine command, and to a large extent, obedience to it lies within one’s own power. I am responsible to control my emotions. True, I cannot help being sorrowful in the presence of sorrowful thoughts, but I can refuse to let my mind dwell upon them. I can pour out my heart for relief unto the Lord, and cast my burden upon Him. I can seek grace to meditate upon His goodness, His promises, the glorious future awaiting me. I have to decide whether I will go and stand in the light or hide among the shadows. Not to rejoice in the Lord is more than a misfortune, it is a fault which needs to be confessed and forsaken.

2. We are profited from the Word when we *learn the secret* of true joy. That secret is revealed in 1 John 1:3-4. “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” Ah, when we consider the littleness of their fellowship with God, the shallowness of it, it is not to be wondered at that so many Christians are comparatively joyless. We sometimes sing, “O happy day that fixed my choice on Thee my Saviour and my God! Well may this glowing heart rejoice and tell its raptures all abroad.” Yes, but if that happiness is to be maintained, there must be a continued steadfast occupation of the heart and mind with Christ. It is only where there is much faith and consequent love that there is much joy.

“Rejoice *in the Lord* always” (Phi 4:4). There is no other object in which we can rejoice “always.” Everything else varies and is inconstant. What pleases us today may pall on us tomorrow. But God is always the same, to be enjoyed in seasons of adversity as much as in times of prosperity. As an aid to this, the very next verse says, “Let your *moderation* be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand” (Phi 4:5). Be temperate in connection with all external things. Do not be taken with them when they seem most pleasing, nor troubled when displeasing. Be not exalted when the world smiles upon you, nor dejected when it scowls. Maintain a stoical indifference to outward comforts. Why be so occupied with them, when the *Lord Himself* is so near! If persecution be violent, if temporal losses be heavy, the Lord is “a very *present* help in trouble” (Psa 46:1)—ready to support and succour those who cast themselves upon Him. He *will* care for you, so, “Be careful for nothing” (Phi 4:6). Worldlings are haunted with carking care, but the Christian should not be.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (Joh 15:11). As these precious words of Christ are pondered by the mind and treasured in the heart, they cannot but produce joy. A rejoicing heart comes from an increasing knowledge of and love for the truth as it is in Jesus. “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jer 15:16). Yes, it is by feeding and feasting upon the words of the Lord that the soul is made fat, and we are made to sing and make melody in our hearts unto Him.

“Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy” (Psa 43:4). As Spurgeon (1834-1892) well said, “With what exultation should believers draw near unto Christ, who is the antitype of the altar! Clearer light should give a greater intensity of desire. It was not the altar as such that the Psalmist cared for, for he was no believer in the heathenism of ritualism. His soul desired spiritual fellowship, fellowship with God Himself in very deed. What are all the rites of religion unless the Lord be in them. What, indeed, but empty shells and dry husks? Note the holy rapture with which David regards his Lord! He is not his joy alone, but his *exceeding* joy. Not the fountain of joy, the giver of joy, or the maintainer of joy, but the *joy itself*. The margin hath it, ‘The gladness of my joy,’ i.e. the soul, the essence, the very bowels of my joy.”

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice *in the LORD*, I will joy in *the God* of my salvation” (Hab 3:17-18). Ah, that is something of which the worldling knows nothing. Alas, that it is an experience to which so many professing Christians are strangers. It is in God all the fount of spiritual and everlasting joy originates. From Him, it all flows forth. This was acknowledged of old by the Church when it said, “All my springs are in thee” (Psa 87:7). Happy the soul who has been truly taught this secret.

3. We are profited from the Word when we are taught *the great value of joy*. Joy is to the soul what wings are to the bird, enabling us to soar above the dregs of earth. This is brought out plainly in Nehemiah 8:10, “The joy of the LORD is *your strength*.” The days of Nehemiah marked a turning-point in the history of Israel. A remnant had been freed from Babylon and returned to Palestine. The Law, long ignored by the captives, was now to be established again as the rule of the newly-formed commonwealth. There had come a remembrance of the many sins of the past, and tears, not unnaturally, mingled with the thankfulness that they were again a nation, having a divine worship and a divine Law in their midst. Their leader, knowing full well that, if the spirit of the people began to flag, they could not face and conquer the difficulties of their position, said to them, “This day is holy unto the LORD,”... this feast we are keeping is a day of devout worship; therefore, mourn not—“neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10).

Confession of sin, and mourning over the same, has its place, and communion with God cannot be maintained without it. Nevertheless, when true repentance has been exercised and things put right with God, we must forget “those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before” (Phi 3:13). And we can only press forward with alacrity as our hearts are joyful. How heavy the steps of him who approaches the place where a loved one lies cold in death! How energetic his movements as he goes to meet his bride! Lamentation unfits for the battles of life. Where there is despair, there is no power for obedience. If there be no joy, there can be no worship.

My brethren and sisters, there are tasks needing to be performed, service to others requiring to be rendered, temptations to be overcome, battles to be fought, and we are only experimentally fitted for them as our hearts are rejoicing in the Lord. If our souls are resting in Christ, if our hearts be filled with a tranquil gladness, work will be easy, duties pleasant, sorrow bearable, endurance possible. Neither contrite remembrance of past failures, nor vehement resolutions, will carry us through. If the arm is to smite with vigour, it must smite at the bidding of a light heart. Of the Saviour Himself, it is recorded, “Who for the *joy that was set before him* endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb 12:2).

4. We are profited from the Word when we attend to *the root of joy*. The spring of joy is faith, “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace *in believing*” (Rom 15:13). There is a wondrous provision in the Gospel, both by what it takes from us and brings to us, to give a calm and settled glow to the Christian’s heart. It takes away the load of guilt, by speaking peace to the stricken conscience. It removes that dread of God and terror of death, which weighs on the soul while conscious it is under His condemnation. It gives us God Himself, as the portion of our hearts, as the object of our communion. The Gospel works joy, because the soul is at rest in God. But these blessings become our own only by personal appropriation. Faith must *receive* them, and when it does so, the heart is filled with peace and joy. And the secret of *sustained* joy is to keep the channel open, to continue as we began. It is *unbelief* which clogs that channel. If there be but little heat around the bulb of the thermometer, no wonder that the mercury marks so low a degree. If there is a weak faith, joy cannot be strong. Daily do we need to pray for a *fresh* realization of the preciousness of the Gospel, a fresh appropriation of its blessed contents, and then, there will be a renewing of our joy.

5. We are profited from the Word when we are *careful to maintain* our joy. “Joy in the Holy Spirit”(Rom 14:17), is of an altogether different order from a natural buoyancy of spirit. It is the product of the Comforter dwelling in our hearts and bodies, revealing Christ to us, answering all our need for pardon and cleansing, and so setting us at peace with God, and forming Christ in us, so that He reigns in our souls, subduing us to His control. There are no circumstances of trial and temptation in which we may refrain from it, for the command is to, “Rejoice in the Lord *always*”(Phi 4:4). He, who gave this command, knows all about the dark side of our lives, the sins and sorrows which beset us, the “much tribulation” through which we must enter the kingdom of God. Natural hilarity leaves the woes of our earthly lot out of reckoning. It soon relaxes in presence of life’s hardships. It cannot survive the loss of friends or health. But the joy to which we are exhorted is not limited to any set of circumstances or type of temperament, nor does it fluctuate with our varying moods and fortunes.

Nature may assert itself in the subjects of it, as even Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus. Nevertheless, they can exclaim with Paul, “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2Co 6:10). The Christian may be loaded with heavy responsibilities, his life may have a series of reverses, his plans may be thwarted, and his hopes blighted, the grave may close over the loved ones who gave to his earthly life its cheer and sweetness, and yet, under all his disappointments and sorrows, his Lord still bids him, “Rejoice.” Behold the apostles in Philippi’s prison, in the innermost dungeon, with feet fast in stocks, and backs bleeding and smarting from the terrible scouring they had received—how were they occupied? In grumbling and growling, in asking what they had done to deserve such treatment? No, “At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and *sang* praises unto God” (Act 16:25). Ah, there was no sin in their lives. They were walking obediently, and so the Holy Spirit was free to take of the things of Christ and show them unto their hearts, so that they were filled to overflowing. If we are to maintain our joy, we must keep from grieving the Spirit.

When Christ is supreme in the heart, joy fills it. When He is Lord of every desire, the Source of every motive, the Subjugator of every lust, then will joy fill the heart and praise ascend from the lips. The possession of this joy involves taking up the cross every hour of the day. God has so ordered it that we cannot have the one without the other. Self-sacrifice, the cutting of a right hand, and the plucking out of a right eye are the avenues through which the Spirit enters the soul, bringing with Him the joys of God’s approving smile and the assurance of His love and abiding presence. Much also depends upon the spirit in which we enter the world each day. If we expect people to pet and pamper us, disappointment will make us fretful. If we desire our pride to be

ministered unto, we are dejected when it is not. The secret of happiness is forgetting self and seeking to minister unto the happiness of others. “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Act 20:35), so it is a happier thing to minister unto others than to be ministered unto.

6. We are profited from the Word when we are sedulous *in avoiding the hindrances to joy*. Why is it that so many Christians have so little joy? Are they not all born children of the light and of the day? This term, “light,” which is so often used in Scripture to describe to us the nature of God, our relation to Him, and our future destiny, is most suggestive of joy and gladness. What other thing in nature is so beneficent and beautiful as the light. “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1Jo 1:5). Ah, it is only as we walk with God, in the light, that the heart can truly be joyous. It is the deliberate allowance of things, which mar our fellowship with Him, that chills and darkens our souls. It is the indulgence of the flesh, the fraternizing with the world, the entering of forbidden paths, which blights our spiritual lives and makes us cheerless.

David had to cry, “Restore unto me *the joy* of thy salvation” (Psa 51:12). He had grown lax and self-indulgent. Temptation presented itself and he had no power to resist. He yielded and one sin led to another. He was a backslider, out of touch with God. Unconfessed sin lay heavy on his conscience. O my brethren and sisters, if we are to be kept from such a fall, if we are not to lose our joy, then self must be denied, the affections and lusts of the flesh crucified. We must ever be on our watch against temptation. We must spend much time upon our knees. We must drink frequently from the fountain of living water. We must be out and out for the Lord.

7. We are profited from the Word when we *diligently preserve the balance between sorrow and joy*. If the Christian faith has a marked adaptation to produce joy, it has an almost equal design and tendency to produce sorrow—a sorrow that is solemn, manly, noble. “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2Co 6:10) is the rule of the Christian’s life. If faith casts its light upon our condition, our nature, our sins, sadness must be one of the effects. There is nothing more contemptible in itself, and there is no more sure mark of a superficial character and trivial round of occupation, than unshaded gladness, that rests on no deep foundations of quiet, patient grief—grief, because I know what I am and what I ought to be. Grief, because I have learned the exceeding sinfulness of sin (Rom 7:13). Grief, because I look out on the world and see hell’s fire burning at the back of its mirth and laughter and know *what* it is that men are hurrying to.

Ah, He who was anointed with the oil of gladness *above* his fellows (Psa 45:7) was also “the man *of sorrows*, and acquainted with grief.” And both of these characters are (in measure) repeated in the operations of His Gospel upon every heart that really receives it. And if, by the fears it removes from us and the hope it breathes into us, and the fellowship into which it introduces us, we are anointed with the oil of gladness—on the other hand, by the sense of our own vileness which it teaches us, by the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, there is infused a sadness which finds expression in, “O wretched man that I am” (Rom 7:24). These two are not contradictory, but complementary. The Lamb must be eaten *with* “bitter herbs” (Exo 12:8).

THE FIGHT OF FAITH

There are some who teach that those Christians who engage in spiritual fighting are living below their privileges. They insist that God is willing to do all our fighting for us. Their pet slogan is, "Let go, and let God." They say that the Christian should turn the battle over to Christ. There is a half truth in this, yet only a half truth, and carried to extremes, it becomes error. The half truth is that the child of God has no inherent strength of his own. Says Christ to His disciples, "Without me, ye can do nothing" (Joh 15:5). Yet this does not mean that we are to be merely passive, or that the ideal state in this life is simply to be galvanized automaton. There is also a positive, an active, aggressive side to the Christian life, which calls for the putting forth of our utmost endeavours, the use of every faculty, a personal and intelligent co-operation with Christ.

There is not a little of what is known as "the victorious life" teaching which is virtually a denial of the Christian's responsibility. It is lop-sided. While emphasizing one aspect of truth, it sadly ignores other aspects equally necessary and important to be kept before us. God's Word declares that, "Every man shall bear *his own burden*" (Gal 6:5), which means that he must discharge his personal obligation. Saints are bidden to, "*Cleanse ourselves* from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (2Co 7:1), and to, "*Keep himself* unspotted from the world" (Jam 1:27). We are exhorted to, "Overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21). The apostle Paul declared, "*I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection*" (1Co 9:27). Thus, to deny that a Christian is called upon to engage in a ceaseless warfare with the flesh, the world, and the devil, is to fly in the face of many plain Scriptures.

There is a very real twofoldness to the Christian life and every aspect of divine truth is balanced by its counterpart. Practical godliness is a mysterious paradox, which is incomprehensible to the natural man. The Christian is strongest when he is weakest, wealthiest when he is poorest, happiest when most wretched. Though unknown (1Jo 3:1), yet he is well known (2Ti 1:18). Though dying (1Co 15:31), yet, behold, he lives. Though having nothing, yet he possesses all things (2Co 6:10). Though persecuted, he is not forsaken. Cast down, he is not destroyed. He is called upon to "rejoice with trembling" (Psa 2:11), and is assured, "Blessed are ye that weep now" (Luk 6:21). Though the Lord maketh him to lie down in green pastures and leadeth him beside still waters, he is yet in the wilderness, and "in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (Psa 63:1). Though followers of the Prince of peace, Christians are to endure "hardness, as good *soldiers* of Jesus Christ" (2Ti 2:3), and though "more than conquerors" (Rom 8:37), they are often defeated.

"Fight the good fight of faith" (1Ti 6:12). We are called upon to engage in a ceaseless warfare. The Christian life is to be lived out on the battlefield. We may not like it, we may wish that it were otherwise, but so has God ordained. And our worst foe, our most dangerous enemy, is *self*, that "old man" which ever wants his way, which rebels against the "yoke" of Christ, which hates the "cross." That "old man" which opposes every desire of the "new man," which dislikes God's Word and ever wants to substitute man's word. But self has to be "denied" (Mat 16:24), his affections and lusts crucified (Gal 5:24). Yet that is by no means an easy task. O what a conflict is ever going on within the true Christian. True, there are times when the "old man" pretends to be asleep or dead, but soon he revives and is more vigorous than ever in opposing that "new man."

Then it is that the real Christian seriously asks, “If it be so (that I truly am a child of God) why am I thus?” Such was Rebekah’s puzzling problem when “the children struggled together within her” (Gen 25:22).

What a parable in action is set before us in the above Scripture! Do we need any interpreter? Does not the Christian have the key which explains that parable in the conflicting experiences of his own soul? Yes, and is not the sequel the same with you and me, as it was with poor Rebekah? “She went and inquired of the LORD” (Gen 25:22). Ah, her husband could not solve the mystery for her. No man could, nor did she lean unto her own understanding and try and reason it out. No, the struggle inside her was so great and fierce, she must have *divine* assurance. Nor did God disappoint her and leave her in darkness. “And the LORD said unto her, *Two* nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger” (Gen 25:23). But the meaning of such a verse is *hid* from those who are, in their own conceits, “wise and prudent.” But, blessed be God, it is revealed to those who, taught of the Spirit, are made to realize they are *babes*, that is, who feel they are ignorant, weak, helpless—for that is what “babes” are.

And who were the two nations that “struggled together” inside Rebekah? Esau and Jacob, from whom two vastly different nations descended, namely, Edom and Israel. Now, observe closely what follows. “And the one people shall be stronger than the other.” Yes, Esau was so strong that Jacob was afraid of him and fled from him. So it is spiritually, the “old man” is stronger than the “new man.” How strange that it should be so! Would we not naturally conclude that that which is “born of the Spirit” is stronger than that which is “born of the flesh” (Joh 3:6)? Of course, we would *naturally* think so, for, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God” (1Co 2:14). But consider the matter from the standpoint of spiritual discernment. Suppose the “new man” *were* stronger than the “old man”—then what? Why, the Christian would be self-sufficient, proud, haughty. But God, in His infinite wisdom, allows that “new man” in His children to be weaker than the “old man.” Why? That they may depend upon Him. But it is one thing to know the theory of this, and it is quite another to put it into practice. It is one thing to believe the “new man” (Jacob) is weaker than the “old man” (Esau, who was born first!), and it is quite another thing to daily seek and obtain from God the needed strength to “fight” against the “old man.” That is why it is called the “good fight of *faith*,” for faith treats with *God*.

“Fight the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12). Our *circumstances* are the battleground. The “flesh” is never long satisfied with the “circumstances” in which God places us, but always wants to change them, or get into another set than we are now in. Thus it was with Israel of old. The “circumstances” into which God had brought the children of Israel was the *wilderness*, and they murmured, and wished they were back in Egypt. And that is written as a *warning* for us! The tendency of circumstances is to bind our hearts to the earth. When prosperous, to make us satisfied with *things*. When adverse, to make us repine over or covet the things which we *do not* have. Nothing but the exercise of real faith can lift our hearts above circumstances, for faith looks away from all things seen, so that the heart delights itself and finds its peace and joy in the Lord (Psa 37:4). This is never easy to any of us. It is always a *fight*, and only divine grace (diligently sought) can give us the victory. Oftentimes we fail. When we do, this must be confessed to God (1Jo 1:9), and a fresh start made.

Nothing but faith can enable us to rise above “circumstances.” It did so in the case of the two apostles, who, with feet fast in the stocks, with backs bleeding and smarting, sang praises to God in Philippi’s dungeon. That was faith victorious over most unpleasant circumstances. We can almost imagine each reader saying, “Alas, *my* faith is so *weak*.” Ah, ponder again this word,

“Fight the good fight of faith”—note the repetition! It is not easy for faith to rise above circumstances. No, it is not. It is difficult, at times, extremely difficult. So the writer has found it. But remember, a “fight” is not finished in a moment, by one blow. Oftentimes the victor receives many wounds and is sorely pounded before he finally knocks-out his enemy. So we have found it, and still find it. The great enemy, the “flesh” (*self*) gives the “new man” many a painful blow, often floors him, but, by grace, we keep on *fighting*. Sometimes the “new man” gets the victory, sometimes the “old man” does. “For a just man falleth seven times, *and* riseth up again” (Pro 24:16).

Yes, dear reader, every real Christian has a “fight” on his hands. *Self* is the chief enemy which has to be conquered, and our *circumstances*, the battleground where the combat has to be waged. And each of us would very much like to change the battleground. There are unpleasant things which, at times, sorely try each of us, until we are tempted to cry with the afflicted Psalmist, “O that I had the wings like a dove! for then I would fly away” (Psa 55:6). Yes, sad to say, the writer has been guilty of the same thing. But, when he is in his right mind (spiritually), he is thankful for these very “circumstances.” Why? Because they afford an opportunity for *faith* to act and rise above them, and for us to find our peace, our joy, our satisfaction, not in pleasant surroundings, not in congenial friends, nor even in sweet fellowship with brethren and sisters in Christ. But—in *God*! He can satisfy the soul. *He* never fails those who truly trust Him. But it is a *fight* to do so. Yes, a real, long, hard fight. Yet, if we cry to God for help, for strength, for determination, He does not fail us, but makes us “more than conquerors.”

There is that in each of us which wants to play the coward, *run away* from the battlefield—our “circumstances.” This is what Abraham did (Gen 12:10), but he gained nothing by it. This is what Jacob did (Gen 28), and in consequence, his trials were multiplied. This is what Elijah did (1Ki 19:3), and the Lord rebuked him for it. And these instances are recorded “for our learning” (Rom 15:4), as warnings for us to take to heart. They tell us that we must steadfastly resist this evil inclination, and call to mind that exhortation, “Watch ye, *stand fast* in the faith, quit you [act] like men, *be strong*” (1Co 16:13).

“Fight the good fight of faith.” Nor does the Lord call upon us to do something from which He was exempted. O what a “fight” the Captain of our salvation endured! See Him yonder in the wilderness, “forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts” (Mar 1:13), and all that time without food (Mat 4:2). How fiercely the devil assaulted Him, renewing his attack again and yet again. And the Saviour met and conquered him on the ground of *faith*, using only the Word of God. See Him again in Gethsemane. There the fight was yet fiercer, and so intense were His agonies that He sweat great drops of blood. Nor was there any comfort from His disciples. They could not watch with Him one hour. Yet He triumphed and that on the ground of faith, “When he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.” (Heb 5:7).

Those two instances are recorded for our instruction, and, as ever, their order is beautifully significant. They teach us *how* we are to “fight the good fight of faith.” Christ Himself has “left us an example”! And what do we learn from these solemn and sacred incidents? This—the only weapon we are to use is the sword of the Spirit, and victory is only to be obtained *on our knees*—“with strong crying and tears.” The Lord graciously enables us so to act. O that each of us may more earnestly seek grace to *fight* the good fight of faith. We shall have happy and peaceful fellowship together in heaven, but before we get there, the “fight” has to be fought, and *won* or we shall never get there at all (2Ti 4:6-8).

GRIEVING THE SPIRIT

“Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30).

Methinks I would make this Scripture the motto of my daily walk, to keep in remembrance more than the dearest friend that wears the ring of love upon his finger, and bears it about with him whithersoever he goeth. And is the Holy Spirit grieved whenever a child of God forgetteth Jesus, and by indulgence in sin, loses sight of those sufferings which He endured on account of sin? Yes, God the Holy Spirit is grieved, communion with God the Father is interrupted, and all the agonies and bloody sweat of Jesus forgotten, if there be a loose and careless life. And shall I ever grieve the Holy Spirit by any one allowed transgression? Would not my soul feel shame at the consciousness of it, even if no eye but His had seen the foul act? Wouldest Thou grieve for me, O Lord, at such a sight? Can it be possible that a poor worm of the earth, such as I am, should excite such regard and attention?

And shall not the consideration have its constant and unceasing influence upon my soul? Shall I grieve the holy Lord by an unholy conduct? Shall I quench those sweet influences which first quickened me, and recompense the kindness, which, had it not been called forth to my spiritual life, would have left me to this hour as it first found me, dead in trespasses and sins? Oh! Thou holy, blessed, gracious Lord God the Spirit. Withdraw not, I beseech Thee, Thy restraining influences. Leave me not for a moment to myself. Thou knowest that I shall grieve Thee, if unassisted by Thy grace. Self-will and confidence, sloth and forgetfulness, pride and presumption, will afford an opportunity to the great enemy of souls to betray me into sin, if Thou do not keep me. But if Thou, Lord, wilt keep me, I shall be well kept. Thou wilt lead me to the all-precious Jesus. Thou wilt take of His, and so effectually shew it to me, that I shall be prepared for, guided in, and carried through all acts of holy obedience and by Thy sweet influences and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, I shall be enabled to mortify the deeds of the body, so as to live. My soul! be thou constantly looking to Jesus, seeking communion with the Holy Spirit, and crying out to God the Father, with David, “Take not thine Holy Spirit from me,” that I may not grieve that holy Lord, by whom I am sealed unto the day of redemption. (Robert Hawker, 1753-1827).



JULY

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

Having seen that our Lord, after His resurrection, ascended to heaven and sat down on the right hand of God, let us now inquire into the nature of that kingdom which has been conferred upon Him. It is indeed deplorable that there should be such wide difference of opinion upon this subject, for the Word of God is plain enough thereon. Such confusion as now exists among men only serves to demonstrate the awful depravity of our fallen nature and its tendency to pervert spiritual things. Into the controversies which have been waged upon the “dispensational” features of Christ’s kingdom, we shall not now enter. Rather would we attempt to give a simple and constructive outline of the teaching of Scripture upon this important and most blessed theme. May it please the Holy Spirit to enlighten our mind, preserve from all error, and guide us to write only that which honours Immanuel.

It is important to clearly grasp the fact that the term, “kingdom” (*basileia*), primarily has reference to sovereignty rather than territory. A king is a person who is advanced to the highest dignity, and his kingdom is that sphere where his authority is exercised. To illustrate—in times past, France was a “kingdom.” Today it is a republic. Yet there has been no territorial change. The country is still the same and is inhabited by the same race of people. But it is no more a “kingdom,” for the simple reason it no longer has a “king” ruling over it. Instead, it is *governed* by the “public.” They are sovereign. The “kingdom” of a “king,” then, is the sphere of his authoritative control, his sovereign dominion, with the necessary implication that his subjects respect his sceptre and obey his laws. With this definition before us, let us look at some of the principal characteristics of the “kingdom” or rule of Christ.

1. It is *natural* to Him as a member of the Godhead. “As the second Person of the Trinity, equal in power and glory to the eternal Father, the Word of God possesses an absolute, inherent, sovereign dominion as King over the whole universe. This authority is intrinsic, underived, inalienable, and is the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (A. A. Hodge, 1823-1886). Of each of the Holy Three can it be said, “Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou are exalted as head above all” (1Ch 29:11). And, “The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all” (Psa 103:19). By virtue of the union of His humanity to His Deity, Jesus Christ as *Man* inherits the privileges of this natural kingdom.

2. It is *delegated* to Him as the God-man Mediator. Because He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, therefore, God has “highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phi 2:9-11). By the “name which is above every name,” we are not to understand words or syllables, but dignity and glory, for names and titles express the quality of persons. This is clear from a parallel passage in Ephesians 1:20-21, where principalities and powers, etc. are placed in the rank of “names,” above which Christ was exalted. He has been elevated above all created dignities.

When we say that the Mediator has received a “kingdom” from the Father (Dan 7:13-14; Luk 19:12), care must be duly taken *not* to conceive of this in the terms of an earthly monarch, who, reigning over one kingdom by original right, acquires dominion over another by inheritance or conquest. A new kingdom in *that* sense was impossible, for as God the Son, the entire universe acknowledged His sway. No, rather are we to think of His original kingdom being invested with a new form, wearing a new aspect, administered for a new end. From one angle, the mediatorial kingdom of Christ may be regarded as God’s answer to the revolt of Satan and his organized efforts to blast His dominions. The great design of Christ’s mediatorial regime is to glorify the Father in destroying “the works of the devil” (1Jo 3:8), subjugating every foe (1Co 15:24), and saving His elect from their sins (Mat 1:21), bestowing eternal life upon them (Joh 17:2), and bringing “many sons unto glory” (Heb 2:10).

Considered from another angle, the mediatorial throne, which Christ now occupies, is the *reward* bestowed upon Him for the humiliation and sufferings which He endured. As the majesty of the Son was, for a time, hidden from the eyes of His creatures, so now, for a season, the Father is pleased to veil His own glory by directing our more immediate attention to His Christ. This is brought out in those striking words of the Saviour’s, “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” The design of which is “that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father” (Joh 5:22-23). The Father has appointed Christ to transact His “business” for Him (Luk 2:49). The Father does not Himself appear so much now in the government of the universe, desiring the Mediator to have that glory. Says He, “Let My once-humbled Son take it. I commit all judgment unto Him.” So too, the Father has made Christ (not Himself), “*Head* over all to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph 1:22-23).

3. It is *universal in its scope*. As God-man Mediator, Christ has been made Governor of the universe. “All power in heaven and in earth” has been *given* to Him (Mat 28:18). He has been given “power over all flesh” (Joh 17:2). Therefore, does He declare, “By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth” (Pro 8:15-16). Therefore is He “the prince of the kings of the earth” (Rev 1:5), the “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev 19:16). All the angels of God worship Him (Heb 1:6) and carry out His orders (Mat 24:31). All the wheels of providence move at His bidding. There is not an event however great, nor a circumstance however trivial, but His power controls. Complete dominion over all the works of God’s hands is now the Redeemer’s (1Co 15:27).

What a blessed and glorious truth is this. The despised, “Jesus of Nazareth,” has been appointed “Heir of all things,” and is now “upholding all things by the word of his power” (Heb 1:2-3). “A *Man* sits upon the mediatorial throne of the universe. He who stood insulted, despised, condemned at Pilate’s judgment-seat, now sitting at the right hand of God, rules all worlds, as He will hereafter, seated on the great white throne, judge all men. The attributes of both the divine

and human natures are together exercised in the administration of this kingly reign. All His kingly acts are infinitely wise, righteous, and powerful, because He is God. But they are, at the same time, the acts of Man. They possess a truly human quality, for in all His administration, He has a feeling for our infirmities as well as an eye for our interests” (A. A. Hodge).

The *subjects* of His kingdom are, first, His *people*. Therefore is He in a special way the “King of saints” (Rev 15:3), for He has conquered them by the power of His grace, indwells them by His Spirit, and writes His laws upon their hearts. Though by nature, they are enemies to His government and unwilling to submit themselves to Him, yet are they made willing in the day of His power, are pleased with His rule, and made partakers of the advantages thereof. Second, His *enemies*. These He also rules by setting bounds to their power and malice, and making even their wrath to praise Him. Though they imagine a vain thing by supposing their defiance of Him is successful, He laughs at their folly, and in due time destroys all their projects. The day is coming when every foe shall be forced to bow down before Him, as subdued by Him, though not to Him.

4. It is *spiritual in its character*. Plainly has He Himself declared, “My kingdom is not of this world” (Joh 18:36). Great care needs to be taken by us lest we form *carnal* conceptions of the throne and reign of the Mediator. Christ is a spiritual King, for as the Lord from heaven, He has been made “a quickening Spirit” (1Co 15:45). His throne is a spiritual one (Rev 3:21). His sceptre is “a sceptre of righteousness” (Heb 1:8). His subjects are subdued by spiritual means. He fights not with carnal weapons, but with the Sword of the Spirit. The blessings which He bestows are spiritual (Eph 1:3). He dwells in the hearts of His people by faith (Eph 3:17). His kingdom consists not of “meat and drink” or such-like carnal things, but “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17).

5. It is *restricted in its duration*. “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power” (1Co 15:24). How like Him! When He is in the height of His dominion, at the time of His full triumph, when every foe has been conquered, every rebel subdued, and when the glorified Church has been presented “without spot or wrinkle” (Eph 5:23), then, the Mediator gives up all things to the Father, and *as Mediator*, becomes “subject” unto Him, that God—Father, Son, and Spirit—may be “all in all” (1Co 15:28). Not does this conflict at all with the words, “no end,” in Isaiah 9:7 and Luke 1:33. Just as Christ’s priesthood is an unchangeable one (passing not from one to another as the Aaronical), so His kingdom will never give way to another, for He is an everliving, everlasting King. Even on the new earth, the throne in it will be that of “God and of the Lamb” (Rev 22:1).

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

55. The Saving of the Soul (10:35-39)

As there is so much ground covered by the verses which are now to be before us, we shall dispense with our usual introductory paragraphs. In lieu of them, we present a brief analysis of the present passage. Hebrews 10:35 really belongs to the section which we took up in our last article. In verses 32-35, the apostle gives a persuasion unto perseverance in the Christian life. First, he bids the Hebrews call to remembrance what they had suffered for Christ's sake in days gone by. Then, let them not now renounce their faith and thereby render void their early witness (Heb 10:32-33). Second, he reminded them of the ground on which they had willingly suffered hardships and losses, namely, because they had the inward assurance and evidence that in heaven they had a better and enduring substance. Then, inasmuch as it changed not, why should they? (Heb 10:34). From these facts, the conclusion is drawn that a duty is rightly required from them, upon the performance of which the reward should be given them (Heb 10:35).

In the last section of Hebrews 10, the apostle first confirms the exhortation he had just insisted on, and points to the chief aids to perseverance, namely, patience and faith (Heb 10:36). Second, he encourages the Lord's people by the prospect of the sure and speedy coming of the Redeemer, who would then reward them (Heb 10:37). Third, he warns again of the fearful state of the apostate (Heb 10:38). Fourth, he affirms that they who persevered to the end, believe to the saving of the soul (Heb 10:39). The obvious design of these verses is to stir up Christians unto utmost earnestness in making their calling and election sure, to guard them against the danger of backsliding, and to bear their trials with submission to the will of God. May it please the Holy Spirit to apply this passage in power to the heart of both writer and reader that our meditation may issue in fruit to the glory of our blessed Lord.

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward" (Heb 10:35). Let us notice, first, the force of the, "therefore." This is an inference drawn from the foregoing. Since you have already suffered so many things in your persons and goods, and inasmuch as divine grace supported and carried you through with constancy and joy, do not be discouraged and give way to despair at the approach of similar trials. Further, this, "therefore," is drawn from the blissful prospect which the sure promise of God holds before His faithful people, and gives point to the admonition. Inasmuch as confidence persisted in is going to be richly repaid, cast it not away.

"Cast not away therefore your confidence." The word, "confidence," here has respect unto an attitude or state of heart Godwards. It is the same term (in the Greek) as is translated, "boldness," in Hebrews 10:19. It is found again in 1 John 3:21, "Then have we confidence toward God." And in 1 John 5:14, "This is the confidence that we have in him." It is not so much faith itself, as one of the products or fruits thereof. It is closer akin to hope. It is that effect of faith which fits the Christian for freedom and readiness unto all his spiritual duties, notwithstanding difficulties and discouragements. It is that frame of spirit which carries us cheerfully through all those sufferings

which a real profession of the Gospel entails. More specifically, this “confidence” may be defined as fortitude of mind, courage of heart, and constancy of will.

From what has just been said, it will be seen that we do not agree with those commentators who understand Hebrews 10:35 as dehorting against the abandonment of Christianity. The apostle’s admonition here strikes deeper than a warning against forsaking the outward profession of the Gospel. It is addressed against that state of heart, which, if it became chronic, would likely lead to the external forsaking of Christ. What is needed in the face of trials and persecution is boldness of mind, the heart being freed from bondage and fear, through a prevailing persuasion of our acceptance with God in the performance of those duties which He has appointed us. It was this particular grace which was admired in Peter and John in Acts 4:13. It is only as the mind remains convinced of the righteousness of our cause, and as the heart is assured we are doing that which is well-pleasing to God, that, when we are criticised and condemned by men, and are menaced by their frowns and threats, we shall be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1Co 15:58), in nothing moved by our adversaries.

This confidence in and toward God, which had hitherto sustained the persecuted Hebrews, they are here bidden to, “Cast not away” (Heb 10:35). Here again the responsibility of the Christian is addressed. There are those who insist we can no more control our “confidence”—weaken or strengthen it—than we can control the wind. But this is to lose sight of the fact that we are moral creatures and accountable for the use or misuse of all our faculties. If I allow my mind to dwell upon the difficulties before me, the disadvantages I may suffer through faithfulness to Christ, or listen to the whisperings of Satan as to how I can avoid trouble by little compromises, then my courage will soon wane, and *I* shall be to blame. On the other hand, if I seek grace to dwell upon God’s promises, realize it is an honour to suffer for Christ’s sake, and remind myself that whatever I lose here is not worthy to be compared with what I shall gain hereafter, then, assured that God is for me, I shall care not who be against me.

To encourage the tempted Hebrews, the apostle at once added, “which hath great recompense of reward” (Heb 10:35). From these words, it is very evident that the true Christian may, and should, have his eye upon the reward that is promised those who suffer for the Gospel’s sake. Nor does this verse by any means stand alone. “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven” (Mat 5:11-12)—notice carefully the words “in heaven,” which at once exposes the error of those who declare that the “Sermon on the Mount” (Mat 5-7) belongs not to and is not about those who are members of the Body of Christ, but is “Jewish” and “Millennial.” Christians are not sufficiently occupied with their reward in heaven.

The subject of “Rewards” is too large a one for us to now canvass in detail. Yet in view of present-day errors, something needs to be said thereon. Not a few suppose that the concepts presented by “grace” and “reward” are irreconcilably at variance. The trouble with such people is that, instead of searching the Scriptures to discover how the Holy Spirit has *used* the term, they turn to a human dictionary. In human affairs, a “reward” commonly (though not always) denotes the recognition and recompensing of a *meritorious performance*, but not so is its general usage in Scripture. Take the first occurrence of the word. In Genesis 15:1, we find Jehovah saying unto Abraham, “Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” How utterly impossible for the patriarch to have done anything to *deserve* this! Once it is plainly perceived that *in Scripture* the term “reward” has in it *no* thought of a meet return for a *meritorious* performance, much of the fog with which modern “dispensationalists” have surrounded the subject will be cleared away.

“Which hath great recompense of reward” (Heb 10:35). Rightly did John Calvin (1509-1564) point out in his comments on this verse, “By mentioning ‘reward,’ he diminishes nothing from the *gratuitous* promise of salvation, for the faithful know that their labour is not in vain in the Lord in such a way that they still rest on God’s mercy alone. But it has been often stated elsewhere how ‘reward’ is *not* incompatible with the *gratuitous* imputation of righteousness.” If those who suppose that Christians, living since the days of J. N. Darby (1800-1882) and “Dr.” Scofield (1843-1921) appeared on the scene have “much more light” than they who preceded them, would only *read* the Reformers and the Puritans with an unprejudiced mind, they would soon be obliged to revise their ideas. In many respects, we have gone backwards instead of forwards, and only too often the “light” which is in men, is but *darkness*, and “How great is that darkness!” (Mat 6:23)—so great that it closes their eyes against all true light.

“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Heb 10:36). The opening, “For,” intimates that the apostle is here confirming the exhortation which he had just insisted upon. “The reward can be obtained only by holding fast this confidence—by adhering steadily and perseveringly to Christ and His cause” (John Brown, 1784-1858). Patience, or endurance in the path of obedience, fidelity, and suffering, is indispensably necessary if we are to be preserved unto salvation. Let those, who will, call this teaching *legalistic*. The only other alternative is lawlessness and licentiousness. Though it is *not* “For,” yet it is “*through* faith and patience” or “perseverance,” that we “inherit the promises” (Heb 6:12).

No one who is familiar with the writings of John Owen the Puritan, who proclaimed the free grace of God and the gratuitousness of His salvation in such certain terms, will accuse him of legality or of inculcating creature-merits. Yet he, in his comments in Hebrews 10:35-36 wrote, “Wherefore, ‘the recompense of the reward’ here intended, is the glory of heaven, proposed as a crown unto them that overcome in their sufferings for the Gospel. And the future glory, which, as unto its original cause, is the fruit of the good pleasure and sovereign grace of God, whose pleasure it is to give us the kingdom, and as unto its procuring cause is the sole purchase of the blood of Christ, who obtained for us eternal redemption. And it is, on both accounts, a free gift of God, for ‘the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God through Christ is life eternal’ (so as it can be no way merited nor procured by ourselves, by virtue of any proportion by the rules of justice between what we do or suffer, and what is promised), is yet constantly promised to suffering believers, under the name of a recompense or a reward. For it doth not become the greatness and goodness of God to call His own people unto sufferings for His name, and unto His glory, and therein to the loss of their lives many times, with all enjoyments here below, and not propose unto them, nor provide for them, that which shall be infinitely better than all that they so undergo. This confidence ‘*hath*’ this recompense of reward. That is, it gives a right and title unto the future reward of glory. It hath in it the promise and constitution of God. Whoever abides in its exercise, shall be no longer in the issue.”

“For ye have need of patience” (Heb 10:36). The apostle did not charge them with being destitute of this grace, for all who are born of the Spirit bear, in some measure, the fruit of the Spirit, and this among the rest (Gal 5:22). Those who are brought into the kingdom of Jesus Christ are into His patience also (Rev 1:9). No, the apostle signified that they needed the exercise, continuance, and increase of this grace. Compare Zephaniah 2:3, where the “meek” are exhorted to *seek* “meekness.” That unto which the apostle would bestir these saints was that they receive afflictions as from the hand of God, to bear reproaches and persecutions from men as that unto which He had “appointed” them (1Th 3:3), to commit their cause unto the Lord, and rest in Him

(Psa 37:5-6), to bear up and not sink under trials, and to live in the constant expectation of heaven.

The Hebrew Christians (like we sometimes are) were tempted to become weary of well doing. Numbers of their fellows, who had once appeared to be zealous believers, had apostatized, and the rest would soon be sorely tried. It was necessary, then, that they should arm their minds with the spirit of resignation and persevering constancy, that having done the will of God, by steadfastly cleaving to Christ, and obeying Him through all temptations and sufferings, they might afterwards receive the promised gift of eternal life. The principle of this verse remains unchanged. Satan is the same, and so also is the world, and they who will live godly cannot escape trials and tribulations. Nor is it desirable that we should. Some of the finer and more delicate of the Christian graces can only be developed under stress and suffering. Then how much we need to pray for God to sanctify to our good each affliction which comes upon us, so that fruit may issue to His praise and that we may so conduct ourselves as to be encouragements to fellow-pilgrims.

The exercise of this grace of patience is to be continued until “after ye have done the will of God” (Heb 10:36). There is no dismissal from the discharge of this duty while we are left here upon earth. While the more immediate reference is unto *meekly bearing* whatever the sovereign will of our all-wise and infinitely loving God has ordained for us, yet the *active walking* in the way of God’s commandments is also included, as is evident from the word “done.” The will of God, as it is made known in His Word, is the alone rule by which we are to live and all our ways are to be conformed. That revealed will of God is not only to be believed and revered by us, but *practiced* as well. No situation in which we can be placed, no threatenings of men, however terrible, can ever justify us for disobeying God. True, there will be seasons of sore testing, times when it seems that our trials are more than flesh and blood can endure, and then, it is that we most have “need of patience.” Nor will divine succour and supernatural grace be withheld if we humbly and trustfully seek it.

“That, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Heb 10:36). Here the “great recompense of reward” of the previous verse is designated “the promise,” partly is guard against the error that eternal life can be earned, or that heaven can be merited by creature performances. And partly to emphasize the *certainty* of that which is promised unto all who endure unto the end. The “promise” is here put for the things promised, as in Hebrews 6:12, 17; 11:13, 39. It is called, “*the promise*,” as in 1 John 2:25 etc., because it is the grand comprehensive promise, including all others, being the glorious consummation to which they point. Nor should any stumble because they cannot perceive the consistency of a thing being *both* a “reward” and a “promise.” We find the same conjunction of concepts in Colossians 3:24, “Ye shall receive the *reward* of the inheritance: *for ye serve* the Lord Christ.” It is so denominated to show that it is *not* merited by works, but is bestowed by free grace, and will certainly be enjoyed by all the elect. And yet, it will only be obtained by them as they persevere in the path of duty.

“For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb 10:37). The casual, “For,” denotes that the apostle was about to confirm what he had just said. He both adds a word to strengthen their “confidence” and “patience,” and also points them to the near approach of the time when they should receive their “reward.” The Greek is very expressive and emphatic. The apostle used a word which signifies, “a little while,” and then, for further emphasis added a particle meaning, “very,” and this he still further intensified by repeating it. Thus, literally rendered, this clause reads, “For yet a very, very little while, and he that shall come will come.”

“There is indeed nothing that avails more to sustain our minds, should they at any time become faint, than the hope of a speedy and near termination. As a general holds forth to his soldiers the prospect that the war will soon end, provided they hold out a little longer, so the apostle reminds us that the Lord will shortly come to deliver us from all evils, provided our minds faint not through want of firmness. And in order that this consolation might have more assurance and authority, he adduces the testimony of Habakkuk. But as he follows the Greek version, he departs somewhat from the words of the prophet” (John Calvin). Frequently does the Holy Spirit emphasize the exceeding (comparative) brevity of the saints’ sufferings in this world, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psa 30:5). “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet *shortly*” (Rom 16:20). “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment” (2Co 4:17).

“For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb 10:37). The reference here is to the person of the Lord Jesus, as is evident from Habakkuk 2:3, to which the apostle here alludes. Like so many prophecies, that word of Habakkuk’s was to receive a threefold fulfillment—a literal and initial one, a spiritual and continuous one, a final and complete one. The literal was the divine incarnation, when the Son of God came here in flesh. The final will be His return in visible glory and power. The spiritual has reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, when that which most obstructed the manifestation of Christ’s kingdom on earth was destroyed—with the overthrow of the Temple and its worship, official Judaism came to an end. The Christians in Palestine were being constantly persecuted by the Jews, but their conquest by Titus and their consequent dispersion put an end to this. That event was less than ten years distant when Paul wrote. Compare our remarks on “see the day approaching” (Heb 10:25).

We trust that none will conclude from what has been said above that we regard Heb 10:37 as containing *no* reference to the final coming of Christ. What we have sought to point out was the *immediate* purport of its contents unto the Hebrews. But it also contains a message for us, a message of hope and comfort. It is *our* privilege, too, to be waiting for God’s Son from heaven. Let us add that it is a big mistake to regard every mention of the “coming” of Christ in the New Testament Scriptures as referring to His “appearing the second time” (Heb 9:28). In John 14:18, 28, the reference was to Christ’s “coming” by His Spirit. In John 14:23, to His “coming” in loving manifestation to the individual soul. In Ephesians 2:17, He “came” by the Gospel. In Revelation 2:5, His “coming” is in chastisement. Careful study of each verse is required in order to distinguish between these several aspects.

“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Heb 10:38). The first half of this verse is a quotation from Habakkuk 2:4, and its pertinency to the admonition which the apostle was pressing upon the Hebrews is not difficult to perceive. The prophet is cited in proof that perseverance is one of the distinguishing characteristics of a child of God. He who has been justified by God, through the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to his account, lives by faith as the influencing principle of his life. Thus, the apostle declared, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God” (Gal 2:20). The one whom God has exonerated from the curse and condemnation of the law is not him who has merely “believed,” but is the man who *continues* “believing,” with all that that word includes and involves. Let the reader fully note the force of the present perfect “*believeth*,” in John 3:15-16, 18; 5:24, etc., and contrast the, “for a while believed,” of Luke 8:13!

The use of the future tense, “shall live,” announces and enforces the necessity for the continued exercise of faith. It is true that one who has been justified by God was previously quickened, for we are “justified by faith” (Act 13:39; Rom 5:1, etc.), and one who is dead in

trespasses and sins cannot savingly believe—note the “called” *before* “justified” in Romans 8:30. It is also true that the real Christian *lives* by faith, for that is the very nature of indwelling grace. But it is equally true that the “just *shall live* by faith.” The constant exercise of faith by the saint is as essential to his final salvation as it was to his initial salvation. Just as the soul can only be delivered from the wrath to come by repentance (self-judgment) and personal faith in the Lord Jesus, so we can only be delivered from the power of indwelling sin, from the temptations of Satan, from an enticing world which seeks to destroy us, by a steady and persistent *walking* by faith.

Patient endurance is a fruit of faith, yet it is only as that vital and root grace is in daily exercise that the Christian is enabled to stand firm amid the storms of life. Those whom God declares righteous in Christ are to pass their lives here, not in doubt and fear, but in the maintenance of a calm trust in and a joyful obedience to Him. Only as the heart is engaged with God and feeds upon His Word, will the soul be invigorated and fitted to press onwards when everything outward seems to be against him. It is by our faith being drawn out unto things above that we receive the needed strength which causes us to look away from the discouraging and distracting scene around us. As faith lives upon Christ (Joh 6:56-57), it draws virtue from Him, as the branch derives sap from the root of the vine. Faith makes us resign ourselves and our affairs to Christ’s disposing, cheerfully treading the path of duty, and patiently waiting that issue which He will give. Faith is assured that our Head knows far better than we do what is good and best.

“But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Heb 10:38). It seems to the writer that the translators of the Authorized Version took an unwarranted liberty with the Word of God when they inserted (in italics) the words, “any man,” and changed, “and,” (kai) into, “but.” The Holy Scriptures should never be altered to suit our ideas of evangelical truth. The Revised Version correctly gives, “if he shrink back,” and Bagster’s Interlinear, “and if he draw back.” Yes, *if* the “just” man himself were to draw back and continue in apostacy, he would finally perish. “By this solemn consideration, therefore, the apostle urges on them the importance of perseverance, and the guilt and danger of apostacy from the Christian faith. *If* such a case should occur, no matter what might have been the former condition, and no matter what love or zeal might have been evinced, yet such an apostacy would expose the individual to the certain wrath of God. His former love could not save him, any more than the former obedience of the angels saved them from the horrors of eternal chains and darkness” (Albert Barnes, 1798-1870).

“But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Heb 10:38). Once more the apostle faithfully warns the Hebrew Christians (and us) of the dreadful consequence which would attend the continuance in a course of backsliding. He who thinks that by refusing to take up his cross daily and follow the example left by Christ, can escape the world’s reproach and persecution, and yet go to heaven, is fatally deluding himself. Said the Lord Jesus, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it” (Mat 16:25). That is, he who is so diligent in looking after his temporal prospects, worldly reputation, and personal comforts, shall eternally lose his soul.

It was to stir up the Hebrews unto the more diligent labouring after living the life of faith that the apostle here pointed out the terrible alternative. Unless they maintained a steady trust in God and an obedient submission unto His revealed will, they were in grave danger of backsliding and apostatizing. If any should “draw back,” then God would have “*no* pleasure in him,” which is but the negative way of saying that he would be an object of abhorrence. But observe closely, it does not say God would have “*no more* pleasure in him,” which would conflict with the uniform teaching of the Word concerning the *unchanging* love of God (Mal 3:6; Joh 13:1; Rom 8:35-39)

toward His own. O the minute accuracy of Holy Writ! The practical application of this solemn word to us is that, in order to have a scripturally-grounded assurance of God's taking pleasure in *us*, we must continue cleaving closely unto Him.

"But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb 10:39). The word, "perdition," shows plainly that the "drawing back," of the previous verse, is a fatal and final one. Nevertheless, so far is Hebrews 10:38 from establishing the doom of any child of God, the apostle assures the Hebrews that no such fate would overtake them. What is added here, in this verse, was to prevent their being unduly affrighted with the solemn warnings previously given. And lest they should conclude that Paul thought evilly of them, though he had warned, he did not regard them as treading the broad road to destruction. Instead, he was "persuaded better things of you" (Heb 6:9). "Let it be noticed that this truth belongs also to us, for we, whom God has favoured with the light of the Gospel, ought to acknowledge that we have been called in order that we may advance more and more in our obedience to God, and strive constantly to draw nearer to Him. This is the real preservation of the soul, for by so doing, we shall escape eternal perdition" (John Calvin).

"In this, the apostle expresses the fullest conviction that none of those to whom he wrote would apostatize. The case which he had been describing was only a supposable case, not one which he believed would occur. He had only been stating what *must* happen if a sincere Christian should apostatize. But he did not mean to say that this *would* occur in regard to them. He made a statement of a general principle under the divine administration, and he designed that this should be a means of keeping them in the path of life" (A. Barnes). Christians may grow cold, neglect the means of grace, backslide, fall into grievous sins, as did David and Peter, but they shall not "draw back *unto perdition*." No, they have been predestinated "to be conformed unto" the image of Christ (Rom 8:29), and God's purpose cannot fail. They are the objects of Christ's intercession (Joh 17:15, 24), and that is efficacious (Joh 11:42). They are *restored* by the good Shepherd when they go astray (Psa 23:3).

As the term, "perdition," denoted that eternal damnation is the doom of apostates, so the word, "salvation," here has reference to that ultimate consummation of the portion of all true believers. It is to be carefully noted that the apostle did not say, "Them that have believed to the salvation of the soul," but, "Them that believe to the saving of the soul." The difference is real and radical. There is a blessed sense in which every regenerated believer *has been* saved by Christ, yet there is also another, and most important sense, in which his salvation is *yet* future. See Romans 13:11; 1 Peter 1:5, 9. The complete and final salvation of the Christian is dependent upon his *continued* trust in and obedience to God in Christ, *not* as the *cause* thereof, yet as the indispensable *means* thereto.

It is gloriously true that Christians are "kept by the power of God" (1Pe 1:5). He, who prepares heaven for them, preserves them unto it. But by what instrument or means? The same verse tells us—"through faith" (1Pe 1:5). To depend upon an invisible God for a happiness that awaits us in an invisible world, when, in the meantime, He permits us to be harassed with all sorts of temptations, trials, and troubles, requires faith—real faith, supernatural faith. Through faith alone can the heart be sustained till we obtain salvation. Nothing but a God-given and God-maintained faith can enable us to row against the stream of flesh and blood, and so deny its cravings that we shall win through to heaven at last. The "flesh" is for sparing and pampering the body, but, "faith" is for the "saving of the soul."

THE LIFE OF DAVID

7. His Fleeing from Saul

At the close of 1 Samuel 18, there is a very striking word recorded which supplies a most blessed line in the typical picture that was furnished by the man after God's own heart. There, we read, "David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by" (1Sa 18:30). The marginal reading is still more suggestive, "so that his name was *precious*." What a lovely foreshadowing was this of Him whose "Name" is "as ointment poured forth" (Song 1:3)! Yes, both to His Father and to His people, the name of Christ is "much set by." He has "obtained a more excellent name" than angels bear (Heb 1:4). Yea, He has been given "a name which is above every name" (Phi 2:9). "Precious" beyond description is that Name unto His own. They plead it in prayer (Joh 14:13). They make it their "strong tower" (Pro 18:10).

"And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David" (1Sa 19:1). How vivid and how solemn is the contrast presented between the last sentence of the preceding chapter and the opening one of this! And yet, perhaps, the spiritually-minded would hardly expect anything else. When the "name" of the "Beloved" (for that is what "David" signifies) is "much set by," we are prepared to see the immediate raging of the enemy—personified here by Saul. Yes, the picture here presented to our view is true to life. Nothing is more calculated to call into action the enmity of the serpent against the woman's Seed than the extolling of His "name," with all that that scripturally includes. It was thus in the days of the apostles. When they announced that, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Act 4:12), the Jewish leaders "commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (Act 4:18). And because they heeded not, the apostles were "beaten" and again commanded "they should not speak in the name of Jesus" (Act 5:40).

The previous plot of Saul upon David's life had failed. Instead of his being slain by the Philistines, they fell under the hand of David, and the consequence was that the son of Jesse became more esteemed than ever by the people. His name was had in high honour among them. Thus it was, too, with his Antitype. The more the chief priests and Pharisees persecuted the Lord Jesus, the more the people sought after Him. "From that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death...and the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus" (Joh 11:53, 55-56). So it was after His ascension. The more His witnesses were persecuted, the more the Gospel prospered. There seems little room for doubt that the death of Stephen was one of the things used by God to convict him who afterwards became the mighty apostle to the Gentiles. When the early church was assailed, we are told, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (Act 8:4). Thus does God make the wrath of man to praise Him.

Saul was growing desperate, and now hesitated not to make known unto his own son his fierce hatred of David. Yet, here again, we may behold and admire the directing hand of Providence in the king's not concealing his murderous designs from Jonathan. The son shared not his father's enmity, accordingly we read, "But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan

told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself: and I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee” (1Sa 19:2-3). It is blessed to see such true and disinterested friendship, for it should not be forgotten that Jonathan was the natural heir to the throne. Here we see him faithfully acquainting David of his danger, and counselling him to take precautionary measures against it.

Not only did Jonathan warn his beloved friend of the evil intentions of his father, but he also intreated the king on his behalf. Beautiful is it to see him interceding before Saul (1Sa 19:4-5) at the imminent risk of bringing down his anger upon his own head. Jonathan reminded Saul that David had never wronged him. So far from it, he had delivered Israel from the Philistines, and had thus saved the king’s throne. Why then should he be so set upon shedding “innocent blood” (1Sa 19:5). Jonathan must not here be regarded as a type of Christ, rather is he a vivid contrast. Jonathan’s plea was based upon David’s personal merits. It is the very opposite in the case of the Christian’s Intercessor. Our great High Priest appears before the King of the universe on behalf of His people, not on the ground of any good *they* have done, but solely on the ground of that perfect satisfaction or obedience which *He* offered to divine justice on their behalf. No merits of theirs can He plead, but His own perfect sacrifice prevails for them.

Jonathan’s intercession was successful, “And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan” (1Sa 19:6). He not only gave his son a fair hearing, but was duly impressed by the arguments used, and was convicted, for the present, that he was wrong in seeking the life of David. Yet here again, the intercession of Jonathan and that of the Lord Jesus for His people are in striking contrast. The former had naught but a temporary and transient effect upon his father, whereas that of our Advocate is eternally efficacious—forever be His name praised. “And Saul swear, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain” (1Sa 19:6). Once more, we see how easy it is for wicked men to make use of pious expressions, and appear to superficial observers very godly men. The sequel shows of what little value is the solemn oath of a king, and warns us to place no confidence in the engagements of earthly rulers. They who are acquainted with the Scriptures are not surprised when even national and international treaties become only worthless “scraps of paper.”

Re-assured by Jonathan, David returned to Saul’s household (1Sa 19:7). But not for long—a fresh war (probably local and on a small scale) broke out with the Philistines. This called for David to resume his military activities, which he did with great success (1Sa 19:8), killing many of the enemy and putting the remainder to flight. A blessed example does the man after God’s own heart here set us. Though serving a master that little appreciated his faithful efforts, nay, who had vilely mistreated him, our hero did not refuse to perform his present duty. “David continues his good services to his king and country. Though Saul had requited him evil for good, and even his usefulness was the very thing for which Saul envied him, yet he did not, therefore, retire in sullenness and decline public service. Those that are ill paid for doing good, yet must not be weary of well-doing, remembering what a bountiful benefactor our heavenly Father is” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

“And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand” (1Sa 19:9). The opening word of this verse seems to intimate that the fresh victory of David over the Philistines stirred up the spiteful jealousy of the king, and thus, by “giving place to the devil” (Eph 4:26-27), became susceptible again to the evil spirit. “And David played with his hand,” no doubt upon the harp. One who had been so successful upon the battlefield, and was held in such honour by the people, might have deemed such a service as beneath his dignity. But

a gracious man considers no ministry too humble by which he may do good to another. Or, he might have objected, the danger he incurred the last time he performed this office for Saul (1Sa 18:10), but he counted upon God to preserve him in the path of duty.

“And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin” (1Sa 19:10). In view of his so recently acceding to his son’s intercession and swearing that David should not be slain, our present verse furnishes an illustration of a solemn and searching principle. How often unsaved people, after sudden conviction, have *resolved* to break from their evil doings and serve the Lord, but only after a short season, to return to their course of sin, like a washed sow to her wallowing in the mire (2Pe 2:22). Where there has been no miracle of mercy wrought within the heart, no change of disposition, and where there is no dependence upon divine grace for needed strength, resolutions, however sincere and earnest, seldom produce any lasting effect. Unmortified lusts quickly break through the most solemn vows. Where the fear of God does not possess the heart, fresh temptations soon arouse the dormant corruptions, and this gives Satan good opportunity to regain complete mastery over his victim.

“But he slipped away out of Saul’s presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night” (1Sa 19:10). How wonderful is the care of God for His own! Though invisible, how real are His protecting arms! “Not a shaft of hate can hit, till the God of love sees fit.” What peace and stability it brings to the heart when faith realizes that, “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Psa 34:7). Men may be filled with malice against us, Satan may rage and seek our destruction, but none can touch a hair of our heads without God’s permission. The Lord Almighty is the “Shield and Buckler” (Psa 91:4), the “Rock and Fortress” (Psa 18:2) of all those who put their trust in Him. Yet note that David was not foolhardy and reckless. Faith is not presumptuous. Though we are to trust Him, we are forbidden to *tempt* the Lord. Therefore, it is our duty to retire when men seek our hurt—cf. Matthew 10:23.

“Saul also sent messengers unto David’s house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: And Michal David’s wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life tonight, tomorrow shalt thou be slain” (1Sa 19:11). Saul was thoroughly aroused. Chagrined by his personal failure to kill David, he now sent his guards to assassinate him. These were to surround his house and wait till daylight, rather than enter and run the risk of killing some one else, or allowing him to make his escape during the confusion and darkness. But man proposes and God disposes. The Lord had other services for David to perform, and the servant of God is immortal until the work allotted him has been done. This time, the king’s own daughter, who had married David, was the one to befriend him. In some way, she had learned of her father’s plan, so at once took measures to thwart it. First, she acquainted her husband of his imminent danger.

Next we are told, “So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped” (1Sa 19:12). In like manner, Rahab had let down the spies from her house in Jericho, when the king’s messengers were in quest of him, and as the disciples let down the apostle Paul at Damascus, to preserve him from the evil designs of the Jews. Though the doors were securely guarded, David thus escaped through a window, and fled swiftly and safely away. It is of deep interest, at this point, to turn to the 59th Psalm, the heading of which (inspired, we believe) tells us it was written, “When Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.” In his critical situation, David betook himself to prayer, “Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men. For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: the mighty are gathered against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD” (Psa 59:1-3). Blessed is it to see that ere he completed

the Psalm, full assurance of deliverance was his, “But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy *in the morning*” (Psa 59:16).

“And Michal took an image, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats’ hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth, and when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick” (1Sa 19:13-14). Water will not rise above its own level. We cannot expect the children of this world to act according to heavenly principles. Alienated as they are from the life of God (Eph 4:18), utter strangers to Him in experience (Eph 2:12), they have no trust in Him. In an emergency, they have no better recourse than to turn unto fleshly schemings and devisings. From a natural viewpoint, Michal’s fidelity to her husband was commendable, but from a spiritual standpoint, her deceit and falsehood was reprehensible. The one who commits his cause and case unto the Lord, *trusting* also in Him to bring to pass His own wise purpose and that which shall be for his own highest good (Psa 37:5), has no need to resort unto tricks and deceits. Does not David’s having yoked himself to an unbeliever supply the key to his painful experiences in Saul’s household!

“And Saul sent the messengers again to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him” (1Sa 19:15). Bent on David’s destruction, the king gave orders that, sick or no, he should be carried into his presence, and this for the specific purpose of slaying him by his own hand. Base and barbarous was it to thus triumph over one whom he thought was sick, and to vow the death of one that, for all he knew, was dying by the hand of nature. Spurred on by him who is “a murderer from the beginning” (Joh 8:44), the savage cruelty of Saul makes evident the extreme danger to which David was exposed, which, in turn, intensifies the blessedness of God’s protection of him. How precious it is for the saint to know that the Lord places Himself as the Shield between him and his malicious foe! “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever” (Psa 125:2).

When the servants returned to and entered Michal’s house, her plot was exposed and the flight of David discovered (1Sa 19:16). Whereupon the king asked his daughter, “Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped?” (1Sa 19:17). How thoroughly blurred is the vision of one who is filled with envy, anger, and hatred! He, who had befriended Saul again and again, was now regarded as an “enemy.” There is a solemn lesson for us in this. If pride, prejudice, or self-seeking rule our hearts, we shall regard those who are our wisest counsellors and well-wishers as foes. Only when our eye be single is our whole body full of light. Solemn is it to note Michal’s answer to Saul, “He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?” (1Sa 19:17), thereby representing David as a desperate man who would have slain her had she sought to block his escape. Still more solemn is it to find the man after God’s own heart married to such a woman!

“So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth” (1Sa 19:18). It was by Samuel he had been anointed, and through him he had first received the promise of the kingdom. Probably David now sought God’s prophet for the strengthening of his faith, for counsel as to what he should do, for comfort under his present troubles, for fellowship and prayer. It was through Samuel he was most likely to learn the mind of the Lord. And too, he probably regarded asylum with Samuel as the most secure place in which he could lodge. Naioth was close to Ramah and there was a school of the prophets. If the Philistines gave no disturbance to the “hill of God” and the prophets in it (1Sa 10:5), it might be reasonably concluded that Saul would not.

“And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah. And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and

Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied” (1Sa 19:19-20). Notwithstanding the sacredness of the place David was in, Saul sent servants to arrest him. But again, the Lord interposed, by causing His Spirit to fall upon Saul’s messengers, who were so much taken up with the religious exercises, they neglected the errand on which they had been sent. How this reminds us of the Pharisees and chief priests sending officers to apprehend Christ, but who instead of executing their commission, returned to their masters, saying, “Never man spake like this man” (Joh 7:32, 45-46)! Saul sent others of his servants, a second and a third time, to seize David, but with the same result as before (1Sa 19:21). Saul now, therefore, went forth in person to seek and slay David, but before he reached the place where David was, the Spirit of God came upon him and threw him into a kind of trance, in which he continued all day and night, giving David plenty of time to escape. Such strange methods does JOHOVAH sometimes employ in bringing to naught the efforts of His enemies against His servants.

PRAYER

4. The Application

First, a word of *information*. As prayer is the duty of every one of the children of God, and carried on by the Spirit of Christ in the soul, so every one that doth but offer to take upon him to pray to the Lord had need to be very wary, and to go about that work especially with the dread of God, as well as with hopes of the mercy of God through Jesus Christ. Prayer is an ordinance of God in which a man draws near to Him, and therefore, it calleth for so much the more of the assistance of the grace of God to help a soul to pray as becomes one that is in the presence of Him. It is a shame for a man to behave himself irreverently before a king, but a sin to do so before God. And as a king (who is wise) is not pleased with an oration made up with unseemly words and gestures, so God takes no pleasure in the sacrifice of fools. It is not long discourses nor eloquent tongues that are the things which are pleasing in the ears of the Lord, but a humble, broken, and contrite heart that is sweet in the nostrils of the heavenly majesty. Therefore, for information, know that there are these five things that are obstructions to prayer, and even make void the requests of the creature.

1. When men regard iniquity in their hearts at the time of their prayers before God. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear me” (Psa 66:18), when there is a secret love to that very thing which thou, with thy dissembling lips, dost ask for strength against. For this is the wickedness of man’s heart, that it will even love and hold fast that which with the mouth it prays against. And of this sort are they that, “honour me with their mouth...but their heart is far from me” (Mat 15:8). Oh how ugly would it be in our eyes, if we should see a beggar ask an alms with an intention to throw it to the dogs! or, that should say with one breath, “Pray bestow this upon me,” and with the next, “I beseech you give it me not”! And yet thus it is with these kind of

persons. With their mouth they say, “Thy will be done,” and with their hearts the opposite. With their mouth say, “Hallowed be thy name,” yet with their hearts and lives, they would like to dishonour Him all the day long. These be the prayers that become sin, and though they put them often, yet the Lord will never answer them.

2. When men pray for show, to be heard, and thought somebody in religion. These prayers also fall short of God’s approbation and are never like to be answered in reference to eternal life. There are two sorts of men that pray to this end: (1) Your trencher-chaplains that thrust themselves into great men’s families, pretending the worship of God, when in truth the great business is their own bellies, and were notable pointed out by Ahab’s prophets, and also Nebuchadnezzar’s, who, though they pretended great devotion, yet their lusts were the things aimed at by them. (2) Them also that seek repute and applause for their eloquent terms and seek more to tickle the ears and heads of their hearers than anything else. These be they that “pray to be heard of men,” and have their reward already.

These persons are discovered thus—they eye only their auditory in their expressions. They look for commendation when they have done. Their hearts either rise or fall according to their praise or enlargement. The length of their prayer pleaseth them, and that it might be long, they vainly repeat them over and over, but look not from what heart they come. They look for returns, but it is the windy applause of men. And therefore, they love not to be in their chamber, but among company. And if at any time, conscience thrusts them into their closet, yet hypocrisy will cause them to be heard in the streets. And when their mouths have done going, their prayers are ended, for they wait not to hear what the Lord will say.

3. A third sort of prayer that will not be accepted of God is when either they pray for wrong things, or if for right things, that the things asked for might be spent upon their own lusts and made out to wrong ends. “Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (Jam 4:2-3). Ends contrary to God’s will is a great argument with Him to frustrate the petitions presented before Him. Hence, it is that so many pray for this and that and yet receive it not. God answers them only with silence. They have their words for their labour. That is all. *Objection:* But God hears some persons though their hearts be not right with Him, as He did Israel in giving quails, though they spent them on their lusts. *Answer:* If He doth, it is in judgment, not in mercy. He gave them their desire indeed, but they had better have been without, for He sent leanness into their souls. Woe be to that man that God answereth thus.

4. Another sort of prayers there are that are not answered—those made by men and presented to God in their own persons only, without their appearing in the Lord Jesus. Though God hath appointed prayer, and promised to hear the prayer of the creature, yet *not* the prayer of any creature that comes not in Christ. “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name,” said Christ, “that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (Joh 14:13). Though you be never so devout, zealous, earnest, and constant in prayer, yet it is in Christ only that you must be heard and accepted. But, alas! the most of men know not what it is to come to God in the name of our Lord Jesus, which is the reason why they live wickedly, pray wickedly, and also die wickedly. Or else that they attain to nothing else but what a mere natural man may attain unto.

5. The last thing that hindereth prayer is the form of it without the power. It is an easy thing for men to be very hot for such things as forms of prayer, as they are written in a book. But yet they are altogether forgetful to inquire with themselves whether they have the Spirit and power of prayer. These men are like a painted man, and their prayers are like a false voice. They in person

appear as hypocrits and their prayers are an abomination. When they say they have been pouring out their souls to God, He says they have been “howling” like dogs (Hos 7:14).

When, therefore, thou intendest to pray to the Lord of heaven and earth, consider these particulars. First, what thou wantest. Do not as many, who in their words only beat the air, and ask for such things as indeed they do not desire, nor see that they stand in need of. Second, when thou seest what thou wantest, keep to that, and take heed that thou prayest feelingly. *Objection:* But I have a sense of nothing. Then, by your argument, I must not pray at all. *Answer:* 1. If thou findest thyself senseless, in some sad measure, yet thou canst not complain of that senselessness, but by being sensible. There is a sense of senselessness according to thy sense, then, that thou hast of the need of anything, so pray. And if thou art sensible of thy senselessness, pray the Lord to make thee sensible of what ever thou findest thy heart senseless of. “Call upon me, and I will hear thee, and show thee great and mighty things that thou knowest not,” that thou art not sensible of.

2. Take heed that thy heart go to God as well as thy mouth. Let not thy mouth go any further than thou strivest to draw thine heart along with it. David would lift his heart and soul to the Lord and with good reason. For so far as a man’s mouth goeth not along with his heart, so far it is but lip labour only. And though God calls for and accepteth the calves of the lips, yet the lips without the heart argueth not only senselessness, but our being without sense of our senselessness, and therefore, if thou hast a mind to enlarge in prayer before God, see that it be with thy heart.

3. Take heed of affecting expressions and so to please thyself with the use of them that thou forget not the life of prayer. I shall conclude this use with a caution or two. First, take heed you do not throw off prayer, through sudden persuasions that thou has not the Spirit, neither prayerst thereby. It is the great work of the devil to do his best, or rather his worst, against the best prayers. He will flatter your false, dissembling hypocrits and feed them with a thousand fancies of well-doing, when their very duties of prayer and all other stink in the nostrils of God. So he stands at a poor Joshua’s hand (Zec 3:1) to resist and discourage. Take heed, therefore, of such false conclusions and groundless discouragements, and though such persuasions do come in upon thy spirit, be so far from being discouraged by them, that thou use them to put thee upon further sincerity and restlessness of spirit in thy approaching to God.

Secondly, as such sudden temptations should not stop thee from prayer and pouring out thy soul to God, so neither should thine own heart’s corruption hinder thee. It may be thou mayest find in thee all those things before mentioned and that they will be endeavoring to put forth themselves in thy praying to Him. Thy business, then, is to judge them, to pray against them, and lay thyself so much the more at the foot of God, in a sense of thy own vileness, and rather make an argument from thy vileness and corruption of heart to plead with God for justifying and sanctifying grace, than an argument of discouragement and despair. David went this way, “O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great” (Psa 25:11)

Next, a word of *encouragement* to the poor tempted and cast-down soul to pray to God through Christ. 1. That Scripture in Luke 11:7-8 is very encouraging to any soul that doth hunger after Christ Jesus. In Luke 11:5-7, he spake a parable of a man that went to his friend to borrow three loaves, who, because he was in bed, denied him. Yet for his importunity-sake, he did arise and give him, clearly signifying that though poor souls, through the weakness of their faith, cannot see that they are the friends of God, yet they should never leave asking and knocking at God’s door for mercy. Mark, saith Christ, “I say unto you, although he will not arise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity (of restless desires), he will arise and give him as many as he needeth.” Poor heart! thou criest out that God will not regard thee, thou

doest not find that thou art a friend to Him, but rather an enemy in thine heart, by wicked works, and thou art as though thou didst hear the Lord saying to thee, as in the parable, "Trouble me not, I cannot give unto thee." Yet I say, *continue* knocking, crying, moaning, and bewailing thyself. I tell thee, though He will not arise and give thee because thou art His friend, yet because of thy importunity He will arise and give thee as many as thou needest.

The same in effect you have discovered in the parable of the unjust judge and the poor widow. Her importunity prevailed with him. And verily mine own experience tells me that there is nothing that doth more prevail with God than importunity. Is it not so with you in respect of beggars that come to your door? Though you have no heart to give them anything at their first asking, yet if they follow you, bemoaning themselves and will take no nay without an alms, you will give them, for their continual begging overcometh you.

2. Another encouragement for a poor, trembling, convicted soul is to consider the place, *throne* or seat, on which the great God hath placed Himself to hear the petitions of poor creatures, and that is, a throne *of grace*. It is the "mercy-seat," which signifies in the days of the Gospel that God hath taken His abiding-place in mercy and forgiveness and from thence, He doth intend to hear the sinner and to commune with him, as He saith, "And *there* I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat" (Exo 25:22). Poor souls! they are very apt to entertain strange thoughts of God, and His carriage towards them, and conclude that He will have no regard unto them, when He is upon the mercy-seat and hath taken up His place there on purpose to hear and regard the prayers of poor creatures. If He had said, "I will commune with thee from My throne of judgment," then you might have trembled and fled from the face of the great and glorious Majesty. But when He declares He will hear and commune with souls from the mercy-seat, this should encourage thee, and cause thee to hope, and to "come *boldly* (freely) unto the throne of grace, that we may there obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16).

3. By this mercy-seat is Jesus Christ, who continually besprinkleth it *with His blood*, hence, it is called, "the blood of sprinkling." When the high priest, under the law, entered the holiest, where the mercy-seat was, he might not go in without blood. Why so? Because, though God was upon the mercy-seat, yet He was perfectly just as well as merciful. Now the blood was to stop justice from running out upon the persons concerned in the intercession of the high priest, as was signified in Leviticus 16:13-17, to show that all that unworthiness which thou fearest, should not hinder thee from coming to God, in Christ, for mercy. Thou criest out that thou art vile, and therefore, God will not regard thy prayer. It is true, if thou delight in thy vileness and come to God out of a mere pretence. But if from a sense of thy vileness, thou do pour out thy heart to God, desiring to be saved from guilt, and cleansed from filth, with all thy heart, then fear not, thy vileness will not cause the Lord to stop His ear from hearing of thee. The value of *the blood of Christ*, which is sprinkled upon the mercy-seat, stops the course of justice, opens a flood-gate from the mercy of the Lord to be extended unto thee. Thou hast, therefore, boldness to enter into the holiest "by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way" (Heb 10:19-20), which He has made to thee that thou die not. When God sees the blood, He will pass over you and the plague shall not be upon you.

A word of *reproof*. 1. This speaks sadly to you who never pray at all. I will pray, saith the apostle, and so saith the heart of them that are Christians. Thou then art not a Christian, that art not a praying person. The promise is, "That every one that is righteous shall pray." Thou then art a wicked wretch that prayest not. Jacob got the name of Israel by wrestling with God, and all his children bear that name with him. But the people that forget prayer, that call not on the name of

the Lord, they have prayer made *for* them, but it is such as this, “Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name” (Jer 10:25). How likest thou this, O thou that art so far off from pouring out thine heart before God, that thou goest to bed like a dog, and riseth like a hog, and forgettest to call upon Him? What wilt thou do when thou shalt be damned in hell, because thou couldest not find in thine heart to ask for heaven? Who will grieve for thy sorrow that thou didst not count mercy worth asking for?

2. This rebukes you that make it your business to slight, mock at, and undervalue the Spirit, and praying by that. What will you do when God shall come to reckon for these things? Did God send His Holy Spirit into the hearts of His people to the end that you should taunt at it? If God sent Korah and his company headlong to hell for speaking against Moses and Aaron, do you that mock at the Spirit of Christ think to escape unpunished? Did you ever read what God did to Ananias and Sapphira for telling one lie against it? Also to Simon Magus for the undervaluing of it. It is a fearful thing to do despite unto the Spirit of grace. Compare Matthew 12:31 with Mark 3:29.

3. As this is the doom of those who do openly blaspheme the Holy Spirit, in a way of disdain and reproach to its office and service, so also it is sad for you who resist the Spirit of prayer by a form of man’s inventing. A very juggle of the devil that the traditions of men should be of better esteem and more to be owned than the Spirit of prayer. Hath God required these things at your hands? If He hath, show us where. If not (as I am sure He has not), then what cursed presumption is it in any pope, bishop, or other to command that, in the worship of God, which He hath not required! Thus is the Spirit of prayer disowned and the form imposed. The Spirit debased and the form extolled. They that pray with the Spirit, though never so humble and holy, counted fanatics and they that pray with the form, though with that only, counted the virtuous.

I shall conclude this discourse with these words of advice to all God’s people. “Believe that as sure as you are in the way of God, you must meet with temptations. The first day, therefore, that thou dost enter Christ’s congregation, look for them. When they do come, beg of God to carry thee through them. Be jealous of thine own heart, that it deceive thee not in thy evidences for heaven, nor in thy walking with God in this world. Take heed of the flatteries of false brethren. Keep in the life and power of truth. Look most at the things which are not seen. Take heed of little sins. Keep the promise warm upon thy heart. Renew thy acts of faith in the blood of Christ” (John Bunyan, 1660).

SAVING FAITH

5. Its Evidences

The great majority of those who read this article will, doubtless, be they who profess to be in possession of a saving faith. To all such, we would put the question, “Where is your proof? What effects has it produced in you?” A tree is known by its fruits, and a fountain by the waters which

issue from it. So the nature of your faith may be ascertained by a careful examination of what it is bringing forth. We say, “A *careful* examination,” for all fruit is not fit for eating nor all water for drinking, so all works are not the effects of a faith which saves. Reformation is not regeneration, and a changed life does not always indicate a changed heart. Have you been saved from a dislike of God’s commandments and a disrelish of His holiness? Have you been saved from pride, covetousness, murmuring? Have you been delivered from the love of this world, from the fear of man, from the reigning power of every sin?

The heart of fallen man is thoroughly depraved. Its thoughts and imaginations being only evil continually (Gen 6:5). It is full of corrupt desires and affections, which exert themselves and influence man in all he does. Now, the Gospel comes into direct opposition with these selfish lusts and corrupt affections, both in the root and in the fruit of them (Ti 2:11-12). There is no greater duty that the Gospel urges upon our souls than the mortifying and destroying of them, and this indispensably, if we intend to be made partakers of its promises (Rom 8:13; Col 3:5-8). Hence, the first real work of faith is to cleanse the soul from these pollutions and therefore we read, “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24). Mark well, it is not that they “ought to” do so, but that they *have actually*, in some measure or degree.

It is one thing really to *think* we believe a thing, it is quite another actually to do so. So fickle is the human heart that, even in natural things, men know not their own minds. In temporal affairs, what a man really believes is best ascertained by his practice. Suppose I meet a traveler in a narrow gorge and tell him that just ahead is an impassable river, and that the bridge across it is rotten. If he declines to turn back, am I not warranted in concluding that he does not believe me? Or if a physician tells me a certain disease holds me in its grip, and that in a short time it will prove fatal if I do not use a prescribed remedy which is sure to heal. Would he not be justified in inferring that I did not trust his judgment were he to see me, not only ignoring his directions, but following a contrary course? Likewise, to believe there is a hell and yet run unto it, to believe that sin continued in will damn and yet live in it—to what purpose is it to boast of *such* a faith?

Now, from what was before us in the last article, it should be plain beyond all room for doubt that when God imparts saving faith to a soul, radical and real effects will follow. One cannot be raised from the dead without there being a consequent walking in newness of life. One cannot be the subject of a miracle of grace being wrought in the heart without a noticeable change being apparent to all who know him. Where a supernatural root has been implanted, supernatural fruit must issue therefrom. Not that sinless perfection is attained in this life, nor that the evil principle, the flesh, is eradicated from our beings, or even purified. Nevertheless, there is now a yearning after perfection, there is a spirit resisting the flesh, there is a striving against sin. And more, there is a growing in grace and a *pressing forward* along the “narrow way” which leads to heaven.

One serious error so widely propagated today in “orthodox” circles, and which is responsible for so many souls being deceived, is the seemingly Christ-honouring doctrine that it is, “His blood which *alone* saves any sinner.” Ah, Satan is very clever. He knows exactly what bait to use for every place in which he fishes. Many a company would indignantly resent a preacher’s telling them that getting baptized and eating the Lord’s Supper were God’s appointed means for saving the soul. Yet most of these same people will readily accept the lie that it is *only* by the blood of Christ we can be saved. That is true Godwards, but it is not true manwards. The work of the Spirit in us is *equally* essential as the work of Christ for us. Let the reader carefully ponder the whole of Titus 3:5.

Salvation is twofold. It is both legal and experimental, and consists of justification and sanctification. Moreover, I owe my salvation not only to the Son, but to all three persons in the Godhead. Alas, how little is this realized today, and how little is it preached. First and primarily, I owe my salvation to God the Father, who ordained and planned it, and who chose me unto salvation (2Th 2:13). In Titus 3:4, it is the Father who is denominated, “God our Saviour.” Secondly and meritoriously, I owe my salvation to the obedience and sacrifice of God the Son incarnate, who performed as my Sponsor everything which the Law required, and satisfied all its demands upon me. Thirdly and efficaciously, I owe my salvation to the regenerating, sanctifying, and preserving operations of the Spirit. Note that *His* work is made just as prominent in Luke 15:8-10, as is the Shepherd’s in Luke 15:4-7! As Titus 3:5 so plainly affirms, God “*saved* us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit,” and it is the presence of *His* “fruit” in my heart and life which furnishes the immediate evidence of my salvation.

“With the heart man believeth unto righteousness” (Rom 10:10). Thus, it is the heart which we must first examine in order to discover evidences of the presence of a saving faith. And first, God’s Word speaks of “*purifying* their hearts by faith” (Act 15:9). Of old, the Lord said, “O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from the wickedness, that thou mayest be saved” (Jer 4:14). A heart that is being purified by faith (cf. 1Pe 1:22) is one fixed upon a pure Object. It drinks from a pure fountain, delights in a pure Law (Rom 7:22), and looks forward to spending eternity with a pure Saviour (1Jo 3:3). It loathes all that is foul and filthy—spiritually as well as morally—yea, hates the very garment spotted by the flesh (Jude 1:23). Contrariwise, it loves all that is holy, lovely, and Christlike.

The pure in heart shall see God (Mat 5:8). Heart purity is absolutely essential to fit us for dwelling in that place into which there shall in no wise enter anything “that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination” (Rev 21:27). Perhaps a little fuller definition is called for. Purifying the heart by faith consists of, first, the purifying of the understanding, by the shining in of divine light, so as to cleanse it from error. Second, the purifying of the conscience, so as to cleanse it from guilt. Third, the purifying of the will, so as to cleanse it from self-will and self-seeking. Fourth, the purifying of the affections, so as to cleanse them from the love of all that is evil. In Scripture, the “heart” includes all these four faculties. A deliberate purpose to continue in any one sin cannot consist with a pure heart.

Again, saving faith is always evidenced by a *humble* heart. Faith lays the soul low, for it discovers its own vileness, emptiness, impotency. It realizes its former sinfulness and present unworthiness. It is conscious of its weaknesses and wants, its carnality and corruptions. Nothing more exalts Christ than faith, and nothing more debases a man. In order to magnify the riches of His grace, God has selected faith as the fittest instrument, and this, because it is that which causes us to go entirely out from ourselves unto Him. Faith, realizing we are nothing but sin and wretchedness, comes unto Christ as an empty-handed beggar to receive all from Him. Faith empties a man of self-conceit, self-confidence, and self-righteousness, and makes him seem nothing, that Christ may be all in all. The strongest faith is always accompanied by the greatest humility, accounting self the greatest of sinners, and unworthy of the least favour (see Mat 8:8-10).

Again, saving faith is always found in a *tender* heart. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Eze 36:26). An unregenerate heart is hard as a stone, full of pride and presumption. It is quite unmoved by the sufferings of Christ, in the sense that they act as no deterrent against self-will and self-pleasing. But the real Christian *is* moved by the love of Christ

and says, “How can I sin against His dying love for me?” When overtaken by a fault, there is passionate relenting and bitter mourning. Oh, my reader, do *you* know what it is to be melted before God, for you to be heart-broken with anguish over sinning against and grieving such a Saviour? Ah, it is not the absence of sin, but the grieving over it, which distinguishes the child of God from empty professors.

Another characteristic of saving faith is that it, “worketh by love” (Gal 5:6). It is not inactive, but energetic. That faith which is “of the operation of God” (Col 2:12) is a mighty principle of power, diffusing spiritual energy to all the faculties of the soul and enlisting them in the service of God. Faith is a principle of life, by which the Christian lives unto God; a principle of motion by which he walks to heaven along the highway of holiness; a principle of strength, by which he opposes the flesh, the world, and the devil. “Faith in the heart of a Christian is like the salt that was thrown into the corrupt fountain that made the naughty waters good and the barren land fruitful. Hence, it is that there followeth an alteration of life and conversation, and so bringeth forth fruit accordingly, ‘A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good fruit,’ which treasure is faith” (John Bunyan in *Christian Behaviour*, 1628-1688).

Where a saving faith is rooted in the heart, it grows up and spreads itself in all the branches of obedience, and is filled with the fruits of righteousness. It makes its possessor act for God, and thereby evidences that it is a living thing and not merely a lifeless theory. Even a newborn infant, though it cannot walk and work as a grown man, breathes and cries, moves and sucks, and thereby shows it is alive. So with the one who has been born again—there is a breathing unto God, a crying after Him, a moving toward Him, a clinging to Him. But the infant does not long remain a babe. There is growth, increasing strength, enlarged activity. Nor does the Christian remain stationary. He goes “from strength to strength” (Psa 84:7).

But observe carefully, faith not only “worketh,” but it “worketh *by love*.” It is at this point that the “works” of the Christian differ from those of the mere religionist. “The papist works that he may merit heaven. The Pharisee works that he may be applauded, that he may be seen of men, that he may have a good esteem with them. The slave works lest he should be beaten, lest he should be damned. The formalist works that he may stop the mouth of conscience, that will be accusing him, if he do nothing. The ordinary professor works because it is a shame to do nothing, where so much is professed. But the true believer works because he *loves*. This is the principal, if not the only motive that sets him a-work. If there were no other motive within or without him, yet would he be working for God, acting for Christ, because he loves Him. It is like fire in his bones” (David Clarkson, 1621-1686).

Saving faith is ever accompanied by *an obedient walk*. “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1Jo 2:3-4). Make no mistake upon this point. Infinite as are the merits of Christ’s sacrifice, mighty as is the potency of His priestly intercession, yet they avail not for any who continue in the path of disobedience. He acknowledges none to be His disciples save them who do homage to Him as their Lord. “Too many professors pacify themselves with the idea that they possess imputed righteousness, while they are indifferent to the sanctifying work of the Spirit. They refuse to put on the garment of obedience. They reject the white linen which is the righteousness of the saints. They thus reveal their self-will, their enmity to God, and their non-submission to His Son. Such men may talk what they will about justification by faith and salvation by grace, but they are rebels at heart. They have not on the wedding-dress any more than the self-righteous, whom they so eagerly condemn. The fact is, if we wish for the blessings of grace, we must in our hearts submit to the *rules* of

grace, without picking and choosing” (Charles H. Spurgeon on, “The wedding garment,” 1834-1892).

Once more—Saving faith is *precious*, for, like gold, it will endure trial (1Pe 1:7). A genuine Christian fears no test. He is willing, yea, wishes to be tried by God Himself. He cries, “Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Psa 26:2). Therefore is he willing for his faith to be tried by others, for he shuns not the touchstone of Holy Writ. He frequently tries himself, for where so much is at stake, he must be *sure*. He is anxious to know the worst as well as the best. That preaching pleases him best which is most searching and discriminating. He is loath to be deluded with vain hopes. He would not be flattered into a high conceit of his spiritual state without grounds. When challenged, he complies with the apostle’s advice in 11 Corinthians 13:5.

Herein does the real Christian differ from the formalist. The presumptuous professor is filled with pride, and, having a high opinion of himself, is quite sure that *he* has been saved by Christ. He disdains any searching tests, and considers self-examination to be highly injurious and destructive of faith. That preaching pleases him best which keeps at a respectable distance, which comes not near his conscience, which makes no scrutiny of his heart. To preach to him of the finished work of Christ and the eternal security of all who believe in Him strengthens his false peace and feeds his carnal confidence. Should a real servant of God seek to convince him that his hope is a delusion, and his confidence presumptuous, he would regard him as an enemy, as Satan seeking to fill him with doubts. There is more hope of a murderer being saved than of *his* being disillusioned.

Another characteristic of saving faith is that it gives the heart victory over all the vanities and vexations of things below. “For whatsoever is born of God *overcometh the world*: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1Jo 5:4). Observe that this is not an ideal after which the Christian strives, but an actuality of present experience. In this, the saint is conformed to his Head, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (Joh 16:33). Christ overcame it for His people, and now He overcomes it in them. He opens their eyes to see the hollowness and worthlessness of the best which this world has to offer, and weans their hearts from it by satisfying them with spiritual things. So little does the world attract the genuine child of God that he longs for the time to come when God shall take him out of it.

Alas, that so very few of those now bearing the name of Christ have any real experimental acquaintance with these things. Alas, that so many are deceived by a faith which is not a saving one. “He only is a Christian who *lives for Christ*. Many persons think they can be Christians on easier terms than these. They think it is enough to trust in Christ while they do not live for Him. But the Bible teaches us that if we are partakers of Christ’s death, we are also partakers of His life. If we have any such appreciation of His love in dying for us as to lead us to confide in the merits of His death, *we shall be* constrained to consecrate our lives to His service. And this is the only evidence of the genuineness of our faith” (Charles Hodge on 11 Corinthians 5:15, 1797-1878).

Reader, are the things mentioned above actualized in your own experience? If they are not, how worthless and wicked is your profession! “It is, therefore, exceedingly absurd for any to pretend that they have a good heart while they live a wicked life, or do not bring forth the fruit of universal holiness in their practice. Men that live in the ways of sin, and yet flatter themselves that they shall go to heaven, expecting to be received hereafter as holy persons, without a holy practice, act as though they expected to make a fool of their Judge—which is implied in what the apostle says (speaking of men’s doing good works and living a holy life, thereby exhibiting

evidence of their title to everlasting life). ‘Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap’ (Gal 6:7). As much as to say, ‘Do not deceive yourselves with an expectation of reaping life everlasting hereafter, if you do not sow to the Spirit here. It is in vain to think that God will be made a fool of by you’” (Jonathan Edwards in *Religious Affections*, 1703-1758).

That which Christ requires from His disciples is that they should magnify and glorify Him in this world and that by living holily to Him and suffering patiently for Him. Nothing is as honouring to Christ as that those who bear His name should, by their holy obedience, make manifest the power of His love over their hearts and lives. Contrariwise, nothing is so great a reproach to Him, nothing more dishonours Him, than that those who are living to please self, and who are conformed to this world, should cloak their wickedness under His holy name. A Christian is one who has taken Christ for his example in all things. Then how great the insult which is done Him by those claiming to be Christians whose daily lives show they have no respect for His godly example. They are a stench in His nostrils. They are a cause of grievous sorrow to His real disciples. They are the greatest hindrance of all to the progress of His cause on earth, and they shall yet find that the hottest places in hell have been reserved for them. Oh, that they would either abandon their course of self-pleasing or drop the profession of that name which is above every name.

Should the Lord be pleased to use this article in shattering the false confidence of some deluded souls, and should they earnestly inquire how they are to obtain a genuine and saving faith, we answer, “Use the means which God has prescribed.” When faith be His gift, He gives it in His own way. And if we desire to receive it, then, we must put ourselves in that way wherein He is wont to communicate it. Faith is the work of God, but He works it not immediately, but through the channels of His appointed means. The means prescribed cannot effect faith of themselves. They are no further effectual than as instruments in the hands of Him who is the principal cause. Though He has not tied Himself to them, yet He has confined us. Though He be free, yet the means are necessary to us.

The first means is *prayer*, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you” (Eze 36:26). Here is a gracious promise, but in what way will He accomplish it and similar ones? Listen, “Thus saith the LORD God; I will yet for this *be inquired of* by the house of Israel, to do it for them” (Eze 36:37). Cry earnestly to God for a new heart, for His regenerating Spirit, for the gift of saving faith. Prayer is a universal duty. Though an unbeliever sin in praying (as in everything else), it is not a sin for him to pray.

The second means is the *written Word* heard (Joh 17:20; 1Co 3:5) or read (2Ti 3:15). Said David, “I will never forget thy precepts: for *with them* thou hast quickened me” (Psa 119:93). The Scriptures are the Word of God, through them He speaks. Then read them—asking Him to speak life, power, deliverance, peace, to your heart. May the Lord deign to add His blessing.

WELCOME TIDINGS

I will bless the LORD at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Psa 34:1). And why not? God changes not (Mal 3:6). His eternal purpose of grace and His wondrous love are ever the same. True, I change, yet in this matter, I ought not, for I am bidden to “Rejoice *evermore*” (1Th 5:16). True, circumstances may vary, yet faith has power to lift the heart above them, and often does so, but (alas) not always. Shall I then make excuses for this? Nay, that would be sinful. Rather must I with shame confess my failure. The standard here set before us is to be ardently desired and earnestly striven after.

“I will bless the LORD at all times” (Psa 34:1). All times include hard times, trying times, times of adversity. In every situation, under every circumstance, our lips should show forth God’s praise. In bright days of joy and in dark nights of fear, we ought alike to magnify the perfections of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, and makes them combine for good unto them that love Him. “Giving thanks always for all things” (Eph 5:20). That “all things” includes *chastisements*. How so? Because they are given in “love” (Heb 12:5) and are designed for the Christian’s “profit” (Heb 12:10).

Ah, dear reader, we ought to “Bless the LORD,” not only *during* “hard times,” but *for* them. Why so? Because they afford a suitable background upon which God’s faithfulness and sufficiency may shine forth the more plainly. He can furnish a table in the wilderness, and does so for His own. Moreover, we ought to bless God for (what man terms) “hard times” because of the golden opportunity they furnish us for the exercise of faith. Nothing is more honouring to God than this. Abraham “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, *giving glory* to God” (Rom 4:20). Contrariwise, nothing is more dishonouring to God than doubting and murmuring. Verily, it takes a crisis to *reveal* how much faith, or how little faith, we really have.

Praising the Lord is a wonderful antidote for doubtings and fears. None can really “Bless the LORD” very long without his heart being lifted out of the bog of unbelief. *Cultivate* this spirit, dear brethren, and thus prove that, “The joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10). Satan knows the truth of that full well, and therefore does he seek to dampen and depress us. But we are not ignorant of his devices. Then, let us meet his efforts to cast down our souls by presenting to God a “sacrifice of praise” (Heb 13:15). Nothing is more calculated to raise the heart above earthy trials and their gloomy tendency than to be occupied with the Lord and His goodness. Let us remember that because God “changeth not,” we have *the same* ground and cause to “bless” Him in “hard times” as in prosperous ones.

As they have gone over the above paragraphs, perhaps some of our friends have been “reading between the lines,” and drawn the conclusion that the writer also is now feeling the “pinch” severely, and is seeking to console himself. Then, let us assure you that there is *nothing* “between the lines.” Thank God, our financial position is as good *this* year as in former ones. Praise be unto His holy name, there are no “hard times” with Him who declares, “The cattle upon a thousand hills are mine” (Psa 50:10). If the publishing of this little magazine be “of the Lord,” then, until it has served His purpose, He will maintain it. Faith may be tested, but if it is genuine, God will not mock it. O for more faith to His honour and praise.

No, we felt that Psalm 34:1 was a fitting verse with which to begin our “Welcome Tidings” letter. As older readers will remember, once a year, we seek to give some account of the grace of God in condescending to use these “Studies” in blessing to some of His dear people. But ere doing this, we felt constrained to emphasize the force of this word, “I will bless the LORD *at all times*” (Psa 34:1). We heartily bless Him that, in these so-called “hard times,” He *is* faithfully supplying all our need. Our longing is that He will not only design to use this magazine for the feeding of His sheep, but that He will also employ it to get unto Himself “a name and a praise in the earth,” and to this end that there may be a larger credit-balance at the end of this year than in former ones. O that many others may be encouraged to turn away from all worldly and fleshly ways of raising money, and whole-heartedly trust in the living God.

During the past twelve months, our hearts have been gladdened almost every day by letters from the scattered children of God testifying to the help received from the “Studies”—how gracious of the Lord to grant such encouragement along the way. “Thank you also for the Magazine. I cannot begin to express what help and blessing we have received through the perusal of them. I have been reprov'd and convicted many times. Our prayer is that He will deepen His work of grace in you, and so teach you experimentally that you may be able to teach others—that He will mercifully preserve you from all error, and guide and help you in the preparation of every article—that He will bring you into touch with many more of His hungry people, and above all, that God’s blessings may continue upon the ministry to His own glory and the good of His beloved saints” (A brother in Kentucky).

“The incalculable help which I have derived from its Christ-exalting ministry (alas, so seldom heard today) has begotten likewise in me the desire to make known to others those glories which eternal years shall never all unfold” (A brother in Pennsylvania). “We can truly say we have benefited from your Magazine, for which we praise our God and Saviour, and also thank you for the wonderful truth of God’s Word which we have been hungering for. Truly we want to obey God’s Word” (A brother in Minnesota). “I want to thank you for the wonderful studies in Hebrews. Your letters have bred in me a desire to be a real man of God. I have gone over and over, marked and remarked the ‘Studies’ which you have been so kind to send me. I receive from them deep food, good strong meat, for which I thank God” (A brother in Texas). “I would like to join with those who have been blest and helped by your ministry through the printed page, and express in this feeble way my thanks....I begin to see that more and more the flesh profiteth nothing. My prayer is: Help me to be holy, O Spirit divine, Come sanctify wholly this temple of Thine; Now cast out each idol, here set up Thy throne, Reign, reign, without rival, supreme and alone. Now that is the influence your ministry has upon me by the grace of God” (A brother in Michigan).

“It is a pleasure to say at the end of this year that much of the blessing coming to my life and ministry is traceable to ‘Studies.’ For all this I thank you and the Lord Jesus” (Pastor in Michigan). “When the Magazine arrives, I drop everything, and begin meditating on the good things. Praise the Lord for the help I receive with each issue. Please keep me on the mailing list” (Pastor in Minnesota). “Your writings and your Studies in the Scriptures have been of untold benefit to me, and have greatly enriched both mind and heart. I pray that God may long spare you to continue giving to His dear people these precious truths” (Pastor in Canada). We are always especially glad to hear of Pastors and other Christian workers being helped.

“I do thank you for sending me the Studies. My friend and myself have been helped through reading them. We do pray that God will bless the messages to all who read them. It makes one want to know more of His precious Word and to have His blessing in everything” (Sister in

Australia). “The magazines have come to hand regularly with their wealth of precious food for starving sheep—soul-satisfying, heart-searching, doubt-dispelling, God-honouring portions. May the Holy Spirit continue His aid in the preparation of the articles” (Brother in Australia). “Your message has been an inspiration and blessing, and has helped me in many a dry place. Some things I found bitter to my taste, but most profitable as they worked in my heart and conscience. I refer particularly to ‘The Scriptures and Obedience’ in the October number. It was most searching. What blessing we miss through disobedience! Isaiah 48:18 is constantly in my mind as I think of these things” (Another brother in Australia).

“Last week I made a special and prayerful study of your articles on ‘Repentance,’ and I do thank the God of all grace that He moved you to stress the subject, for there is an awful need for it. It has been a great blessing to my soul, and I believe to every true child of God. The unfolding of this truth leadeth every one who calls himself by the name of the Lord to soul exercise, and to examine himself by the light of God’s Word, while at the same time deceitful natural feelings, which still live within us, get burnt up like the chaff” (Brother in Holland). “We enjoyed your addresses on Matthew 7 very much. It is just the character of ministry that is so much needed today” (Brother in England). “Thank you so much for sending me the magazine during 1931. It always brings me a real blessing. The articles on Repentance have been of much help” (Brother in Sweden). “Your magazine is very helpful for my spiritual life” (Brother in Syria).

The above are representative of many more which might be quoted. May the reading of these few extracts evoke praise from many hearts, and stimulate to further prayer that God will graciously enlarge the circulation of this magazine and condescend to use it more and more in blessing to His people. Yours in His happy service, A. W. and V. E. Pink.

IT IS FINISHED

“How terribly have these blessed words of Christ’s been misunderstood, misappropriated, and misapplied. How many seem to think that at the cross the Lord Jesus accomplished a work which rendered it *unnecessary* for the beneficiaries of it to live holy lives on earth. So many have been deluded into thinking that, so far as their reaching heaven is concerned, it matters not how they walk provided they are “resting on the finished work of Christ.” They may be unfruitful, untruthful, disobedient, yet (though they may possibly miss some “millennial crown”) so long as they repudiate all righteousness of their own and have faith in Christ, they imagine they are “eternally secure.”

All around us are people who are worldly-minded, money-lovers, pleasure-seekers, Sabbath-breakers, yet who think all is well with them because they have “accepted Christ as their personal Saviour.” In their aspiration, conversation, and recreation, there is practically nothing to differentiate them from those who make no profession at all. Neither in their home-life, business-life, nor social-life is there anything save empty pretensions to distinguish them from others. The fear of God is not upon them, the commands of God have no authority over them, the holiness of God has no attraction for them.

“It is finished” (Joh 19:30). How unspeakably solemn to realize that these precious words of Christ’s have been used of Satan to lull thousands into a false peace. Yet such is the case. We have come into close contact with many who have no private prayer-life, who are selfish, covetous, dishonest, but who suppose that a merciful God will overlook all such things provided they once put their trust in the Lord Jesus. What a horrible perversion of the truth! What a turning of God’s grace “into lasciviousness” (Jude 1:4)! Yes, those who now live the most self-seeking and flesh-pleasing lives, talk about their faith in the blood of the Lamb, and suppose they are safe. How the devil has deceived them!

“It is finished.” Do those blessed words signify that Christ *so* satisfied the requirements of God’s holiness that that Holiness no longer has any real and pressing claims upon us? Perish the thought. Even to the redeemed, God says, “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1Pe 1:16). Did Christ “magnify the law, and make it honourable” (Isa 42:21) that we might be lawless? Did He “fulfil all righteousness” (Mat 3:15) to purchase for us an immunity from loving God with all our hearts and serving Him with all our faculties? Did Christ die in order to secure a divine indulgence that we might live to please self? Many seem to think so. No, the Lord Jesus has left His people an example that they should “follow (not ignore) his steps.”

“It is finished.” What was? The need for sinners to repent? No indeed. The need for turning to God from idols? No indeed. The need for mortifying my members which are upon the earth? No indeed. The need for being sanctified wholly, in spirit, and soul, and body? No indeed. Christ died not to make my sorrow for, hatred of, and striving against sin, useless. Christ died not to absolve me from the full discharge of my responsibilities unto God. Christ died not so that I might go on retaining the friendship and fellowship of the world. How passing strange that any should think He did. Yet the *actions* of many show that this is *their* idea.

“It is finished” (Psa 34:1). What was? The sacrificial types were accomplished, the prophecies of His sufferings were fulfilled, the work given Him by the Father had been perfectly done, a sure foundation had been laid on which a righteous God could pardon the vilest transgressor of the Law who threw down the weapons of his warfare against Him. Christ had now performed all that was necessary in order for the Holy Spirit to come and work in the hearts of His people, convicting them of their rebellion, slaying their enmity against God, and producing in them a loving and obedient heart.

O dear reader, make no mistake on this point. The “finished work of Christ” avails you nothing if your heart has never been broken through an agonizing consciousness of your sinfulness. The “finished work of Christ” avails you nothing unless you have been saved from the power and pollution of sin (Mat 1:21). It avails you nothing if you still love the world (1Jo 2:15). It avails you nothing unless you are a “*new* creature” in Him (2Co 5:17). If you value your soul, search the Scriptures and see for yourself. Take no *man’s* word for it.



AUGUST

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST

Jesus has been “crowned with glory and honour” (Heb 2:9). That the eternal Son of God should sit upon the throne of power presents no difficulty to regenerate minds, but that one in our nature should be exalted to the seat of pre-eminence is a mystery presented to faith’s acceptance. How transcendently amazing that those hands which once were nailed to the cross should now hold the sceptre of universal dominion; that those feet which were once weary and dust-soiled at Jacob’s well, which were washed with a sinful woman’s tears, and kissed in penitential grief and love with polluted lips, should now have *all* things, both in heaven and in earth (Eph 1:21-22), put under them! Yet how blessed to know that that lowly, gentle, compassionate Saviour, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, is possessed of all authority and might, supreme majesty and government, so that He can answer His peoples’ prayers, deliver them from their enemies, support them under their trials, and at last take them to be with Himself forever!

During the days of His humiliation, a vail was drawn over the Saviour’s glory. Yet some rays occasionally broke through, manifesting to attentive spectators His essential and official dignity. The perfect life which He lived, the heavenly doctrine which He taught, the amazing miracles which He performed, proclaimed Him to be none other than the only-begotten Son of God and the promised Redeemer of Israel. At His birth, the angels heralded Him as “Christ, the Lord” (Luk 2:11). At His baptism, the opened heavens, the voice of the Father, and the descent of the Spirit upon Him in the form of a dove, gave witness that He was more than man. The dark scene of His death was illuminated by supernatural phenomena to signify that He was no ordinary sufferer. Even His burial was not without honour, for though He had been put to death in the most ignominious manner, and under the imputation of the greatest of crimes, yet His body was wrapped in fine linen and precious spices by men of high rank and deposited in a new sepulchre.

However, the circumstances called attention to above gave only a partial relief to the deep gloom of self-abasement which had rested upon Christ for thirty-three years. His life, from the manger to the tomb, was via a path of shame and sorrow. It was not until His resurrection that the glory which was to follow His sufferings began to shine forth in unmistakable splendour. Then it was that the character of Christ was vindicated from the aspersions of His enemies. Then it was that the Father openly testified to the Mediator’s accomplishment of that work which had been given Him to perform. Then it was that the Lord Jesus obtained eternal redemption for His

people, and by rising as their Representative, gave pledge that they too should rise after His example and through His merits and power.

Having finished the work which had been assigned Him by the Father, it was not necessary for the Mediator to prolong His stay upon earth. Rather was it expedient that He should leave it in order to enter into His well-earned reward, that He should perform those benevolent offices by which the benefits of His humiliation and death should be communicated to His people, and in particular, to make way for the coming of another divine person, not in visible form, but in a powerful dispensation of life and light, holiness and consolation. “But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth, It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (Joh 16:5-7). Accordingly, we read that, after He had given all necessary instructions to His disciples, Christ was parted from them and received up into heaven (Luk 24:51).

“Our Lord ascended in human nature. The man Christ Jesus has left the earth and entered into that invisible region of the universe where God sits on the throne of His majesty. To His followers, it is a source of high consolation to know that He has not laid aside their nature, but retained it amidst His glory, because they can look up to Him with confidence, in the full assurance of His sympathy, and see in His exaltation an earnest of their future glory....As God, He could neither descend or ascend, because His divine essence, filling heaven and earth, cannot change its place and does not admit of that exaltation or that accession of glory which the ascension implies....It was in His assumed nature that He, who had first descended, after ascended that ‘He might fill all things,’ heaven with His glory, and the earth with the blessings of His grace” (John Dick, 1764-1833).

At His ascension, the Mediator was attended by the heavenly hierarchies, although invisible to human eyes. “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men” (Psa 68:17-18). The angelic hosts celebrated Christ’s mighty achievements and attested the high dignity of the Victor. “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1Pe 3:22). Therefore did they come, on the occasion of His ascending, to do homage to their Lord and top swell His train when He took possession of His kingdom.

“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men” (Eph 4:8). “Leading captivity” is clearly interpreted for us in Judges 5:12, where an ancient custom, long observed and well-known in the times of the apostles, is in view. When a victorious general returned home in public triumph, the captives he had taken were led in chains before him, and the richest of the spoils adorned his chariot. Borrowing a figure of speech from this established practice, the apostle pictures our Mediator as the Conqueror of sin, Satan, the world, death, and every spiritual enemy of Himself and His people. He has “spoiled principalities and powers” by releasing many of their victims, and now, “made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Col 2:15—cf. Luk 11:21-22; Heb 2:14-15)—the expression “captivity captive” is a putting of the abstract for the concrete—“captivity” for “captives,” and that for the purpose of emphasizing the fact that His elect should be freed from their captor, the devil.

From what has been said above, the reader will see that we do not endorse the strange theory which some have advanced, namely, that the souls of the Old Testament saints were *outside* of

heaven before Christ's resurrection, and that not until His ascension were they conducted on High—Hebrews 11:40 at once disposes of such a view. No, we regard Ephesians 4:8 as referring to the Mediator's triumph over the infernal powers. "They who made men captives, by their successful stratagems, saw the spoils wrested from their hands and were themselves made captive by our Almighty Redeemer. Whether they were compelled to be present, and were exhibited as vanquished foes, disgraced and ruined, and reserved to everlasting punishment, we are not warranted by a single expression, of which no explanation is given, to affirm. (Personally, we believe Col 2:15 justifies this conclusion. AWP). But there is no doubt that our Saviour triumphed over them while He ascended. That in His exaltation to the throne of heaven, they beheld a fearful presage of the final overthrow of their kingdom" (John Dick).

"So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God" (Mar 16:19). It ought not to be necessary for us to point out that such language as this is figurative, yet in this day of carnalizing spiritual things, it may be well to supply a word of explanation. Neither the "right hand" of God, nor the posture ascribed to our Saviour, can be literally understood. God is pure "Spirit" (Joh 4:24) and has no bodily members. When mention is made of His eyes, ears, feet, hands, we must explain them consistently with the spirituality of His essence, and regard them as metaphors employed to assist us in conceiving His perfections and operations. Although the Mediator in His exaltation has a material body, yet His "sitting" is as figurative as the "right hand" of God. In Acts 7:55, He is pictured as "standing," and in Revelation 2:1, as He who "*walketh* in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks."

The "right hand" is the place of honour (Gen 48:14; 1Ki 2:19; Psa 80:17). Christ's being seated at God's right hand is expressive of His exaltation, of the glory which has been conferred upon Him, of His official dignity. It also denotes the possession of supreme happiness (Psa 16:11), and of invincible might (Mat 26:64). It is God's answer to the prayer of His incarnate Son, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (Joh 17:5). The humanity of Christ has been elevated high above all creatures. He is "the Firstborn [entitled to the *double* portion] among many brethren" (Rom 8:29). Angels adore Him and the saints will cast their crowns before His throne. All heaven will yet cry, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev 5:12). In the meantime, it is ours to love, serve, and worship Him with all our hearts, and to count upon Him for the supply of our every need.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

56. The Excellency of Faith (11:1-3)

Ere we take up the contents of the 11th chapter, let us briefly review the ground already covered. Chapters 1 and 2 are more or less introductory in their character. In them, the wondrous *person* of the God-man Mediator is presented to our view as superior to the Old Testament

prophets and as excelling the angels. The first main division of the Epistle commences at 3:1 and runs to the end of 4:15 and treats of the *mission* of Christ. This is seen to surpass that of either Moses or Joshua, for neither of them led the people into the real rest of God. The section is followed by a practical application in 4:16. The second principal division begins with 5:1 and extends to 10:18, and deals with the *priesthood* of Christ. This is shown to transcend the Aaronic in dignity, efficacy, and permanency. The section is followed by a practical application contained in 10:19 to 12:29. The closing chapter forms a conclusion to the Epistle.

“The general nature of this Epistle, as unto the kind of writing, is paranetical or hortatory, which is taken from its end and design. The exhortation proposed is to constancy and perseverance in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the profession of the Gospel against temptations and persecutions. Both these the Hebrews had to conflict with in their profession—the one from the Judaical church-state itself, the other from the members of it. Their temptations to draw back and forsake their profession arose from the consideration of the Judaical church-state and Mosaic ordinances of worship, which they were called by the Gospel to relinquish. The divine institution of that state, with its worship, the solemnity of the covenant whereon it was established, the glory of its priesthood, sacrifices, and other divine ordinances (Rom 9:4), with their efficacy for acceptance with God, were continually proposed unto them and pressed on them, to allure and draw them off from the Gospel. And the trial was very great after the inconsistency of the two states was made manifest. This gave occasion to the whole *doctrinal* part of the Epistle, the exposition of which, by divine grace and assistance, we have passed through. For therein declaring the nature, use, end, and signification of all divine institutions under the Old Testament, and allowing unto them all the glory and efficacy which they could pretend unto, the writer of this Epistle declares from the Scripture itself that the state of the Gospel church, in its high-priest, sacrifice, covenant, worship, privileges, and efficacy is incomparably to be preferred above that of the Old Testament. Yea, that all the excellency and glory of that state, and all that belonged unto it, consisted only in the representation that was made thereby of the greater glory of Christ and the Gospel, without which they were of no use, and therefore ruinous or pernicious to be persisted in.

“After he had fixed their minds in the truth and armed them against the temptations, which they were continually exposed to, the apostle proceeds to the second means, whereby their steadiness and constancy in the profession of the Gospel, which he exhorted them unto, was already assaulted with greater force and fury. This arose from the opposition which befell them and from the persecutions of all sorts that they had endured, and were still likely to undergo, for their faith in Christ Jesus with the profession thereof and observance of the holy worship ordained in the Gospel. This they suffered from the obstinate *members* of the Jewish church, as they did the other (temptation) from the *state* of that church itself. An account hereof the apostle enters upon in the close of the foregoing chapter and withal declares unto them the only way and means on their part whereby they may be preserved and kept constant in their profession, notwithstanding all the evils that might befall them therein, and this is by faith alone. From their *temptations* they were delivered by the *doctrine* of the truth, and from the *opposition* made unto them by *faith* in exercise” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

The particular character of the section begun at 10:19 is not difficult to ascertain. It is addressed to our responsibility. This is at once evident in the “Let us” of 10:22, 23, 24. In 10:32-36, there is a call to patient waiting for the fulfillment of God’s promises. Nothing but real faith in the veracity of the Promiser can sustain the heart and prompt to steady endurance during a protracted season of trial and suffering. Hence in 10:38, the apostle quotes the striking word from

Habakkuk, “The just shall live *by faith*” (Hab 2:4). That sentence really forms the text of which Hebrews 11 is the sermon. The central design of this chapter is to evidence the *patience* of those who, in former ages, endured by faith before they received the fulfillment of God’s promises. Note particularly verses 13 and 39.

“Whosoever made this (verse 1) the beginning of the eleventh chapter, has unwisely disjointed the context, for the object of the apostle was to prove what he had already said—that there is need of patience. He had quoted the testimony of Habakkuk, who says that the just lives by faith, he now shows what remained to be proved—that faith can be no more separated from patience than from itself. The order then of what he says is this, ‘We shall not reach the goal of salvation except we have patience, for the prophet declares that the just lives by faith, but faith directs us to things afar off which we do not as yet enjoy. It then necessarily includes patience.’ Therefore, the minor proposition in the argument is this, ‘Faith is the substance of things hoped for’” (John Calvin, 1509-1564).

“The apostle now, for the illustration and enforcement of his exhortation, brings forward a great variety of instances, from the history of former ages, in which *faith* had enabled individuals to perform very difficult duties, endure very severe trials, and obtain very important blessings. The principles of the apostle’s exhortation are plainly these: ‘They who turn back, turn back unto perdition. It is only they who persevere in believing that obtain the salvation of the soul. Nothing but a persevering faith can enable a person, through a constant continuance in well-doing, and a patient, humble submission to the will of God, to obtain that glory, honour, and immortality which the Gospel promises. Nothing but a persevering faith can do it, as is plain from what it has done in former ages’” (John Brown, 1784-1858).

The order of thought followed by the apostle in Hebrews 11 was ably and helpfully set forth by an early Puritan, “The parts of this whole chapter are two—1. A general *description* of faith (verses 1 to 4). 2. An *illustration* or declaration of that description, by a large rehearsal of manifold *examples* of ancient and worthy men in the Old Testament (verses 4 to 40). The description of faith consists of three actions or effects of faith set down in [these] several verses. The first effect is that faith makes things which are not (but only are hoped for), after a sort, to subsist and to be present with the believer (verse 1). The second effect is that faith makes a believer approved of God (verse 2). The third effect is that faith makes a man understand and believe things incredible to sense and reason” (Wm. Perkins, 1595).

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). The opening “Now” has almost the force of “for,” denoting a farther confirmation of what had just been declared. At the close of chapter 10, the apostle had just affirmed that the saving of the soul is obtained through believing, whereupon he now takes occasion to show what faith is and does. That faith can, and does, preserve the soul, prompting to steadfastness under all sorts of trials, and issuing in salvation, may not only be argued from the effects which is its very nature to produce, but is illustrated and demonstrated by one example after another, cited in the verses which follow. It is important to bear in mind at the outset that Hebrews 11 is an amplification and exemplification of 10:38-39. The “faith” which the apostle is describing and illustrating is that which has the *saving of the soul* annexed to it.

“In verse 1, there is the thing described and the description itself. The thing described is faith. The description is this, ‘It is the substance of things hoped for,’ etc. The description is proper, according to the rules of art—habits (or graces) are described by their formal acts and acts restrained to their proper objects. So faith is here described by its primary and formal acts, which are referred to their distinct objects. The acts of faith are two. It is the substance. It is the

evidence. Think it not strange that I call them *acts*, for that is it the apostle intends. Therefore, Beza says, in rendering this place, he had rather paraphrase the text than obscure the scope, and he interpreteth it thus—Faith substantiates or gives a subsistence to our hopes, and demonstrates things not seen. There is a great deal of difference between the acts of faith and the effects of faith. The effects of faith are reckoned up throughout this chapter. The formal acts of faith are in this verse. These acts are suited with their objects. As the matters of belief are yet to come, faith gives them a substance, a being, as they are hidden from the eyes of sense and carnal reason. Faith also gives them an evidence and doth convince men of the worth of them. So that one of these acts belongs to the *understanding*, the other to the *will*” (Thomas Manton, 1670).

The contents of verse 1 do not furnish so much a formal definition of faith, as they supply a terse description of how it operates and what it produces. Faith, whether natural or spiritual, is the belief of a testimony. Here, faith is believing the testimony of God. How it operates in reference to the subjects of this testimony, whether they be considered simply as future, or as both invisible and future, and the effects produced in and on the soul, the Holy Spirit here explains. First, He tells us that “faith is the substance of things hoped for.” The Greek word rendered “substance” has been variously translated. The margin of the Authorized Version gives “ground or confidence.” The Revised Version has “assurance” in the text, and “giving substance to” in the margin. The Greek word is “hypostasis” and is rendered “confident” (should be “this *confidence* of boasting,” as in Bagster’s Interlinear) in both 11 Corinthians 9:4 and 11:17; “person” (should be “subsistence” or “essential being”) in Hebrews 1:3; and “confidence” in Hebrews 3:14. Personally, the writer believes it has a double force, so will seek to expound it accordingly.

“Faith is the *confidence* of things hoped for.” In this chapter (and in general throughout the New Testament), “faith” is far more than a bare assent to anything revealed and declared by God. It is a firm persuasion of that which is hoped for, because it assures its possessor not only that there *are* such things, but that through the power and faithfulness of God, he shall yet *possess* them. Thus it becomes the ground of expectation. The Word of God is the *objective* foundation on which my hopes rest, but faith provides a *subjective* foundation, for it convinces me of the certainty of them. Faith and confidence are inseparable. Just so far as I am counting upon the ability and fidelity of the Promiser, shall I be confident of receiving the things promised and which I am expecting. “And we *believe* and are *sure*” (Joh 6:69).

From what has just been said, the reader will perhaps perceive better the force of the rather peculiar word, “substance,” in the text of the Authorized Version. It comes from two Latin words, *sub* *stans*, meaning “standing under.” Faith provides a firm standing-ground while I await the fulfillment of God’s promises. Faith furnishes my heart with a sure support during the interval. Faith believes God and relies upon His veracity. As it does so, the heart is anchored and remains steady, no matter how fierce the storm nor how protracted the season of waiting. “These all died in faith, *not* having received the [fulfillment of the] promises, *but* having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them” (Heb 11:13). Real faith issues in a confident and standing expectation of future things.

“Faith is the *subsistence* of things hoped for” (Heb 11:1), as the marginal reading of the Revised Version suggests, “giving substance to.” Crediting the sure testimony of God, resting on His promises, and expecting the accomplishment of them, faith gives the object hoped for at a *future* period, a *present* reality and power in the soul, as if already possessed. For the believer is satisfied with the security afforded, and *acts* under the full persuasion that God will not fail of His engagement. Faith gives the soul an *appropriating hold* of them. “Faith is a firm persuasion and expectation that God will perform all that He has promised to us in Christ, and this persuasion is

so strong that it gives the soul a kind of possession and present fruition of those things, gives them a subsistence in the soul by the first fruits and foretastes of them, so that believers in the exercise of faith are filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714)

But *how* does faith bring to the heart a present subsistence of future things? First, by drawing from the promises that which, by divine institution, is stored up in them. Hence, they are called the “*breasts* of consolation” (Isa 66:11). Second, by making the promises the food of the soul (Jer 15:16), which cannot be unless they are really *present* unto it. Third, by conveying an experience of their power, as unto all the ends for which they are purposed. It is as divine truth is appropriated and assimilated that it becomes powerfully operative in the soul. Fourth, by communicating unto us the first fruits of the promises, faith gives a living reality to what it absorbs, and so real and potent is the impression made, that the heart is changed into the same image (2Co 3:18).

Ere passing on, let us pause for a word of application. Many profess to “believe,” but *what influence* have their hopes upon them? How are they affected by the things which their faith claims to have laid hold of? I profess to believe that sin is a most heinous thing—do I fear, hate, shun it? I believe that ere long I shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ—does my conduct evince that I am living in the light of that solemn day? I believe that the world is an empty bauble—do I despise its painted tinsel? I believe that God will supply all my need—am I fearful about the morrow? I believe that prayer is an essential means unto growth in grace—do I spend much time in the secret place? I believe that Christ is coming back again—am I diligent in seeking to have my lamp trimmed and burning? Faith is evident by its fruits, works, effects.

Faith is “the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). The Greek noun here rendered “evidence” (“proving” in the Revised Version, with “test” in the margin) is derived from a verb which signifies to *convince*, and that by demonstration. It was used by the Lord Jesus when He uttered that challenge, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” (Joh 8:46). The noun occurs in only one other place, namely, 11 Timothy 3:16, “All scripture is...profitable for doctrine, for *reproof*,” or “conviction”—to give assurance and certainty of what is true. Thus, the word “evidence” in our text denotes that which furnished proof, so that one is assured of the reality and certainty of things divine. “Faith,” then, is first the *hand* of the soul which “lays hold of” the contents of God’s promises. Second, it is the *eye* of the soul which looks out toward and represents them clearly and convincingly to us.

To unbelievers, the invisible, spiritual, and future things revealed in God’s Word seem dubious and unreal, for they have no medium to perceive them. “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1Co 2:14). But the child of God *sees* “Him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). Perhaps we might illustrate it thus. Two men stand on the deck of a ship gazing toward the far horizon. The one sees nothing; the other describes the details of a distant steamer. The former has only his unaided eyesight, the latter is using a telescope! Now, just as a powerful glass brings home to the eye an object beyond the range of natural vision, so faith gives reality to the heart of things outside the range of our physical senses. Faith sets divine things before the soul in all the light and power of demonstration, and thus provides inward conviction of their existence. “Faith demonstrates to the eye of the mind the reality of those things which cannot be discerned by the eye of the body” (Matthew Henry).

The natural man prefers a life of sense and to believe nothing more than that which is capable of scientific demonstration. When eternal things, yet invisible, are pressed upon him, he is full of objections against them. Those are the objections of unbelief, stirred into activity by the “fiery

darts” of Satan and nought but the shield of faith can quench them. But when the Holy Spirit renews the heart, the prevailing power of unbelief is broken. Faith argues, “*God* has said it, so it *must* be true.” Faith so convinces the understanding that it is compelled, by force of arguments unanswerable, to believe the certainty of all God has spoken. This conviction is so powerful that the heart is influenced thereby, and the will moved to conform thereto. This it is which causes the Christian to *forsake* the “pleasures of sin” which are only “for a season” (Heb 11:25), because by faith, he has *laid hold of* those satisfying “pleasures at God’s right hand” which are “for evermore” (Psa 16:11).

To sum up the contents of verse 1—To unbelief, the objects which God sets before us in His Word seem unreal and unlikely, nebulous, and vague. But faith visualizes the unseen, giving substantiality to the things hoped for and reality to things invisible. Faith shuts its eyes to all that is seen and opens its ears to all God has said. Faith is a convictive power which overcomes carnal reasonings, carnal prejudices, and carnal excuses. It enlightens the judgment, moulds the heart, moves the will, and reforms the life. It takes us off earthly things and worldly vanities and occupies us with spiritual and divine realities. It emboldens against discouragements, laughs at difficulties, resists the devil, and triumphs over temptations. It does so because it unites the soul to God and draws strength from Him. Thus faith is altogether a supernatural thing.

“For by it the elders obtained a good report” (Heb 11:2). Having described the principal qualities of faith, the apostle now proceeds to give further proof of its excellency, as is evident from the opening “For.” It is by faith we are approved of God. By the “elders” is signified those who lived in former times, namely, the Old Testament saints—included among the “fathers” of 1:1. It was not be their amiability, sincerity, earnestness, or any other natural virtue, but by *faith* that the ancients “obtained a good report.” This declaration was made by the apostle with the purpose of reminding the Hebrews that their pious progenitors were justified by faith and to the end of the chapter he shows that *faith* was the principle of all their holy obedience, eminent services, and patient sufferings in the cause of God. Therefore, those who were *spiritually* united to them must have something more than physical descent from them.

“For by it the elders obtained a good report” (Heb 11:2). Observe the beautiful accuracy of Scripture. It was not *for* their faith (nor could it be without it!), but “*by*” their faith. It was not a cause, yet it was a condition. There was nothing meritorious in it, yet it was a necessary means. Let us also observe that faith is no new thing, but a grace planted in the hearts of God’s elect from the beginning. Then, as now, faith was the substance of things hoped for—promises to be accomplished in the future. The faith of Abel laid hold of Christ as truly as does ours. God has had but one way of salvation since sin entered the world, “by grace, through faith, not of works.” See Ephesians 2:8. They are grossly mistaken who suppose that under the old covenant people were saved by keeping the law. The “fathers” had the same promises we have, not merely of Canaan, but of heaven. See Hebrews 11:16.

The Greek for “obtained a good report” is not in the active voice, but the passive. Literally, “were witnessed of,” an honourable testimony being borne to them—cf. verses 4-5. God took care that a record should be kept (complete in heaven, in part transcribed in the Scriptures) of all the actings of their faith. God has borne witness to the fact that Enoch “walked with him” (Gen 5:24), that David was “a man after his own heart” (1Sa 13:14), that Abraham was His “friend” (2Ch 20:7). This testimony of His acceptance of them because of their faith was borne by God not only externally in His Word, but in their consciences. He gave them His Spirit who assured them of their acceptance—Psalm 51:12, Acts 15:8. Let writer and reader learn to esteem what God does.

Let us value a Christian not for his intellect, natural charms, or social position, but for his *faith*, evidenced by an obedient walk and godly life.

We cannot do better in closing our comments upon verse 2 than by giving the “practical observations” on it of John Owen:

“1. Instances or examples are the most powerful confirmations of practical truths. 2. They who have a good testimony from God shall never want reproaches from the world. 3. It is faith alone, which, from the beginning of the world (or from the giving of the first promise), was the means and way of obtaining acceptance with God. 4. The faith of true believers, from the beginning of the world, was fixed on things future, hoped for, and invisible. 5. That faith whereby men please God acts itself in a fixed contemplation on things future and invisible, from whence it derived an encouragement and strength to endure and abide firm in profession, against all opposition and persecutions. 6. Men may be despised, vilified, and reproached in the world, yet if they have faith, if they are true believers, they are accepted with God, and He will give them a good report.”

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb 11:3). There is a much closer connection between this verse and the two preceding ones than most of the commentators have perceived. The apostle is still setting forth the importance and excellency of faith. Here he affirms that through it, its favoured possessors are enabled to apprehend things which are high above the reach of human reason. The origin of the universe presents a problem which neither science nor philosophy can solve, as is evident from their conflicting and ridiculous attempts. But that difficulty vanishes entirely before *faith*.

“Through faith we *understand*.” Faith is the vehicle or medium of spiritual perception. “If thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest *see* the glory of God” (Joh 11:40). “Which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe *and know* the truth” (1Ti 4:3). Faith is not a *blind* reliance on the Word of God, but an intelligent persuasion of its veracity, wisdom, beauty. So far from Christians being the credulous fools the world deems them, they are the wisest of earth’s inhabitants. The “fools” are they who are “slow of heart to believe” (Luk 24:25). Through faith in what has been revealed in the Scriptures, we *know* that the universe is created and fashioned by God. “What does faith give us to understand concerning the worlds, that is, the upper, middle, and lower regions of the universe? 1. That they were not eternal, nor did they produce themselves, but they were made by another. 2. That the Maker of the world is God. He is the Maker of all things and whosoever is so must be God. 3. That He made the world with great exactness. It was a framed work, in everything duly adapted and disposed to answer its end, and to express the perfections of the Creator. 4. That God made the world by His word, that is, by His essential wisdom and eternal Son, *and* by His active will, saying, Let it be done and it was done. 5. That the world was thus framed out of nothing, out of no pre-existent matter, contrary to the received maxim, that out of nothing, nothing can be made, which, though true of created power, can have no place with God, who can call things that are not as if they were, and command them into being. These things we understand by faith” (Matthew Henry).

“That the worlds were framed by the word of God” (Heb 11:3). The word for “worlds” in the *Greek* signifies “ages,” but by a metonymy it is here used of the universe. “The celestial world, with its inhabitants, the angels; the starry and ethereal worlds, with all that is in them, the sun, moon, stars, and fowls of the air; the terrestrial world, with all upon it, man, beasts, etc.; and the watery world, the sea, and all that is therein” (John Gill, 1697-1771). These “worlds” were made at the beginning of the mundane time and have continued throughout all ages. “The apostle accommodated his expression to the received opinion of the Jews, and their way of expressing

themselves about the world. ‘Olam’ denotes the world as to the subsistence of it and as to its duration” (John Owen). We do not, then, espouse Bullinger’s strange view of this verse.

The “worlds,” or universe, were “framed,” that is, were adjusted and disposed into a wise and beautiful order, by “the word of God.” That expression is used in a threefold sense. First, there is the essential and personal Word, the eternal Son of God (Joh 1:1). Second, there is the written, ever-living Word, the Holy Scriptures (Joh 10:35). Third, there is the Word of Power, or manifestation of the invincible will of God. It is the last-mentioned that is in view in Hebrews 11:3. The Greek for “word” is *not* “logos” (as in John 1:1), but “rhema” (as in Hebrews 1:3). “Rhema” signifies a word *spoken*. The reference is to God’s imperial fiat, His effectual command, as throughout Genesis 1, “God *said* [the manifestations of His invincible will] let light be, and light was.” “For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psa 33:9). An illustration of the Word of His Power (see Heb 1:3) is found in John 5:28-29.

“So that things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear” (Heb 11:3). There is some difficulty (in the Greek) in ascertaining the precise meaning of this phrase. Personally, we are inclined to regard it as referring back to Genesis 1:2. The verse before us concerns more directly the *fashioning* of the present heavens and earth, though that necessarily presupposes their original creation. The elements were submerged and darkness enshrouded them. The *practical* force of this verse to us is—our “faith” does not rest upon what “appears” outwardly, but is satisfied with the bare Word of God. Since God created the universe out of nothing, how easily can He preserve and sustain us when there is not anything (to our view) in sight! He, who can call worlds into existence by the Word of His power, can command supplies for the neediest of His creatures.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

8. His Wanderings

The picture which the Holy Spirit has given in Scripture of David’s character and life is a composite one. It is somewhat like a painting in which the dominant colours are white, black, and gold. In many details, David has left an example which we do well to follow. In other respects, he presents a solemn warning which we do well to heed. In other features, he was a blessed type of Christ. Thus, the meeting together of these three distinct things in David may well be likened unto a composite picture. Nor do we exercise a wrong spirit (providing our motive be right) or sully the grace of God by dwelling upon the sad defects in the character of the Psalmist or the failures in his life. Rather will the Spirit’s design be realized and our souls be the gainers if we duly take to heart and turn them into earnest prayer that we may be delivered from the snares into which he fell.

At the close of our last article, we saw how that to escape the murderous hatred of Saul, David took refuge with Samuel at Naioth. Thither did his relentless enemy follow him. But wondrously did God interpose. Three times the messengers which the king had sent to arrest David were restrained and awed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Not only so, but when Saul himself came in person, the Spirit of God subdued and threw him into a kind of ecstatic trance. One would have thought that this signal intervention of God for David had quietened all his fears and filled his soul with praise and thanksgiving unto Him who had shown Himself strong on his behalf. Was it not plain that God did not intend Saul to harm the one whom His prophet had anointed? Ah, but David too was a man of like passions with us and unless divine grace wrought effectually *within* him, no outward providences would avail to spiritualize him. The moment the Lord leaves us to ourselves (to try us, to show what we are), a fall is certain.

Instead of continuing at Naioth, quietly waiting the next token of God's goodness, David became alarmed and took matters into his own hands. Instead of being occupied with the divine perfections, David now saw only a powerful, inveterate, blood-thirsty enemy. Accordingly, the next thing we read is, "And David fled from Naioth in Ramah" (1Sa 20:1). True he "fled" from Saul, but he also turned his back upon Samuel. "And came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?" It is solemn to see David preferring a conference with Jonathan rather than with the prophet of God. As usual, the key is hung upon the door. The opening verse of this chapter explains to us what is found in the later ones. It was "natural" that David should turn for help to a "friend," but was it *spiritual*?

Do not the questions David put to Jonathan reveal to us the state of his heart? The "I," "mine," "my," "my," show plainly enough the condition of his mind. God was not now in all his thoughts, yea, *He* was not mentioned at all. The repeated attempts of Saul upon his life had thoroughly unnerved him, and his "there is but a step between me and death" (1Sa 20:3) intimates plainly that unbelieving fears now possessed him. Ah, David needed to turn unto an abler physician than Jonathan if his feverish anxiety was to be allayed. Only One was sufficient for laying a calming and cooling hand upon him. O how much the saint loses when he fails to acknowledge the Lord in *all* his ways (Pro 3:6). But worse—when communion is broken, when the soul is out of touch with God, temptation is yielded unto and grievous sin is committed. It was so here. Afraid that Saul's anger would return when his absence from the table was noted, but fearful to take his place there, David bids Jonathan utter a deliberate lie on his behalf (1Sa 20:5-6). May this speak loudly to each of our hearts, warning of the fearful fruits which issue from severed fellowship with the Lord.

The first false step David had taken was in marrying the daughter of Saul, for it is evident from the sacred narrative that she was no suited partner for the man after God's own heart. His second mistake was his fleeing from Naioth and thus turning his back upon the prophet of God. His third failure was to seek aid of Jonathan. The true character of his "friend" was exhibited on this occasion. Seeing David so perturbed, he had not the moral courage to acknowledge the truth, but sought to pacify him with a prevarication (1Sa 20:2). Surely Jonathan could not be ignorant of Saul's having thrown the javelin at David, of the instructions given to the servants to slay him (1Sa 19:11), of the messengers sent to arrest him (1Sa 19:20), and of his going after David in person (1Sa 19:22). But all doubt is removed by, "Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should *kill* David" (1Sa 19:1). Jonathan deliberately equivocated in 1 Samuel 20:2, and "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1Co 15:33). Thus it was here—David lied too (1Sa 20:5-6).

We do not propose to go over this 20th chapter verse by verse, for we are not now writing a commentary upon 1 Samuel. A plan was agreed upon by Jonathan whereby he should ascertain the latest attitude of his father and acquaint David with the same. A solemn covenant was entered into between them—Jonathan here, and David much later (2Sa 9), faithfully carried out its terms. The words, “David hid himself in the field” (1Sa 20:24 and cf. 1Sa 20:35, 41), at once expose his lie in verse 6, though the commentators have glossed it over. When David was missed from the king’s table and inquiry was made, Jonathan repeated the lie which David had suggested to him. Thereupon the king reviled his son and declared that David “shall surely die” (1Sa 20:31). When Jonathan sought to expostulate and ask why David should be slain, Saul threw his javelin at him. The meeting between Jonathan and David in the field, and their affectionate leave-taking is touchingly described (1Sa 20:41-42).

“Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest” (1Sa 21:1). When a real saint is out of touch with God, when he is in a backslidden state, his conduct presents a strange enigma and his inconsistent ways are such as no psychologist can explain. But much that is inexplicable to many (even to ill-informed believers) is solved for us by Galatians 5:17, “For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” Here we have set forth the conflict of the two “natures” in the Christian, the irreconcilable opposition between the two mainsprings of conduct, the “flesh” and the “spirit.” According as one or the other of these two principles is actuating and dominating the saint, such will be his course of action. The final clause of this verse has a double force—the presence of the “flesh” hinders the “spirit” from completely realizing its desires in this life (Rom 7:15-25). The presence of the “spirit” prevents the “flesh” from fully having its way.

Galatians 5:17 supplies the key to many a mysterious experience in the life of a Christian, and sheds much light on the checkered histories of the Old Testament saints. We might add many paragraphs at this point by illustrating the last sentence from the lives of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, etc. But instead, we will confine our attention to the leading subject of these articles. In his meeting the attacks of the wild animals (1Sa 17:34-36), in his devotion for the tabernacle (Psa 132:1-7), in his engagement with Goliath, the “spirit” was uppermost in David, and therefore was the Lord before his heart. There had been severe testings of courage and faith, but his trust in the Lord wavered not. Then followed a season in the king’s household, where it was much harder to preserve this spirituality. Then Saul turned against him, and again and again sought his life. Deprived of the outward means of grace, David’s faith flagged, and as it flagged, fears replaced it, and instead of being occupied with the Lord, his powerful foe filled his vision.

In his flight from Saul, David first sought unto Samuel, which shows that the “flesh” in him was not completely regnant, as it never is in a truly regenerate soul. “Sin shall not have *dominion* over you” (Rom 6:14)—it shall not render you its absolute slave. But in his flight from Samuel and his turning to Jonathan for help, we see the “flesh” more and more regulating his actions—still plainer manifested in the falsehood which he put into his friend’s mouth. And now in his flight unto Ahimelech and the manner in which he conducted himself, the anointed eye may discern the conflict which was at work within him. It now seemed clear unto David that no change for the better was to be expected in Saul. As long as the king was alive, he was in danger. An outcast from the court, he now became a lonely wanderer, but before he journeyed farther afield, his heart was first drawn to Nob, whither the tabernacle had been removed.

Various motives and considerations seem to have moved David in his repairing to Nob. Foreseeing that he must now be an exile, he wished to take leave of the tabernacle, not knowing

when he should see it again. It is plain from many of his Psalms that the sorest grief of David during the time of his banishment was his isolation from the house of God and his restraint from public ordinances. “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD...For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Psa 84:1-2, 10 and cf. 42:3-4, etc.). Second, it seems clear from 1 Samuel 22:10 that David’s purpose was to inquire of the Lord through the high priest to obtain directions from Him as to his path. Third, from what follows here, it appears that food was also his quest.

“And Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David” (1Sa 21:1). Evidently the high priest had heard of David’s having fallen under the displeasure of Saul, and so concluded that he was a fugitive. Knowing the type of man the king was, Ahimelech was fearful of endangering his own life by entertaining David. “And said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?” That there were some “young men” with him is clear from verse 4 and also Matthew 12:3, yet having won such renown both in camp and court, it might well be expected that David should be accompanied by a suitable equipage. The disdain which the high priest showed for David the outcast, illustrates the merciless attitude of the world toward a fallen and impoverished hero.

“And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place” (1Sa 21:2). Here again, we see David guilty of a gross untruth. How solemn to find the Psalmist of Israel telling a deliberate lie at the threshold of the house of God, whither he had come to inquire the mind of the Lord. Verily, each one of us has real need to pray, “Remove from me the way of lying” (Psa 119:29). David’s heart quailed under the embarrassing question of the priest, and he who had dared to meet single-handed the Philistine giant was now afraid to speak the truth. Ah, there cannot be the calm and courage of faith, where faith itself is inoperative. Elijah shrank not from meeting the four hundred prophets of Baal, yet later he fled in terror from Jezebel. Peter dared to step out of the ship onto the sea, yet trembled before a maid. “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1Co 10:12).

It is easier to trust God in days of sunshine than in times of gloom and darkness. “David had often, indeed, before known difficulty and danger—from the day of his conflict with Goliath, he had known little else. But then, there was this difference—in former difficulties, he had been enabled to triumph. Some ray of brightness had gilded every cloud. Some honour awaited him out of each affliction. But now, God seemed no longer to interfere on his behalf. The full enmity of Saul was allowed to take its course and God interfered not, either to subdue or to chasten. He appeared no longer to intend raising David above circumstances, but to allow him to be overcome by them. David’s hearts seemed unable to bear this. To trust God whilst overcoming is one thing; to trust Him when being overcome is another” (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899).

David now asked Ahimelech for five loaves of bread (1Sa 21:3). Bear in mind that he stood at the door of the tabernacle and not before the priest’s personal residence. All that was to hand were the twelve loaves which had rested for a week on the golden table in the sanctuary and which, being replaced at once by twelve more, became the property of the priests and their families. Assuring Ahimelech that he and his men met the requirements of Exodus 19:15, David pressed for the bread being given to him (1Sa 21:5). To what a low estate had the son of Jesse fallen. Now that Saul’s rooted malice was generally known, the people would be afraid and unwilling to befriend him. In Matthew 12:2-8, we find the Lord Jesus vindicating this action, which shows us that the ordinances of religion may be dispensed with where the preservation of life calls for it.

Ritual observances must give way to moral duties and in the case of urgent providential necessity, that is permissible which ordinarily may not be done.

“Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdsmen that belonged to Saul” (v. 7). And yet in *his* hearing, David had preferred his urgent request. Surely natural common sense would have prompted him to act with more prudence. Ah, my reader, when the saint is in a backslidden state of soul, he often acts more foolishly than does the man of the world. This is a righteous judgment of God upon him. He has given us His Word to walk by, and that Word is one of *wisdom*, containing salutary counsel. We turn from it at our peril and irreparable loss. To lean unto our own understanding is to court certain disaster. Yet, when communion with God is broken, this is exactly what we do. Then it is that we are suffered to reap the bitter fruits of our evil ways and made to feel the consequences of our folly.

Next, David asked Ahimelech for a weapon, and was told that the only one available was “the sword of Goliath” (1Sa 21:9), which had been preserved in the tabernacle as a monument of the Lord’s goodness to Israel. When told of this, David exclaimed, “There is none like that, give it to me.” Alas, alas, how had the mighty fallen. “Surely it argued ill that his hand should be the first to withdraw the giant weapon from its resting-place in order that he might transfer to *it* a measure, at least of that confidence which he was withdrawing from God. How different the condition of David now and on the day of Goliath’s fall! Then, trusting in the God of Israel and associated with Israel, he had gone out in owned weakness, but now, forsaking Israel and the land of Israel, he went forth armed with the sword of Goliath, to seek friendship and alliance with the Philistines, the enemies of Israel and the enemies of God” (Benjamin W. Newton).

Thus David now set forth, provisioned (temporarily, at least) and armed. But at what a cost? The unsuspecting priest had believed David’s lies and assured by him that Saul had commissioned him, feared not the presence of Doeg the king’s servant (1Sa 21:7). But he paid dearly for listening, against his better judgment, to David’s falsehoods. That treacherous Edomite informed Saul (1Sa 22:9-10) and later he was ordered by the enraged king to reek a fearful vengeance, “And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep” (1Sa 22:18-19). Such were some of the fearful results of David’s lies, as he afterwards acknowledged to the one remaining child of Ahimelech, “I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father’s house” (1Sam 22:22). May it please the Holy Spirit to powerfully move both writer and reader to lay to heart the whole of this solemn incident, that we may daily pray with increasing earnestness, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Mat 6:13).

*“He will by means like these,
Thy stubborn temper break;
Soften thy heart by due degrees,
And make thy spirit meek.”*

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

10. The Scriptures and Love

This article brings to a close the present series. In them, we have sought to point out some of the ways by which we may ascertain whether or not our reading and searching of the Scriptures is really being blest to our souls. Many are deceived on this matter, mistaking an eagerness to acquire knowledge for a spiritual love of the truth (2Th 2:10), and assuming that additions to their store of learning is the same thing as a growth in grace. A great deal depends upon the end or aim we have before us when turning to God's Word. If it be simply to familiarize ourselves with its contents and become better versed in its details, it is likely that the garden of our souls will remain barren. But if with the prayerful desire to be rebuked and corrected by that Word, to be searched by the Spirit to conform our hearts and lives to its holy requirements, then we may expect a divine blessing.

In the preceding articles, we have endeavored to single out the vital things by which we may discover what progress we are making in personal godliness. Various criteria have been given, which it becomes both writer and reader to honestly measure himself by. We have pressed such tests as, Am I acquiring a greater hatred of sin, and a practical deliverance from its power and pollution? Am I obtaining a deeper acquaintance with God and His Christ? Is my prayer-life healthier, my good works more abundant, my obedience fuller and gladder? Am I more separated from the world in my affections and ways? Am I learning to make a right and profitable use of God's promises and so delighting myself in Him that His joy is my daily strength? Unless I can truthfully say that these *are* (in some measure) my experience, then it is greatly to be feared that my study of the Scriptures is profiting me little or nothing.

It hardly seems fitting that these articles should be concluded until one has been devoted to the consideration of Christian love. The extent to which this spiritual grace is, or is not, being cultivated and regulated, affords another index to the measure in which my perusal of God's Word is helping me spiritually. No one can read the Scriptures with any measure of attention without discovering how much they have to say about *love*, and therefore it behooves each one of us to prayerfully and carefully ascertain whether or no his or her love be really a *spiritual* one, and whether it be in a healthy state and is being exercised aright. It is very easy to be mistaken upon this important point, and therefore it is the part of wisdom to make a close investigation of the same.

The subject of Christ love is far too comprehensive to consider all its varied phases within the compass of a single paper. Properly, we should begin with contemplating the exercise of our love toward God and His Christ, but as this has been at least touched upon in preceding articles, we shall now waive it. Much too might be said about the natural love which we owe to our fellowmen, who belong to the same human family as we do, but there is less need to write thereon than upon what is now before our mind. Here, we propose to confine our attention to spiritual love unto the brethren, the brethren of Christ.

1. We are profited from the Word when we perceive the *great importance* of Christian love. Nowhere is this brought out more emphatically than in 1 Corinthians 13. There, the Holy Spirit tells us that though a professing Christian can speak fluently and eloquently upon divine things, and has not love, he is like metal, which, though it makes a noise when struck, is lifeless. That though he can prophesy, understand all mysteries and knowledge, and have faith which brings miracles to pass, but be lacking in love, he is a spiritual non-entity. Yea, that though he be so benevolent as to give away all his worldly possessions to feed the poor and yield his body to a martyr's death, and have not love, it profits him nothing. How high a value is here placed upon love, and how essential for me to make sure I possess it!

Said our Lord, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (Joh 13:35). By Christ's making it the badge of Christian discipleship, we see again the great importance of love. It is an essential test of the genuineness of our profession. We cannot love Christ, but we must love His brethren, for they are all bound up in the same "bundle of life" (1Sa 25:29) with Him. Love to those whom He has redeemed is a sure evidence of spiritual and supernatural love to the Lord Jesus Himself. Where the Holy Spirit has wrought a supernatural birth, He will draw forth that nature into exercise, He will produce in the hearts and lives and conduct of the saints supernatural graces, one of which is loving each other for Christ's sake.

2. We are profited from the Word when we learn to detect the *sad perversions* of Christian love. As water will not rise above its own level, so the natural man is incapable of understanding, still less appreciating, that which is spiritual (1Co 2:14). Therefore, we should not be surprised when unregenerate professors mistake human sentimentality and carnal pleasantries for spiritual love. But sad is it to see some of God's own people living on so low a plane that they confuse human amiability and affability with this queen of the Christian graces. While it be true that spiritual love is characterized by meekness and gentleness, yet is it something very different from and vastly superior to the courtesies and kindnesses of the flesh.

How many a doting father has withheld the rod from his children, under the mistaken notion that real affection for them and the chastising of them were incompatible? How many a foolish mother, who disdained all corporal punishment, has boasted that "love" rules in her home? One of the most trying experiences of the writer, in his extensive travels, has been to spend a season in homes where the children had been completely spoilt. It is a wicked perversion of the word "love" to apply it to such moral laxity and parental looseness. But this same pernicious idea rules the minds of many people in other connections and relations. If a servant of God rebukes their fleshly and worldly ways, if he presses the uncompromising claims of God, he is at once charged with being "lacking in love." O how terribly are multitudes deceived by Satan on this important subject!

3. We are profited from the Word when we are taught the *true nature* of Christian love. Christian love is a spiritual grace abiding in the soul of the saints alongside of faith and hope (1Co 13:13). It is a holy disposition wrought in them when they are regenerated (1Jo 5:1). It is nothing less than the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). It is a righteous principle which seeks the highest good of others. It is the very reverse of that principle of self-love and self-seeking which is in us by nature. It is not only an affectionate regard for all who bear the image of Christ, but also a powerful desire to promote their welfare. It is not a fickle sentiment which is easily offended, but an abiding dynamic which "many waters" of cold indifference, of "floods" of dis-appreciation can neither quench nor drown (Song 8:7). Though coming far short in degree, it is the same in essence as His of whom we read, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (Joh 13:1).

There is no safer and surer way of obtaining a right conception of the nature of Christian love than by making a thorough study of its perfect exemplification in and by the Lord Jesus. When we say a “thorough study,” we mean the taking a comprehensive survey of *all* that is recorded of Him in the four Gospels, and not the limiting of ourselves to a few favourite passages or incidents. As this is done, we discover that His love was not only benevolent and magnanimous, thoughtful and gentle, unselfish and self-sacrificing, patient and unchanging, but many other elements also entered into it. Love could deny an urgent request (Joh 11:6-7), rebuke His mother (Joh 2:4), use a whip (Joh 2:15), severely upbraid His doubting disciples (Luk 24:25), and denounce hypocrites (Mat 23:13-33). Love can be stern (Mat 16:23), yea, angry (Mar 3:5). Spiritual love is a *holy* thing. It is faithful to God. It is uncompromising toward all that is evil.

4. We are profited from the Word when we discover that Christian love is of *divine communication*. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1Jo 3:14). “Love to the brethren is the fruit and effect of a new and supernatural birth, wrought in our souls by the Holy Spirit, as the blessed evidence of our having been chosen in Christ by the Divine Father, before the world was. To love Christ and His, and our brethren in Him, is congenial to that divine nature He hath made us the partakers of by His Holy Spirit....This love of the brethren must be a *peculiar* love, such as none but the regenerate are the subjects of, and which none but they can exercise, or the apostle would not have so particularly mentioned it. It is such, as those who have it not, are in a state of unregeneracy; so it follows—‘he that loveth not his brother abideth in death’” (S. E. Pierce, 1746-1829).

Love for the brethren is far, far more than a finding agreeable the society of those whose temperaments are similar to or whose views accord with my own. It pertains not to mere nature, but is a spiritual and supernatural thing. It is the heart being drawn out to those in whom I perceive *something of Christ*. Thus, it is very much more than a party spirit. It embraces *all* in whom I can see the image of God’s Son. It is, therefore, a loving them for Christ’s sake, for what I see of Christ in them. It is the Holy Spirit within attracting and alluring me with Christ indwelling my brethren and sisters. Thus, real Christian love is not only a divine gift, but is altogether dependent upon God for its invigoration and exercise. We need to pray daily that the Holy Spirit will call forth into action and manifestation, toward both God and His people, that love which He has shed abroad in our hearts.

5. We are profited from the Word when we *rightly exercise* Christian love. This is done not be seeking to please our brethren and ingratiate ourselves in their esteem, but when we truly seek their highest good. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments” (1Jo 5:2). What is the real test of my personal love to God Himself? It is my keeping of His commandments, see John 14:15, 21, 24; 15:10, 14. The genuineness and strength of my love to God is not to be measured by my words, nor by the lustiness with which I sing His praises, but by my obedience to His Word. The same principle holds good in my relations with my brethren.

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments” (1Jo 5:2). If I am glossing over the faults of my brethren and sisters, if I am walking with them in a course of self-will and self-pleasing, then I am *not* “loving” them. “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and *not* suffer sin upon him” (Lev 19:17). Love is to be exercised in a divine way, and never at the expense of my failing to love God. In fact, it is only when God has His proper place in my heart that spiritual love can be exercised by me toward my brethren. True spiritual love does not consist

in gratifying them, but in pleasing God and helping them, and I can only *help* them in the path of God's commandments.

Petting and pampering each other is not brotherly love. Exhorting one another to press forward in the race that is set before us, and speaking words (enforced by the example of our daily walk) which will encourage them to "look off unto Jesus" would be much more helpful. Brotherly love is to be a holy thing, and not a fleshly sentiment or a loose indifference as to the path we are treading. God's "commandments" are expressions of His love, as well as of His authority, and to ignore them, even while seeking to be kindly affectioned one to another, is not "love" at all. The *exercise* of love is to be in strict conformity to the revealed will of God. We are to love "in the truth" (3Jo 1:4).

6. We are profited from the Word when we are taught the *varied manifestations* of Christian love. To love our brethren and manifest the same in all kinds of ways is our bounden duty. But at no point can we do this more truly and effectually, and with less affection and ostentation, than by having fellowship with them at the throne of grace. There are brethren and sisters in Christ, in the four corners of the earth, about the details of whose trials and conflicts, temptations and sorrows, I know nothing. Yet I can express my love for them and pour out my heart before God on their behalf by earnest supplication and intercession. In no other way can the Christian more manifest his affectionate regard toward his fellow-pilgrims than by using all his interest in the Lord Jesus Christ in their behalf, intreating His mercies and favours unto them.

"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1Jo 3:17-18). Many of God's people are very poor in this world's goods. Sometimes they wonder why this is. It is a great trial unto them. One reason why the Lord permits this is that others of His saints may have their compassion drawn out and minister to their temporal needs from the abundance with which God has furnished them. Real love is intensely practical. It considers no office too mean, no task too humbling, where the sufferings of a brother can be relieved. When the Lord of Love was here upon earth, He had thought for the bodily hunger of the multitude and the comfort of His disciples' feet!

But there are some of the Lord's people so poor that they have very little indeed to share with others. What, then, may they do? Why, make the spiritual concerns of all the saints their own. Interest themselves on their behalf at the throne of grace. We know by our own cases and circumstances what the feelings, sorrows, complaints, other saints must be the subjects of. We know from sad experience how easy it is to give way to a spirit of discontent and murmuring. But we also know how, when we have cried unto the Lord for His quieting hand to be laid upon us, and when He has brought some precious promise to our remembrance, what peace and comfort have come to our heart. Then, let us beg Him to be equally gracious to all His distressed saints. Let us seek to make their burdens our own, and weep with them that weep, as well as rejoice with them that rejoice. Thus shall we express real love for their persons in Christ by intreating their Lord and our Lord to remember them with everlasting kindness.

This is how the Lord Jesus is now manifesting *His* love to His saints, "He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25). He makes their cause and care His own. He is intreating the Father on their behalf. None is forgotten by Him. Every lone sheep is borne upon the heart of the Good Shepherd. Thus, by expressing our love to the brethren in daily prayers for the supply of their various needs, we are brought into fellowship with our great High Priest. Not only so, but the saints will be endeared to us thereby. Our very praying for them as the beloved of God will increase our love and esteem for them as such. We cannot carry them *on* our hearts before the

throne of grace without cherishing *in* our own hearts a real affection for them. The best way of overcoming a bitter spirit to a brother who has offended is to be much in prayer for him!

7. We are profited from the Word when we are taught the *proper cultivation* of Christian love. Space will only permit us to suggest one or two rules for this. First, recognizing at the outset that, just as there is much in you (in me) which will severely try the love of the brethren, so there will be not a little in them to test your love. “*Forbearing one another in love*” (Eph 4:2) is the great admonition on this subject which each of us needs to lay to heart. It is surely striking to note that the very first quality of spiritual love named in 1 Corinthians 13 is “*Charity suffereth long*” (1Co 13:4)!

Second, the best way to cultivate any virtue or grace is to *exercise* it. Talking and theorizing about it avails nothing, unless it be carried into action. Many are the complaints heard today about the littleness of the love which is being manifested in many places. That is all the more reason why I should seek to set a better example! Suffer not the coldness and unkindness of others to dampen your love, but “*overcome evil with good*” (Rom 12:21). Prayerfully ponder 1 Corinthians 13 at least once a week.

Third, above all see to it that your own heart basks in the light and warmth of God’s love. Like begets like. The more you are truly occupied with the unwearying, unfailing, unfathomable love of Christ to you, the more will your heart be drawn out in love to those who are His. A beautiful illustration of this is found in the fact that the particular apostle who wrote most upon brotherly love is he who leaned upon the Master’s bosom. The Lord grant all requisite grace to both reader and writer (than whom none more needs to heed them) to observe these rules, to the praise of the glory of His grace, and to the good of His dear people.

CONVICTION OF SIN

This comprehends *knowledge* and *assent*. It comprehends the knowledge of what the Scripture speaks against sin and sinners, and that the Scripture so speaks is the Word of God. It comprehends a sincere assent to the verity of Scripture, and some knowledge of ourselves, particularly, of our guilt and its consequences.

This conviction comprehends not only knowledge and assent, but *sensibility*. God works on the heart as well as on the head. Both were corrupted and out of order. The principle of new life, therefore, quickens both. The knowledge which is merely theoretical, never suitably moves the affections. The doctrines of religion produce in the understanding of an unrenewed soul, but a superficial apprehension, and therefore, can produce in the heart but small sensibility. As hypocrites may know many things, but nothing with the clear apprehensions of an experienced man, so may they be slightly affected. To view in the map of the Gospel the precious things of Christ and His kingdom, may slightly affect us, but to thirst for and drink of the living waters and to be heir of that kingdom must needs work another kind of sensibility. The great things of sin, of grace, and Christ, and eternity, which are of weight one would think to move a rock, shake not the

heart of the carnal professor. It is true, some soft and passionate natures may have tears at command, when one that is truly gracious hath none. Yet is this Christian with dry eyes more solidly apprehensive and more deeply affected than the other is in the midst of his tears, and the weeping hypocrite will be drawn to his sin again by a trifle, which the groaning Christian would not be hired to commit by crowns and kingdoms. The following are some of the things of which sinners are convinced by the Spirit of God.

1. They are convinced of *the evil of sin*. The sinner is made to know and feel that sin, which was his delight, is indeed a loathsome thing; a breach of the righteous law of the Most High God, dishonourable to Him, and destructive to the soul. He was wont to marvel what made men raise such an outcry against sin or what harm it was for a man to take a little forbidden pleasure. He saw no such heinousness in it that Christ must needs die for it and most of the would be eternally tormented in hell on account of it. He thought this was somewhat hard measure and greater punishment than could possibly be deserved by a little fleshly liberty or worldly delight, by the neglect of Christ, His Word, or worship, by a wanton thought, a vain word, a dull duty, or a cold affection, but now his views are changed. God hath opened his eyes to see the inexpressible vileness of sin which satisfies him of the reasonableness of all this.

2. They are convinced of *their misery*. He who before read the threatenings of God's law, as men do the stories of foreign wars or as they behold the wounds and the blood in a picture which never makes him smart or fear, now finds it is *his own* story, and he perceives that it is his own doom, and if he found his name written in the curse or heard that law say, as Nathan, "Thou art the man" (2Sa 12:7). The wrath of God seemed to be but as a storm to a man in a dry house or as the pains of the sick to the healthy bystander, but now he finds the disease is his own and feels the smart of the wounds of his own soul. In a word, he finds himself a condemned man, that he is dead and damned in point of law and that nothing was wanting but the mere execution to make him absolutely and irrecoverably miserable.

Whether you call this a work of the law or Gospel, yet sure I am it is a work of the Spirit wrought, in some measure, in all the regenerate. And though some do judge it unnecessary bondage, yet it is beyond my conception how he should come to Christ for pardon that did not first find himself guilty and condemned, or for life that never felt himself dead. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" (Mar 2:17). Yet I deny not that some gracious souls may scarcely perceive and others scarcely remember this work of humiliation. The discovery of the remedy, *as soon as* the misery, must needs prevent a great part of the trouble and make the distinct effect on the soul to be with much more difficulty discerned. Nay, the actings of the soul are so quick and often so confused that the distinct order of these workings may not be apprehended or remembered at all. And perhaps, the joyful apprehensions of mercy may make the sense of misery the sooner forgotten.

3. They are convinced of *the vanity and insufficiency of the creature*. Every man is naturally an idolater. Our hearts turned from God in our first fall and ever since the creature has been our god. When God should guide us, we guide ourselves. When He should be our sovereign, we rule ourselves. The laws which He gives us, we would correct, and if we had the making of them, we would have made them otherwise. When we should depend on Him for our daily mercies, we would rather keep our stock ourselves and have our fortune in our own hands. When we should stand at His disposal, we would be at our own. When we should submit to His providence, we usually quarrel with it, as if we knew better what is good for us than He and how to dispose of all things more wisely.

Thus we are naturally our own idols. But down falls this Dagon when God once renews the soul. It is the great business of that great work to bring the heart back to God Himself. He convinces the sinner that the creature of itself can neither be his God to make him happy, nor yet his Christ to recover him from his misery and restore him to God, who is his happiness. This God does not only by His Word, but by His providence also, because words seem but wind and will hardly take off the raging senses. He that therefore makes His rod to speak, and continue speaking, till the sinner hear and learn by it this great lesson. This is the great reason why afflictions so ordinarily concur in the great work of conversion. When a sinner makes honour his god and God shall cast him into lowest disgrace, or bring him that idolized his riches into a condition wherein they cannot help him—what a powerful help is here to this conviction! When a man that made pleasure his god, whether ease or sports, or mirth or company, or gluttony or drunkenness or whatsoever—a ranging eye, a curious ear, a raging appetite, or a lustful heart to desire, and God should take these from him, or turn them all into gall and wormwood—what a help is here to this conviction! When God shall cast a man into a languishing sickness and inflict wounds and anguish on his heart and stir up against him his own conscience and then, as it were, take him by the hand and lead him to credit, to riches, to pleasure, to company, to sports, or whatsoever was dearest to him, and say, “Now try if these can help thee. Can these heal thy wounded conscience? Can they support thy tottering frame? Can they keep thy departing soul in thy body? Will they prove to thee eternal pleasures, or redeem thy soul from eternal flames? Cry aloud to them and see whether these will now be unto thee instead of God and His Christ.” O how this works with the sinner when sense itself acknowledges the truth and even the flesh is convinced of the creature’s vanity and our very deceiver is now undeceived. Now he despises his former idols and calls them all miserable comforters. He chides himself for his former folly and pities those that have no higher happiness.

4. They are convinced of *the absolute necessity, the full sufficiency, and the perfect excellency of Jesus Christ*. This conviction is not by mere argumentation, but also by the sense of our desperate misery, as a man in famine is convinced of the necessity of food, or as a man that has heard his sentence of condemnation is convinced of the necessity of pardon, or as a man that lies in prison for a debt is convinced of the necessity of a surety to discharge it. Now the sinner finds himself in another case than ever he was aware of. He feels an insupportable burden upon him, and sees that there is none but Christ can take it off. He perceives that he is under the wrath of God, and that the law proclaims him a rebel and an outlaw and that none but Christ can make his peace. He feels the curse lie upon him and upon all he has and that Christ alone can make him blessed. He is now brought to this dilemma, either he must have Christ to justify him or be eternally condemned. He must have Christ to bring him to God or be eternally shut out from His presence. And now no wonder if he cries as the martyr Lambert, “None but Christ, none but Christ.” It is not gold but bread that will satisfy the hungry, nor any thing but pardon that will comfort the condemned. All things are now but “dross and dung,” and what he counted gain is now “but loss in comparison of Christ.” See Phi 3:8. For as the sinner sees his utter misery and the inability of himself and all things to relieve him, so he perceives that there is no saving mercy out of Christ.

And as the soul is convinced of the necessity of Christ, so also of His full sufficiency. He sees that though the fig leaves of our own righteousness are too small to cover our nakedness, yet the righteousness of Christ is large enough—that though ours is disproportioned to the justice of the law, yet Christ’s does extend to every tittle. His sufferings being a perfect satisfaction to the law,

and all power in heaven and in earth being given to Him, He is able to supply all our wants and “to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Heb 7:25).

The sinner is also convinced of the perfect excellency of Jesus Christ, both as He is considered in Himself and as considered in relation to us—both as He is the only way to the Father, and as He is the end, being one with the Father. Before, he knew Christ’s excellency as a blind man knows of the sun, but now he knows it as one that beholds His glory.

After this sensible conviction, *the will also discovers its change*, and that in regard to all the four objects mentioned. (1) The sin which the understanding pronounces evil, the will accordingly turns from with abhorrence. Not that the sensitive appetite is changed, or any way made to abhor its object, but when it would prevail against the conclusions of reason, and carry us to sin against God, Scripture becomes the rule, and reason the master, and sense the servant.

(2) The misery which sin has produced, he not only discerns, but bewails. It is impossible that the convinced soul should look either on its trespass against God or yet on its own self-procured calamity without compunction and contrition. He who truly discerns that he has crucified Christ, and killed himself, will surely in some measure be “pricked at the heart” See Act 2:37. If he cannot weep, he can heartily groan, and his heart feel what his understanding sees.

(3) The creature he now renounces as vain, and turns it out of his heart with disdain. Not that he undervalues it or disclaims its use, but only its idolatrous abuse and its unjust usurpation.

(4) He turns to God as his Father and to Christ as his Saviour. Having before been convinced that nothing else can be his happiness, he now finds it is in God, and therefore looks toward it. But yet it is rather with desire and hope, for the sinner has already found himself to be a stranger and an enemy to God, under the guilt of sin and the curse of the law, and knows there is no coming to Him in peace till his state be changed. And therefore having before been convinced that only Christ is able and willing to do this, and having heard this mercy in the Gospel freely offered, his next act is to accept of Christ Jesus as his Saviour and Lord. For in *both* relations will He be received or not at all. It is not only to acknowledge His sufferings and accept of pardon and glory, but to acknowledge His sovereignty and submit to His government (Richard Baxter, 1650).

ASSURANCE

By way of introduction and in order to acquaint the reader with the particular angle of viewpoint from which we now approach our present theme, let it be pointed out that changing conditions in Christendom call for an ever-varying emphasis on different aspects of divine truth. Did space allow and were the writer fully equipped for such a task, it would be both interesting and instructive to give in detail *the history* of the preaching of Assurance throughout this dispensation. Instead, we can barely outline it. At different periods, the true servants of God have had to face widely different situations and meet errors of varied character. This has called for a campaign of offense and defense adapted to the exigencies of many situations. The weapons

suiting to one conflict were quite useless for another, fresh ones needing to be constantly drawn from the armoury of Scripture.

At the close of that lengthy period known as “the dark ages” (though throughout it, God never left Himself without a clear witness), when the Lord caused a flood of light to break forth upon Christendom, the Reformers were faced by the hoary errors of Romanism, among which was her insistence that none could be positively assured of his salvation till the hour of death was reached. This caused Luther and his contemporaries to deliver a positive message, seeking to stimulate confidence toward God and the laying hold of His sure promises. Yet it has to be acknowledged that there were times when their zeal carried them too far, leading to a position which could not be successfully defended from the Scriptures. Many of the Reformers insisted that assurance was an essential element in saving faith itself, and that unless a person *knew* he was “accepted in the Beloved,” he was yet in his sins. Thus, in the revolt from Romanism, the Protestant pendulum swung too far to the opposite side.

In the great mercy of God, the *balance* of truth was restored in the days of the Puritans. The principal doctrine which Luther and his fellows had emphasized so forcibly was justification by faith alone, but at the close of the sixteenth century and in the early part of the seventeenth, such men as Perkins, Gattaker, Rollock, etc. made prominent the collateral doctrine of sanctification by the Spirit. For the next fifty years, the church on earth was blest with many men “mighty in the Scriptures,” deeply taught of God, enabled by Him to maintain a well-rounded ministry. Such men as Goodwin, Owen, Charnock, Flavel, Sibbes, etc., though living in troublous times and suffering fierce persecution, taught the Word more helpfully (in our judgment) and were more used of God than any since the days of the apostles to the present hour.

The ministry of the Puritans was an exceedingly searching one. While magnifying the free grace of God in no uncertain terms, while teaching plainly that the satisfaction of Christ alone gave *title* to heaven, while emphatically repudiating all creature-merits, they nevertheless insisted that a supernatural and transforming work of the Spirit in the heart and life of the believer was indispensable to fit him for heaven. Professors were rigidly tested and the results and fruits of faith were demanded before its presence was admitted. Self-examination was frequently insisted upon and full details given as to how one might ascertain that he was a “new creature in Christ Jesus.” Christians were constantly urged to “make their calling and election sure” (2Pe 1:10) by ascertaining that they had clear evidence of the same. While conditions were far from being perfect, yet there is good reason to conclude that more deluded souls were undeceived and more hypocrites exposed than at any other period since the first century A.D.

The eighteenth century witnessed a sad declension and departure from the faith. Worldly prosperity brought in spiritual deterioration. As the Puritan leaders died off, none were raised up to fill their places. Arminianism spread rapidly, followed by Deism (Unitarianism), and other fatal errors. Worldliness engulfed the churches and lawlessness and wickedness were rampant without. The Gospel-trumpet was almost silent and the remnant of God’s people dwindled down to an insignificant and helpless handful. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Again the light of God shone forth powerfully in the darkness—Whitefield, Romaine, Gill, Hervey, and others being raised up by God to revive His saints and convert many sinners to Christ. The main emphasis of their preaching and teaching was upon the sovereign grace of God as exhibited in the everlasting covenant, the certain efficacy of Christ’s atonement unto all for whom it was made, and the work of the Spirit in regeneration.

Under the God-given revivals of the latter part of the eighteenth century, the great *doctrines* of the Christian faith occupied the most prominent place. In order that the balance of truth might be

preserved during the next two or three generations, it became necessary for the servants of God to emphasize the *experimental* side of things. Intellectual orthodoxy qualifies none for heaven. There must be a moral and spiritual transformation, a miracle of grace wrought within the soul, which begins at regeneration and is carried on by sanctification. During that period, doctrinal exposition receded more and more into the background, and the practical application of the Word to the heart and life was the characteristic feature in orthodox circles. This called for serious self-examination, and that, in many cases, resulted in doubtings and despondency. Where a due balance is not preserved by preachers and teachers between the objective and subjective sides of the truth, where the latter preponderates, either a species of mysticism or a lack of assurance ensues.

The second half of last century found many circles of professing Christians on the borders of the Slough of Despond. In many companies, the full assurance of salvation was looked upon as a species of fanaticism or as carnal presumption. Unduly occupied with themselves, ill-instructed upon the “two natures” in the Christian, thousands of poor souls regarded doubts and fears, sighs and groans, as the highest evidence of a regenerate state, but those being mixed with worldly and fleshly lustings, the subjects were afraid to affirm they were children of God. To meet this situation, many ill-trained evangelists and teachers sought to direct attention to Christ and His “finished work,” and to get their hearers’ confidence placed upon the bare Word of God. While one evil was corrected, another was committed. While the letter of Scripture was honoured, the work of the Spirit was (unwittingly) dishonoured. Supposing they had a remedy which was sure to work in all cases alike, a superficial work resulted, the aftermath of which we are now reaping. Thousands of souls who give no evidence of being born again are quite confident that Christ has saved them.

From the brief outline presented above, it will be seen that the pendulum has swung from one side to the other. Man is a creature of extremes, and nought but the grace of God can enable any of us to steer a middle path. A careful study of the course of religious history also reveals the fact that the servants of God have been obliged, from time to time, to vary their note of emphasis. This is one meaning of that expression, “And be established in the present truth” (2Pe 1:12), namely, that particular aspect or line of truth which is most needful at any given time. Instead of gaining ground, the Puritans had lost it had they merely echoed what the Reformers had taught. It was not that Owen contradicted Luther, rather did he *supplement* him. Where particular stress has been laid on the counsels of sovereign grace and the imputed righteousness of Christ, this needs to be followed by attention being drawn to the work of the Spirit *within* the saints. In like manner, where much ministry has been given on the Christian’s state, there is a need for a clear exposition of his standing before God.

It is truly deplorable that so few have recognized the need for *applying* the principle that has just been mentioned. So many, having a zeal which is not tempered by knowledge, suppose that because some honoured servant of God in the past was granted much success through his dwelling so largely upon one particular line of truth, that *they* will have equal success provided they imitate him. But circumstances alter cases. The different states through which the professing church passes, calls for different ministry. There is such a thing as “a word spoken *in due season*” (Pro 15:23). O that it may please God to open the eyes of many to see *what* is most “seasonable” for the degenerate times in which our lot is cast, and grant them spiritual discernment to recognize that even many portions of divine truth may prove highly injurious to souls if given them *out of* season.

We recognize this fact easily enough in connection with material things. Why are we so slow to do so when it concerns spiritual things? Meats and nuts are nutritious, but who would think of feeding an infant upon them? So too sickness of body calls for a change of diet. The same is true of the soul. To make this clearer, let us select one or two extreme cases. The truth of eternal punishment should be faithfully preached by every servant of God, but would a broken-hearted woman, who had just lost her husband or child, be a suitable audience? The glory and bliss of the heavenly state is a precious theme, but would it be fitting to present it unto a professing Christian who was intoxicated? The eternal security of the saints is clearly revealed in Holy Writ, but does that justify me pressing it on the attention of a *backslidden* child of God?

Our introduction has been a lengthy one, yet we deemed it necessary to pave the way for what follows. The servant of God is facing today a dreadfully serious and solemn situation. Much that is dearest of all to his heart he has largely to be silent upon. If he is to faithfully deal with souls, he must address himself to the condition they are in. Unless he is much upon his guard, unless he constantly seeks wisdom and guidance from above, he is likely to make bad matters worse. On every side are people full of assurance, certain that they are journeying to heaven. Yet their daily lives show plainly that they are deceived and that their assurance is only a fleshly one. Thousands are, to use their own words, “resting on John 3:16” or 5:24 and have not the slightest doubt they will spend eternity with Christ. Nevertheless, it is the bounden duty of every real servant of God to tell the great majority of them that they are woefully deluded by Satan. O that it may please God to give us the ear and serious attention of some of them.

Sometime ago, we read of an incident which, as nearly as we recall, was as follows. Nearly one hundred years since, conditions in England were similar to what they have recently been in this country. Banks were failing and people were panic-stricken. One man, who had lost confidence in the banks, drew out all his money in five-pound notes and then got a friend to change them into gold. Conditions grew worse, other banks failed, and some of this man’s friends told him they had lost their all. With much confidence, he informed them that he had drawn out his money, had changed it into gold, and that this was secretly hidden where no one would find it, so that he was perfectly safe. A little later, when needing to buy some things, he went to his secret hoard and took out five golden sovereigns. He went from one shop to another, but none would accept them—they were bad ones. Thoroughly alarmed, he went to his hidden money, only to find that it was all counterfeit coin!

Now dear reader, you too may be quite sure that *your* faith in Christ is *true* “gold,” and yet, after all, be mistaken. The danger of this is not fancied, but real. The human heart is dreadfully deceitful (Jer 17:9). God’s Word plainly warns us that, “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is *not washed* from their filthiness” (Pro 30:12). Do you ask (O that you *may*, in deep earnestness and sincerity), How can I be sure that my faith is a genuine and saving one? The answer is, *Test* it. Make certain that it is the “faith of God’s elect” (Ti 1:1). Ascertain whether or not your faith is accompanied with those *fruits* which are inseparable from a God-given and Spirit-wrought faith.

Probably many are ready to say, “There is no need for me to be put to any such trouble. I *know* that *my* faith is a saving one, for I am resting on the finished work of Christ.” But dear friend, it is foolish to talk like that. God Himself bids His people *to make* their “calling and election *sure*” (2Pe 1:10). Is that a needless exhortation? O pit not your vain confidence against divine wisdom. It is Satan who is striving so hard to keep many from this very task, lest they discover that their house is built on the sand. There is hope for one who discovers his illusionment, but there is none

for those who go on believing the devil's lie and rest content with the very real but *false* peace which he gives to so many of his poor victims.

God Himself has supplied us *with tests* and we are mad if we do not avail ourselves of them and honestly measure ourselves by them. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; *that ye may know* that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe [more intelligently] on the name of the Son of God" (1Jo 5:13). The Holy Spirit Himself moved one of His servants to write a whole epistle to instruct us *how* we might know whether or not we have eternal life. Does that look as though the question may be determined and settled as easily as so many present-day preachers and writers represent it? If nothing more than a firm persuasion of the truth of John 3:16 or 5:24 be needed to assure me of my salvation, then why did God give a whole epistle to instruct us on this subject?

Let the really concerned soul read slowly and thoughtfully through this first epistle of John and let him duly observe that not once in its five chapters are we told, "We know that we have passed from death unto life *because* we are resting on the finished work of Christ." The total absence of such a statement ought surely to convince us that something must be radically wrong with so much of the popular teaching of the day on this subject. But not only is there no such declaration made in this epistle, the very first passage which contains the familiar, "We know," is quite the reverse of what is now being so widely advocated as *the ground* of Christian assurance. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1Jo 2:3). Is not that plain enough? A *godly life* is the first proof that I am a child of God.

But let us observe the solemn declaration that immediately follows. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1Jo 2:4). Do these words anger you? We trust not. They are *God's*, not ours. Do you refuse to read any more of this article? That would be a bad sign. An *honest* heart does not fear the light. A sincere soul is willing to be searched by the truth. If you are unable to endure now the feeble probings of one of His servants, how will it fare in a soon-coming day when the Lord Himself shall search you through and through? O dear friend, give your poor soul a fair chance and be willing to ascertain whether your faith is real wheat or only chaff. If it prove to be the latter, there is still time for you to humble yourself before God and cry unto Him to give you saving faith. But in that day it will be too late!

"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1Jo 2:4). How plain and pointed is this language! How awful its clear intimation! Do you not see, dear reader, this verse plainly implies that there *are* those who claim to *know* Christ and yet are liars? The father of lies has deceived them and he is doing everything in his power to keep them from being undeceived. *That* is why the unregenerate reader finds this article so unpalatable and wishes to turn from it. O resist this inclination, we beseech you. God has given us this very verse by which we may measure ourselves and discover whether or not *our* "assurance of salvation" will stand the test of His Holy Word. Then act not like the silly ostrich, which buries his head in the sand, rather than face his danger.

Let us quote one more verse from this *first* "we know" passage in John's epistle. "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (1Jo 2:5). This stands in sharp contrast from the preceding verse. The apostle was here moved to set before us some clear scriptural *evidences* of spiritual faith and love, which constitute the vital difference between sheep and goats. In verse 4, it is the empty professor who says, "I know Christ as my personal Saviour." He has a theoretical, but not a vital knowledge of Him. He boasts that he is resting on Christ's finished work, and is confident that he is saved, but keeps not His

commandments. He is still a *self*-pleaser. Like Solomon's sluggard, he is "wiser in his own conceits than seven men that *can* render a reason" (Pro 26:16). He talks boldly, but walks carelessly.

In verse 5, it is the genuine Christian who is in view. *He* does not *say*, "I know Him," instead he *proves* it. The apostle is not here presenting Christ as the immediate object of faith, but is describing him who has savingly fled to the Lord for refuge and this by the effects produced. In him, Christ's Word is everything—his food, his constant meditation, his chart. He "keeps" it, in memory, in heart, in action. Christ's "commandments" occupy his thoughts and prayers as much as do His promises. That Word working in him, subdues his carnal desires, feeds his graces, and draws them into real exercise and act. That Word has *such* a place in his heart and mind that he cannot but give proof of the same in his talk and walk. In *this* way the "love of God is perfected" (1Jo 2:5). The family likeness is plainly stamped upon him. All can see to *which* "father" he belongs—contrast John 8:44).

"*Whoso keepeth his word...hereby [in this way] know we that we are in him.*" Keep His Word perfectly? No. But actually, characteristically, in deep desire and honest effort to do so? Yes. Regeneration is that miracle of divine grace wrought in the soul which enlists the affections Godward, which brings the human will into subjection to the divine, and which produces a real and radical change in the life. That change is from worldliness to godliness, from disobedience to obedience. At the new birth, the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and that love is manifested in a dominating longing and sincere purpose *to please in all things* the One who has plucked me as a brand from the burning. There is a greater difference between the genuine Christian and the deceived professing Christian than there is between a living man and a corpse. None need remain in doubt if they will *honestly measure themselves* by the Holy Word of God.

There is only space left for us to consider one other Scripture in this opening article, namely, the parable of the sower. Why did the Lord Jesus give us that parable? Why, but to stir me up to serious inquiry and diligent examination so as to discover *which* kind of a "hearer" I am. In that parable, Christ likened those who hear the Word unto various sorts of ground upon which seeds fall. He divided them into four different classes. Three out of the four brought no fruit to perfection. That is exceedingly solemn and searching. In one case, the devil catches away the good seed out of the heart (Luk 8:12). In another case, they "for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luk 8:13). In another case, they are "choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life" (Luk 8:14). Are you, my reader, described in one of these? Do not ignore this question, we beg you. Face it honestly and make sure *which* of the various soils represent *your* heart.

But there are some "good ground" hearers. And *how are they to be identified?* What did the infallible Son of God say of them? How did He describe them? Did He say, "That on the good ground are they who rest on the Word of God and doubt not His promises; are thoroughly persuaded they are saved, and yet go on living the same kind of life as previously"? No, He did not. Instead, He declared, "But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luk 8:15). Ah, dear readers, the test is *fruit*, not knowledge, not boastings, not orthodoxy, not joy, but FRUIT, and *such* "fruit" as mere nature cannot produce. It is the fruit of the Vine, namely, *likeness to Christ*, being conformed to His image. May the Holy Spirit search each one of us.

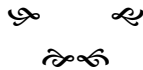


*Holy Bridegroom, glorious Head,
Of Thy beloved Bride,
By Thee may I be daily fed,
And nourish'd by Thy side;
Forsaking all the worthless toys
Of vain carnality;
Tasting of everlasting joys,
And immortality.*

*Fix Thy great love within my heart,
That I may give Thee praise;
And never let me more depart
From Thy most holy ways.
Plainly showing to all around
That I am Thine indeed;
That grace may over sin abound,
As of the holy seed.*

*Lord Jesus, set our hearts on fire
With Thy unchanging love,
That through Thy grace we may aspire
To reign with Thee above.
Let us not sleep, as others do,
But earnest be in prayer;
Looking for and hast'ning to
Our meeting in the air.*

Edward Kirby, 1871



SEPTEMBER

THE IMPECCABILITY OF CHRIST

We are living in a world of sin, and the fearful havoc it has wrought is evident on every side. How refreshing, then, to fix our gaze upon One who is immaculately holy, and who passed through this scene unspoilt by its evil. Such was the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate. For thirty-three years, He was in immediate contact with sin, yet He was never, to the slightest degree, contaminated. He touched the leper, yet was not defiled, even ceremonially. Just as the rays of the sun shine upon a stagnant pool without being sullied thereby, so Christ was unaffected by the iniquity which surrounded Him. He “*did no sin*” (1Pe 2:22), “*in him is no sin*” (1Jo 3:5 and contrast 1Jo 1:8), He “*knew no sin*” (2Co 5:21), He was “*without sin*” (Heb 4:15). He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, *separate from sinners*” (Heb 7:26).

But not only was Christ sinless, He was impeccable, that is, *incapable of sinning*. No attempt to set forth the doctrine of His wondrous and peerless person would be complete, without considering this blessed perfection. Sad indeed is it to behold the widespread ignorance thereon today, and sadder still to hear and read this precious truth denied. The last Adam differed from the first Adam in His impeccability. Christ was not only able to overcome temptation, but He was unable to be overcome by it, necessarily so, for He was “the Almighty” (Rev 1:8). True, Christ was man, but He was the God-man, and as His dominion over the winds and waves, diseases and death, clearly demonstrated—it was impossible that anything should master Him.

The *immutability* of Christ proves His impeccability, or incapability of sinning. “Jesus Christ *the same* yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb 13:8). Because He was not susceptible to any change, it was impossible for the incarnate Son of God to sin. Herein we behold again His uniqueness. Sinless angels fell, sinless Adam fell. They were but creatures, and creaturehood and mutability are, really, correlative terms. But was not the manhood of Christ created? Yes, but it was never placed on probation, *it never had a separate existence*. From the very first moment of its conception in the Virgin’s womb, the humanity of Christ was taken into union with His Deity, and therefore could not sin.

The *omnipotence* of Christ proves His impeccability. That the Lord Jesus, even during the days of His humiliation, was possessed of omnipotence, is clear from many passages of Scripture. “What things so ever he (the Father) doeth, *these also* doeth the Son likewise....For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will” (Joh 5:19, 21). When we say that Christ possessed omnipotence during His earthly sojourn, we do not mean

that He was so endowed by the Holy Spirit, but that He was essentially, inherently, personally, omnipotent. Now to speak of an omnipotent person yielding to sin, is a contradiction in terms. All temptation to sin must proceed from a created being, and hence, it is a finite power, but impossible is it for a finite power to overcome omnipotency.

The *constitution of Christ's person* proves His impeccability. In Him were united (in a manner altogether incomprehensible to created intelligence) the divine and the human natures. Now "God *cannot* be tempted with evil" (Jam 1:13). "It was *impossible* for God to lie" (Heb 6:18). And Christ *was* "God was manifest in the flesh" (1Ti 3:16), "Immanuel"—God with us (Mat 1:23). Personality centered not in His humanity. Christ was a divine person, who had been "made in the likeness of men" (Phi 2:7). Utterly impossible was it, then, for the God-man to sin. To affirm the contrary, is to be guilty of the most awful blasphemy. It is irreverent speculation to discuss what the human nature of Christ might have done *if* it had been alone. It never was alone. It never had a separate existence. From the first moment of its being, it was united to a divine person.

It is objected to the truth of Christ's impeccability that it is inconsistent with His temptability. A person who cannot sin, it is argued, cannot be tempted to sin. As well might one reason that because an army cannot be defeated, it cannot be attacked. "Temptability depends upon the constitutional *susceptibility*, while impeccability depends upon the *will*. So far as His natural susceptibility, both physical and mental, was concerned, Jesus Christ was open to all forms of human temptation, excepting those that spring out of lust, or corruption of nature. But His peccability, or the possibility of being overcome by these temptations, would depend upon the amount of voluntary resistance which He was able to bring to bear against them. Those temptations were very strong, but if the self-determination of His holy will was stronger than they, then, they could not induce Him to sin, and He would be impeccable. And yet plainly He would be temptable" (W. G. Shedd, 1889).

Probably there were many reasons why God ordained that His incarnate Son should be tempted by men, by the devil, by circumstances. One of these was *to demonstrate His impeccability*. Throw a lighted match into a barrel of gunpowder and there will be an explosion. Throw it into a barrel of water and the match will be quenched. This, in a very crude way, may be taken to illustrate the difference between Satan's tempting us and his tempting of the God-man. In us, there is that which is susceptible to his "fiery darts," but the Holy One could say, "The prince of this world cometh, and *hath nothing in me*" (Joh 14:30). The Lord Jesus was exposed to a far more severe testing and trying than the first Adam was, in order to make manifest His mighty power of resistance.

"We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, without sin" (Heb 4:15). "This text teaches that the temptations of Christ were 'without sin' in their *source* and *nature*, and not merely, as the passage is sometimes explained, that they were 'without sin' in their *result*. The meaning is not, that our Lord was tempted in every respect exactly as fallen man is—by inward lust, as well as by other temptations—only He did not outwardly yield to any temptation, but that He was tempted in every way that man is, excepting by that class of temptations that are sinful, because originating in evil and forbidden desire.

"The fact that Christ was almighty and victorious in His resistance does not unfit Him to be an example for imitation to a weak and sorely-tempted believer. Because our Lord overcame His temptations, it does not follow that His conflict and success was an easy one for Him. His victory cost Him tears and blood. 'His visage was so marred more than any man' (Isa 52:14). There was the 'travail of his soul' (Isa 53:11). In the struggle, He cried, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let

this cup pass from me' (Mat 26:39). Because an army is victorious, it by no means follows that the victory was a cheap one" (William G. Shedd, 1820-1894).

One other objection may, perhaps, be noted, though we hesitate to defile these pages by even transcribing the filthy exhalations of the carnal mind. If the humanity of Christ was, because of its union to His divine person, incapable of sinning, then in view of its being divinely sustained, how could it hunger and thirst, suffer and die? and seeing it *did*, then why was it incapable of yielding to temptation? It is sufficient answer to this impious question to point out that, while the Mediator was commissioned to die (Joh 10:18), He was not commissioned to sin. The human nature of Christ was permitted to function freely and normally. Hence, it wearied and wept, but to sin is *not a normal* act of human nature.

To be the Redeemer of His people, Christ must be "travelling in the greatness of his strength?...mighty to save," (Isa 63:1). He must have power to overcome all temptation when it assails His person, in order that He may be able to "succour them that are tempted" (Heb 2:18). Here then is one of the solid planks in that platform on which the faith of the Christian rests. Because the Lord Jesus is Almighty, having absolute power over sin, the feeble and sorely-tried saint may turn to Him in implicit confidence, seeking His efficacious aid. Only He who triumphed over sin, both in life and in death, can save me from my sins.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

57. The Faith of Abel (11:4)

The 11th chapter of Hebrews has three divisions. The first, which comprises verses 1 to 3, is introductory, setting forth the *excellency* of faith. The second, which is covered by verses 4 to 7, outlines the *life* of faith. The third, which begins at verse 8 and runs to the end of the chapter, fills in that outline, and as well describes the *achievements* of faith. The first division we went over in our last article. There we saw the excellency of faith proven by four facts. Faith gives a reality and substantiality unto those things which the Word of God warrants us to hope for (verse 1). Faith furnishes proof to the heart of those spiritual things which cannot be discovered by our natural senses (verse 1). Faith secured to the Old Testament saints a good report (verse 2). Faith enables its favoured possessor to understand that which is incomprehensible to mere reason, imparting a knowledge to which philosophers and scientists are strangers (verse 3). Thus, the tremendous importance and inestimable value of faith is at once apparent.

The second division of our chapter may be outlined thus. First, the beginning of the life of faith (verse 4). Second, the character of the life of faith, showing of what it consists (verse 5). Third, a warning and an encouragement is given (verse 6). Fourth, the end of the life of faith, or the goal to which it conducts (verse 7). That which the Holy Spirit now sets before us is far more than a list of Old Testament worthies or a miniature picture-gallery of the saints of bygone days. To those whom God grants a receptive heart and anointed eye, there is here deep and important

doctrinal instruction, as well as most blessed practical teaching. The contents of Hebrews 11 concern our eternal peace and it behoves us to give them our most prayerful and diligent attention. May it please the Spirit of Truth to act as our Guide, as we seek to pass from verse to verse.

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh” (verse 4). Rightly understood, this verse describes *the beginning* of the life of faith. Let us seek to weigh attentively each separate expression in it.

First, it was “by faith” that Abel offered unto God his sacrifice. He is the first man, according to the sacred record, who ever did so. He had no established precedent to follow, no example to emulate, no outward encouragement to stimulate. Thus, his conduct was not suggested by popular custom, nor was his action regulated by “common sense.” Neither carnal reason nor personal inclinations could have moved Abel to present a bleeding lamb for God’s acceptance. How, then, is his strange procedure to be accounted for? Our text answers—it was “by faith” he acted, and not by fancy or by feelings. But what is signified by this expression? Ah, the mere words, “by faith,” are far more familiar unto many, than their real import is understood. Vague and visionary indeed are the conceptions which multitudes now entertain thereon. We must not, then, take anything for granted, but rather proceed slowly and seek to make quite sure of our ground.

The one Scripture which, perhaps, more than any other unlocks for us the meaning of the, “by faith,” which is found so frequently in Hebrews 11, is Romans 10:17. There we read, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Faith must have a foundation to rest upon, and that foundation must be the Word of Him that cannot lie. God speaks, and the heart receives and acts upon what He says. True, there are two kinds of “hearing,” just as there are two kinds of “faith.” There is an outward “hearing,” and there is an inward “hearing.” The one merely informs, the other influences. The one simply instructs the mind, the other moulds the heart and moves the will. So there is a twofold meaning to the term, “The word of God” (see our remarks on Hebrews 11:3), namely, the Word as written, and the Word as operative, when God speaks in living power to the soul. Hence, there is a twofold “faith.” The one which is merely an intellectual assenting to what God has revealed, and the other, which is a vital and supernatural principle of action, which “worketh by love” (Gal 5:6).

Now, we need hardly say that it is the *second* of these which is in view here in Hebrews 11:4, and throughout the chapter. But let us move carefully, step by step. It was “by faith” that Abel offered unto God his acceptable sacrifice, and as Romans 10:17 declares, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” It, therefore, follows that God had definitely revealed His will, that Abel believed that revelation, and that he acted accordingly. Now in the Old Testament times, God spake to men sometimes directly, sometimes through others. In this instance, we believe the reference is to what God had said to Adam and Eve, and which they had communicated to Cain and Abel. By turning back to Genesis 3, we discover *what* the Lord said to their parents.

“Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy *conception*; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto

dust shalt thou return” (Gen 3:16-19). But further, “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them” (Gen 3:21). Here the Lord spoke to Adam and Eve by action. Four things were clearly intimated. First, that in order for a sinner to stand before the thrice holy God, he needed *a covering*. Second, that that which was of human manufacture (Gen 3:7) was worthless. Third, that God Himself must *provide* the requisite covering. Fourth, that the necessary covering could only be obtained *by death*, by blood-shedding.

In Genesis 3:15 and 21, we have the first Gospel-sermon which was ever preached on this earth, and that by the Lord Himself. Life must come out of death. Cain and Abel and the whole human race sinned in Adam (Rom 5:12, 18-19), and the wages of sin is *death*, penal death. Either I must be paid those wages and suffer that death, or another—an innocent one, on whom death has no claim—must be paid those wages in my stead. And in order to my receiving the benefit of that substitute’s compassion, there must be a link of contact between me and him. *Faith* it is which unites to Christ. Saving faith, then, in its simplest form, is the placing of a Substitute between my guilty self and a sin-hating God.

Now, what we have just gone over above was made known (probably through Adam) to Cain and Abel. How do we know this? Because, as we have seen, Abel brought his offering to God “by faith,” and Romans 10:17 makes it clear that “faith” presupposes a divine revelation. Further confirmation of this is found in Genesis 4:7. When Cain’s countenance fell at the rejection of his offering, the Lord said unto him, “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.” Thus, a divine institution of sacrifice, clearly defined and made known, is here plainly implied. It was as though God had said to Cain, “Did I promise to accept any other offering than which conformed to My prescription?”

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain” (Heb 11:4). Three things here claim our attention—the spring of Abel’s action (faith), the nature of his offering, wherein it was more excellent than Cain’s. The first of these we have already considered, the second, we will now examine. The language of our present verse refers us back to Genesis 4. There we read, “And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof” (Gen 4:4). His action here (“brought”) is in sharp contrast from his parents in Genesis 3:8, who “hid themselves *from* the presence of the LORD God.” The contrast is most significant. A consciousness of guilt caused Adam and Eve to flee. A sense of need moved Abel to seek the Lord. The difference between them is to be attributed unto the respective workings of conscience and faith. An uneasy conscience never, of itself, leads to Christ—“And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, *went out* one by one...and Jesus was left alone” (Joh 8:9).

“And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof” (Gen 4:4). The separate mention of the “fat” tells us that the lamb had been slain. By killing the lamb and offering it to God, Abel acknowledged at least five things. First, he owned that God was righteous in driving fallen man out of Eden (Gen 3:24). Second, he owned that he was a guilty sinner and that death was his just due. Third, he owned that God was holy and must punish sin. Fourth, he owned that God was merciful and willing to accept the death of an innocent substitute in his place. Fifth, he owned that he looked for acceptance with God in Christ the Lamb. Therefore did he, *by faith*, place the blood of the firstlings of his flock (type of Him who is “the Firstborn” or Head “of every creature”—Col 1:15) between his sins and the avenging justice of God.

Here, then, is where the life of faith begins. There must first be a bowing unto the righteous verdict of the divine Judge that I am a sinner, a transgressor of His holy law, and therefore, justly under its “curse” or death-sentence. No excuses have I to offer, no merits have I to plead, no mitigation of the sentence can I fairly ask for. My best performances are only filthy rags in the

sight of Him who knows that they were wrought out of self-love and to promote self's interests, rather than for His glory. I can but plead guilty and hide my face for very shame. But as the Gospel of His grace is applied to my stricken conscience by the power of the Spirit, hope revives. As He makes known to me the amazing fact that the Lamb of God died so that all who bow to God's verdict, own themselves as lost, and hate themselves for their sins, might live. And then, faith stretches forth a trembling hand and lays hold of the Redeemer and the criminal is pardoned and accepted by God.

Having pondered the character of Abel's sacrifice, let us now consider wherein it was "more excellent" than Cain's. In Genesis 4:3, we read, "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD." Cain was no infidel, for he owned the existence of God. Nor was he irreligious, for he came before Him as a worshipper, but he refused to conform to the divine appointment. By carefully noting the nature of his offering, we may observe four things. First, it was a bloodless one, and "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb 9:22). Second, it was merely the fruit of his toils, the product of his labours. Third, he deliberately ignored the sentence of God in Genesis 3:17, "Cursed is the ground." Fourth, he despised the grace made known in Genesis 3:21.

Thus, in Cain we behold the first *hypocrite*. He refused to comply with the revealed will of God, yet cloaked his rebellion by coming before Him as a worshipper. He would not obey the divine appointment, yet brought an offering to the Lord. He believed not that his case was so desperate that death was his due, and could only be escaped by another suffering it in his stead. Yet he sought to approach unto the Lord and patronize Him. This is the "way of Cain," spoken of by Jude (Jude 1:11). It is the way of self-will, of unbelief, of disobedience, and of religious hypocrisy. What a contrast from Abel! Thus, we see how there was a striking foreshadowment from the beginning of human history that the church on earth is a *mixed* assembly, made up of wheat and tares!

Cain and Abel stand before us as two representative men. They head the two, and the only two classes, which are to be found in the religious world. They typified, respectively, the two sections of Christendom. Cain, the elder, who is mentioned *first* in Genesis 4, and therefore represents the prominent section, sets forth that vast company who honour God with their lips, but whose hearts are far from Him. Who think to pay God a compliment, but who refuse to meet His requirements. Who pose as worshippers, but live to please themselves. Abel, on the other hand, *hated by* Cain, foreshadowed that "little flock," the members of which bow to God's will, comply with His commandments, fly to Christ for refuge, and are accepted by God.

Most solemnly too do Cain and Abel furnish us with a striking example of the *sovereignty* of divine grace. Both of them were "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin," for both were the fallen sons of fallen parents, and both of them were born outside of Eden. Yet one was "of that wicked one" (1Jo 3:12), while the other was one of God's elect. Marvelously and most blessedly, may we here behold the fact that sovereign grace is "no respecter of persons," but passes by (to human ideas) the most likely and pitches upon the unlikely. Being the younger of the two, Abel was inferior in dignity. God Himself said to Cain, "Thou shalt rule over him" (Gen 4:7). But spiritual blessings do not follow the order of external privileges. Shem is preferred before Japheth (Gen 5:32, 10:2, 21), Isaac before Ishmael, Jacob before Esau.

"By (a divinely-given and divinely-wrought) faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Heb 11:4). The superiority of Abel's worship may, perhaps, be set forth thus. First, it was offered *in obedience* to God's revealed will. This lies at the very foundation of all actions which are acceptable unto God. Nothing can be pleasing unto Him except that which

He has stipulated, every thing else is “will worship” (Col 2:23). Second, it was offered “by faith.” This tells us that there was something more than the mere performance of an outward duty. Only that is approved of God which proceeds from the living principle of faith, kindled in the heart by the Holy Spirit. True obedience and faith are never apart. Therefore, we read of “the obedience to the faith” (Rom 1:5). Yet though inseparable, they are distinguishable in thought. Faith respects the word of *promise*, obedience the word of *command*, for promises and precepts go hand in hand. We act in obedience when the commandment is uppermost in our minds and hearts, which puts us to the performing of duties. We act in faith when the promise is looked to and the reward is counted upon.

Third, Abel had a “willing mind” (2Co 8:12). Faith works by “love” (Gal 5:6). This is seen in the fact that he brought *of his best*. It was “of the firstlings of his flock,” which God afterwards took as His portion (Exo 13:12). When slain, it was the “fat” which he presented, which later God also claimed as His own (Lev 3:16; 7:25). Thus, it was of the most precious and valuable things on earth which Abel brought to God. So it is our best which He requires of us. “Son, give me thine heart” (Pro 23:26). It is “with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness” (Rom 10:10). Fourth, his sacrificial offering looked forward to and adumbrated the great sacrifice, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. In all these four things, Abel excelled Cain. Cain did not act in obedience, for he disregarded the divine appointment. He did not offer in faith. Nothing is said of any choice of excellent fruit. It was as though he brought the first which came to hand. His offering contained no foreshadowment of Christ.

Ere passing on, let us seek to gather up the *practical* teaching of what has been before us. 1. To serve God acceptably, we must disregard all human inventions, lean not unto our own understandings or inclinations, and adhere strictly to the revelation which He has made of His will. 2. All obedience, service, and worship must proceed from faith, for, “Without faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb 11:6). Where this be lacking, no matter how exact the performance of our duty, it is unacceptable to God. 3. We are to serve God with the best that we have—with the best of our abilities and with the best of our substance. Only as *love* constrains us will there be a doing it “heartily as unto the Lord” (Col 3:23). 4. In all our religious exercises, Christ must be before us, for only as they are perfumed with His merits can they meet with God’s acceptance.

“By which he obtained witness that he was righteous” (Heb 11:4). There is a little uncertainty as to whether the, “By which,” refers to Abel’s “faith” or to the “more excellent sacrifice” which he offered. Though the latter be the nearest antecedent, yet with Owen, Gouge, and Manton, we believe the reference is to his faith. First, because it is not the apostle’s design in this chapter to specify the kind of sacrifices which were acceptable unto God. Second, because his obvious purpose was to illustrate and demonstrate the efficacy of faith. Third, because the apostle here exemplifies what he had just said of the Old Testament saints, namely, that by faith, “The elders obtained a good report” (Heb 11:2). Fourth, because this agrees much more closely with the Analogy of Faith. By the one perfect offering of Christ is the Christian *constituted* “righteous” before God, but it is through faith that he obtains *witness* of the same to his heart.

“By which he obtained witness that he was righteous” (Heb 11:4). Herein we are supplied with an illustration of, “For them that honour me, I will honour” (1Sa 2:30). In keeping God’s precepts, there is “great reward” (Psa 19:11). God will be no man’s debtor. He, who obediently, humbly, trustfully, lovingly, respects His appointments and obeys His commandments, shall be recompensed—not as a recognition of merit, but as what is divinely meet and gracious. God did not leave Abel in a state of uncertainty, ignorant as to whether or not his offering was approved.

The Lord was pleased to assure Abel that the sacrifice had been accepted and that he was accounted just before Him. The Greek word for, “he obtained witness,” is the same as is rendered, “obtained a good report,” in verse 2.

“By which he obtained witness that he was righteous.” This too is recorded for our instruction and comfort. From these words, we learn it is the good pleasure of God that His obedient and believing children should *know* His mind concerning them. Where there is a justifying faith in Christ, which moves the Christian to walk according to the divine precepts, God honours that faith by granting assurance to its possessor. When we are enabled by faith to plead the most excellent Sacrifice and to present acceptable worship unto God, then we obtain testimony from Him, through His Word and by His Spirit, that our persons and services are accepted by Him. In Abel’s case, He received from God an outward attestation. In the case of the Christian today, it is the inward authentication of his conscience (2Co 1:12), to which the Holy Spirit also adds His confirmation (Rom 8:15). As we are now treating of this subject at length in our articles upon “Assurance,” we will not enlarge any further here.

“God testifying of his gifts” (Heb 11:4). We are not told in Genesis 4 in so many words *how* He did so, but the Analogy of Faith leaves little room for doubt. By comparing other Scriptures, it seems clear that the Lord evidenced His acceptance of Abel’s offering (and thereby testified that he was “righteous”) by causing fire to descend from heaven and consume the sacrifice, which, in turn, ascended to Him as a sweet-smelling savour. In Leviticus 9:24, we read, “And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat.” So too, we are told, “Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice” (1Ki 18:38). Compare also Judges 6:21, 13:19-20; 1Ch 21:26; Psa 20:3 margin.

“By which (faith) he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.” The second clause is explanatory of the former. The parallel is found in Genesis 4:4, where we read, “And the LORD had respect unto Abel *and* to his offering.” “He testified in the approbation of his offering that He had respect unto his person. That is, that He judged, esteemed, and accounted him righteous, for otherwise God is no respecter of persons. Whosoever God accepts or respects, He testifieth him to be righteous, that is, to be justified and freely accepted with Him. This Abel was by faith, antecedently unto his offering. He was not made righteous, he was not justified by his sacrifice, but therein showed his faith by his works. And God, by acceptance of his works of obedience, justified him, as Abraham was justified by works, namely, *declaratively*, He declared him so to be. Our persons must be first justified, before our works of obedience can be accepted with God. For by that acceptance, He testifies that we are righteous” (John Owen, 1616-1683).

“And by it he being dead yet speaketh” (Heb 11:4). Marvellously full are the words of God. His commandment is “exceeding broad” (Psa 119:96). In every sentence of Holy Writ, there is both a depth and breadth which our unaided minds are incapable of perceiving and appreciating. Only as the Holy Spirit, the Inspirer and Giver of the Word, deigns to “guide” us (Joh 16:13), only as He teaches us to compare passage with passage, so that in His light we “see light” (Psa 36:9), are we enabled to discern, in fuller measure, the beauty, meaning, and many-sidedness of any verse or clause. Such is the case in the sentence now before us. We are convinced that there is at least a threefold meaning and reference in it. Briefly, we will consider these in turn.

“And by it he being dead yet speaketh.” The first and most obvious signification of these words is that, by his faith’s-obedience, as recorded in Genesis 4 and Hebrews 11, Abel preaches to us a most important sermon. His worship and the fruits thereof are registered in the everlasting records of Holy Scripture, and thereby, he speaketh as evidently as though we heard him audibly. There comes to us a voice from the far distant past, from the other side of the flood, saying,

“Fallen man can only approach unto God through the death of an innocent Substitute. Yet none save God’s elect will ever feel their need of such, set aside their own inclinations, bow to God’s revealed will, and submit to His appointment. But they who do so obtain witness that they are ‘righteous’ (cf. Mat 23:35), and receive divine assurance that they are accepted in the Beloved, and that their obedience (imperfect in itself, yet proceeding from a heart which desires and seeks to *fully* please Him) is approved for His sake.”

“And by it he being dead yet speaketh.” And *how* did he die? By the murderous hand of a religious hypocrite who hated him. Then began that which the apostle affirms still to continue, “He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit” (Gal 4:29). Here was the first public and visible display of that enmity between the (mystical) seed of the woman and the (mystical) seed of the serpent. Abel’s death was, therefore, also a pledge and representation of the death of Christ Himself—murdered by the religious world. Those whom God approves must expect to be disproved of men, more particularly by those professing to be Christian. But the time is coming when the present situation shall be reversed. In Genesis 4:10, God said to Cain, “The voice of thy brother’s blood *crieth* unto me from the ground.” Abel’s own blood “speaketh,” crying to God for vengeance.

“And by it he being dead yet speaketh.” Though ruthlessly slain by his brother, the soul of Abel exists in a separate state, alive, conscious, and vocal. He is among that company of whom the apostle said, “I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they *cried* with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Rev 6:9-10). Thus, Abel is not only a type of the persecution and suffering of the godly, but gives a pledge of the certain vengeance which God will take in due time upon their oppressors. God shall yet avenge His own elect (those in heaven as well as those on earth) who cry unto Him day and night for Him *to* avenge them (Luk 18:7-8). Let us, then, seek grace to possess our souls in patience (verse), knowing that ere long God will reward the righteous and punish the wicked.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

9. His Flight to Ziglag

There are times when God’s tender love for His people *seems* to be contradicted by the sore testings which He sends upon them, times when His providences appear to clash with His promises. Then it is that faith is tested and so often fails. Then it is also that the superabounding grace of God is evidenced by delivering the one who has given way to unbelief. These principles are illustrated again and again on the pages of Holy Writ, especially in the Old Testament. And one of their chief values is for us to lay them to heart, turn them into earnest prayer, and seek to profit from them. God forbid that we should “wrest” them to our destruction (2Pe 3:16). God forbid that we should deliberately sin in order that grace may abound (Rom 6:1-2). And God

forbid that we should take the failures of those who preceded us as excuses for our own grievous falls, thus endeavouring to shelter behind the faults of others. Rather, let us seek grace to regard them as danger-signals set up to deter us from slipping into the snares which tripped them.

To Abraham, God promised a numerous seed (Gen 12:2), but His providences seemed to run counter to the fulfillment. Sarah was barren! But the sterility of her womb presented no difficulty to Omnipotence. Nor was there any need for Abraham to attempt a fleshly compromise by seeking a son through Hagar (Gen 16). True, for a while, his plan appeared to succeed, but the sequel not only demonstrated the needlessness for such a device, but in Ishmael a bitter harvest was reaped. And this is recorded as a warning for us. To Jacob, God said, “Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee” (Gen 31:3). During the course of his journey, messengers informed him that Esau was approaching with four hundred men, and we read that, “Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed” (Gen 32:7). How human! True, and how sad, how dishonouring to God! What cause for fear was there when JEHOVAH was with him? O for grace to “trust in him at all times” (Psa 62:8).

Learn, dear brethren and sisters, that faith must be tested—to prove its genuineness. Yet only He who gives faith can maintain it, and for this we must constantly seek unto Him. What has just been before us receives further illustration in the subject of these articles. David was the king elect, yet another wore the crown. The son of Jesse had been anointed unto the throne, yet Saul was now bitterly persecuting him. Had God forgotten to be gracious? No, indeed. Had He changed His purpose? That could not be (Mal 3:6). Why, then, should the slayer of Goliath now be a fugitive? He had been appointed to be master of vast treasures, yet he was now reduced to begging bread (1Sa 21:3). Faith *must* be tested, and we *must* learn by painful experience the bitter consequences of *not trusting* in the Lord with all our hearts, and the evil fruits which are borne whenever we lean unto our own understandings, take matters into our own hands, and seek to extricate ourselves from trouble.

Concerning Hezekiah, we read that “God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart” (2Ch 32:31). None of us knows how weak he is till God withdraws His upholding grace (as He did with Peter) and we are left to ourselves. True, the Lord has plainly told us that “without me ye can do nothing” (Joh 15:5). We think we believe that word, and in a way we do. Yet there is a vast difference between the non-calling into question of a verse of Scripture, an assenting to its verity, and an inward acquaintance with the same in our own personal history. It is one thing to believe that I am without strength or wisdom, it is another to *know* through actual experience. Nor is this, as a rule obtained through a single episode, any more than a nail is generally driven in securely by one blow of the hammer. No, we have to learn, and re-learn, so stupid are we. The truth of God has to be burned into us in the fiery furnace of affliction. Yet this ought not to be so, and would not be so, if we paid more heed to these Old Testament warnings, furnished in the biographies of the saints of yore.

In our last article, we saw that, following the murderous attack of Saul upon him, David fled to Naioth. But thither did his relentless enemy follow him. Wondrously did God interpose on His servant’s behalf. Yet, being a man of like passions with ourselves, and the supernatural grace of God not supporting him at the time, instead of David’s fears being thoroughly removed, and his waiting quietly with Samuel to receive a word of divine guidance, he was occupied with his immediate danger from Saul, and after vainly conferring with Jonathan, took things into his own hands and fled to Nob. There he lied to the priest, by means of which he obtained bread, but at the fearful cost of Saul reeking vengeance through Doeg in slaying eighty-five of those who wore the linen ephod. Disastrous indeed are the consequences when we seek to have our own way and hue

out a path for ourselves. How differently had things turned out if David trusted the Lord and left Him to undertake for him!

God is all-sufficient in Himself to supply all our need (Phi 4:19) and to do for us far more exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think (Eph 3:20). This He can do either in an immediate way, or mediately if He sees fit to make use of creatures as instruments to fulfill His pleasure and communicate what He desires to impart to us. God is never at a loss. All things, all events, all creatures, are at His sovereign disposal. This foundational truth of God's all-sufficiency should be duly improved by us, taking heed that we do not let our thoughts or actions reflect upon or deny this divine perfection. And this we certainly do when we use *unlawful* means to escape imminent dangers. Such was the case with Abram (Gen 20) and Isaac (Gen 26) when they denied their wives, concluding that that was a necessary expedient to save their lives—as though God were not able to save them in a better and more honourable way. Such we shall see was the case with David at Ziklag.

We also made brief reference in our last article to the fact that when the saint is out of touch with God, when he is in a backslidden state, his behaviour is so different from his former conduct, so inconsistent with his profession, that his actions now present a strange enigma. And yet that enigma is capable of simple solution. It is only in God's light that any of us "see light" (Psa 36:9). As the Lord Jesus declares, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness" (Joh 8:12). Yes, but it is only as we are really "following" Him, our hearts engaged with the example which He has left us, that we shall see, know, and take that path which is pleasing and honouring to Him. There is only one other alternative, and that is seeking to please either our fellows or ourselves, and where this is the case, only confusion and trouble can ensue.

When communion with God (who is "light") is severed, nothing but spiritual darkness is left. The world is a "dark place" (2Pe 1:19), and if we are not ordering our steps by the Word (Psa 119:105), then we shall flounder and stumble. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with *his own ways*" (Pro 14:14), not with the "ways" of God (Psa 103:7). Where fellowship with the Lord is broken, the mind is no longer illuminated from heaven, the judgment is clouded, and a lack of wisdom, yea, folly itself, will then characterize all our actions. Here is the key to much in our lives, the explanation of those "unwise doings," those "foolish mistakes" for which we have had to pay so dearly—we are not controlled by the Holy Spirit, we acted in the energy of the flesh, we sought the counsel of the ungodly, or followed the dictates of common sense.

Nor is there any determining to what lengths the backslider may go, or how foolishly and madly he may not act. Solemnly is this illustrated in the case now before us. As we saw in the preceding paper, David was worried at being unarmed, and asked the high priest if there were no weapon to hand. On being informed that the only one available was "the sword of Goliath," which had been preserved in the tabernacle as a memorial of the Lord's goodness to His people, David exclaimed, "There is none like that; give it me" (1Sa 21:9). Alas, "How had the fine gold become dim"! He who, when walking in the fear of the Lord, had not hesitated to advance against Goliath with nothing in his hand save a sling, now that the fear of man possessed him, places his confidence in a giant's sword. Perhaps both writer and reader are inclined to marvel at this, but have we not more reason to *mourn* as we see in this incident an accurate portrayal of many of our past failures?

"And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath" (1Sa 21:10). Fearing that Saul would pursue him were he to make for any other part of the land of Israel, and not being disposed to organize a company against him, David took refuge in Gath of the Philistines. But what business had he in the territory of God's enemies? None whatever, for he

had not gone there in *His* interests. Verily, “Oppression maketh a wise man mad” (Ecc 7:7). Few indeed conduct themselves in extreme difficulties without taking some manifestly false step. We should, therefore, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Mat 26:41), earnestly seeking from God the strength which will alone enable us to successfully resist the devil.

“And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath.” It is evident from what follows that David hoped he would not be recognized. Thus it is with the backslidden Christian as he fraternizes with the world. He attempts to conceal his colours, hoping that he will not be recognized as a follower of the Lord Jesus. Yet behold the consummate folly of David. He journeyed to Gath with “the sword of Goliath” in his hands! Wisdom has indeed deserted him. As another has said, “Common prudence might have taught him that, if he sought the friendship of the Philistines, the sword of Goliath was not the most likely instrument to conciliate their favour.” But where a saint has grieved the Holy Spirit, even common sense no longer regulates him.

“And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?” (1Sa 21:11) God will not allow His people to remain incognito in this world. He has appointed that they should “be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom” they are to “shine as lights in the world” (Phi 2:15), and any efforts of theirs to annul this, He will thwart. Abraham’s deception was discovered. Peter’s attempt to conceal his discipleship failed—his very speech betrayed him. So here, David was quickly recognized. And thus it will be with us. And mercifully is this the case, for God will not have His own to settle down among and enjoy the friendship of His enemies.

“And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath” (1Sa 21:12). What right had David to be at Gath? None whatever, and God soon caused circumstances to arise which showed him that he was out of his place, though in wondrous mercy, He withheld any chastisement. How sad to hear of him, who had so courageously advanced against Goliath, now, being “sore afraid”! “The righteous are bold as lion” (seems wrong) (Pro 28:1). Yes, the “righteous,” that is, they who are right with God, walking with Him, and so sustained by His grace. Sadder still is it to see how David now acted. Instead of casting himself on God’s mercy, confessing his sin, and seeking His intervention, he had recourse to deceit and played the fool.

“And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard” (1Sa 21:13). Afraid to rely upon the man whose protection he had sought, the anointed of God now feigned himself to be crazy. It was then that he learned experimentally, “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes” (Psa 118:9). The king elect “feigned himself mad.” “Such was the condition into which David had sunk himself. Saul himself could scarcely have wished for a deeper degradation” (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899). Learn from this, dear reader, what still indwells the true saint, and which is capable of any and every wickedness, but for the restraining hand of God. Surely we have need to pray daily, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe” (Psa 119:117).

“Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me? Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?” (1Sa 21:14-15). How evident is it to the anointed eye, from the whole of this incident, that the Holy Spirit’s object here was not to glorify David, but to magnify the longsuffering grace of God, and to furnish salutary instruction

and solemn warning for us? Throughout the Scriptures, the character of man is accurately painted in the colours of reality and truth.

Many are the lessons to be learned from this sad incident. Though ingenious falsehoods may seem to promote present security, yet they insure future disgrace. They did for Abraham, for Isaac, for Jacob, for Peter, for Ananias. Leaning unto his own understanding conducted David to Gath, but he soon learned, from the shame of his folly, that he had not walked in wisdom. Not only was David deeply humiliated by this pitiful episode, but JEHOVAH was grievously dishonoured thereby. Marvelous indeed was it that he escaped with his life. This can only be attributed to the secret, but invincible workings, of His power moving upon the king of the Philistines, for as the title of Psalm 34 informs us, “Achish drove him away, and he departed.” Such was the means which an infinitely merciful God used to screen His child from imminent danger.

From Gath, David fled to the cave of Adullam. Blessed is it to learn of the repentant and chastened spirit in which the servant of God entered it. The 34th Psalm was written by him then (as its superscription informs us), and in it the Holy Spirit has given us to see the exercises of David’s heart at that time. There, we find him blessing the Lord, his soul making his boast in Him (Psa 34:1-3). There, we hear him saying, “I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears” (Psa 34:4). There, he declares, “This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Psa 34:6-7).

But it was more than praise and gratitude which filled the restored backslider. David had learned some valuable lessons experimentally. Therefore, we hear him saying, “Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it” (Psa 34:11-14). “He had proved the evil of lying lips and a deceitful tongue, and now was able to warn others of the pitfall into which he had fallen” (Benjamin W. Newton). But it is blessed to mark that he warned, not as one who was left to reap the harvest of his doings, but as one who could say, “The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate” (Psa 34:22).

THE ONE THING NEEDFUL

Sermon #1015 by C. H. Spurgeon

“But one thing is needful” (Luk 10:42). We have no difficulty whatever in deciding what that one thing is. We are not allowed to say that it is the Saviour, for He is not a thing. And we are not permitted to say that it is attention to our own salvation, for, although that would be true, it is not mentioned in the context. The one thing needful, evidently, is that which Mary chose—that good

part which should not be taken away from her. Very clearly, this was to sit at Jesus' feet and hear His word. If any thing be plain at all in Holy Scripture, it is most clear that this is the one thing needful, to sit at Jesus' feet and hear His word. This and nothing less, this and nothing more.

The mere posture of sitting down and listening to the Saviour's word was nothing in itself. It was that which it indicated. It indicated, in Mary's case, a readiness to believe what the Saviour taught, to accept and obey—nay, to delight in the precepts which fell from His lips. And this is the one thing needful. He that hath it hath the spirit of grace and life. To sit at Jesus' feet implies *submission*. Such an one is no longer resisting His power. He has cast down the weapons of his rebellion, and has come humbly to acknowledge the Redeemer as Lord and King in his soul. This is needful—absolutely needful, for no rebel can enter the kingdom of heaven with the weapons of rebellion in his hands. We cannot know Christ while we resist Christ. We must be reconciled to His gentle sway and confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

To sit at Jesus' feet implies *faith* as well as submission. Mary believed in what Jesus said, and therefore, sat there to be taught by Him. It is absolutely necessary that we have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in His power as God and man, in His death as being expiatory, in His crucifixion as being a sacrifice for our sins. We must trust Him for time and for eternity, in all His relationships as Prophet, Priest, and King. We must rely upon Him. He must be our hope, our salvation, our all in all. This one thing is an absolute necessity. Without it, we are undone. A believing submission and a submissive faith in Christ we must have or perish.

But sitting at Jesus' feet implies also, that having submitted and believed, we now desire to be His disciples. *Discipleship* is too often forgotten. It is as needful as faith. A man cannot be saved unless he becomes a learner in the school of Christ, and learner too in a practical sense, being willing to practice what he learns. Only he who does the Master's will knows His doctrine. The believer's position is that of a pupil and the Lord Jesus is his teacher. Except we be converted and become as little children, we can in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Sitting at the feet of Jesus indicates the child-like spirit of true discipleship, and this is the one thing needful. There is no salvation apart from it.

It meant also *service*, for though Mary was not apparently engaged in waiting upon Christ as Martha was, yet she was, in very truth, ministering unto Him in a deeper and truer sense. No one gives greater joy to a public speaker than an attentive listener. No one serves a teacher better than he who is an apt and attentive scholar. The first duty, indeed, of the student to the tutor is that he be cheerful in accepting and diligent in retaining what is taught. In this sense, Mary was really waiting upon Christ in one of His loftiest capacities, namely, that of a Teacher and Prophet in the midst of Israel. In that same spirit, had the Master only intimated it, she would have risen to wash His feet, or anoint His head, or wait at table, as Martha did. But she would, while she was performing these active duties, have continued spiritually in her first posture. She could not, of course, have continued literally sitting at the feet of the Saviour, but her heart would have remained in the condition which that posture indicated. She was in the fittest position for service, for she waited to hear what her Lord would have her to do. We must all be servants, too, as we have been servants of unrighteousness, we must by grace submit ourselves unto the rules of Jesus, and become servants of righteousness or else we miss the one thing that is indispensable for the entrance into heaven.

Sitting at the feet of Jesus also signifies *love*. She would not have been sitting there at ease and happy in mind, if she had not loved Him. There was a charm in the very tone of His words to her. She knew how He had loved her, and therefore, each syllable was music to her soul. She looked up again and again, I doubt not, into that dear face, and often caught the meaning of the words

more readily as she read His countenance, marked His eyes oftentimes suffused with tears, and ever bright with holy sympathy. Her love to His person made her a willing learner, and we must be the same. We must not learn of Christ like unwilling truant boys, who go to school and must needs have learning flogged into them. We must be eager to learn. We must open our mouth wide that He may fill it. Like the thirsty earth when it needs the shower, our soul must break for the longing it hath towards His commandments at all times. We must rejoice in His statutes more than gold, yea, than much fine gold. When we are moved by this spirit, we have found the one thing needful.

Having laid before you the meaning of the text, that to sit at Jesus' feet is the one thing necessary, for a literal translation of the text would be "of one thing there is a necessity." Let us take the text as it stands and notice in it four things. The first is a word of *consideration*—the disjunctive conjunction, "But." The Saviour bids us to make a pause. He says, "*But* one thing is needful." Then there comes a word of *necessity*—"one thing is *needful*." Thirdly, a word of concentration—"one thing is needful." And then a word of *immediateness*—"one thing is needful"—needful now, at once.

I. To begin then, here is a word of CONSIDERATION, which, as I have already said, is interjected into the middle of our Lord's brief word to Martha. Martha is very busy. She is rather quick-tempered also and she speaks to the Saviour somewhat shortly. And the Master says, "Martha, Martha"—very tenderly, kindly, gently, with only the slightest tinge of rebuke in His tone, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things—but, but, but wait awhile and hear." That wise and warning, *but*, may be very useful to many here. You are engaged today in business—very diligent you are in it. You throw your whole energy into your trading, as you must, if you would succeed. You rise up early and you sit up late. Shall I say a word that should discourage your industry? I will not—but, *but* is there nothing else?—is this life all? Is money-making everything? Is wealth worth gaining merely for the sake of having it said, "He died worth fifty thousand pounds"? Is it so?

Perhaps, you are a very hard working man. You have very little rest during the week, and in order to bring up your family comfortably, you strain every nerve. You live as you should, economically, and you work diligently. From morning to night, the thought of you is, "How shall I fill these many little mouths? How shall I bring them up properly? How shall I, as a working man, pay my way?" Very right! I wish all working men would be equally thoughtful and economical, and that there were fewer of those foolish spendthrifts who waste their substance when they have it, and who the moment there is a frost, or they are out of employ, become paupers, loafing upon the charity of others. I commend your industry, *but, but, but*, at the same time, is that all? Were you made only to be a machine for digging holes, laying bricks, or cutting out pieces of wood? Were you created only to stand at a counter and measure or weigh out goods? Do you think your God made you for that and that only? Is this the chief end of man—to earn so many shillings a week and try to make ends meet therewith? As a man with a soul, capable of thought and judgment, and not a mere animal like a dog, nor a machine like a steam engine, can you stand up and look at yourself and say, "I believe I am perfectly fulfilling my destiny"? I beg this morning to interject that quiet, *but*, right into the middle of your busy life and ask from you space for consideration, a pause for the voice of wisdom, that a hearing may be granted her. Business? Labour? Yes, but there is a higher bread to be earned and there is a higher life to be considered. Hence, the Lord puts it, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth," that is to say, not for that first and foremost, "but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (Joh 6:27). God hath made man that he may glorify Him, and whatever else man accomplishes, if he attains not to this end, his life is a disastrous failure.

Now, I have spoken thus to the busy, but I might speak, and I should have certainly as good a claim to do so, to those who are lovers of pleasure. They are not cumbered with much serving, rather they laugh at those who cumber themselves about anything. They are as merry as the birds. Their life is as the flight of a butterfly, which lightly floats from flower to flower. Now, thou gay young man, what doth Solomon say to thee? “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: *but*”—there comes in a pause, and the cool hand of wisdom is laid upon the hot brow of folly, and the youth is asked to think awhile, “*but* know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment” (Ecc 11:9). It cannot be that an immortal spirit was made for frivolities. Oh, pause awhile, thou careless, godless one, and hear the voice that saith unto thee, “*but*.” There is something more than the fool’s laugh. All things are not a comedy. Death is serious and heaven and hell, and should not life be? Stop, stop, and let this “*but*” sound in thine ears.

I take liberty, moreover, to address the same word to religious people, who, perhaps, need it as much as others. They will, of course, agree with anything I can say about the mere worldling or the profligate, but will they listen to me when I say to them, “You are very diligent in your religion. You are attentive to all its outward rites and ceremonies, You believe the articles of your church, *but, but*, do you know that all this is nothing, unless you sit at Jesus’ feet?” We may do what the church tells us and never do what Christ tells us, for these may be different things, and the church is not our Saviour, but Christ. We may believe what a certain creed tells us, but not believe what Jesus teaches. Ay, and we may believe even what the Bible itself teaches to us, or think we believe it, but if our heart has never made submission to the Teacher Himself, so as to sit at His feet and receive the truth obediently from Him, our religion is altogether vain.

Yes, and let me say, even to those of you who can honestly declare that Christ is your sole confidence, it is possible for you to forget the necessity of sitting at His feet. You, dear brethren, are looking to His precious blood alone for your salvation, and His name is sweet to you, and you desire in all things to be conformed to His will. So far it is well with you, for in this you have a measure of sitting at His feet. *But* so had Martha! She loved her Lord, knew His Word, and was a saved soul. You have been very busy this week and have been drifting from your moorings. You have not lived with your Lord in conscious fellowship. You have been full of care and empty prayer. You have not committed your sorrows to your loving Friend. You have blundered on in duty without asking His guidance or assistance. You have not maintained, in your Christian service, the communion of your spirit with the Well-Beloved, and if such has been the case, let me say, “*but*” to you and ask you, as you sit here this morning, to make a little stop in your Sunday School teaching or your street preaching, or whatever else it is that you are so laudably engaged in, and say to yourself, “To me, as a worker, the one thing needful is to keep near my Lord, and I must not so suffer the watering of others to occupy me, as to neglect my own heart, lest I should have to say ‘Woe is me, they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept.’”

Our text speaks of NECESSITY—one thing is a necessity. If this be proved, it overrides all other considerations. We are nearly right when we say proverbially, “Necessity has no law.” Necessity, like hunger, breaks through stone walls. The text claims for sitting at Jesus’ feet the first and only necessity. Now, I see all around me a crowd of things *alluring*. Pleasure calls to me. I hear her siren song—but I reply, “I cannot regard thee, for necessity presses upon me to hearken to another voice.” Philosophy and learning charm me. Fain would I yield my heart to them, but while I am yet unsaved, the one thing needful demands my first care, and wisdom bids me give it. Not that we love human learning less, but eternal wisdom more. Pearls? Yes. Emeralds? Yes, but

bread, in God's name—bread at once, when I am starving in the desert. If you are wise, you will evermore prefer the necessity to the dazzling.

About us are a thousand things *entangling*. This world is very much like the pools we have heard of in India, in which grows a long grass of so clinging a character that, if a man once falls into the water, it is almost certain to be his death, for only with the utmost difficulty could he be rescued from the meshes of the deadly, weedy net, which immediately wraps itself around him. This world is even thus entangling. All the efforts of grace are needed to preserve men from being ensnared with the deceitfulness of riches and the cares of this life. The ledger demands you, the shop requires you, the warehouse-bell rings for you, the theatre invites you. You must live, you say, and you must have a little enjoyment, and consequently, you give your heart to the world. These things, I say, are very entangling, but we must be disentangled from them. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mar 8:36). O sirs! For the one thing needful, all entangling things must be given up. You must lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset you, if by any means the one thing needful may be yours.

There are some things very *puzzling*, and some people have a strange delight in being bewildered. It is astonishing the many letters I receive and interviews I am asked to give in order to adjust in people's minds the doctrine of predestination and the fact of free agency. And equally remarkable is the way in which young people, and old people too, will pick out extremely difficult texts, perhaps relating to the Second Advent, or to the battle of Armageddon, and they must needs have these opened up to them before they will believe the Gospel. I think it utterly useless to begin upon such things with those who are unsaved. One thing is needful, sir, and that is by no means a puzzling matter. It is plainly this, that thou *submit thyself* to Jesus Christ and sit at His feet.

Now, why is it that sitting at Jesus' feet is a necessity? It is so, because it is needful for us to have our sins forgiven, but Jesus will never forgive the unhumbled rebel. If he will not take Jesus to be a Master, the sinner cannot have Him to be a Saviour. As long as we rebel against Him, we cannot be saved by Him. Submission, by repentance and faith, we must have, or our transgressions will remain upon us to our everlasting ruin. It is necessary, because we must have our inbred sins overcome. But none can stay corruption in a man but Christ, who has come to destroy the works of the devil, and to save His people from their sins. Jesus, the Seed of the woman, is the only power that can crush the serpent's head. Only at the feet of Jesus can the divine power be gained which works in us holiness and sanctifies us practically. Therefore, as you must be purified or you cannot enter heaven, you must come to Jesus' feet.

In order to enter heaven, it is necessary that our nature should become like the nature of Christ. This earth is for those who bear the image of the first Adam, but the new heaven and the new earth are for those who bear the image of the second Adam. We must, by some means, acquire the nature of the heavenly Adam, and this must be wrought in us by regeneration and developed by acquaintance with Him. By sitting at His feet and beholding Him, we become changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. If we reject the Lord Jesus as our Trust, Teacher, and Exemplar, we have no new life, and shall never be admitted within the holy gates, where those alone dwell who are fashioned after His likeness. Woe, woe, woe to the godless, Christless spirit that passeth across the river of death without a hope. Woe, woe, woe eternally to the soul that will not sit at the feet of Jesus! He shall be trodden beneath His feet in His anger and crushed in His hot displeasure. God grant that may never be our portion. To sit at Jesus' feet is the one thing needful then.

And brethren, let me just say and leave this point, it is needful to *every one* of you. It is not some of you who must be there, but all. The wisest must become fools to learn of Him, or fools they are. The most educated and cultured mind must submit to this further culture, or else it is nothing but a barren waste in His sight. One thing is a necessity to you all, high or low, rich or poor—you must sit at Jesus’ feet. Some things in this world are necessary, after a measure, but this is necessary without measure. Infinitely needful is it that you sit at Jesus’ feet. Needful now, needful in life, needful in life for peace, in death for rest, and in eternity for bliss! This is needful always. In the highest and most emphatic sense, “one thing is needful.”

(Completed in the October issue.)

GIVING PLACE TO THE DEVIL

“Neither give place to the devil.” Eph 4:27

The verse just quoted sets before us an exhortation which every Christian needs to take seriously to heart. Many believers give place to the devil unconsciously, because they are ignorant of his devices. But this ought not to be. The Scriptures clearly expose them, but unless we diligently study the Word, we shall neither be forewarned nor forearmed. In order to fight successfully against a subtle and powerful enemy, it is of first importance to be well informed of the tactics he employs and the methods he follows. The great enemy of our souls hides himself behind many unsuspected forms. His chief weapon is deception. “The Devil, and Satan, which *deceiveth* the whole world” (Rev 12:9). Only as the Holy Spirit gives us to see light from the light of the Word are we able to discern and detect Satan’s many disguises.

Now there is a real difference between “giving place to the devil” and being “overcome” by him, yet there is a close connection between the two. It is the former which is the occasion of the latter. Let us give a simple illustration of this. If I leave my windows unlatched and my doors unlocked, then am I not inviting burglars to enter and rob me? Of course I am. In like manner, if I fail to avail myself of the safeguards which God’s Word sets before me, if I am not careful and watchful against the devil’s approaches, I am open to his assaults. Prevention is better than cure. It is because we fail to use our God-given preventatives that we are so often tripped up by Satan. Let us first name seven ways in which we fail to keep the windows and doors of our souls securely locked against the great thief (Joh 10:10).

First, we “give place to the devil” when *we fail to really believe God’s warning*. His Word plainly tells us that our “adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1Pe 5:8). Ah, but it is one thing to be acquainted with the letter of that verse, but it is quite another to appropriate it and act as though we felt we *were* in real danger from him. Oh how we need to beg the Holy Spirit to write this word upon our hearts, to bring it home in power to our remembrance each day, to cause us to be cautious and vigilant, knowing that Satan is ever seeking our destruction. God does not preserve careless and heedless souls.

Second, we “give place to the devil” when *we are not on our prayerful guard*. Let us call to mind those words of our Lord’s, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Mat 26:41). And let us recall Peter’s sad failure to heed that admonition. How differently he had acted in the high priest’s palace if, instead of “sleeping” in the Garden, he had spent his time in earnest prayer, seeking grace to fortify him against the approaching temptation! Alas, how often we have repeated Peter’s offence. O my reader, make no mistake upon this point, to lapse into a careless and prayerless state of soul renders us easy victims to Satan’s deceptions.

Third, we “give place to the devil” when *we fail to “put on the whole armour of God”* (Eph 6:11). That armour is not to be talked about, but used. It is no mock warfare we are called to engage in. The fight is intensely real, and the saving or the losing of our very souls is at issue. That “armour” is provided that we “may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” But if we do not gird it upon us, then we have no protection, and our very vitals are exposed to his “fiery darts.” May it please the Lord to deeply impress upon writer and reader the absolute necessity of our putting on the seven pieces of armour which divine grace has provided for us.

Fourth, we “give place to the devil” when *we fail to confess every known sin*. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper” (Pro 28:13). Unconfessed sins clog and choke the channel of blessing between our souls and God (Isa 59:2). Not only so, but our unconfessed sins leave the door wide open for Satan to repeat his attacks upon us at the same point. The evil root must be judged before God if its bearing of evil fruit is to cease. Nothing is more necessary if we are to have power against our adversary than for us to keep short accounts with God—to daily own before Him every conscious failure and fall.

Fifth, we “give place to the devil” when *we fail to fully trust God*. “The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” or “set aloft” (Pro 18:10), that is, raised above the place where Satan can successfully assail us. While I am completely dependent upon the mighty God, drawing my strength from Him, the devil cannot harm me. It is when I give way to doubting that the enemy finds the opening which he seeks. As soon as my heart begins calling into question God’s goodness, it is easy for Satan to fill me with despondency and a despairing heart is just as wrong as having unclean hands.

Sixth, we “give place to the devil” when *we shrink from persecution*. Bearing Christ’s “reproach” (Heb 13:13) is inseparable from a faithful going forth unto Him outside the camp. Suffering “affliction with the people of God” is set over against “enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb 11:25). And such suffering is to be viewed as a holy privilege and high honour, and not as something to be shunned and ashamed of, for it brings us into fellowship with the sufferings of Christ (Phi 3:10). But when these sufferings are looked at by the eye of sense and the heart sinks, Satan soon gains an advantage and tempts to compromise. “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison [there are spiritual “prisons” as well as material ones!], that ye may be tried” (Rev 2:10).

Seventh, we “give place to the devil” when *we relax spiritually*. O how much we need to heed that word, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1Co 16:13). If we become slack and careless, if we fail to “gird up the loins of your minds” (1Pe 1:13), and keep not our hearts “with *all* diligence” (Pro 4:23), we shall soon be found giving place to the devil. Has the reader noted *what preceded* David’s fearful fall? It was, “At the time when kings go forth to battle...*But* David tarried still at Jerusalem” (2Sa 11:1). Hence, in the next verse, we find him idling, lazing, and then—he fell!

The above are some of the more negative ways of “giving place to the devil,” namely, by failing to be armed against him. Let us now mention some of the more positive ways through

which he gains an advantage over us. 1. We give place to the devil when *we listen to his evil suggestions*. We do not begin by doing as he wants us, nor even by accepting his whisperings. It is the paying attention to what he says which is the root from which obeying him springs. This is seen clearly in the case of Eve. She parleyed with him before she took of the forbidden fruit. Contrast the Lord Jesus, who promptly rejected His evil suggestions by a verse from the Word of God.

2. We give place to the devil the moment *we begin to compromise*. Solemnly is this illustrated in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. Of them, we are told that they “sold a possession, and kept back *part* of the price.” The remainder was laid at the apostles’ feet. Then Peter said, “Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to *keep back part*?” (Act 5:1-3). What a solemn voice this has for each of us! Do we not realize that it was Satan who was filling our hearts when we only half consecrated ourselves to the Lord, when we yielded Him only a partial obedience, when we used on ourselves a portion of His tithe, when we refused to thoroughly go forth unto Him “outside the camp”? What is it that *we* are keeping back a “part” of?

3. We give place to the devil when *we become self-sufficient* and independent of God. It was being “lifted up with pride” which brought about the fall of the devil himself (1Ti 3:6). Pride is a subtle thing, for we are largely unconscious of its presence. Nevertheless, it can be easily detected if we take the trouble to examine our motives and trace our actions back to their source. Pride is self-sufficiency. We are controlled by pride whenever we ask not wisdom and strength from God. We are moved by pride when we trust to common sense and “lean unto our own understandings.” Contrariwise, the humble man is he who seeks help from the Lord for everything.

4. We “give place to the devil” when *we put self’s interests before the Lord’s glory*. This was exemplified by the Gadarenes. Christ had come into their midst and graciously delivered a demon-possessed man. The demons then obtained His permission to enter a herd of swine, which rushed into the sea and were destroyed. How awful the sequel, “And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts” (Mar 5:17)! The demands of the Holy One were too strict for their liking. He interfered with their money-making. They preferred their swine to the Saviour. Does this shock you, dear reader? Then ask God to reveal to you if there is any thing which you are preferring (by your actions) above the honour and glory of His blessed Son.

5. We “give place to the devil” when *we seek the company of and are friendly with his children*. Satan knows full well that “evil communications corrupt good manners,” therefore is he untiring in his efforts to induce God’s children to take upon them an unequal yoke and become intimate with the ungodly. For this reason does God command us, “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph 5:11). Disobedience to this inevitably leads to our being ensnared by the great enemy.

6. We “give place to the devil” when *we knowingly enter his territory*. God has expressly commanded us, “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away” (Pro 4:14-15). If we disregard this divine prohibition, then we deliberately expose ourselves to Satan’s temptations and cannot count upon God delivering us from the same. A solemn example of one who trespassed on the devil’s ground is Lot. By settling down in Sodom, he deliberately courted the fearful disaster which overtook his family.

7. We “give place to the devil” when *we allow him to use us to do his work*. As a general rule, the devil works through human instruments and happy is he when he can move a Christian to perform his bidding. It is a solemn consideration that every child of God is controlled, hour by hour, either by the Holy Spirit or the evil spirit. Satan is using us to further his evil ends when he

causes us to set an unchristlike example before the ungodly—encouraging them in their sins. He uses the Christian when he can get him to sow the seeds of discord among brethren. And how often has he used a Christian to undermine the influence of a servant of God by speaking evil about him to others! Let us now point out some of *the devil's tactics*.

1. He aims to inject doubts into our minds. This is seen in the method which he employed with Eve. He endeavours to raise questionings in our hearts. Particularly is this true in prayer, while we are waiting for God to fulfill the promise which we have pleaded. Hence, the Saviour said, “If ye have faith, *and doubt not*” (Mat 21:21).

2. He aims to discredit God in our esteem. This is seen in his attack upon Job. It was the devil who moved his wife to bid him, “Curse God and die.” With this before us, there is no excuse for any Christian being “ignorant of his devices.” When trials come upon us, Satan tempts unto hard thoughts against God, seeking to make us believe that He is unkind and unjust in His dealings.

3. He aims to puff us up with pride. This is seen in the temptation he presented to David to number the people (1Ch 21:1). Much watchfulness and prayer is needed to guard against this. If he cannot make us conceited over our natural endowments and possessions, he will seek to make us proud of our devotedness and obedience to God, our liberality and kindness to others, and even of our humility. The safeguard against this is to remind ourselves constantly that we have nothing but what we have ourselves first received of God (1Co 4:7).

4. He aims to destroy full dependency upon God. This is seen in his first temptation of Christ in Matthew 4. The Son of God had taken upon Himself the form of a servant, and the devil said, “*Command* that these stones be made bread” (Mat 4:3). Christ was an hungered and Satan says, “Trust God no longer. Take things into your own hands.” He tempts us to act independently. He seeks to prevent our earnestly seeking from God divine guidance, wisdom, strength, and blessing.

5. He aims to induce reckless trifling with God. When he fails to bring us to distrust God, he seeks to fling us to the opposite extreme and get us to act presumptuously. This is seen in his second temptation of Christ. “Since you trust God fully, cast thyself down from the pinnacle of the temple.” (See Mat 4:5-6). Beware of tempting God (under the guise of strong faith) by refusing to take wise precautions, use legitimate means, or needlessly expose yourself to danger.

6. He aims to fix our hearts on worldly things. This is seen in his third temptation of Christ, when he showed Him all its kingdoms and their glory. There are many subtle forms of this temptation, such as coveting a beautiful home, aspiring after a high position in business, following the fashions of the ungodly in our dress, conforming to their ways in our hours of recreation. If we more definitely sought grace to heed that exhortation, “Be content with such things as ye have” (Heb 13:5), we should be delivered from many snares and sorrows.

7. He aims to prevent the denying of self and the daily taking up of the cross. This comes out clearly in Matthew 16:21-24. Let the reader slowly ponder those verses. “Spare thyself” is the motto which the devil would have us live by. Beware of lazing in the evenings instead of “redeeming the time” (Eph 5:16).

8. He aims to blind the mind (2Co 4:4) and becloud our judgment. He often accomplishes this by Scriptures themselves, causing us to wrongly understand them or use them irrelevantly. When we ought to do as David did in Psalm 119:60, he tells us, “He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa 28:16). When we ought to rebuke sin in a brother (Lev 19:17), he quotes to us, “Judge not that ye be not judged” (Mat 7:1). Sometimes he blinds people’s minds by the sound of words like, “This is my body” (Luk 22:19) or “all” in John 12:32, etc.

9. He aims to catch away the Word of God out of our hearts (Luk 8:12). Oftentimes he is very successful in this, because we have failed to definitely seek God's intervention or because we have failed to fix the Scriptures in our mind by meditating upon them. Satan is also catching away the seed by making people believe that many portions of God's Word are not for them, but for the Jews.

10. He aims to afflict our bodies so that they are incapacitated for the performance of duties or of spiritual exercises (Luk 13:11). He often causes us to eat too much, so that we are dull and drowsy when reading the Word or hearing God's servants preach. He produces lassitude and weakness, but God can "renew our strength" (Isa 40:29-31).

Now dear friend, turn into definite, daily, believing prayer, what has been before you that God would deliver you from these Satanic snares. Be constantly on the alert to recognize the devil's approach to you through persons and things. Remember that it was "While men *slept*" that he sowed his tares (Mat 13:25)! Plead unto God 1 John 3:8 and beg Him to make it good in your life.

(The above is the substance of an address given by the editor at Glenholden, PA on May 23, 1932.)

ASSURANCE

"Can true believers be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace and that they shall persevere therein unto salvation? Answer: Such as truly believe in Christ, and endeavor to walk in all good conscience before Him (1Jo 2:3), may, without extraordinary revelation, by faith grounded upon the truth of God's promises, and by the Spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those graces to which the promises of life are made (1Jo 3:14, 18-19, 21, 24; Heb 5:11-12, etc.), and bearing witness with their spirits that they are the children of God (Rom 8:16), be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace and shall persevere therein unto salvation (1Jo 5:13; 2Ti 1:12)."

"Assurance is the believer's full conviction that, through the work of Christ alone, received by faith, he is in possession of a salvation in which he will be eternally kept. And this assurance rests only upon the Scripture promises to him who believes."

The careful reader will perceive a considerable difference of doctrine in the two quotations given above. The former is the product of the Puritans; the latter is a fair sample of what the boasted enlightenment of the twentieth century has brought forth. The one is extracted from the Westminster Catechism of Faith (the doctrinal standard of the Presbyterians); the other is taken from the "Schofield Bible." In the one, the balance of truth is helpfully preserved. In the second, the work and witness of the Holy Spirit is altogether ignored. This example is only one out of scores we could cite, which sadly illustrates how far we have gone backwards. The answer given by the Puritans is calculated to lead to heart searchings. The definition (if such it may be called) of the popular dispensationalist is likely to bolster up the deluded. This brings us to consider, more definitely,

1. Its Nature

Let us begin by asking the question, Assurance of *what*? That the Holy Scriptures are the inspired and infallible Word of God? No, that is not our subject. Assured that salvation is by grace alone? No, for neither is that our immediate theme. Rather, the assurance that I am no longer in a state of nature, but in a state of grace. And this, not as a mere conjectural persuasion, but as resting on sure evidence. It is a well authenticated realization that not only has my mind been enlightened concerning the great truths of God's Word, but that a supernatural work has been wrought in my soul, which has made me a new creature in Christ Jesus. A scriptural assurance of salvation is that knowledge which the Holy Spirit imparts to the heart, through the Scriptures, that *my* "faith" is not a natural one, but "the faith of *God's elect*" (Ti 1:1), that my love for Christ is sincere and not fictitious, that my daily walk is that of a regenerated man.

The assurance of the saints is, as the Westminster divines said, "By the Spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those graces to which the promises of life are made." Let us seek to amplify that statement. At the commencement of Matthew 5, we find the Lord Jesus pronouncing *blessed* a certain class of people. They are not named as "believers" or "saints," but instead are described by their characters, and it is only by comparing ourselves and others with the description that the Lord Jesus there gave that we are enabled to *identify* such. First, He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Mat 5:3). To be "poor in spirit" is to have a feeling sense that in me, that is, in my flesh, there "dwelleth no good thing" (Rom 7:18). It is the realization that I am utterly destitute of anything and everything which could commend me favourably to God's notice. It is to recognize that I am a spiritual bankrupt. It is the consciousness, even now (not years ago, when I was first awakened), that I am without strength and wisdom, that I am a helpless creature, completely dependent upon the grace and mercy of God. To be "poor in spirit" is the opposite of Laodiceanism, which consists of self-complacency and self-sufficiency, imagining I am "rich, and in need of nothing."

"Blessed are they that mourn" (Mat 5:4). It is one thing to believe the theory that I am spiritually a poverty-stricken pauper, it is quite another to have an acute sense of it in my soul. Where the latter exists, there are deep exercises of heart, which evoke the bitter cry, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" (Isa 24:16). There is deep anguish that there is so little growth in grace, so little fruit to God's glory, such a wretched return made for His abounding goodness unto me. This is accompanied by an ever-deepening discovery of the depths of corruption which is still within me. The soul finds that when it would do good, evil is present with him (Rom 7:21). It is grieved by the motions of unbelief, the swellings of pride, the surgings of rebellion against God. Instead of peace, there is war within. Instead of realizing his holy aspirations, the blessed one is daily defeated. Until the stricken heart cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom 7:24).

"Blessed are the meek" (Mat 5:5). Meekness is *yieldedness*. It is the opposite of self-will. Meekness is pliability and meltedness of heart, which makes me submissive and responsive to God's will. Now observe, dear reader, these first three marks of the "Blessed" consist not in outward actions, but of inward graces. Not in showy deeds, but in states of soul. Note too that they are far from being characteristics which will render their possessor pleasing and popular to the world. He who feels himself to be a spiritual pauper will not be welcomed by the wealthy Laodiceans. He who daily mourns for his leanness, his barrenness, his sinfulness, will not be courted by the self-righteous. He who is truly meek will not be sought after by the self-assertive.

No, he will be scorned by the Pharisees and looked upon with contempt by those who boast they are “out of Romans 7 and living in Romans 8.” These lovely graces, which are of great price in the sight of God, are despised by the bloated professors of the day.

We must not now review the additional marks of the “Blessed” named by the Redeemer at the beginning of His precious Sermon on the Mount, but at one other we will just glance. “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake....Blessed are ye when men shall revile you...for my sake” (Mat 5:10-11). Observe that this antagonism is not evoked by wrongdoing or by a well-grounded offence. They who are morose, selfish, haughty, evil speakers, cruel, have no right to shelter behind this beatitude when people retaliate against them. No, it is where Christliness of character and conduct is assailed. Where practical godliness condemns the worldly ways of empty professors, that fires their enmity—where humble but vital piety cannot be tolerated by those who are destitute of the same. Blessed, said Christ, are the spiritual, whom the carnal hate—the gentle sheep, whom the dogs snap at.

Now dear reader, seek grace to honestly measure yourself by these criteria. Do such heavenly graces adorn your soul? Are these marks, of those whom the Son of God pronounces “Blessed,” stamped upon *your* character? Are you truly “poor in spirit”? We say, “truly,” for it is easy to adopt expressions and call ourselves names—if you are offended when someone else applies them to you, it shows you do not mean what you say. Do you “mourn” over your lack of conformity to Christ, the feebleness of your faith, the coldness of your love? Are you “meek”? Has your will been broken and your heart made submissive to God? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness?—does your use of the means of grace, your searchings of the Scriptures, your prayers, evince it? Are you “merciful,” or censorious and harsh? Are you “pure in heart”?—grieved when an impure imagination assails? If not, you have no right to regard yourself as “Blessed.” Instead, you are under the curse of a holy and sin-hating God.

It is *not*—Are these spiritual graces *fully developed* within you—they never are in this life. But are they truly present at all? It is not, are you completely emptied of self, but is it your sincere desire and earnest prayer to be so. It is not, do you “mourn” as deeply as you ought to over indwelling sin and its activities, but have you *felt* at all “the plague” of your own heart (1Ki 8:38). It is not, is your meekness all that can be desired, but is there unmistakable proof that the root of it has actually been communicated to your soul? There is a growth, “First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.” But that which has no existence can have no growth. Has the “seed” (1Pe 1:23) of grace been planted in your heart. *That* is the point which each of us is called upon to determine—not to assume or take for granted, but to make “sure” of (2Pe 1:10). And this is done when we faithfully examine our hearts to discover whether or not there is in them those spiritual graces to which the promises of God are addressed.

While Gospel assurance is the opposite of carnal presumption and of unbelieving doubts, yet it is far from being opposed to thorough self-examination. But alas, so many have been taught, and by men highly reputed for their orthodoxy, that if it is not actually wrong, it is highly injurious for a Christian to look within. There is a *balance* of truth to be observed here, as everywhere. That one might become too introspective is readily granted, but that a Christian is never to search his own heart, test his faith, scrutinize his motives, and make sure that he has the “root of the matter” within him (Job 19:28), is contradicted by many plain Scriptures. Regeneration is a work which God performs *within* us (Phi 1:6), and as eternal destiny hinges on the same, it behoves every serious soul to take the utmost pains and ascertain whether or not this miracle of grace has been wrought within him. When Paul stood in doubt of the state of the Galatians, he said, “My little

children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed *in* you” (Gal 4:19). So to the Colossians, he wrote, “Christ *in* you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27).

“For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in [or by] God” (Joh 3:20-21). Here is one of the vital differences between the unregenerate and the regenerate, the unbelieving and the believing. Unbelief is far more than an error of judgment, or speculative mistake into which an *honest* mind may fall. It proceeds from heart-enmity against God. The natural man, while left to himself, hates the searching light of God (Joh 3:19), fearful lest it should disquiet the conscience, expose the fallacy of his presumptuous confidence, and shatter his false peace. But it is the very reverse with him who has been given “an honest and good heart” (Luk 8:15). He who acts sincerely and conscientiously, desiring to know and do the whole will of God without reserve, welcomes the light.

The genuine Christian believes what Scripture says concerning the natural heart, namely, that it is “deceitful above all things” (Jer 17:9). And the surest proof that he *does* believe this solemn fact is that he is deeply concerned lest “a deceived heart hath turned *him* aside” (Isa 44:20), and caused him to believe that all is well with his soul, when in reality he is yet “in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity” (Act 8:23). He believes what God’s Word says about Satan, the great deluder, and trembles lest, after all, the devil has beguiled him with a false peace. Such a possibility, such a likelihood, occasions him much exercise of soul. Like David of old (and every other genuine saint), he “communes with his own heart” (Psa 4:4), and “his spirit makes *diligent search*” (Psa 77:6). He turns to the light of Holy Writ, anxious to have his character and conduct scrutinized by the same, desiring to have his deeds made manifest, as to whether they proceed from self-love or real love to God.

It is not that we are here seeking to foster any confidence in self, rather do we desire to promote real confidence toward God. It is one thing to make sure that I love God, and it is quite another for me to find satisfaction in that love. The self-examination which the Scriptures enjoin (in 1 Corinthians 11:28, for example) is *not* for the purpose of finding something within to make me more acceptable to God, nor as a ground of my justification before Him, but is with the object of discovering whether Christ is being formed in me. There are two extremes to be guarded against—such an undue occupation with the work of the Spirit *within*, that the heart is taken right off from the work of Christ *for* His people, and such a one-sided emphasis upon the imputed righteousness of Christ, that the righteousness *imparted* by the Spirit is ignored or disparaged. It is impossible that the Third Person of the Trinity should take up His abode within a soul without effecting a radical change within him. And it is *this* which I need to make sure of. It is the Spirit’s work within the heart which is the only infallible proof of salvation.

It is perfectly true that as I look within and seek to faithfully examine my heart in the light of Scripture that the work of the Spirit is *not all* I shall discover there. No, indeed—much corruption still remains. The genuine Christian finds clear evidence of *two* natures, two contrary principles at work within him. This is brought out plainly, not only in Romans 7 and Galatians 5:17, but strikingly too in the Song of Solomon. “What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of *two* armies” (Song 6:13). Hence, it is that in her present state, the Bride says, “I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon” (Song 1:5). And again, “I sleep, but my heart waketh” (Song 5:2)—strange language to the natural man, but quite intelligible to the spiritual. And therefore is it also that the renewed soul so often finds suited to his case the prayer of Mark 9:24, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”

It is because the real Christian finds within himself so much that is conflicting, that it is difficult for him to be sure of his actual state. And therefore does he cry, “Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Psa 26:2). They who are filled with a carnal assurance, a fleshly confidence, a vain presumption, feel no need for asking the Lord to “prove” *them*. So completely has Satan deceived them that they imagine it would be an act of unbelief so to do. Poor souls, they “call evil good, and good evil.” They “put darkness for light, and light for darkness” (Isa 5:20). One of the surest marks of regeneration is that the soul frequently cries, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa 139:23-24).

Perhaps some of our readers are still ready to say, “I do not see that there needs to be so much difficulty in ascertaining whether one is in a lost or saved condition. I am resting upon John 5:24 and that is sufficient for me.” But allow us to point out, dear friend, that John 5:24 is *not a promise* which Christ gave to an individual disciple, but instead, a doctrinal declaration which He made in the hearing of a mixed multitude. If the objector replies, “I believe that verse does contain a promise and I am going to hold fast to it.” Then may we lovingly ask, “Are you sure that it belongs *to you*?” That John 5:24 contains a precious promise, we gladly acknowledge, but to whom is it made? Let us examine it. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

That promise is given to a definitely defined character, namely, “He that *heareth my word*.” Now dear reader, can it be truthfully said that you are one that “heareth” His Word? Are you sure? Do not be misled by the mere sound of words. The reference here is not to the hearing of the outward ear, but to the response of the heart. In the days that He sojourned on earth, there were many of whom the Lord Jesus had to say that “hearing [with the outward ear], they hear not” with the heart (Mat 13:13). So it is still. To “hear” spiritually, to “hear” savingly, is to *heed* (Mat 18:15), is to *obey* (Mat 17:5; Joh 10:27; Heb 3:7). Ah, are *you* obedient? Have you searched the Scriptures diligently in order to discover His commandments? And that, not to satisfy an idle curiosity, but desiring to put them into practice? Do you love His commandments? Are you actually *doing* them? Not once or twice, but regularly, as the main tenor of your life—for note, it is not “hear,” but “heareth.”

Does some one object, “All of this is getting away from the *simplicity* of Christ. You are taking us from the Word and seeking to get us occupied with ourselves.” Well, does not Scripture say, “Take heed unto thyself” (1Ti 4:16)? But it may be answered, “There cannot be any *certainty* while we are occupied with our wretched selves. I prefer to abide by the written Word.” To this, we have no objection at all. What we are here pressing is the vital necessity of making sure that the portions of the Word you cite or are resting upon, fairly and squarely *belong to you*. The reader may refer me to, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Act 16:31) and ask, “Is not that plain enough?” But have you ever noted, dear friend, to whom the apostles addressed those words and all the attendant circumstances?

It was neither to a promiscuous crowd, nor to a careless and unconcerned soul that the apostles said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” Rather was it to an awakened, deeply exercised, penitent soul, who had taken his place in the dust, and in deepest anguish cried, “What must I do to be saved?” However, what is the *use* you are making of Acts 16:31? You answer, “This: Those words are divinely simple. I believe in Christ and therefore, I am saved. *God* says so and the devil cannot shake me.” Possibly he is not at all anxious to. He may be well content for you to retain a carnal confidence. But observe, dear friend, the apostles did not tell the

stricken jailor to “Believe on Jesus” nor, “Believe in Christ,” but to “Believe on *the Lord* Jesus Christ.”

What does it mean to *savingly* “believe”? We have sought to answer this question at length in our recent articles on “Saving Faith.” But let us now give a brief reply. John 1:12 makes it clear that to “believe” is to “receive,” to receive “Christ Jesus *the Lord*” (Col 2:6). Christ is the Saviour of none until He is welcomed as LORD. The immediate context shows plainly the particular character in which Christ is there viewed, “He came unto *His own*” (Joh 1:11). He was their rightful Owner, because their Lord. But “His own received Him not.” No, they declared, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luk 19:14). Ah, dear friend, this is searching. Have *you* received “*The Lord* Jesus Christ”? We do not ask, “Are you resting on His finished work,” but have you bowed to His scepter and owned His authority in a *practical* way? Have you *disowned your own* sinful lordship? If not, you certainly *have not* “believed on *the Lord* Jesus Christ,” and therefore, the promise of Acts 16:31 does not belong to you.

“Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom 8:9). *This* is just as much a part of God’s Word as is Acts 16:31. Why do we not hear it quoted as frequently! And how can any one *know* that he *is* indwelt by the Spirit of Christ? Only by discovering within him the *fruits* of His regenerating and sanctifying grace. *Not* that either these “fruits” or the “good works” of the Christian are in any wise or to any degree meritorious. No, no, but as the *evidence* of his divine sonship.

FOOD ASSURED

“But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said unto them, children, have ye any meat?” (Joh 21:4-5).

Every incident in relation to Christ and His love to His people becomes interesting, and here is a very sweet one. Christ was now risen from the dead. But His disciples had only faith and indistinct notions of the immense importance of this glorious event. They, therefore, were returned to their employment of fishing, as unconscious of what the resurrection from the dead should mean. All night they had been employed in a fruitless pursuit and when the morning began to dawn, Christ stood on the shore, but their eyes were holden that they should not know Him. My soul! Learn from hence that Christ is often with thee, often looking on thee, and often providing and preparing for thee, while thou art ignorant of His presence and His love. He speaks to them, before they speak to Him. Yes, “If we love him, it is because he first loved us.” And what doth Christ say? “Children, have ye any meat?” Precious account of Christ! My soul, turn over the several blessed particulars shewn here in it. He calls them children. Yes, His people are His children, for He is the everlasting Father, as well as their Husband and Brother. Indeed, He stands in place of all relations and fills all. My soul, if thou didst but consider this, and keep the remembrance of it always uppermost in thine heart, how wouldest thou delight to go to Christ, as to a “brother born for adversity, a friend that loveth at all times, and one who sticketh closer than a brother.”

Observe how earnest the Lord is concerning their present state and safety. Oh that every child of God in Christ would learn from hence that Christ takes part in all that concerns them. Surely this solicitude of Christ takes in the whole of a believer's warfare. Are they poor in this world? Do they seek their bread out of desolate places? Like the disciples, do they toil all night and gain nothing? And shall not He, who providently caters for the sparrow, know it and provide for them, amidst all their manifold necessities? Look up, my poor afflicted brother (if perchance such an one should read these lines), look up, I say, and behold Christ in this endearing instance of tenderness to the wants of His few faithful disciples. He that caused a miraculous draught of fishes to supply the pressing needs of His disciples, can, and will equally now, regard the state of all His redeemed ones under their various temporal straits and difficulties. The promise is absolute and hath never failed, "He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure" (Isa 33:16). And as for spiritual famine, when at any time the waters of the sanctuary run low, Christ is the Almighty Governor, our spiritual Joseph, through all the Egyptian state of His people here below, and He speaks to every one, yea, to thee my soul, in the number, "Children, have ye any meat?" Lamb of God, though Thou art now in Thine exalted state, yet not all the church is glory above, nor all the hallelujahs of heaven, can detain Thee one moment from knowing and visiting and supplying all the manifold wants of Thy church in grace here below. Doth Christ say to me, "Hast thou any meat?" Lord, I would answer, "Thou art 'the bread of life, and the bread of God; yea the living bread, which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world.'" (See Joh 6:51) Precious Christ! Be Thou my bread, my life, my hope, my fulness, my joy, and my portion forever (Robert Hawker, 1825).



*Holy Bridegroom, glorious Head,
Of Thy beloved Bride,
By Thee may I be daily fed,
And nourish'd by Thy side;
Forsaking all the worthless toys
Of vain carnality;
Tasting of everlasting joys,
And immortality.*

*Fix Thy great love within my heart,
That I may give Thee praise;
And never let me more depart
From Thy most holy ways.
Plainly showing to all around
That I am Thine indeed;
That grace may over sin abound,
As of the holy seed.*

*Lord Jesus, set our hearts on fire
With Thy unchanging love,
That through Thy grace we may aspire
To reign with Thee above.
Let us not sleep, as others do,
But earnest be in prayer;
Looking for and hast'ning to
Our meeting in the air.*

Edward Kirby, 1871



OCTOBER

THE FAITH OF CHRIST

“Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in flesh” (1Ti 3:16). Yes, so “great” is this “mystery” that when faith attempts to view it, our eyes are dazzled. Only as we contemplate it through the very words of Holy Writ shall we be preserved from the blindness which carnal speculation inevitably imparts. “The word became flesh” (Joh 1:14). The second person in the Holy Trinity took upon Him the form of a servant. The eternal Son took holy humanity into union with Himself. Though that humanity was not, in itself, a person, though it never had a separate existence, yet was it endowed with all the elements and qualities of a human personality. Christ was not only God, but man, having a human spirit and soul and body. As such, Christ lived the life of a perfect man. Speaking by the Spirit of prophecy, He declared, “I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved” (Psa 16:8).

In becoming flesh, our blessed Lord took upon Him a *dependent* nature, and therefore did He for thirty-three years live a life of faith upon His heavenly Father. The actings of that faith, in all its diversified phases, may be clearly seen portrayed to our wondering view in those Psalms, which, beyond all gainsaying, contain the experiences of Christ in the days of His flesh. “There is not a grace or fruit of the Spirit possessed by His people in measure which the Lord did not possess without measure. And these, it must be borne in mind, were active graces, drawn out and called into continual exercise by the same Holy Spirit who had communicated them.

“Faith in all its actings, hope in all its anchorings, love in all its flowings, patience in all its endurings, humility in all its submittings, prayer in all its supplications, praise in all its adorings, obedience in all its yieldings, holiness in all its flame, and worship in all its fervour—all, all these graces and fruits of the Holy Spirit, may be seen shining forth as with beams of heavenly light in the personal experience of our blessed Lord in those Psalms in which He speaks. They were, as it were, framed for Him by the Holy Spirit before He came into a time state, that they might be, not only prophetic of His sufferings for the benefit of His church, but be the spiritual utterance of His own holy soul in the days of His flesh” (J. C. Philpot, 1862).

As the Sponsor and Surety of God’s elect, the Lord Jesus entered the place of their responsibility. To be the Kinsman-Redeemer of His people, really and truly “of one” (Heb 2:11) with the many sons He was to bring to glory, “In all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren” (Heb 2:17), and thus to be brought into that condition wherein He should trust in God and act in that dependency upon Him which the nature of man, whilst exposed to troubles,

does indispensably require. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor. He who had brought into existence the universe by the fiat of His will, now became subject to the commandments of the Father. He who upholdeth all things by the word of His power, entered the place of complete dependency, and cried to the Strong for strength.

Not only in the Psalms, but in the prophets too has the Holy Spirit given us to hear some of the holy breathings of Him who became man, completely dependent upon God. Most blessedly is this brought before us in Isaiah 50. There we find the Mediator saying, “The LORD God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The LORD God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back....The LORD God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded” (Isa 50:4-5, 7). What light this casts upon the lowly place which the Creator of angels had taken! How blessedly it makes known to us His amazing condescension! How perfectly He conducted Himself as the Father’s Servant (Isa 42:1). Well could He say, “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Mat 11:29).

1. From the very commencement of His earthly life, the Lord Jesus lived by faith. Marvelously is this revealed to us in the 22nd Psalm. There we behold the Saviour in the midst of His dying agonies, doubtless tempted by Satan to give way to unbelief and despair—for it was there he was permitted to fully vent his enmity against the woman’s seed (Gen 3:15; Luk 22:53), yet vain were the enemy’s attacks. There we hear our blessed Redeemer declaring, “But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother’s belly” (Psa 22: 9-10). How this brings out His uniqueness! In His faith, as in everything else, He has the “pre-eminence” (Col 1:18). It was not only in manhood or childhood, but from very earliest infancy that the Man Christ Jesus drew His support from the Triune God.

2. Throughout His life the Lord Jesus lived by faith. Many are the proofs of this, but we can here barely mention a few of them. His prayer-life exemplifies the fact. He was engaged in prayer while being baptized (Luk 3:21). He “continued all night in prayer to God” (Luk 6:12) before selecting the twelve apostles. It was “as he prayed” that “the fashion of his countenance was altered” (Luk 9:29) and He was transfigured on the holy mount. His prayers expressed His dependence upon and felt need of the Father. His victory over Satan illustrated the same fact. “By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer,” He declared and then added, “Hold up my goings in thy paths” (Psa 17:4-5). “He ever acted in filial dependence upon the Father and in filial reception out of the Father’s fullness” (Adolph Saphir, 1831-1891).

Christ was never actuated by what is called “common sense,” influenced by public opinion, or governed by worldly policy and prudence. Instead, He was always beholding Him who is invisible, walking with God, and doing His will. “I am not alone....he that sent me is with me” (Joh 8:16, 29). The Captain of our salvation was exposed to great difficulties, anxiety of mind, dangers, and troubles—typed out by the great sufferings of David before he came to the kingdom. But in all His perplexities, the Lord Jesus ever betook Himself unto the protection of God, “Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust” (Psa 16:1)—such was His plea. “As the living Father hath sent me, and I *live* by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me” (Joh 6:57). “When he suffered, he threatened not; but [by faith] committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1Pe 2:23).

3. On the cross, the suffering Saviour’s faith was active. Wondrously is this brought out in Isaiah 50:8-9, “He is near that justifieth me....Behold, the LORD God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me?” The ineffably Holy One had been made the Sinbearer. Jehovah had laid on

Christ the iniquity of all His people (Isa 53:6). Though personally sinless, all the sins of God's elect were imputed to Christ, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1Pe 2:24). Yet even while enduring the curse, and the wrath of God was hard upon Him, our Surety had implicit faith that He would be exonerated, "He is near that *justifieth* me."

4. In death itself, the Saviour fully trusted God. His last act was one of faith, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luk 23:46). "My flesh also shall rest in hope [literally, "dwells in confident sureness"]. For thou wilt not leave my soul in Hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou *wilt* show me the path of life [resurrection life]: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psa 16:9-11).

Perhaps the fear of lowering the character of our blessed Lord has restrained many from writing on this precious theme, but none should be afraid to go as far as Scripture goes. As we have seen, Holy Writ depicts the life of Christ as giving us the only perfect and all-sided embodiment of faith. Nor was His faith a secret or hidden thing. He made open profession of it—His enemies acknowledged, "He *trusted in God*" (Mat 27:43). O for more conformity to His image. Christ is not only the Christian's righteousness and peace, but as well the model and strength of his life.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

58. The Faith of Enoch (11:5-6)

The apostle makes it his principal design in this chapter to convince the Hebrews of the nature, importance, and efficacy of saving faith. In the execution of his design, he first described the essential actings of faith (Heb 11:1), and then in all that follows he treats of the effects, fruits, and achievements of faith. It is blessed to behold how that once more his appeal was to the Holy Scriptures. Not by abstract arguments, still less by bare assertions, would he persuade them, but instead, by setting forth some of the many examples and proofs which the sacred records furnished. Having reminded them of what the faith-obedience of Abel procured, namely, the obtaining of a witness from God that he was righteous, the apostle cites the case of Enoch who exemplifies another aspect and consequent of faith.

The *order* observed by the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 11 is not the historical one. A careful reading of its contents will make this clear. For example, reference is made in Hebrews 11:9 to Isaac and Jacob before attention is directed to Sarah in Hebrews 11:11. The falling down of Jericho's walls (Heb 11:30) is mentioned before the faith of Rahab (Heb 11:31). In Hebrews 11:32, Gideon is mentioned before Barak, Samson before Jephthah, and David before Samuel. Thus it is evident that we are to "search" for something deeper. Since the chronological order is departed from again and again, must there not be a spiritual significance to the way in which the Old Testament saints are here referred to? Without a doubt, such must be the case. The reason for

this is not far to seek. It is the *experimental* order which is followed in this chapter. If the Lord permits, this will become plainer and plainer as we proceed from verse to verse.

That which the three examples supplied in Hebrews 11:4 to 7 set before us is an outline of the life of faith. Abel is mentioned first not because he was born before Enoch and Noah, but because what is recorded of him in Genesis 4 illustrated and demonstrated where the life of faith begins. In like manner, Enoch is referred to next, not because he is mentioned before Noah in the book of Genesis, but because what was found in him (or rather, what divine grace had wrought in him) must precede that which was typified by the builder of the ark. Each of these three men adumbrated a distinct feature or aspect of the life of faith and the order concerning them is inviolable. Another, before us, has characterized them thus—in Abel, we see faith’s worship, in Enoch, faith’s walk, in Noah, faith’s witness. This, we believe, is an accurate and helpful way of stating it and the more it be pondered, the more its beauty and blessedness should be perceived.

But man ever reverses God’s order and never was this fact more plainly evident to the anointed eye than in these degenerate times in which our lot is cast. Witnessing and working (“service”) is what are so much emphasized today. Yet dear reader, Hebrews 11 does not begin with the example of Noah. No, indeed. Noah was preceded by Enoch and for this reason—there can be no divinely-acceptable witness or work unless and until there is a walking with God! Enoch’s walk with God must come before any service which is pleasing *to Him*. Alas that this is so much lost sight of now. Alas that, so generally, as soon as a young person makes profession of being a Christian, he or she is pushed into some form of “Christian activity”—open-air speaking, personal work, teaching a Sunday school class—when God’s Word so plainly says, “*Not a novice* [margin, “one newly come to the faith”], lest being lifted up with pride [which almost always proves to be the case] he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1Ti 3:6).

O how much we miss and lose through failing to give close heed to the *order* of God’s words. Frequently have we emphasized this fact in these pages, yet not too frequently. God is the God of order and the moment we depart from His arrangements, confusion, with all its attendant evils, at once ensues. We cannot pay too strict attention to the order in which things are presented to us in Holy Writ, for only as we do so are we in the position to learn some of its most salutary lessons and admire its heavenly wisdom. Such is the case here. Enoch’s walk of faith must precede Noah’s witnessing by faith, and this, in turn, must be preceded by Abel’s worship of faith. There must be that setting aside of our own preferences and ways, that bowing to God’s will, that submitting to His appointments, that obedience to His requirements, before there can be any real walking with Him. Obedience *to Him*, then walking *with Him*, then witnessing *for Him*, is heaven’s unchanging order.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Heb 11:5). The case of Abel shows us *where* the life of faith begins. The example of Enoch teaches us *of what* the life of faith consists. Now just as we had to refer to Genesis 4 to understand Hebrews 11:4, so we have to turn back to Genesis 5 for its light to be thrown upon our present verse.

“And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him” (Gen 5:24). Here we have set forth, in the form of a brief summary, the new life of the believer—to “walk with God.” Previously, Enoch had “walked according to the course of this world” (Eph 2:2), had gone his “own way” (Isa 53:6) of self-pleasing, and unconcerned about the future, had thought only of the present. But now he had been “reconciled to God” (2Co 5:20), for “Can two walk together, except they be *agreed*?” (Amo 3:3). The term “walk” signifies a voluntary act, a steady advance, a

progress in spiritual things. To “walk with God” imports a life surrendered to God, a life controlled by God, a life lived for God. It is to that our present verse has reference.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Heb 11:5). It should be obvious to any Spirit-taught heart that we need to look beneath the surface here if we are to discover the *spiritual principle* of the verse and seek grace to apply it to ourselves. As a mere historical statement, it is doubtless a very interesting one, yet as such it imparts no strength to my needy soul. The bare fact that a man who walked this earth thousands of years ago escaped death may astonish, but it supplies no practical help. What we wish to press upon the reader is the need for asking each portion of Scripture he reads the question, What is there here, what practical lesson, to *help me* while I am left on earth? Nor is this always discovered in a moment—prayer, patience, meditation are required.

As we endeavor to *study* our verse with the object of ascertaining its practical and meaning message for us today, the first thing the thoughtful ponderer will notice is the repetition of the word “translated.” This occurring no less than three times in one verse is evidently the key-word. According to its etymology, “translated” signifies to carry across, to bear up, to remove, to change from one place to another. This at once brings to mind (if the Word of Christ be dwelling in us richly) that verse, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and *hath translated us* into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col 1:13). This refers to the grand fact of the Christian’s present standing and state before God—he has “passed from death unto life” (Joh 5:24). Now it is the Christian’s privilege and duty to live in the power of this fact and have it made good in his actual case and experience. And this *will be so* just in proportion as he is enabled to live and walk *by faith*.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death” (Heb 11:5). The word “see” here has the force of taste or experience. Enoch was not to be overcome by death, but let us not limit our thoughts unto physical death. Just as Enoch’s “translation” from earth to heaven has a deeper meaning than the natural, so “that he should not see death” signifies more than an escape from the grave. “Death” is the wages of sin, the curse of the broken law. We are living in a world which is under God’s righteous curse and death is plainly stamped across everything in it. But when faith is in exercise, the soul is lifted above the scene, and its favoured possessor is enabled to “walk in newness of life.” As we saw when pondering the opening verse, it is the nature of faith to bring near things future and to obtain proof and enjoyment of what is invisible to natural sight. Just so far as we walk by faith is the heart “translated,” raised above this poor world, and then it is we experience the “*power* of his [Christ’s] resurrection” (Phi 3:10).

Let us now link verses 4 and 5 together, observing their *doctrinal* force. When a sinner, by surrender to God and faith in the sacrifice of Christ, is pronounced righteous by the Judge of all, he is made an heir of eternal life and sin and death can no more have dominion over him, that is, no longer have any legal claim upon him. It is *this* which is illustrated here. The very next saint who is mentioned after Abel was taken to heaven *without* dying, thereby demonstrating that the power of “death” over the Christian has been annulled. First a sinner saved through the blood of the Lamb (Abel), then a saved sinner removed from earth to heaven, and nothing between. How inexpressibly blessed! Words fail us and we can but bow in silent wonderment and worship. How “great” is God’s salvation!

Now that which is a fact of Christian doctrine needs to become a fact of Christian experience. We need to enjoy the good, the power, the blessedness of it in our souls day by day. And this can only be as a supernatural faith is in exercise. A bare knowledge of doctrine is practically

worthless unless the heart earnestly seeks from God a practical outworking of it. It is one thing to believe that I have judicially passed from death unto life, it is quite another to live practically in the realm of LIFE. But that is exactly what a *life of faith* is. It is a being lifted above the things which are seen and a being occupied with those things which are unseen. It is for the affections to be no longer set on things on the earth, but to have them fixed on things in heaven.

Perhaps the reader is inclined to say, The ideal you set before us is indeed beautiful, but it is impossible for flesh and blood to attain unto it. Quite true, dear friend, we fully grant it. Of himself the Christian can no more live practically upon resurrection-ground than Enoch could transport himself to heaven. But observe carefully the very next words in our wonderful text, “because *God* had translated him.” Again we beg you not to carnalize these words and see in them *only* a reference to his bodily removal to heaven or to see in them nothing more than a type and pledge of the rapture—the fulfillment of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17—that is the prophetic significance. But there is a spiritual meaning and practical application also and this is what we so much desire to make clear unto each spiritual reader.

Enoch’s translation to heaven was a miracle and that which is spiritually symbolized is a supernatural experience. The whole Christian life, from start to finish, is a *supernatural* thing. The new birth is a miracle of grace, for one who is dead in trespasses and sins can no more regenerate himself than he can create a world. A spiritual repentance and spiritual faith are imparted by “the operation of God” (Col 2:12), for a fallen creature can no more originate them than he could give himself being. To have the heart divorced from the world, to be brought to hate the things we once loved, and to now love the things we once hated is the alone fruitage of the almighty work of the Holy Spirit. And for the heart to function in the realm of resurrection-life, while its possessor is left in a scene of death, can only be made possible and become actual as the supernatural grace of God sustains and calls into exercise a supernatural faith. Only God can daily wean our hearts from the things of this world of death and bring us into real communion with the Prince of life.

A word of caution here. Let us be on our guard against fatalistically folding our arms and saying, God has not ordained that I should live the *translated* life. True, God is sovereign and distributes His favours as He pleases. True, He grants more grace to some of His own people than to others of them. Yet it is also written that, “Ye have not, because ye ask not” (Jam 4:2). Moreover, observe well the next words in our text, “before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Heb 11:5). Ah, does not *that* explain why *our* faith is so feeble and why the things of earth forge such heavy chains about our hearts? God is not likely to strengthen and increase our faith while we are so largely indifferent to *His* pleasure. There must first be the daily, diligent, prayerful striving to please Him in all things. This is absolutely essential if we are to enter into the experience of the *translated* life.

Let us seek to anticipate a possible objection. Some may be saying, “The *translated* life is *difficult* these days.” Then let us remind you of the times in which Enoch lived. It was just before the flood and probably conditions then were far worse than they are now. “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the LORD cometh with ten thousands of His saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” (Jude 1:14-15). It must be remembered that those words had a historical force as well as a prophetic. Thus, a life of pleasing God, of walking with Him, of the heart being lifted above the world, was no easier then than now. Yet divine grace made this actual in Enoch and that grace is as potent today as it was then.

Oftentimes it is helpful to reverse the clauses of a verse so as to perceive more clearly their relation. In order to illustrate this and because we are so anxious for the reader to lay hold of the vitally important teaching of Hebrews 11:5, we will treat it accordingly. “Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Heb 11:5). Do I? Do you? That is a most timely inquiry. If we are *not* “pleasing God,” then the more knowledge we have of His truth, the worse for us. “And that servant, which *knew* his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither *did* according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes” (Luk 12:47). God will not be mocked. Fair words and reverent postures cannot deceive Him. It is not how much light do I have, but how far am I in complete subjection to the Lord?

“God had translated him.” Of course He did. God always honours those who honour Him, but let us remember that same verse adds, “And they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed” (1Sa 2:30). God is too holy to encourage self-pleasing and put a premium upon self-indulgence. While we gratify the flesh, the blessing of the Spirit will be withheld. While our hearts are so much occupied with the concerns of earth, He will not make the things of heaven real and efficacious to us. O my reader, if God be not working mightily in your life and mine, showing Himself strong on our behalf (2Ch 16:9), then something is seriously wrong with us.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death” (Heb 11:5). Remember what was before us in the preceding article, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). Faith always presupposes a divine revelation. Faith must have a foundation to rest upon and that foundation must be the Word of Him that cannot lie. God had spoken and Enoch believed. But what a testing of faith! God declared that Enoch should be removed from earth to heaven without passing through the portals of the grave. One, two, three hundred years passed, but Enoch *believed God* and before the fourth century was completed His promise was fulfilled. “That he should not see death” was the reward of his pleasing God. And He does not change. Where there is a genuine “pleasing” of Him, a real walking with Him, He elevates the heart above this scene into the realm of life, light, and liberty.

Ere passing on to the next verse, let us enumerate other points of interest and value contained in this one, though we can do no more than barely mention them. 1. God is not tied to the order of nature. Genesis 3:19 was set aside in the cases of Enoch and Elijah. 2. God puts great outward (providential) differences between those equally accepted by Him. He did so between Abel and Enoch. 3. To exhibit the world’s enmity, God suffered Abel to be martyred. To comfort His people, God preserved Enoch. 4. What God did for Enoch He can and will yet do for a whole generation of His saints (1Co 15:51). 5. There is a future life for believers. The removal of Enoch to heaven plainly intimated this. 6. The body is partaker with the soul in life eternal. The corporeal translation of Enoch showed this. 7. The godliest do not always live the longest. All mentioned in Genesis 5 stayed on earth a much greater time than did Enoch. 8. They who live with God hereafter must learn to please God ere they depart hence. 9. They who walk with God please Him. 10. They who please God shall not lack testimony thereof.

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb 11:6). The apostle had just spoken of Enoch’s translation as a consequent of his pleasing God, and now from the fact of his pleasing God, proves his faith. The adversative particle “But” is used to introduce a syllogism. The argument is framed thus—God Himself had translated Enoch, who before his translation had pleased Him (as his translation evidenced), but without faith it is impossible to please God—therefore Enoch was by faith translated. Thus, this declaration in Hebrews 11:6 has special reference to the last clause in the verse preceding. The argument is drawn from the impossibility

of the contrary—as it is impossible to please God without faith and as Enoch received testimony that he *did* please God, then he must have had faith—a justifying and sanctifying faith.

While there is an intimate relation between our present verse and the one immediately preceding, and while as we shall yet see (the Lord willing) that it is closely connected with the case of Noah in Hebrews 11:7, yet it also makes its own particular contribution unto the theme which the apostle is here developing, supplying both a solemn warning and a blessed encouragement. The Holy spirit still had before Him the special need of the wavering Hebrews and would press upon them the fact that the great thing God required was not attendance on outward ordinances, but the diligent seeking unto Him by a wholehearted trust. Where faith was missing, nothing could meet with His approval, but where faith really existed and was exercised, it would be richly rewarded. This principle is unchanging, so that the central message of our verse speaks loudly to us today and should search the heart of each one of us.

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb 11:6). Most solemnly do these words attest the total depravity of man. So corrupt is the fallen creature, both in soul and body, in every power and part thereof, and so polluted is everything that issues from him, that he cannot of and by himself do anything that is acceptable to the Holy One. “So then they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God” (Rom 8:8). “They that are in the flesh” means they that are still in their natural or unregenerate state. A bitter fountain cannot send forth sweet waters. But faith looks out of self to Christ, applies unto His righteousness, pleads *His* worth and worthiness, and does all things Godward in the name and through the mediation of the Lord Jesus. Thus, by faith we *may* please God.

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb 11:6). Yet in all ages there have been many who attempted to please God without faith. Cain began it, but failed woefully. All in their divine worship profess a desire to please God and hope that they do so, why otherwise should they make the attempt? But as the apostle declares in another place, many seek unto God but “not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law” (Rom 9:32). But where faith be lacking, let men desire, design, and do what they will, they can never attain unto divine acceptance. “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his *faith* is counted for [“unto”] righteousness” (Rom 4:5). Whatever be the necessity of other graces, faith is that which alone obtains acceptance with God.

In order to please God, four things must concur, all of which are accomplished by faith. First, the person of him that pleaseth God must be accepted of Him (Gen 4:4). Second, the thing done that pleaseth God must be in accord with His will (Heb 13:21). Third, the manner of doing it must be pleasing to God. It must be performed in humility (1Co 15:10), in sincerity (Isa 38:3), in cheerfulness (Rom 8:12; 2Co 9:7). Fourth, the end in view must be God’s glory (1Co 10:31). Now faith is the only means whereby these four requirements are met. By faith in Christ the person is accepted of God. Faith makes us submit ourselves to God’s will. Faith causes us to examine the manner of what we do Godwards. Faith aims at God’s glory—of Abraham it is recorded that he “was strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Rom 4:20).

How essential it is then that each of us examine himself diligently and make sure that he has *faith*. It is by faith the convicted and repentant sinner is saved (Act 16:31). It is by faith that Christ dwells in the heart (Eph 3:17). It is by faith that we live (Gal 2:20). It is by faith that we stand (Rom 11:20; 2Co 1:24). It is by faith we walk (2Co 5:7). It is by faith the devil is successfully resisted (1Pe 5:8-9). It is by faith we are experimentally sanctified (Act 26:18). It is by faith we have access to God (Eph 3:12; Heb 10:22). It is by faith that we fight the good fight (1Ti 6:12). It is by faith that the world is overcome (1Jo 5:4). Reader, are you certain that *you* have the “faith of

God's elect" (Ti 1:1)? If not, it is high time you made sure, for "without faith it is *impossible* to please God." (Heb 11:6).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

10. In the Cave of Adullam

At the close of last month's article, we saw the backslider restored to communion with God. As David then wrote, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous:"—most of them brought upon ourselves through sinful folly—"but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Psa 34:19). Yet, in His own good time. The hour had not yet arrived for our patriarch to ascend the throne. It would have been a simple matter for God to have put forth His power, destroyed Saul, and given His servant rest from all his foes. And this, no doubt, is what the energetic nature of David had much preferred. But there were other counsels of God to be unfolded before He was ready for the son of Jesse to wield the scepter. Though *we* are impulsive and impetuous, God is never in a hurry. The sooner we learn this lesson, the better for our own peace of mind, and the sooner shall we "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him" (Psa 37:7).

"God had designs other than the mere exaltation of David. He intended to allow the evil of Saul and of Israel to exhibit itself. He intended to give to David some apprehension of the character of his own heart and to cause him to learn subjection to a greater wisdom than his own. He intended also to prove the hearts of His own people Israel and to try how many among them would discern that the cave of Adullam was the only true place of excellency and honour in Israel" (B. W. Newton, 1897-1899). Further discipline was needed by David, if he was to learn deeper lessons of dependency upon God. Learn from this, dear reader, that though God's *delays* are trying to flesh and blood, nevertheless, they are ordered by perfect wisdom and infinite love. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come" (Hab 2:3).

"David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam" (1Sa 22:1). Still a fugitive, David left the land of the Philistines and now took refuge in a large underground cavern, situated, most probably, not far from Bethlehem. To conceal himself from Saul and his blood-thirsty underlings, our hero betook himself to a cave—it is probable that the Holy Spirit made reference to this in Hebrews 11:38. The high favourites of heaven are sometimes to be located in queer and unexpected places. Joseph in prison, the descendants of Abraham labouring in the brick-kilns of Egypt, Daniel in the lion's den, Jonah in the whale's belly, Paul clinging to a spar in the sea, forcibly illustrate this principle. Then let us not murmur because we do not now live in as fine a house as do some of the ungodly. *Our* "mansions" are in heaven!

"David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam" " (1Sa 22:1). It is blessed to learn how David employed himself at this time, yet close searching has to be done before this can be ascertained. The Bible is no lazy man's book. Much of its treasure, like the valuable

minerals stored in the bowels of the earth, only yield up themselves to the diligent seeker. Compare Proverbs 2:1-5. By noting the superscription to the Psalms (which, with many others, we are satisfied are divinely inspired), we discover that two of them were composed by “The sweet singer of Israel” at this time. Just as the 34th Psalm casts its welcome light upon the close of 1 Samuel 21, so Psalm 57 and 142 illuminate the opening verses of 1 Samuel 22.

The underground asylum of David made an admirable closet for prayer, its very solitude being helpful for the exercise of devotion. Well did C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) say, “Had David prayed as much in his palace as he did in his cave, he might never have fallen into the act which brought such misery upon his latter days.” We trust the spiritual reader will, at this point, turn to and ponder the 57th and 142nd Psalms. In them he will perceive something of the exercises of David’s heart. From them he may derive valuable instructions as to how to pray acceptably unto God in seasons of peculiar trial. A careful reading of the 57th Psalm will enable us to follow one who began it amid the gloomy shadows of the cavern, but from which he gradually emerged into the open daylight. So it often is in the experiences of the believer’s soul.

Perhaps the 142nd Psalm was composed by David before the 57th, certainly it brings before us one who was in deeper anguish of soul. Blessed indeed is it to mark the striking contrast from what is here presented to us and what was before us as we passed through 1 Samuel 20 and 21. There we saw the worried fugitive turning to Jonathan, lying to Abimelech, playing the madman at Gath. But vain was the hope of man. Yet how often we have to pass through these painful experiences and bitter disappointments before we thoroughly learn this lesson! Here we behold the son of Jesse turning to the only One who could do him any real good. “I cried unto the LORD with my voice...I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble” (Psa 142:1-2). This is what we should do—thoroughly unburden our hearts unto Him with whom we have to do. Note how, at the close of this Psalm, after he had so freely poured out his woes, David exclaimed, “Thou shalt deal bountifully with me!”

“And Jonathan loved him as his own soul . . . all Israel and Judah loved David” (1Sa 18:1, 16). Now their love was tested, now an opportunity was furnished them to manifest their affections for him. This was the hour of David’s unpopularity. He was outlawed from the court, a fugitive from Saul, he was dwelling in a cave. Now was the time for devotion to David to be clearly exhibited. But only those who truly loved him could be expected to throw in their lot with an hated outcast. Strikingly is this illustrated in the very next words.

“And when his brethren and all his father’s house heard it, they went down thither to him” (1Sa 22:1). Ah, true love is unaffected by the outward circumstances of its object. Where the heart is genuinely knit to another, a change in his fortunes will not produce a change in its affections. David might be in the eyes of the world in disgrace, but that made no difference to those who *loved* him. He might be languishing in a cavern, but that was all the more reason why they should show their kindness and demonstrate their unswerving loyalty. Among other things, this painful trial enabled David to discover who were, and who were not, his real friends.

If we look beneath the surface here, the anointed eye should have no difficulty in discerning another striking and blessed type of David’s Son and Lord. First, a type of Him when He tabernacled among men in “the days of his flesh.” How fared it then with the anointed of God? By title, the throne of Israel was His, for He was born “the King of the Jews” (Mat 2:2). That God was with Him was unmistakably evident. He too “behaved himself wisely in all his ways.” He too performed exploits—healing the sick, freeing the demon-possessed, feeding the hungry multitude, raising the dead. But just as Saul hated and persecuted David, so the heads of the Jews—the chief

priests and Pharisees—were envious of and hounded Christ. Just as Saul thirsted for the blood of Jesse's son, the leaders of Israel (at a later date) thirsted for the blood of God's Son.

The analogy mentioned above might be drawn out at considerable length, but at only one other point will we here glance, namely, the fact of the solemn foreshadowment furnished by David as first the friend and benefactor of his nation, now the poor outcast. Accurately did he prefigure that blessed One, who when here was "the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa 53:3). Trace His path as the Holy Spirit has described it in the New Testament. Behold Him as the unwanted one in this world of wickedness.

Hear His plaintive declaration, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Mat 8:20). Read too, "And every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the mount of Olives" (Joh 7:53; 8:1) and it is evident that David's Lord was the homeless outcast in this scene.

But were there none who appreciated Him, none who loved Him, none who were willing to be identified with and cast in their lot with Him who was "despised and rejected of men" (Isa 53:3)? Yes, there were some and these, we believe, are typically brought before us in the next verse of the Scripture we are now pondering, "And everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him" (1Sa 22:2). What a strange company to seek unto God's anointed! No mention is made of the captains of the army, the men of state, the princes of the realm, coming unto David. No, they, with all like them, preferred the court and the palace to the cave of Adullam.

Is not the picture an accurate one, dear reader? Is it not plain again that these Old Testament records furnish something more than historical accounts, that there is a typical and spiritual significance to them as well? If David be a type of Christ, then those who sought him out during the season of his humiliation, must represent those who sought unto David's Son when he sojourned on this earth. And clearly they did so. Read the four Gospels and it will be found that, for the most part, those who sought unto the Lord Jesus were the poor and needy. It was the lepers, the blind, the maimed, and the halt who came unto Him for help and healing. The rich and influential, the learned and the mighty, the leaders of the nation had no heart for Him.

But what is before us in the opening of 1 Samuel 22 not only typed out that which occurred during the earthly ministry of Christ, but it also shadowed forth that which has come to pass all through this Christian era, and that which is taking place today. As the Holy Spirit declared through Paul, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things which are: That no flesh should glory in his presence" (1Co 1:26-29).

The second verse of 1 Samuel 22 sets before us a striking Gospel picture. Note, first, that those who came to David were *few in number*, "about four hundred." What a paltry retinue! What a handful compared with the hosts of Israel! But did Christ fare any better in the days of His flesh? How many friends stood around the cross, wept at His sepulchre, or greeted Him as He burst the bars of death? How many followed Him to Bethany, gazed at His ascending form, or gathered in the upper room to await the promised Spirit? And how is it today? Of the countless millions of earth's inhabitants, what percentage of them have even heard the Gospel? Out of those who bear His name, how many evidence that they are denying self, taking up their cross daily, and following the example which He has left, and thus proving themselves by the only badge of

discipleship which He will recognize? A discouraging situation, you say. Not at all, rather is it just what faith expects. The Lord Jesus declared that His flock is a “little one” (Luk 12:32), that only “few” tread that narrow way which leadeth unto life (Mat 7:14).

Second, observe again the particular *type of people* who sought out David. They were “in distress, in debt, and discontented.” What terms could more suitably describe the condition they are in when the redeemed first seek help from Christ! “In debt”—in all things we had come short of the glory of God. In thought, word, and deed, we had failed to please Him, and there was marked up against us a multitude of transgressions. “In distress”—who can tell out that anguish of soul which is experienced by the truly convicted of the Holy Spirit? Only the one who has actually experienced the same, knows of that unspeakable horror and sorrow when the heart first perceived the frightful enormity of having defied the infinite Majesty of heaven, trifled with His longsuffering, slighted His mercy again and again.

“Discontented”—Yes, this line in the picture is just as accurate as the others. The one who has been brought to realize he is a spiritual pauper, and who is now full of grief for his sins, is discontented with the very things which till recently pleased him. Those pleasures which fascinated, now pall. That gay society which once attracted, now repels. O the emptiness of the world to a soul which God hath smitten with a sense of sin! The stricken one turns away with disgust from that which he had formerly sought after so eagerly. There is now an aching void within, which nothing without can fill. So wretched is the convicted sinner, he wishes he were dead, yet is terrified at the very thought of death. Reader, do you know anything of such an experience or is all this the language of an unknown tongue to you?

Third, these people who were in debt, in distress, and discontented, *sought out* David. They were the only ones who did so. It was *a deep sense of need* which drove them to him and a hope that he could relieve them. So it is spiritually. None but those who truly feel that they are paupers before God, with no good thing to their credit, absolutely destitute of any merits of their own, will appreciate the glad tidings that Christ Jesus came into this world to pay the debt of such. Only those who are smitten in their conscience, broken in heart, and sick of sin will really respond to that blessed word of His, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Mat 11:28). Only those who have lost all heart for this poor world will truly turn unto the Lord of glory.

Fourth, the spiritual picture we are now contemplating is not only a type of the first coming to Christ of His people, but also of their subsequent *going forth* “unto him without the camp” (Heb 13:13). Those who sought David in the cave of Adullam turned their backs upon both the court of Saul and the religion of Judaism. There was none to pity them there. Who cared for penniless paupers? Who had a heart for those in distress? So it is in most of the churches today. Those who are “poor in spirit” (Mat 5:3) have nothing in common with the self-satisfied Laodiceans. And how “distressed” in soul are they over the worldliness that has come in like a flood, over the crowds of unregenerate members, over the utter absence of any scriptural discipline. And what is to be the attitude and actions of God’s grieved children toward those having nothing more than a form of godliness? This—“from such turn away” (2Ti 3:5). Identify yourself with Christ on the outside. Walk alone with Him.

Fifth, “And he became a *captain over them*” (1Sa 22:2). Important and striking line in the picture is this. Christ is to be received as “Lord” (Col 2:6) if He is to be known as Saviour. Love to Christ is to be evidenced by “keeping his commandments” (See Joh 14:15). It mattered not what that strange company had been who sought unto David, they were now his servants and soldiers. They had turned away from the evil influence of Saul, to be subject unto the authority of

David. This is what Christ requires from all who identify themselves with Him. “Take my *yoke* upon you” is His demand (Mat 11:29). Nor need we shrink from it, for He declares “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Mat 11:30).

FEEBLE FAITH

“And the apostles said unto the Lord, increase our faith”
(Luke 18:5)

Did the apostles need to pray? Then well may I. Oh! Thou great Author and Finisher of our faith! I would look up unto Thee with thankfulness that Thou hast granted even the smallest portion of faith to so unworthy a creature as I am. Surely, my soul, it is as great a miracle of grace that my God and Saviour should have kindled belief in thy stony heart, amidst all the surrounding obstructions of sin and Satan which lay there, as when miraculous fire from heaven, in answer to the prophet’s prayer, came down and consumed the wetted sacrifice. I praise Thee, my God and King, this day, in the recollection of this unspeakable, unmerited mercy. And though this faith in my heart still be but as a grain of mustard seed, though it be but as a spark in the ocean, though it be but as a drop of dew in comparison of the river, yet blessed, precious Jesus, still this is faith and it is Thy gift! And is it not a token of Thy favour? Is it not an earnest of the Holy Spirit and a pledge of the promised inheritance? Babes in faith as well as strong in the Lord are equally Thine, for it is said that, “as many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Act 13:48), “and to as many as believed, thou gavest power to become the sons of God.” So it is by Thyself, blessed Redeemer, and not by the strength or weakness of the faith of Thy people, their justification before God the Father is secured. Precious is the Scripture which tells us that by Thee all that believe, whether great faith or little faith—”all that believe are justified from all things” (Act 13:39).

But my soul, while the consciousness of thy possessing the smallest evidences of faith in thy Beloved gives thee joy unspeakable and full of glory, dost thou not blush to think what ungrateful returns thou art making to thy Redeemer in the littleness of thy faith in such a God and Saviour? Whence is it that thine affections are so warm in a thousand lesser things and so cold toward Christ? Whence that His Holy Word thou so often hearest as though thou heardest not? Whence the ordinances of Jesus’ house, the promises of His Scriptures, the visits of His grace, whence these pass again and again before thee and thou remainest so cold and lifeless in thy affections? Whence that the temptations of Satan, the corruptions of thine heart, the allurements of the world, gain any influence upon thee? Whence that thou art so anxious about things that perish, about anything, about nothing, deserving to be called interesting, whence so seldom at the court of the heavenly King, where thou oughtest to be found daily, hourly, waiting, and whence under trials or the want of answers at a mercy-seat, fretful, impatient, and misgiving—whence all these, and

numberless other evils, but from the weakness and littleness of thy love to Christ, and thy trust in Christ, and thy dependence upon Christ, and thy communion with Christ? All, all arise out of this one sad cause, my soul, thine unbelief. Jesus, Master, look upon me, put the cry with earnestness within my heart, that I may unceasingly, with the apostle's prayer, be sending forth this as the first and greatest petition of my whole soul—"Lord, increase my faith." (Robert Hawker, 1825)

ASSURANCE

2. Its Basis

The task which these articles sets before us is by no means easily executed. On the one hand, we wish to be kept from taking the "children's bread, and casting it to the dogs" (Mat 15:26). On the other, it is our earnest prayer that we may be delivered from casting a stumbling block before any of God's "little ones." That which occasions our difficulty is the desire to expose an empty profession and to be used of God in writing that which, under His free Spirit, may be used in removing the scales from the eyes of those who, though unregenerate, are resting with carnal confidence on some of the divine promises given to those who are in Christ—for while a sinner is out of Christ, none of the promises belong to him. See 2 Corinthians 1:20. Notwithstanding, it behooves us to seek wisdom from above so that we may write in such a way that any of Christ's who are yet unestablished in the faith may not draw the conclusion they are still dead in trespasses and sins.

Having before us the twofold object named above, let us ask the question, Is a simple faith in Christ sufficient to save a soul for time and eternity? At the risk of some readers turning away from this article and refusing to read further, we unhesitatingly answer, No, it is not. The Lord Jesus Himself declared, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luk 13:3). Repentance is just as essential to salvation as is believing. Again, we read that, "Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead" (Jam 2:20). A "simple faith" which remains alone, a faith which does not purify the heart (Act 15:9), work by love (Gal 5:6), and overcome the world (1Jo 5:4) will save nobody.

Much confusion has been caused in many quarters through failure to define clearly *what it is* from which the sinner needs saving. Only too often the thought of many minds is restricted to hell. But that is a very inadequate conception, and often proves most misleading. The only thing which can ever take any creature to hell is unrepented and unforgiven *sin*. Now on the very first page of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit has particularly recorded it that the incarnate Son of God was named "Jesus" because "He shall *save* his people *from their sins*" (Mat 1:21). Why is it that that which God has placed at the forefront is relegated to the rear by most modern evangelists? To ask a person if he has been saved from hell is much more ambiguous than to inquire if he has been saved from his sins.

Let us attempt to enlarge on this a little, for thousands of professing Christians in these days have but the vaguest idea of what it means to be saved *from sin*. First, it signifies to be saved from the *love* of sin. The heart of the natural man is wedded to everything which is opposed to God. He may not acknowledge it, he may not be conscious of it, yet such is the fact nevertheless. Having been shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin (Psa 51:5), man cannot but be enamoured with that which is now part and parcel of his very being. When the Lord Jesus explained why condemnation rests upon the unsaved, He declared, “Men *loved darkness* rather than the light” (Joh 3:19). Nothing but a supernatural change of heart can deliver any from this dreadful state. Only an omnipotent Redeemer can bring us to “abhor” (Job 42:6) ourselves and loathe iniquity. This He does when He saves a soul, for, “The fear of the LORD is to *hate evil*” (Pro 8:13).

Second, to be saved from our sins is to be delivered from the *allowance* of them. It is the unvarying tendency of the natural heart to excuse evildoing, to extenuate and gloss it over. At the beginning, Adam declined to acknowledge his guilt, and sought to throw the blame upon his wife. It was the same with Eve. Instead of honestly acknowledging her wickedness, she attempted to place the onus on the serpent. But how different is the regenerated person’s attitude toward sin! “For that which I do I *allow not*” (Rom 7:15): Paul committed sin, but he did not approve, still less did he seek to vindicate it. Nay, more. The real Christian repents of his wrongdoing, confesses it to God, mourns over it, and prays earnestly to be kept from a repetition of the same. Pride, coldness, slothfulness, he hates, yet day by day he finds them re-asserting their power over him. Yet nightly he returns to the fountain which has been opened “for sin and for uncleanness” (Zec 13:1), that he may be cleansed. The true Christian desires to render perfect obedience to God and cannot rest satisfied with anything short of it, and instead of palliating his failures, he mourns over them.

Third, to be saved from our sins is to be delivered from the *reigning power* or mastery of them. Sin still indwells the Christian, tempts, annoys, wounds, and daily trips him up. “In many things we offend all” (Jam 3:2). Nevertheless, sin is not the complete master of the Christian, for he resists and fights against it. While far from being completely successful in his fight, yet on the other hand, there is a vast difference between him and the helpless slaves of Satan. His repentings, his prayers, his aspirations after holiness, his pressing forward unto the mark set before him, all witness to the fact that sin does not have “dominion” (Rom 6:14) over him. Undoubtedly there are great differences of attainment among God’s children. In His high sovereignty, God grants more grace unto one than to another. Some of His children are far more plagued by constitutional sins than others. Some who are very largely delivered from outward transgressions are yet made to groan over inward ones. Some who are largely kept from sins of commission have yet to bewail sins of omission. Yet sin is no longer complete master over any who belong to the household of faith.

The last sentence may perhaps discourage some who have a sensitive conscience. He who is really honest with himself and has had his eyes opened in some degree to see the awful sinfulness of self, and who is becoming more and more acquainted with that sink of iniquity, that mass of corruption which still indwells him, often feels that sin more completely rules him now than ever it did before. When he longs to trust God with all his heart, unbelief seems to paralyze him. When he wishes to be completely surrendered to God’s blessed will, murmurings and rebellion argue within him. When he would spend an hour in meditation on the things of God, evil imaginations harass him. When he desires to be more humble, pride seeks to fill him. When he would pray, his mind wanders. The more he fights against these sins, the farther off victory seems to be. To him it

appears that sin is very much the master of him and Satan tells him that his profession is vain. What shall we say to such a dear soul who is deeply exercised over this problem? Two things.

First, the very fact that you *are* conscious of these sins and are so much concerned over your failure to overcome them is a *healthy* sign. It is the blind who cannot see; it is the dead who feel not—true alike naturally and spiritually. Only they who have been quickened into newness of life are capable of real sorrow for sin. Moreover, such experiences as we have mentioned above, evidence a *spiritual growth*—a growth in the knowledge of self. As the wise man tells us, “He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow” (Ecc 1:18). In God’s light we see light (Psa 36:9). The more the Holy Spirit reveals to me the high claims of God’s holiness, the more I discover how far short I come of meeting them. Let the midday sun shine into a darkened room, and dust and dirt which before was invisible is now plainly seen. So with the Christian—the more the light of God enters his heart, the more he discovers the spiritual filth which dwells there. Beloved brother, or sister, it is not that you are becoming more sinful, but that God is now giving you a clearer and fuller sight of your sinfulness. Praise Him for it, for the eyes of the vast majority of your fellows (religionists included) are blind and cannot see what so distresses you!

Second, side by side with sin in your heart, is *grace*. There is a new and holy nature within the Christian as well as the old and unholy one. Grace is active within you, as well as sin. The new nature is influencing your conduct as well as the old. Why is it that you so desire *to be* conformed to the image of Christ, to trust Him fully, love Him fervently, and serve Him diligently? These longings proceed not from the flesh. No, my distressed brother or sister, sin is *not* your *complete* master. If it were, all aspirations, prayers, and strivings after holiness would be banished from your heart. There are “as it were the company of *two* armies” (Song 6:13) fighting to gain control of the Christian. As it was with our mother Rebekah—“The children struggled together within her” (Gen 25:22)—so it is with us. But the very “struggle” shows that the issue is not yet decided. Had sin *conquered*, the soul would no longer be able to *resist*. The conqueror disarms his enemy so that he can no longer fight back. The very fact that you *are* still “fighting,” proves that sin has not vanquished you! It may *seem* to you that it soon will, but the issue is not in doubt—Christ will yet save you from the very *presence* of sin.

Having sought in the above paragraphs to heed the injunction found in Hebrews 12:13-14 to “Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;” and to “make straight paths” for the feet of God’s little ones, “*lest* that which is lame be turned out of the way,” let us again direct our attention unto those who “have not a doubt” of *their* acceptance in Christ and perhaps feel in no personal need for what has been said above. The Lord declared that a tree is known by its fruits, so there cannot be anything wrong in examining the tree of our hearts, to ascertain *what* kind of “fruit” it is now bringing forth and discover whether it be such as may proceed from mere nature or that which can only issue from indwelling grace. It may at once be objected, “But nothing spiritual can issue from ourselves.” From our *natural selves*, yes. But how can an evil tree ever be any different? Christ said, “Make the tree good, and his fruit good” (Mat 12:33). This is typed out by engrafting a new slip on an old stock.

All pretensions unto the present enjoyment of the assurance of faith, by those whose daily lives are unbecoming the Gospel, are groundless. They who are confident of entering that eternal happiness, which consists very much in a perfect freedom from all sin, but who now *allow* themselves in the practice of sin (persuading themselves that Christ has fully atoned for the same), are deceived. None truly desire to be free from sin in the future, who do not sincerely long to forsake it in the present. He who does not pant after holiness here, is dreadfully mistaken if he imagines he desires holiness hereafter. Glory is but grace consummated. The heavenly life is but

the full development of the regenerated life on earth. Neither death nor the second coming of Christ will effect any radical change in the Christian. It will only *perfect* what he already has and is. Any, then, who pretend unto the assurance of salvation, boast of their pardon and present possession of eternal life, but who have not an experience of deep sorrow for sin, real indignation against it, and hatred of themselves because of transgressions, know nothing at all of what *holy assurance* is.

In considering the *basis* of the Christian's assurance, we must distinguish sharply between the ground of his *acceptance before God* and his own knowledge *that he is* accepted by Him. Nothing but the righteousness of Christ—wrought out by Him in His virtuous life and vicarious death—can give any sinner a perfect legal standing before the thrice holy God. And nothing but the communication of a new nature, a supernatural work of grace within, can furnish proof that the righteousness of Christ *has been* placed to my account. Whom God legally saves, He experimentally saves; whom He justifies, them He also sanctifies. Where the righteousness of Christ is *imputed* to an individual, a principle of holiness is *imparted* to him; the former can only be ascertained by the latter. It is impossible to obtain a scriptural knowledge that the merits of Christ's finished work are reckoned to my account, except by proving that the efficacy of the Holy Spirit's work is evident in my soul.

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (2Pe 1:10). Why that order of “calling” before “election”? Here it is the converse of what we find in Romans 8:29-30, “Whom he did [1] predestinate, them he also [2] called”; but here in Peter the Christian is bidden to make sure (1) his “calling” and (2) his “election.” Why this variation of order? The answer is simple—in Romans 8:29-30, it is the execution of God's eternal counsels, but in 2 Peter 1, it is the Christian's obtaining an experimental knowledge of the same. I have to work back from effect to cause, to examine the fruit so as to discover the nature of the tree. I have no immediate access to the Lamb's Book of Life, but if I obtain clear proof that I have been effectually called by God out of the darkness of sin's enmity into the light of reconciliation, then I *know* that *my* name is written there.

And *how* am I to make my “calling and election *sure*”? The context of this passage tells me very plainly. In 11 Peter 1:5-7 we read, “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness charity.” There we have a summary of those graces which make up the Christian character. The word “add” signifies “supply in connection with,” just as in a choir a number of parts and voices unite together in making harmony or as in a rainbow the various colors, side by side, blend into one beautiful whole. In the previous verses, the apostle had spoken of the grace of God manifested toward His elect. By regeneration they had “escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” Now he adds, Rest not satisfied with a negative salvation, but press forward unto perfection. Be in thorough earnest to “add to your faith” these virtues. Faith is not to be alone, but the other spiritual graces must supplement and adorn it.

In 11 Peter 1:8-9, the Spirit moved the apostle to set before us the consequences of a compliance or a non-compliance with the duties specified in verses 5-7. The “these things,” in verse 8, are the seven graces of the previous verses. If “all diligence” be devoted to the acquiring and cultivating of those lovely virtues, then a certain consequence is sure to follow—as cause stands to effect, so is fruitfulness dependent on Christian diligence. Just as the neglect of our daily food will lead to leanness and feebleness, just as lack of exercise means flabby muscles, so a

disregard of the divine injunction of verse 5 issues in soul-barrenness, lack of vision, and loss of holy assurance. This brings us now to verse 10.

The, “Wherefore the rather, brethren,” of 11 Peter 1:10, points a contrast from the sad tragedy presented in verse 9. There we see the pitiful results of being in a backslidden state of soul. There is no remaining stationary in the Christian life. He who does not progress, retrogrades. He who does not diligently heed the divine precepts, soon loses the good of the divine promises. He who does not add or conjoin with his “faith” the graces mentioned in verses 5-7, will soon fall under the power of unbelief. He who does not cultivate the garden of his soul, will quickly find it grown over with weeds. He who neglects God’s exhortations will lose the joy of His salvation and will lapse into such a state of doubting that he will seriously question his divine sonship. To prevent this the apostle says, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (2Pe 1:10).

The obvious meaning, then, of this exhortation in 2 Peter 1:10 is, Bestir yourselves, take pains to secure satisfactory evidence that you are among the effectually called and elect of God. Let there be no doubt or uncertainty about it. You profess to be a child of God, then justify your profession by cultivating the character and displaying the conduct of one. Sure proof is this that something more than a mere resting upon John 5:24 or Acts 16:31 is demanded of us! It is only in proportion as the Christian manifests the fruit of a genuine conversion that he is entitled to regard himself and be regarded by others as one of the called and elect of God. It is just in proportion as we add to our faith the other Christian graces that we have solid ground on which to rest the assurance we belong to the family of Christ. It is not those who are governed by self-will, but “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom 8:14).

“In times so critical to the interests of vital religion and amidst such awful departures from the faith as we are daily called upon to behold, it becomes a very anxious inquiry in the breasts of the humble—Is there no method under divine grace by which the believer may arrive to a well-grounded assurance, concerning the great truths of the Gospel? Is it not possible for him to be so firmly settled in those great truths, as that he shall not only be ready ‘to give answer to every one that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him,’ but to find the comfort of it in his own mind, that his faith ‘doth not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God’”? To this inquiry I answer, Yes, blessed be God, there is. An infallible method is discovered at once to secure from the possibility of apostasy and to afford comfort and satisfaction to the believer’s own mind concerning the great truths of God, namely, *from the Spirit’s work in the heart*, by the sweet influences of which he may find ‘joy and peace in believing and abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit’” (Robert Hawker, 1803).

Christian assurance, then, is a scripturally-grounded knowledge that I am in the narrow way which leadeth unto life. Thus, it is based upon the Word of God, yet consists of the Holy Spirit enabling me to discern in myself a character to which the divine promises are addressed. We have the same Word to measure ourselves by now as God will judge us by in the day to come. Therefore, it behooves every serious soul to prayerfully and carefully set down the scriptural marks of God’s children on the one side and the characteristics of his own soul and life on the other and determine if there be any real resemblance between them. We will close this section by quoting from the saintly Samuel Rutherford (1637):

“You may put a difference betwixt you and reprobates if you have these marks—If ye prize Christ and His truth so as you will sell all and buy Him and suffer for it. If the love of Christ keep you back from sinning more than the law or fear of hell does. If you be humble and deny your own will, wit, credit, ease, honour, the world, and the vanity and glory of it. Your profession must

not be barren and void of good works. You must in all things aim at *God's* honour. You must eat, sleep, buy, sell, sit, stand, speak, pray, read, and hear the Word with a heart purpose that God may be honoured. Acquaint yourself with daily praying, commit all your ways and actions to God by prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving and count not much for being mocked, for Christ Jesus was mocked before you." (God willing, to be continued.)

THE ONE THING NEEDFUL

Sermon by C. H. Spurgeon

Part 2

III. The next word is CONCENTRATION: "*One* thing is needful" (Luk 10:42). I am glad it says "one thing," because a division of ends and objects is always weakening. A man cannot follow two things well. Our life-blood suffices not to fill two streams or three. There is only enough water, as it were, in our life's brooklet to turn one wheel. It is a great pity when a man fritters away his energies by being "everything by turns and nothing long," trying all things and mastering nothing. Oh, soul, it is well for thee that there is only one thing in this world that is absolutely necessary, give thy whole soul to that. If other things are necessary in a secondary place, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mat 6:33).

One thing is needful and this is well arranged, for we cannot follow two things. If Christ be one of them, we cannot follow another. Is it not written, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or cleave to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Mat 6:24). Not only would it be very weakening for you to attempt to serve both, but it is absolutely impossible that you should do so. Jesus Christ is a monopolizer of human hearts, He will never accept a portion of our manhood. He bought us altogether and He will have the whole of our personality. Christ must be everything or He will be nothing. He does not love Christ who loves anything as well as Christ, neither does he trust Him who trusts in anything besides. Christ must reign alone. "Jesus only" must be the motto of our spirit. It is well for us, therefore, that only one thing is necessary, for only one thing is possible.

It is an unspeakable mercy that this one thing needful is a very simple one. Little child, thou couldst not climb the mountain, but thou canst sit down at Jesus' feet. Thou canst not understand hard doctrine, but thou canst love Him who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (See Luk 18:16). Take the Incarnate Wisdom to be thy Master and sit as a little child at His feet to learn with all thine heart. That is all He asks of thee. The one thing needful is very easy except to proud hearts, which cannot brook to accept any thing gratis and to be beholden to sovereign mercy. To sit at Jesus' feet in humble submission and quiet rest,

He the Master and I the little child, I the vessel waiting to be filled and He my fullness. This is all in all to me.

Let us remark that, though this is only one thing and so concentrated, yet it is also comprehensive and contains many things. Imagine not that to sit at Jesus' feet is a very small, unmeaning thing. It means peace, for they who submit to Jesus find peace through His precious blood. It means holiness, for those who learn of Jesus learn no sin, but are instructed in things lovely and of good repute. It means strength, for they that sit with Jesus and feed upon Him are girded with His strength.

If we say that in an army the one thing needful is loyalty to the sovereign, we know what that means, for the loyal soldier will be sure to be obedient to his officers, and if attracted to his queen, he will be brave in the day of battle and do his duty well. If we said that the one thing needful in a family was love, we should not require a small thing, for love will place husband and wife in their true position. Love will produce obedience in children and diligence in servants. Let love permeate everything and other virtues will grow out of it, as flowers spring from the soil. So when we say that sitting at Jesus' feet is one thing needful, we have not uttered a mere truism. It comprehends a world of blessings.

And here would I address a word to the church of God in this country at the present time. She too is as Martha, "cumbered with much serving" (Luk 10:40). It were her wisdom and strength if she would become more like Mary and sit at Jesus' feet. Just now we need revival. O that God would send it! Oh for a mighty flood of spiritual influences that would bear the stranded churches right out into a sea of usefulness. But how can we get revival? We shall have it, brethren, when we commune with Christ. When the saints habitually sit at Jesus' feet they will be revived and of necessity the revival will spread from them and the hearts of sinners will be touched. There is a great talk now-a-days of union. The walls of the various churches are to be broken down and the denominations are to be blended. Think not of it in such a fashion. The only union possible or desirable is that we all unite to sit at Jesus' feet. It is not allowable that we concede one truth and you another—that is not natural charity, but common treason to Christ.

We have no right to yield an atom of the truth under the pretense of charity. Truth is no property of ours. We are only God's stewards and it behooves us to be faithful to our trust. Neither one church nor another has any right to bate its testimony one jot, if it be true. To alter the statute-book of Christ is blasphemy. True union will come when all the churches learn of Christ, for Christ does not teach two things opposed to each other. There are not two baptisms in the Bible. We shall not find two sets of dogmas diametrically opposite to each other. If we give up the various things that are of man and hold fast each of us only that which is of God, we shall be united in principle and in doctrine, and "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" will once again be emblazoned upon the banners of the church of God. Sit at Jesus' feet, O thou church of Christ, and true unity will come to thee.



NOVEMBER

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

Our desire is to contemplate here, by the help of the Holy Spirit, that lovely perfection of the Lord Jesus which was the very life and beauty of His mediatorial holiness. His obedience was the absolute conformity of His entire spirit and soul to the will and mind of His Father—His ready and cheerful performance of every duty and everything which God commanded Him. This obedience He performed perfectly amid the greatest and sorest trials, with infinite respect unto Him whose “Servant” (Isa 42:1) He had become. The laws which He obeyed were, first, those to which He was subject considered simply as man (Gal 4:4), namely, the Ten Commandments or moral law. Second, those to which He was subject considered as Son of David (Mat 1:1), namely, the ceremonial law of Israel. Third, those to which He was subject as Mediator, namely, fulfilling the commandments which He had received from the Father to preach the Gospel, perform miracles, call disciples, and die upon the cross.

The closer the four Gospels be read in the light of our present subject, the more will it be seen that obedience to the Father was Christ’s supreme mission on earth. As He Himself declared, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me” (Joh 4:34), and again, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (Joh 6:38). Familiar as are these verses to many Christians, few have seen the *fullness* of His obedience or perceived that *every act* of Christ during the thirty-three years He tabernacled among men was distinctly and designedly an act of submission unto God. Limited space will not allow us to attempt much more than an outline of this blessed fact and truth as it was realized in the life of Him who always did those things which pleased the Father (Joh 8:29).

Christ’s birth was an act of obedience. This will be the more evident if we recognize that every prophecy of God concerning His Son was for Christ a command and the fulfillment of each prophecy was a designed act of obedience on His part. Hence, in Matthew 1:20-23, we find an angel announcing to Joseph, “Thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, *that it might be fulfilled* which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son.” Thus, in subjection to His Father’s decree, the Lord of glory condescended to be made of a woman. Compare Hebrews 10:5-9.

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to *fulfill all righteousness*” (Mat 3:13-15). Here it is distinctly said that Christ’s baptism had to do with the fulfilling of “righteousness” or right doing, measuring up to the required standard. His words to John signified, “Neither you or I can do the will of the Father except I submit to baptism and you baptize Me.”

The perfect obedience of Christ appears next in His resistance to Satan’s temptations. There we see the great enemy seeking to turn aside the Saviour from the path of complete surrender to God’s will, but in vain. Christ unhesitatingly refused to perform the devil’s bidding, meeting each assault with an, “It is written,” (Mat 4:4,7,10) which was the same as though He had said, “I decline to go contrary to the divine precepts, I refuse to disobey My Father.” Possibly Matthew 4:1-10 will appear in a newer or clearer light if the reader turns to and sees in its contents a studied effort on the part of the serpent to induce the last Adam unto an act of disobedience and His steadfast refusal to take one step contrary to the revealed will of God.

The perfect servant of God chose His place of labour in obedience to God’s revealed will. “Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zebulon and Naphtali: *That it might be fulfilled* which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet” (Mat 4:12-14). It was not the force of circumstances which drove the Lord Jesus to select Capernaum as His ministerial headquarters, nor was it of personal inclination—that town had been singled out by God long before His Son came to earth and it was in subordination to the divine will that He went there. How this shows us that Christ made obedience unto God the one great business of His life!

His miracles of mercy were wrought in obedience to the Father’s revealed will. “When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: *That it might be fulfilled* which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” (Mat 8:16-17). How striking is the particular aspect of truth here made known to us! Christ was tender, sympathetic, and full of compassion, yet the first and deepest motive which moved Him to heal the sick was that the will of God might be done. Beautifully does this come out in John 11. Though Martha and Mary had sent a message unto Christ that their brother was sick, He responded not to their appeal till the Father’s hour arrived. See verses 4-6.

His saving of sinners was in order to render obedience unto God. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. *For* I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me” (Joh 6:37-38). What a view does this present to us of the redemptive work of Christ! How it magnifies His blessed submission unto the One who had sent Him into this world!

The Redeemer’s preservation of His people is in obedience to the Father. “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (Joh 6:39). Thus, the security of the saint depends not only upon the Saviour’s love unto His own or His all-mighty power, but is as well His act of subjection to God.

His very death was itself an act of submission to the Father, for He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi 2:8). As He Himself declared concerning His life, “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This *commandment* have I received of my Father” (Joh 10:18). Thus, there were no limits to His obedience, no reserve in His subjection to

the Father's will, but complete and perfect compliance with the same throughout the whole of His earthly life. How blessed it is to perceive that through and by His Son's obedience, God has been more honoured upon earth than He has been dishonoured by all the disobedience of all the sons of Adam!

In seeking to make an application of that which has been before us, let us point out, first, that this perfect obedience of Christ is reckoned to the account of all and each of His people, being that "righteousness" which is imputed by God to them. As it is written, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made [legally constituted] righteous" (Rom 5:19). Second, Christ has left us an example that we should follow His steps, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1Jo 2:6). Third, obedience is to be the one aim and mission of the Christian. To us Christ says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (Joh 14:15), and again, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (Joh 15:10).

N.B. For much of the above we are indebted to an article by J. W. Gillon, which appeared in the "Western Recorder" of November 15, 1917.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

59. The Faith of Noah (11:6-7)

The verses which are now to engage our attention are by no means free of difficulty, especially unto those who have sat under a ministry which has failed to preserve the balance between divine grace and divine righteousness. Where the free favour of God has been strongly emphasized and His *claims* largely ignored, where privileges have been stressed and duties almost neglected, it is far from easy to view many Scriptures in their true perspective. When those who have heard little more than the decrying of creature-abilities and the denunciation of creature-merits are asked to honestly and seriously face the terms of Hebrews 11:6-7, they are quite unable to fit them into their system of theology. Where such be the case, it is proof positive that something is wrong with our theology. Often those who are least cramped by sectarian bias find that the truth of God is too large, too many-sided, to be squeezed into human definitions and creeds.

Others of our readers are probably wondering what it is we have reference to above when we say that our present portion of Hebrews 11 is by no means free of difficulty. Then let us raise a few questions upon these verses. If the exercise of faith be pleasing to God, does this signify that it is a thing meritorious? How is this concept to be avoided in the light of the statement that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him? How does a "reward" consist with pure grace? And what is the doctrinal force of the next verse? Does the case of Noah teach salvation by works? If he had not gone to so much expense and labour in building the ark, would he and his

house have escaped the flood? Was his becoming “heir of righteousness” (Heb 11:7) something that he earned by his obedient toil? How can this conclusion be fairly avoided? We shall endeavour to keep these questions before us in the course of our exposition.

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb 11:6). There is a threefold “coming to God”—an initial, a continuous, and a final. The first takes place at conversion, the second is repeated throughout the Christian’s life, the third occurs at death or the second coming of Christ. To come to God signifies to seek and have fellowship with Him. It denotes a desire to enter into His favour and become a partaker of His blessings in this life and of His salvation in the life to come. It is the heart’s approach unto Him in and through Christ, John 14:6, Hebrews 7:25. But before there is a conscious access to Him, God has to be diligently sought.

None come to God, none truly seek Him, until they are made conscious of their lost condition. The Spirit must first work in the soul a realization that sin has alienated us “from the life of God” (Eph 4:18). We have to be made to feel that we are *away from* God, out of His favour, under His righteous condemnation, before we shall really do as the prodigal did and say “I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee” (Luk 15:18). The same principle holds good in connection with the repeated “coming” of the Christian (1Pe 2:4). It is a sense of need which causes us to seek Him who is the Giver of every good and every perfect gift. There is also a maintained communion with God in the performance of holy duties. In all the exercises of godliness, we renew our access to God in Christ in reading of or hearing His Word. We come to Him as Teacher, in prayer we come to Him as Benefactor.

But to seek God aright, He has to be sought in faith, for “Without faith it is impossible to please him,” therefore, “He that cometh to God *must* believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6). There has to be first a firm persuasion of His being and second of His bounty. To believe that “He is” means much more than assenting to the fact of a “First Cause” or to allow that there is a “Supreme Being.” It means to believe in the character of God *as* He has revealed Himself in His works, in His Word, and in Christ. He must be conceived of aright or otherwise we are only pursuing a phantom of our own imagination. Thus to believe that “God is” is to exercise faith upon Him as *such* a Being as His Word declares Him to be—supremely sovereign, ineffably holy, all-mighty, inflexibly just, yet abounding in mercy and grace toward poor sinners through Christ.

Not only is the heart to go out unto God as His being and character is revealed in Scripture, but particularly, faith is to lay hold of His graciousness, that He is “a *rewarder*,” etc. The acting of faith toward God as a “rewarder” is the heart’s apprehension and anticipation of the fact that He is ready and willing to conduct Himself to needy sinners in a way of bounty, that He will act in all things toward them in a manner suitable unto the proposal of which He makes of Himself through the Gospel. It was the realization of this (in addition to his felt need) which stirred the prodigal to act. Just as it would be useless to pray unless there were an hope that God hears and that He will answer prayer, so no sinner will really seek unto God until there is born in his heart an expectation of mercy from Him, that He will receive him graciously. This is a laying hold of His promise.

In Scripture, privileges are propounded with their necessary limitations and we disjoint the whole system of truth if we separate the recompense from the duty. There is something to be done on our part. God is a “rewarder,” but *of whom*? Of those who “diligently seek him.” “The wicked shall be turned into hell, all the nations that forget God” (Psa 9:17)—not only “deny,” but “forget” Him, as they cast God out of their thoughts and affections, so He will cast them out of

His presence. What is meant by “diligently seek him”? To “seek” God is to forsake, deny, go out of self, and take Him alone for our Ruler and satisfying portion. To seek Him “diligently” is to seek Him early (Pro 8:17), wholeheartedly (Psa 119:10), earnestly (Psa 27:4), unweariedly (Luk 11:8). How does a thirsty man seek water? The promise is, “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jer 29:13 and cf. 2Ch 15:15).

And *how* does God “reward” the diligent seeker? By offering Himself graciously to be found of them who penitently, earnestly, trustfully approach Him through the appointed Mediator. By granting them access into His favour. This He did not unto Cain, who sought Him in a wrong manner. By actually bestowing His favour upon them, as He did upon the prodigal. By forgiving their sins and blotting out their iniquities (Isa 55:7). By writing His laws in their hearts, so that they now desire and determine to forsake all idols and serve Him only. By giving them assurance of their acceptance in the Beloved and granting them sweet foretastes of the rest and bliss which awaits them on High. By ministering to their every need, both spiritual and temporal. Finally, by taking them to heaven, where they shall spend eternity in the unclouded enjoyment of the wondrous riches of His grace.

But does this word “rewarder” have a legalistic ring to it? Not if it be understood rightly. Does it signify that our “diligent seeking” is a meritorious performance which is entitled to recognition? Of course it does not. What, then, is meant? First, let us quote from the helpful comments of John Owen (1616-1683), “That which these words of the apostle hath respect to, and which is the ground of the faith here required, is contained in the revelation that God made of Himself unto Abraham, ‘Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward’ (Gen 15:1). God is so a rewarder unto them that seek Him, as that He is Himself their reward, which eternally excludes all thoughts of merit in them that are so rewarded. Who can merit God to be his reward? Rewarding in God, especially where He Himself is the reward, is an act of infinite grace and bounty. And this gives us full direction unto the object of faith here intended, namely, God in Christ, as revealed in the promise of Him, giving Himself unto believers as a reward, (to be their God) in a way of infinite goodness and bounty. The proposal hereof, is that alone which gives encouragement to come unto Him, which the apostle designs to declare.”

“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt” (Rom 4:4)—is not the implication clear that *grace* itself also “rewards”? Grace and reward are no more inconsistent than the high sovereignty of God and the real responsibility of man or between the fact that Christ is and was both “Servant” (Isa 42:1) and “Lord” (Joh 13:13). The language of Colossians 3:24 makes this clear as a sunbeam, “Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.” The “inheritance” is heaven itself, salvation in its consummation. But is not salvation a free gift? Yes, indeed, nevertheless it has to be “bought” by its recipient (Isa 55:1), yet “without money and without price.” Salvation is both a “gift” and a “reward.”

While it is true that heaven cannot be earned by the sinner, it is equally true that heaven is not for idlers and loiterers. God has to be “diligently sought.” To enter the strait gate the soul has to agonize (Luk 13:24). We are called upon to “labour” for that meat which endureth unto eternal life (Joh 6:27) and to enter into the heavenly rest (Heb 4:11). Such efforts God “rewards,” not because they are meritorious, but because He deems it meet to recognize and recompense them. There are those who teach that in serving God we ought to have no “respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Heb 11:26), but this verse refutes them, for the apostle explicitly declares that this forms a necessary part of that truth which is to be believed in order to obey our pleasing God.

Heaven, or completed salvation, is spoken of as a “reward” to intimate the character of those to whom it is given, namely, the diligent labourer. Second, because it is not bestowed until our work is completed, 2 Timothy 4:7-8. Third, to intimate the sureness of it. We may as confidently expect it as does the labourer who has been hired by an honest master, James 1:12. This “reward” is principally in the next life, Hebrews 11:16, 2 Corinthians 4:17. It is then that all true godliness shall be richly recompensed, Mark 10:29-30. It only remains for us now to add that the *ground* on which God bestows the “reward” is the infinite merits of Christ and out of respect unto His own promise. *That which* He “rewards” is the work of His own Spirit within us, so that we have no ground for boasting.

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Heb 11:7). The apostle now presents a concrete example which illustrates what he had said in verse 6. God’s dealings with Noah and the world in his time were plainly a sample and pledge of His dealing with the world in all ages, particularly so when its history is finally wound up. Inasmuch as God is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him, it necessarily follows that He is also the revenger of all who despise Him. In the destruction of the old world, God showed His displeasure against sin (Job 22:15-16). In the preservation of Noah, He made manifest the privileges of His own people (2Pe 2:9). That the whole was a *pledge* and type is clear from 2 Peter 3:6-7.

In the verse which is now before us, three things claim attention. First, Noah’s faith and its ground, namely, the warning he had received from God. Second, the effects of his faith, namely, internally—the impulse of “fear,” externally—his obedience in making the ark under God’s orders. Third, the consequences of his faith, namely, the saving of his house, the condemning of the world, his becoming heir of the righteousness which is by faith. But ere taking up these points, let us face and endeavour to remove a difficulty which some feel this verse raises. Let us put it this way, Was Noah saved by his own works? We believe the answer is both Yes and No. We beg the reader to exercise patience and prayerfully ponder what follows and not cry out rank heresy and refuse to read further.

If Noah had not “prepared an ark” in obedience to God’s command, would he not have perished in the flood? Then was it his own efforts which preserved him from death in the great deluge? No indeed, it was the preserving power of God. That ark had neither mast, sail, nor steering-wheel, only the gracious hand of the Lord kept that frail baroque from being splintered to atoms on the rocks and the mountains. Then what is the relation between these two things? This—Noah made use of the *means* which God had prescribed and by His grace and power those means were made effectual unto his preservation. Must not the farmer toil in his fields? yet it is God alone who gives him the increase. Must I not observe the laws of hygiene and eat wholesome food? yet only as God blesses them to me am I kept in health. So it is in spiritual things. Salvation by grace alone *does not exclude* the imperative necessity of our using the means which God has appointed and prescribed.

The temporal deliverance of Noah from the flood is undoubtedly an adumbration of the eternal deliverance of God’s elect from the wrath to come and here, as everywhere, the type is accurate and perfect. Nor can any sophistical quibbling honestly get rid of the fact that Noah’s building of the ark—a most costly and arduous work!—was a means towards his preservation. Then does the case of Noah supply a clear example of salvation by works? Again we answer boldly, Yes and No. But the difficulty is greatly relieved if we bear in mind that Noah was *already a saved man* before God bade him build the ark! A reference to Genesis 6:8-9 and a comparison with 6:14, 22

makes this unmistakably plain. But does not this fact overthrow all that has been said in the previous paragraphs? Not at all. The Christian's salvation is not only a past thing (2Ti 1:9), but a present (Phi 2:12) and future (Rom 13:11) thing too! We trust that the solution of the difficulty will be more evident as we proceed with our exposition of the verse.

As we have before pointed out, the first three verses of Hebrews 11 are introductory, their design being to set forth the importance and excellency of faith. Then, in verses 4-7, we have an outline of the life of faith. The beginning of it is seen in verse 4, the nature of what it consists in verse 5, a warning and encouragement is supplied in verse 6, and the end of it is shown in verse 7. Before bringing before us the glorious goal which the life of faith reaches, verse 7 gives us the other side of what was before us in verse 5. There we saw faith elevating above a world of death, carrying the heart of its favoured possessor into heaven. But we are still in the world and that is the place of opposition, of danger, and hence, of testing. Thus in verse 7, we are not only shown what faith obtains, but *how* it obtains it.

Now as we found it necessary to go back to Genesis 3 and 4 to interpret Hebrews 11:4 and to Genesis 5:24 to get the meaning of Hebrews 11:5, so now we have to consult Genesis 6 in order to discover what is here adumbrated. Let the reader turn back to Genesis 6:5-22. There we find unsparing divine judgment announced (verse 13), a way of deliverance presented to one who had "found grace" in the Lord's eye (verse 14), faith's obedience called for if escape was to be had from judgment (verse 14), the divinely prescribed means to be used (verse 15)—by employing those means deliverance was obtained. Now in like manner, a most solemn warning has been given us, an announcement of coming judgment. See 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8; 2 Peter 3:10-17—let the reader duly observe that both of these passages are found in epistles addressed to God's children.

In saying above that Hebrews 11:7 gives us the other side of what is spiritually set forth in verse 5, we mean that it gives us the *balancing* truth. It is most important to observe this, for otherwise we are very liable to entertain a mystical concept of verse 5 and become lopsided. Satan is ready to tell us that verse 5 presents to us a beautiful ideal, but one which is altogether impracticable for ordinary people—alright for preachers, but impossible for others. After reading our article on verse 5, many are likely to exclaim—We cannot be thinking of heavenly things all the time, we have our daily duties to attend to here on earth. The only way we could reach the standard of verse 5 would be by entering a monastery or convent, entirely secluding ourselves from the world and surely God does not require this of us. No, indeed, that was the great mistake of the "Dark Ages."

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house" (Heb 11:7). This gives us the other side of verse 5. It shows that we *have* duties to perform on earth and intimates *how* they are to be discharged—by faith, in the fear of God, implicitly obeying His commands. And more—our present verse insists on the fact (now so little apprehended) that the performing these duties, the rendering of faith's obedience to God, is indispensably necessary to our very salvation. The "salvation" of the soul is yet future—note "saving" and *not* "salvation" in Hebrews 11:7 and also compare 1 Peter 1:5. In order to be saved from the destructive power of sin, the ruinous allurements of the world, and the devouring assaults of Satan, we *must* tread the path of obedience to Christ (Heb 5:9), for only there do we escape these fatal foes. Let the reader prayerfully ponder Mark 9:43-50; Luke 14:26-27, 33; Romans 8:13; 1 Corinthians 9:27; Colossians 3:5; Hebrews 3:12, 14.

Hebrews 11:5 and 7 supplement each other. Verse 5 shows us that by the exercise of faith our affections are elevated above the earth and set upon things above. Verse 7 teaches us that our

lives on earth are to be regulated by heavenly principles. The real Christian is a heavenly man living on earth *as* a heavenly man. That is to say, he is governed by spiritual and divine principles and not by fleshly motives and worldly interests. The Christian performs many of the same deeds as the non-Christian does, yet with a far different object and aim. All that I do should be done in obedience to God, in joyous response to His revealed will. Let us be specific and come to details. Let the Christian wife read Ephesians 5:22-24 and the husband 5:25-31 and let each recognize that in obeying the husband and loving the wife, they are *obeying God*. Let Christian employees ponder Ephesians 6:5-7 and recognize that in obeying their masters they are obeying the Lord. Contrariwise, in sulking or speaking against them, they murmur against the Lord!

Now such obedience to God's commandments in the ordinary relationships of life is necessary unto salvation. If this staggers the reader, let him contemplate the opposite. Those precepts and commands have been given us by God and to disregard them is rebellion and to refuse compliance is defiance and no rebel against God can enter heaven. Unless our wills have been broken, unless our hearts have been brought into subjection to God, we have no Scriptural warrant for concluding that He has *begun* a good work in us (Phi 1:6). "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1Jo 2:4). The only path which leads to heaven is that of walking in obedience to God's commands.

Now the salvation of the soul lies at the *end* of that path. Does the reader exclaim, I thought it was at the beginning of it and that none but a regenerate person could or would walk therein. From one standpoint that is quite true. When genuinely converted, a sinner *is* saved from the eternal penalty of his sins and *is* "delivered from the wrath to come." But is he there and then removed to heaven? With very rare exceptions, he is not. Instead, God leaves him here in this world and this world is the place of danger, for temptations to return unto its ways and pleasures abound on every side. Moreover, the judgment of God hangs over it and one day will burst upon and consume it. And who will escape that destruction? Only those who, like Noah, have a faith which is moved with fear and produces obedience. But it is now high time that we considered more closely the details of verse 7.

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house" (Heb 11:7). Ah, here is the key to our verse, hung right upon the very door of it. Like every other one of God's elect, Noah was saved by grace through faith and yet not by a faith that was inactive—Ephesians 2:10 follows verse 9! *Faith* was the spring of all his works—a faith which was far more than an intellectual assent, one which was a supernatural principle that sovereign grace had wrought in him. God had determined to send a flood and destroy the wicked world, but ere doing so, He acquainted Noah with His purpose. He has done the same with us. See Romans 1:18. That divine warning was the ground of Noah's faith. He argued not, nor reasoned about its incredibility. Instead, he believed God. The *threatening*, as well as the promise of God, is the object of faith. The justice of God is to be eyed, as well as His mercy!

Human reason was altogether opposed unto what God had made known to Noah. Hitherto there had been no rain (Gen 2:6), then why expect an overwhelming deluge? It seemed utterly unlikely God would destroy the whole human race and His mercy be thus utterly swallowed up by His avenging justice. The threatened judgment was a long way off (120 years, Gen 6:3) and during that time the world might well repent and reform. When he preached to men (2Pe 2:5) none believed his message. Why then should he be so fearful, when every one else was at ease? To build an ark of such huge dimensions was an enormous undertaking and as well would involve the scoffs of all his fellows. And even if the flood came, how could the ark float with such an

immensely heavy burden? It had no anchor to stay her, no mast and sail to steady her, no steering-wheel to direct. Was it not quite impracticable, for Noah was quite inexperienced nautically. Moreover, for him and his family to dwell for an indefinite period in a sealed ark was far from a pleasant prospect unto flesh and blood. But against all these carnal objections faith offered a steady resistance and *believed God!*

“Moved with fear.” This evidenced the reality and power of his faith, for saving faith not only “worketh by love” (Gal 5:6), but in “fear and trembling” (Phi 2:12). A reverential awe of God is a sure fruit of saving faith. That “fear” acted as a salutary impetus in Noah and operated as a powerful motive in his building of the ark. “His believing the word of God, had this effect on him...a reverential fear it is of God’s threatenings and not an anxious solicitous fear of the evil threatened. In the warning given him, he considered the greatness, the holiness, and the power of God, with the vengeance becoming those holy properties of His nature, which He threatened to bring on the world. Seeing God by faith under this representation of Him, he was filled with a reverential fear of Him. See Habakkuk 3:16; Psalm 119:120; Malachi 2:5” (John Owen).

“Prepared an ark to the saving of his house” (Heb 11:7). As Matthew Henry says, “Faith first influences our affections and then our actions.” “Faith without works is dead” (Jam 2:20), particularly works of obedience. “Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he” (Gen 6:22). Privilege and duty are inseparably connected, yet duty will never be performed where faith is absent. Faith in Noah caused him to persevere in his arduous labours amid many difficulties and discouragements. Thus his building of the ark was a work of faith and patience, a labour of godly fear, an act of obedience, a means to his preservation—for God’s covenant with him (Gen 6:18) did not preclude his diligent use of means and a type of Christ. As it was by faith-obedience he prepared the ark, so by faith’s obedience came the “saving of his house.” God always honours those who honour Him. This temporal salvation was a figure of the eternal salvation unto which we are pressing forward, for note that the destruction of the anti-deluvians was an *eternal* one—for their spirits are now “in prison” (1Pe 3:19)! Observe, it is *our* responsibility to seek after our own salvation and those committed to us. See Acts 2:40; 2 Timothy 4:16.

“By the which he condemned the world” (Heb 11:7). The reference is to all that precedes. By his own example, by his faith in God’s warning, his reverential awe of God’s holiness and justice, his implicit and unflagging obedience in preparing the ark, Noah “condemned” the unbelieving, unconcerned, godless people all around him. One man is said to “condemn” another when, by his godly actions, he shows what the other should do and which by doing not, his guilt is aggravated. See Matthew 12:41-42. The Sabbath-keeper “condemns” the Sabbath-breaker. He who abandons a worldly church and goes forth unto Christ outside the camp “condemns” the compromiser. Noah’s diligent and costly labours increased the guilt of the careless, who rested in a false security. Though we cannot convert the wicked, yet we must be careful to set before them such an example of personal piety that they are left “without excuse.”

“And became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Heb 11:7). The “righteousness” here referred to is that perfect obedience of Christ which God imputes unto all who savingly believe on His Son—Jeremiah 23:6; Romans 5:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21. This righteousness is sometimes called, absolutely, the “righteousness of God” (Rom 1:17, etc.), sometimes the “gift of righteousness...by one, Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:17), sometimes “the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phi 3:9)—in all of which our free and gratuitous justification, by the righteousness of Christ reckoned to our account through faith, is intended. In saying that Noah “became heir” of the righteousness, there may be a double significance. First, by faith’s obedience he *evidenced*

himself *to be* a justified man (Gen 6:9), as Abraham did when he offered up Isaac (Jam 2:21). Second, he *established his title* to that righteousness which is here spoken of as an “inheritance.” This is in contrast from Esau, who despised his. That righteousness which Christ purchased for His people is here denominated an “inheritance,” to emphasize the dignity and excellency of it, magnify the freeness of its tenure, to declare the certainty and inviolability of it.

The actual entrance upon our inheritance is yet future. “That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the *hope* of eternal life” (Ti 3:7). The great question for each of us to settle is—am I an “heir”? To help me do so, let me inquire—Have I the *spirit* of one? Is my main care to make sure that I have the *birth* right? Am I putting the claims of God and His righteousness (Mat 6:33) above everything else? Have I such thoughts of the blessedness of my portion in Christ that nothing can induce me to sell or part with it (Heb 12:16)? Is my heart wrapped up in that inheritance so that I am groaning within myself, “waiting for the adoption” (Rom 8:23)? Am I walking by faith, with the fear of God upon me, diligently attending to His commandments, thereby condemning the world? If so, thrice blessed am I and soon shall I be saved “to sin no more” (Joh 8:11).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

11. His Return to Judea

In our last article, we left David in the cave of Adullam. An incident is recorded in 2 Samuel 23 which throws an interesting light on the spiritual life of our hero at this time. “And three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest-time unto the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim. And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. And David longed, and said, Oh, that one would give me a drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! And the three mighty men brake through the hosts of Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took and brought it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD. And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it” (2Sa 23:13-17).

No doubt the trials of his present lot had called to David’s mind his happy life at home. The weather being hot, he expressed a longing for a drink from the family well of Bethlehem, though with no thought that any of his men would risk their lives to procure it for him. Yet this is precisely what happened. Out of deep devotion to their outlawed captain, three of them fought their way through a company of the Philistines who were encamped there and returned to David with the desired draught. Touched by their loyalty, stirred by their self-sacrifice, David felt that water obtained at such risk was too valuable for him to drink and was fit only to be “poured out unto the LORD” (See 2Sa 23:16) as a “drink-offering” (Num 28:7). Beautifully has Matthew

Henry made application of this thus, “Did David look upon that water as very precious, which was got but with the hazard of these men’s blood, and shall not we much more value those benefits for the purchasing of which our blessed Saviour shed His blood”?

We quote from another who has commented upon this incident. “There is something peculiarly touching and beautiful in the above scene, whether we contemplate the act of the three mighty men in procuring the water for David or David’s act in pouring it out to the Lord. It is evident that David discerned, in an act of such uncommon devotedness, a sacrifice which none but the Lord Himself could duly appreciate. The odor of such a sacrifice was far too fragrant for him to interrupt it in its ascent to the throne of the God of Israel. Wherefore he, very properly and very graciously, allows it to pass him by, in order that it might go up to the One who alone was worthy to receive it or able to appreciate it. All this reminds us forcibly of that beautiful compendium of Christian devotedness set forth in Philippians 2:17-18, ‘Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For this cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.’ In this passage, the apostle represents the Philippian saints in their character as priests, presenting a sacrifice and performing a priestly ministration to God, and such was the intensity of his self-forgetting devotedness, that he could rejoice in his being poured out as a drink-offering upon their sacrifice, so that all might ascend, in fragrant odor to God.” (C. H. M., 1820-1896)

Some commentators have denied that the above touching episode occurred during that section of David’s history which we are now considering, placing it at a much later date. These men failed to see that 1 Chronicles 11:15 and 2 Samuel 23 recount things out of their chronological order. If the reader turn back to 1 Samuel 17:1, 19:8 etc., he will see that the Philistines were quite active in making raids upon Israel at this time and that David, not Saul, was the principal one to withstand them. But now he was no longer in the position to engage them. Saul, as we shall see in a moment, had dropped all other concerns and was confining his whole attention to the capture of David. Thus the door was then wide open for the Philistines to continue their depredations. Finally, be it said, all that is recorded after David came to the throne makes it altogether unlikely that the Philistines were then encamped around Bethlehem, still less that the king should seek refuge in the cave of Adullam.

“And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you, till I know what God will do for me. And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold” (1Sa 22:3-4). We are convinced that what has been before us in the above paragraphs supplies the key to that which is here recorded. In 1 Samuel 22:1, we learn that “all his family” had come to David in the cave. From 1 Samuel 16:1, we learn that their home was in Bethlehem, but the Philistines were now encamped there (2Sa 23:14), so they could not return thither. David did not wish his parents to share the hardships involved by his wanderings and so now he thoughtfully seeks an asylum for them. Blessed is it to see him, in the midst of his sore trials, “honouring his father and his mother” (Exo 20:12) Beautifully did this foreshadow what is recorded in John 19:26-27.

While Saul was so bitterly opposed to David, there was no safety for his parents anywhere in the land of Israel. The deep exercises and anguish of David’s heart at this time are vividly expressed in Psalm 142, the title of which reads, “A prayer when he was in the cave.” “I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they

privily laid a snare for me. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living. Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.” Blessed is it to mark the note of confidence in God in the closing verse.

“And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, let my father and mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you” (1Sa 22:3). What was it induced David to trust his parents unto the protection of the Moabites? We quote, in part, from the answer given by J. J. Blunt (1794-1855) in his very striking book, *“Undesigned Coincidences in the Old and New Testaments.”* “Saul, it is true, had been at war with them, whatever he might then be—but so had he been with every people round about, with the Ammonites, with the Edomites, with the kings of Zobah. Neither did it follow that the enemies of Saul, as a matter of course, would be the friends of David. On the contrary, he was only regarded by the ancient inhabitants of the land, to which ever of the local nations they belonged, as the champion of Israel and with such suspicion was he received amongst them, notwithstanding Saul’s known enmity towards him, that before Achish king of Gath, he was constrained to feign himself mad and so effect his escape.

“Now what principle of preference may be imagined to have governed David when he committed his family to the dangerous keeping of the Moabites? Was it a mere matter of chance? It might seem so, as far as appears to the contrary in David’s history, given in the books of Samuel, and if the book of Ruth had never come down to us, to accident it probably would have been ascribed. But this short and beautiful historical document shows us a *propriety* in the selection of Moab above any other for a place of refuge to the father and mother of David, since it is there seen that the grandmother of Jesse, David’s father, was actually a *Moabitess*, Ruth being the mother of Obed and Obed the father of Jesse. And moreover, that Orpah, the other Moabitess, who married Mahlon at the time when Ruth married Chilion his brother, remained behind in Moab after the departure of Naomi and Ruth and remained behind with a strong feeling of affection, nevertheless, for the family and kindred of her deceased husband taking leave of them with tears (Ru 1:14). She herself then, or at all events, her descendants and friends might still be alive. Some regard for the posterity of Ruth, David would persuade himself, might still survive amongst them. . .

“Thus do we detect, not without some pains, a certain fitness in the conduct of David in this transaction which makes it to be a real one. A forger of a story could not have fallen upon the happy device of sheltering Jesse in Moab simply on the recollection of his Moabitish extraction two generations earlier or having fallen upon it, it is probable he would have taken care to draw the attention of his readers towards his device by some means or other, lest the evidence it was intended to afford of the truth of the history might be thrown away upon them. As it is, the circumstance itself is asserted without the smallest attempt to explain or account for it. Nay, recourse must be had to another book of Scripture, in order that the coincidence may be seen.”

Unto the king of Moab David said, “Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you, till I know what God will do for me” (1Sa 22:3). Slowly but surely our patriarch was learning to acquiesce in the appointments of God. Practical subjection unto the Lord is only learned in the school of experience. The theory of it may be gathered from books, but the actuality has to be hammered out on the anvil of our hearts. Of our glorious Head it is declared, “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb 5:8). This word of David’s also indicates that he was beginning to feel the need of waiting upon God

for directions. How much sorrow and suffering would be avoided did *we* always do so. His “what God will do *for* me,” (1Sa 22:3). rather than “with me,” indicated a hope in the Lord.

“And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judea. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth” (1Sa 22: 5). In the light of this verse, and together with 1 Samuel 22:23, we may see that “the excellent” of the earth (Psa 16:3) were more and more gathering to him who was a type of Christ in His rejection. Here we see the prophet of God with him and shortly afterwards he was joined by the high priest—solemn it is to contrast the apostate Saul, who was now deserted by both. David had been humbled before Go, and He now speaks again to him, not directly, but mediately. Two reasons may be suggested for this. David was not yet fully restored to divine communion and God was honouring His own institutions—the prophetic office, cf. 1 Samuel 23:9-11.

“And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah” (1Sa 22:5). It is quite clear from the language of this verse that at the time God now spoke to His servant through the prophet, he had not returned to the cave of Adullam, but he sought temporary refuge in some stronghold of Moab. Now he received a call which presented a real test to his faith. To appear more openly in his own country would evidence the innocence of his cause, as well as display his confidence in the Lord. “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD” (Psa 37:23), yet the path He appoints is not the one which is smoothest to the flesh. But when God calls, we must respond and leave the issue entirely in His hands.

“When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that were with him, (now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants standing about him); then Saul said unto his servants” (1Sa 22:6-7) etc. Here the Spirit takes up again another leading thread around which the history of 1 Samuel is woven. Having traced the movements of David since the leaving of his home (1Sa 19:11-12) up to the cave of Adullam and his now receiving orders to return to the land of Judea, He follows again the evil history of Saul. The king had apparently set aside everything else and was devoting himself entirely to the capture of David. He had taken up his headquarters at Gibeah—the “spear in his hand” showed plainly his blood-thirsty intentions.

The news of David’s return to Judea soon reached the ears of Saul and the fact that he was accompanied by a considerable number of men, probably alarmed him not a little, fearful that the people would turn to his rival and that he would lose his throne. His character was revealed again by the words which he now addressed to his servants (1Sa 22:7), who were for the most part selected from his own tribe. He appealed not to the honour and glory of Jehovah, but to their cupidity. David belonged to Judah and if he became king then those who belonged to the tribe of Benjamin must not expect to receive favours at his hands—neither rewards of land, nor positions of prominence in the army.

“That all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me, or sheweth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day” (1Sa 22:8). Here Saul charges his followers with having failed to reveal to him that which he supposed they knew and of showing no concern for the circumstance in which he was then placed. This he construed as a conspiracy against him. His was the language of ungovernable rage and jealousy. His son is charged as being ringleader of the conspirators, merely because he would not assist in the murder of an excellent man whom he loved! True, there was a covenant of friendship between Jonathan and David, but no plot to destroy Saul, as he wildly imagined. But it is the nature of an evil person to regard as enemies those who are not prepared to toady to him or her in everything.

It was in response to Saul's bitter words to his men, that Doeg the Edomite made known David's secret visit to Ahimelech and his obtaining victuals and the sword of Goliath (1Sa 22:9-10). Nothing was mentioned of the high priest being imposed upon, but the impression was left that he joined with David in a conspiracy against Saul. Let us learn from this that we may "bear false witness against our neighbor" (Exo 20:16) as really and disastrously by maliciously *withholding* part of the truth as by deliberately inventing a lie. When called upon to express our opinion of another (which should, generally, be declined, unless some good purpose is to be served thereby), honesty requires that we impartially recount what is in his favour, as well as what makes against him. Note how in His addresses to the seven churches in Asia, the Lord commended the good, as well as rebuked that which was evil.

The terrible sequel is recorded in 1 Samuel 22:11-19. Ahimelech and all his subordinate priests were promptly summoned into the king's presence. Though he was by rank the second person in Israel, Saul contemptuously called the high priest "the son of Ahitub" (1Sa 22:12). Quietly ignoring the insult, Ahimelech addressed the king as "my lord," thus giving honour to whom honor was due—the occupant of any office which God has appointed is to be honoured, no matter how unworthy of respect the man may be personally. Next, the king charged the high priest with rebellion and treason (1Sa 22:13). Ahimelech gave a faithful and ungarnished account of his transaction with David (1Sa 22:14-15). But nothing could satisfy the incensed king but death, and orders were given for the whole priestly family to be butchered.

One of the sons of Ahimelech, named Abithar, escaped. Probably he had been left by his father to take care of the tabernacle and its holy things, while he and the rest of the priests went to appear before Saul. Having heard of their bloody execution, and before the murderers arrived at Nob to complete their vile work of destroying the wives, children, and flocks of the priests, he fled, taking with him the ephod and the Urim and Thummim, and joined David (1Sa 22:20). It was then that David wrote the fifty-second psalm. Three things may be observed in connection with the above tragedy. First, the solemn sentence which God had pronounced against the house of Eli was now executed (1Sa 2:31-36; 3:12-14)—thus the iniquities of the fathers were visited upon the children. Second, Saul was manifestly forsaken of God, given up to Satan and his own malignant passions, and was fast ripening for judgment. Third, by this cruel carnage, David obtained the presence of the high priest, who afterwards proved a great comfort and blessing to him (1Sa 23:6, 9-13; 30:7-10)—thus did God make the wrath of man to praise Him and work together for good unto His own.

PRAYER

The Spirit of God exhorts the saints at least three times definitely in the New Testament to pray. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luk 18:1), "Pray without ceasing" (1Th 5:17), "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1Ti 2:8). This means no more and no less than that the life of God's people should be a life of continual prayer. Prayer is the most mighty power in the Christian life under every

circumstance and the records of Scripture and history tell us that the meekest and strongest Christian is the praying Christian. Prayer is not a matter of one or three times a day, but of every moment of the day and every moment of a sleepless night. If we realized that the child of God in prayer is in close communion with God, with the Almighty Himself, then it will be clear to every one of us what a mighty power and weapon prayer is. If we are in close communion with God, we are in our appointed place; God has the place in our hearts which He rightly owns and we please Him. Prayer means to be in the dust before a thrice holy God on His throne, and in fear and holy reverence speaking with Him, pleading with Him, begging from Him, through the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26), on the righteous claim which we have through the precious blood of Him, the only-begotten Son, who gave us access into the holiest (Heb 10:19-20). It is prayer when we approach God to unburden our hearts, plead His promises, and ask for the things we need.

Now it is a sad fact that many of the prayers (so called) from God's children do not go higher than the ceiling of the room where they are uttered, for the simple reason that many prayers are no prayers at all—especially when uttered in company at prayer-meetings. How many of these prayers are only workings of the flesh, to make a fair show before the fellow saints!—to express Scriptural knowledge, to rebuke (or worse, sneer at) a fellow-saint, or dictate to God what He should do or not do. No lowliness of heart, no meekness of the spirit, but a proud and haughty attitude often prevails in such meetings. The Holy Spirit is grieved and insulted and quenched in the babes of Christ. An aged saint told me some years ago “Brother, if you want to find out Christians, go to the prayer-meetings!”

As for private prayer, prayer in the closet, let every one of us examine himself how we in the past did approach God and how many things we pleaded and asked whereby we, instead of honouring the Holy One, insulted Him. Well may we cry, “Lord teach us *to pray*” (Luk 11:1). Holy Writ teaches us that we must pray in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20), “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (Eph 6:18). Although every child of God is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, he is not always *in* the Spirit, for many times the Holy Spirit is grieved through sin. How we need, beloved brethren and sisters, the exhortation in Ephesians 4:30-32, “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” I have been in homes and in prayer-meetings where people were reading the newspaper and talking the gossip of the day, till the so-called leader suggested, “Brethren, let us begin to pray.” Awful!

When we have grieved the Spirit, it is first of all needful to confess and forsake our sins before God (Pro 28:13). Then we need to ask the Holy Spirit for guidance (Rom 8:26-27), that we should not use vain and idle words, which only condemn us and insult God. It is many times regarded as very spiritual to hear a long prayer from a man. But the humble and true saint knows that, when we are really in the Spirit before a holy God on our knees, that as a rule we have not many words to use, although the heart is full, and also that, when we pray in the flesh, we have so many words that we hardly know how to stop. It will be good for every one of us to be reminded of the words from our Lord Jesus Christ, “When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do . . . be not ye therefore like unto them” (Mat 6:7-8). Prayer as well as worship must be in Spirit and in truth. There must be a spiritual realization that we are before a thrice holy God. There must be a holy fear whereby we know that we cannot deceive God. We must be true, honest, and searching ourselves in the truth, because we are liable to deceive ourselves and stand before God as liars. Prayer is a very solemn thing, beloved fellow-heirs.

It is good for us to observe that which is found in what is called the “Lord’s Prayer” in Matthew 6. This prayer gives us an example for shortness and begins and ends with worship. In Matthew 6:9, God is addressed as “Father,” and given honour and reverence. In verse 13, the prayer closes with honouring Him in His “kingdom, and the power, and the glory.” If we approach God in prayer while in agony of bodily pain or in agony of soul, in sorrow of bereavement, in pleading for our brethren with tears, or in need of temporal things or having a heart full of joy for the great things the Lord has done for us, we must approach Him in the Spirit, in lowliness, and in humiliation, and there must be *faith*. For “without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:6). Volumes could be written on the subject of prayer, but I believe for the child of God there are three points which he should specially take to heart for effective and prevailing prayer, in which God is honoured. First, what it means to pray in the name of Christ. Second, the importance of pleading the promises. Third, what are the things we need most to pray for?

Before our Lord was crucified and ascended to the Father, the people of God, even His disciples, did not pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. But in the last conversation with the disciples, the Lord knowing that His hour was come, that He should depart out of the world unto the Father, told them He would send the Spirit of truth (the Comforter, the Holy Spirit) and that whatsoever they should ask in His name, that would He do, that the Father might be glorified in the Son (Joh 14:13). And a little later He said, “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (Joh 16:24). All this was to be after His departure, when the Holy Spirit should dwell in them, and teach them through the fully revealed Word (1Jo 2:27; Joh 17:17). It will be a matter of simple truth and need for the child of God, when he bows down in prayer, that he begins by honouring God the Father. But we cannot honour God, when we pass by the Son! For it is written, “That all men should honour the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him” (Joh 5:23). In other words, we have in prayer to acknowledge and honour the Son, otherwise we do not honour God, and He will not hear our prayer. Further—how do we know God as our Father? Through the Son, “Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” (Mat 11:27).

Multitudes know God, but not God the Father, because they do not know the Son. God’s elect were “predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of his will . . . In whom [that is Jesus Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:5, 7). We are redeemed by the blood of Christ, by which we receive the adoption of sons, and by the Spirit of adoption we cry, “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15). Because we have received the spirit of a child, we know the Father. Moreover, Christ Jesus is appointed by God our High Priest, who hath entered “into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb 9:24). Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, because He was in all parts tempted like we are (yet in Him was no sin, He was spotless, undefiled), “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:14-16). He is our advocate with the Father, as Jesus Christ the righteous (1Jo 2:1). If we want to approach God in prayer, we have to do this through the Son, in the name of the Son, “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Joh 14:6). He is “*the door*” (Rev 3:20) for the sheep.

It is very important in prayer to plead the promises of God. This will be plain when we read that “all the promises of God in him [in Christ] are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us (2Co 1:20). Exceeding great and precious are these promises which are given unto us by God’s divine power, being added to the all things which pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue, so that by these promises “ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2Pe 1:4). It is by experimentally enjoying these promises that we indeed, in a practical way, become partakers of the divine nature, and this cannot be before we have also, in a practical way, escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. This will make it plain that conditions of responsibility are bound up with the promises of God and that these conditions must be fulfilled by us in purpose of heart before we can plead, receive, and enjoy the promises. It is no use to plead a promise from God while we willfully and purposely walk against the will of God. For instance, in 2 Corinthians 7:1, we read, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” It must be clear to every unbiased mind that here are conditions laid down if we want to enjoy experimentally these promises. And what are “*these* promises” here spoken of? See 2 Corinthians 6:18, “And will be Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and My daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” The condition for being able to enjoy experimentally these promises is—cleanse ourselves, thus perfecting holiness in the fear of God and this means practical separation from all that is not of God (see 2Co 6:14-17).

The promise of the Lord’s return and redemption of the body is for them who fulfill the condition laid down in Hebrews 9:28, “*Unto them that look for him* shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” We are His friends if we do whatsoever He commands us (Joh 15:14). His promise is He will give and open to us, but we must ask and knock (Mat 7:7-8). It is rather marvelous to hear true children of God pleading promises from God without taking heed to the conditions of responsibility which are bound up with every promise. The promise for the unregenerated man not to perish and have everlasting life is that he must “believe” (Joh 3:15-16). Who hath everlasting life? He that believeth on the Son (Joh 3:36). It is only when the sinner believes that he experimentally enjoys the promise of everlasting life. And as for believers, they who are God’s children, He forgiveth our sins and cleanseth us from all unrighteousness *if* we confess our sins (1Jo 1:9). Who shall have mercy? He who confesseth and forsaketh his sins (Pro 28:13). The promise of being blessed is given repeatedly in Holy Writ. But who will be “blessed”? He that considereth the poor (Psa 41:1), he that is poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, etc. (see Mat 5:3-11). He will keep him in perfect peace. Whom? “Whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isa 26:3). The Lord said to Abram, “I will make thee a great nation, and I will bless thee,” but the condition was, “Get thee out” (Gen 12:1-2). The Lord’s promise is that He will honour thee, *if* thou honourest Him (1Sa 2:30).

It is very needful for God’s people to study the promises of God that we may know *what* to ask in prayer. Many things are asked in prayer which God never promised and many promises are asked while we are totally ignorant of the claims of God bound up with them. One of the conditions in prayer is that we should ask according to God’s will and when we do so, we have His promise that “He heareth us” (1Jo 5:14). We must not ask the fulfilling of any promise to consume it on our own lusts, but always ask it to the glory of God. And it is needful that we should have fulfilled in purpose and determination of heart, the conditions, the responsibility, which is bound up with the promise we ask for.

And “According to your *faith* be unto you” (Mat 9:29). “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Mat 17:20). The promises of God are great, “Exceeding great,” and never too great that we could not ask for or God would not give. But at the same time, we have to remember that conditions of our responsibility are inseparably bound up with them. God does not give like a foolish father to a spoiled child. Oh no, brethren, God is holy and never will He sanction sin. He may show mercy to us and He does—otherwise all of us would be consumed, but His command is, “Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD” (Isa 52:11).

What are the things we most need to pray for in these days of corruption, selfishness, and exaltation of man? What should we specially pray for in these last days, when *individual* faithfulness to God alone has value? First of all, let me take it for granted that God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe, that He is the giver of all good and perfect things, that we are only poor worms, at His entire mercy and consequently we have to ask for everything—bread and water, as well as desired fellowship with our brethren and sisters, for “in him we live, and move and have our being” (Act 17:28). But the child of God, as belonging to the kingdom of His dear Son (Col 1:13) and being still in the world, although he belongs not to it (Joh 17:16), is commanded to be holy as God is holy (1Pe 1:16), and as such, there are special things he needs to pray for—1. A holy life, which in a practical way means obeying the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ—“Follow me.” And if we truly are desirous of following Him, we need first of all meekness and lowliness in heart and spirit. Thus should we pray that God will cause us daily, hourly, momentarily to come to Christ and take His yoke upon us and learn of Him (Mat 11:29).

2. As our heart is still prone to be deceitful and desperately wicked, so that we do not know what is in it, we need to pray, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa 139:23). 3. As each of us is very ignorant of the statutes of the Lord and especially of the way to walk in them, we need to pray, “Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes” (Psa 119:33). 4. As we all know, or ought to know, the commandments given to us in Holy Writ, but fail to keep them as the Lord bids, we have to pray, “Make me to go in the path of thy commandments” (Psa 119:35). 5. God’s children read His Word, but show repeatedly by their actions that they do not really believe it. The reason of which is that God’s Word is not established or rooted in their hearts. Therefore we have to pray, “establish thy word unto thy servant” (Psa 119:38). 6. We claim to have faith in God, but when our faith is put to the test, we mostly fail miserably. Therefore we should pray, Lord, increase my faith, purify, refine it, that it may prove able to remove mountains and to rejoice in the Lord, although I should be desolate like Job (see Hab 3:17-18). 7. As God’s children we are predestinated and called to be conformed to the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:29), but in our daily lives we are all far from it, otherwise we should be more hated and despised like Christ. We have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin (Heb 12:4). Therefore we should pray, “Father, make us more and more conformed to the image of Thy dear Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

The praying for these things in the Spirit, through our Lord Jesus Christ, will experimentally prove the truth of “Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [for our daily common needs] *shall* be added unto you” (Mat 6:33 and context). God giveth always more than we ask for and I firmly believe that in the life of the Christian everything hangs on the needful qualities as mentioned in these seven points.

Now for a short summary of seven other points which are requisite for effectual and prevailing prayer. 1. Separation from all known sins, by confessing and forsaking these in purpose of heart.

If we regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear us (Psa 66:18), if He did, He would be sanctioning sin. 2. Entire dependence upon the finished work of Christ and pleading His precious blood (Heb 10:10; 1Jo 1:7). 3. We must ask the Spirit of God to lead us in prayer, pray for us, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought (Rom 8:26). 4. Faith in God's Word and His promises. Not to believe Him is to make Him a liar or perjurer (Heb 11:6; Joh 3:33). 5. Asking according to His will (1Jo 5:14). We must not seek a gift from God to consume it upon our own lust (Jam 4:3). 6. We must offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, this is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks in His name (Heb 13:15). Prayer as well as worship must be in Spirit and truth, if not, it is of the flesh and is a lie. 7. There must be waiting on God, waiting for God, as the husbandman has long patience to wait for the harvest (Jam 5:7; Luk 18:1-8). (By A. Klooster. Engaged in evangelistic work in Holland, looking to the Lord alone for the supply of every need.)

ASSURANCE

3. Its Attainment

In writing to a company of the saints, an apostle was inspired to declare, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work *in* you will perform [or "finish"] it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phi 1:6). *That* is what distinguishes the regenerate children of God from empty professors, from those who, while having a name to live, are really spiritually dead (Rev 3:1). This is what differentiates true Christians from deluded ones. And in what does this "good work" which is "begun" *within* the saved consist? It is variously described in different Scriptures. It is the heart being purified by faith (Act 15:9). It is the love of God being shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). It is the laws of God being written in their hearts (Heb 8:10). Thus, the *nature* of Christian assurance is a well-founded knowledge that I am a child of God. The *basis* of this assurance that there is an unmistakable agreement between *my* character, experience, and life, and the description which Holy Writ furnishes of the characters, experiences, and lives of God's children. Therefore, the *attainment* of assurance is by an impartial scrutiny of myself and an honest comparing of myself with the Scriptural marks of God's children.

A reliable and satisfactory assurance can only be attained or reached by means of a thorough self-examination. "O therefore, Christians, rest not till you can call this rest your own. Sit not down without assurance. Get alone and bring thy heart to the bar of trial. Force it to answer the interrogatories put to it to set the qualifications of the saints on one side, and the qualifications of thy self on the other side, and then judge what resemblance there is between them. Thou hast the same Word before thee, by which to judge thyself now, as thou shalt be judged by at the great day. Thou mayest there read the very articles upon which thou shalt be tried; try thyself by these articles now. Thou mayest there know beforehand on what terms men shall then be acquitted or condemned. Try now whether thou art possessed of that which will acquit thee or whether thou be in the condition of those that will be condemned, and accordingly acquit or condemn thyself. Yet

be sure thou judge by a true touchstone, and mistake not the Scripture description of a saint, that thou neither acquit nor condemn thyself by mistake” (The Saint’s Everlasting Rest, Richard Baxter, 1680).

The need for such self-examination is indeed great, for multitudes are deceived, quite sure that they are Christians, yet without the marks of one. “They say they are saved and they stick to it they are and think it wicked to doubt it, but yet they have no reason to warrant their confidence. There is a great difference between presumption and full assurance. Full assurance is reasonable. It is based on solid ground. Presumption takes for granted and with brazen face pronounces that to be its own to which it has no right whatever. Beware, I pray thee, of presuming that thou art saved. If thy heart be renewed, if thou shalt hate the things that thou didst once love and love the things that thou didst once hate; if thou hast really repented; if there be a thorough change of mind in thee; if thou be born again, then hast thou reason to rejoice. But if there be no vital change, no inward godliness, if there be no love to God, no prayer, no work of the Holy Spirit, then thy saying, ‘I am saved,’ is but thine own assertion and it may delude, but it will not deliver thee” (C. H. Spurgeon on 1Ch 4:10, 1834-1892).

Oh, what efforts Satan puts forth to keep people from this vitally important and all-necessary work of self-examination. He knows full well that if many of his deceived victims set about the task in earnest, they would soon discover that no miracle of divine grace has been wrought in them and that this would cause them to seek the Lord with all their hearts. He knows too that real Christians would gain much advantage against the power of indwelling sin would they but thoroughly search their own hearts. Many are diverted from this wholesome work by the evil example set by so many who now bear the name of Christ. Not a few argue, “If he or she (that claims to have been a Christian so much longer and appears to know the Bible so much better), who is so worldly, so governed by ‘the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,’ is sure he is bound for heaven, why should I be concerned?”

But *the state of men’s hearts* is what holds so many back from the discharge of this duty. Some are so ignorant that they know not what self-examination is, nor what a servant of God means when he seeks to persuade them to “*prove* your own selves” (2Co 13:5). Others are so much in love with sin and have such a dislike for the holy ways of God, they dare not venture on the trial of their state, lest they should be forced from the course they so much relish, to one which they hate. Others are so taken up with their worldly affairs and are so busy providing for themselves and their families they say, “I pray thee have me excused” (Luk 14:18). Others are so slothful that they cannot be induced on any consideration to be at those pains which are necessary in order to know their own hearts.

Pride holds many back. They think highly of themselves. They are so sure of *their* salvation, so thoroughly convinced that all is right between their souls and God, they deem any search after *proof*, and testing of themselves by Scripture to see if they *have* the marks of those who are “new creatures in Christ Jesus,” (See 1Co 5:17) as quite unnecessary and superfluous. They have been brought up in a religious atmosphere where none of those professing the name of Christ expressed any doubts about their state. They have been taught that such doubtings are of the devil, a calling into question the veracity of God’s Word. They have heard so many affirm, “I *know* that my Redeemer liveth,” they felt it their duty to echo the same, forgetting that he who first uttered those words (Job 19:25) was one of whom God said, “There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil” (Job 1:8).

Tens of thousands have been taught that it is wrong for the Christian to look within himself and they have blindly followed the advice of such physicians “of no value.” How can it be wrong

for me to examine my heart to see whether or not God *has* written His laws upon it (Heb 8:10)? How can it be wrong for me to look and see whether or not God *has* begun a “good work” in me (Phi 1:6)? How can it be wrong for me to test myself by the Parable of the Sower to see *which* of its four soils represents *my* heart? How can it be wrong to measure myself by the Parable of the Virgins and ascertain whether or not the “oil” of regenerating and sanctifying grace is within the “vessel” of my soul (Mat 25:4)? Since God Himself declares, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom 8:9), how can it be wrong for me to make sure that *I am* indwelt by Him?

Rightly did an eminent Puritan say, “The Scripture abounds in commands and cautions for our utmost diligence in our search and inquiry, whether we are made partakers of Christ or not, or whether His Spirit dwell in us or not; which argue both the difficulty of attaining an assured confidence herein, as also the danger of our being mistaken, and yet the certainty of a good issue upon the diligent and regular use of means to that purpose” (John Owen on Heb. 3:14, 1670). Alas, this is what has been so strenuously opposed by many during the last two or three generations. An easy-going religion, well calculated to be acceptable unto the slothful, has been zealously propagated, representing the salvation of the soul and assurance of the same as a very simple matter.

It is very evident to one who has been taught of God that the vast majority of present-day evangelists, tract-writers, and “personal workers” do not believe one-half of what Holy Writ declares concerning the spiritual impotency of the natural man or the absolute necessity of a miracle of grace being wrought within him before he *can* savingly turn to Christ. Instead, they erroneously imagine that fallen man is a “*free* moral agent,” possessing equal power to accept Christ as to reject Him. They suppose all that is needed is information and coercion—to preach the Gospel and persuade men to believe it. But have they never heard of the Holy Spirit? O yes, and *say* they believe that only He can effectually convict of sin and regenerate. But do their actions agree with this? They certainly do not, for not only is there practically no definite waiting upon God and an earnest seeking from Him the power of His Spirit, but they sally forth and speak and write to the unsaved as if the Holy Spirit had no existence.

Now just as it is plainly *implied* by such “novices” that lost sinners can receive Christ any time they make up their minds to do so, just as they are constantly told that nothing more is needed than to believe that Christ died for them and rest on John 3:16 and salvation is theirs, so the idea has been inculcated that the professing Christian may enjoy the full assurance of faith any time he wishes and that nothing more is required for this than to “rest on John 5:24,” etc. One verse of Holy Scripture is sufficient to give the lie to this popular delusion, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom 8:16). If the written promises of God were sufficient of themselves to produce assurance, then what need is there for the third person of the Godhead to “bear witness” with the spirit of the Christian that he *is* a child of God?

As this verse is virtually given no place at all in modern ministry, let us ponder its terms, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” The clear implication of these words is that the actual existence of the saint’s sonship is, at times at least, a matter of painful uncertainty and that the supernatural agency of the Spirit is required to authenticate the fact and thus allay all fear. To be fully assured of the amazing fact that God is my spiritual Father, demands something more than the testimony of our own feelings or the opinion of men, and let us reverently add, something more than resting upon a divine promise. Millions have “rested on” the

words, “This *is* my body,” and no argument could persuade them that the bread upon the Lord’s table was not actually changed into Christ’s literal flesh.

Who so competent to authenticate the work of the Spirit in the heart as the Spirit Himself? What, then, is the merit of His testimony? Not by visions and voices, nor by any direct inspiration of new revelation of truth. Not by bringing some verse of Scripture (of which I was not thinking) vividly before the mind, that my heart is made to leap for joy. If the Christian had no surer grounds than *that* to stand upon, he might with despair. Satan can bring a verse of Scripture before the mind (Mat 4:6), and produce in his victims strong emotions of joy and impart a false peace to his soul. Therefore, the witness of the Spirit to be decisive and conclusive must be something which the devil cannot duplicate. And what is that? This—Satan cannot beget divine grace and impart real holiness to the heart.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit” (Rom 8:16). To “bear witness with” is a legal term and signifies to produce valid and convincing evidence. “Our spirit” here has reference to the renewed conscience. Concerning natural men it is said, “which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their *conscience* also *bearing witness*” (Rom 2:15). But the conscience of the natural man is partial, dim-sighted, stupid. Grace makes it tender, pliant, and more able to do its office. The desire of the regenerate man, and unto which he exercises himself, is “to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and men” (Act 24:16). Where such a conscience is (by grace) maintained, we can say with the apostle, “This is our rejoicing [what? resting on John 3:16? No, but] *the testimony of our conscience*, that in simplicity and godly sincerity . . . we have had our conversation in the world” (2Co 1:12).

Was the beloved Paul off the right track when he found something *in himself* which afforded ground for “rejoicing”? According to many present-day teachers (?), he was. It is a great pity that these men do not give less attention to human writings and more to the Holy Scriptures, for then they would read, “The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself” (Pro 14:14). If that text be despised because it is in the Old Testament, then we also read in the New Testament, “But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have *rejoicing in himself* alone, and not in another” (Gal 6:4). Once more, “Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And *hereby* we know that we are of the truth, and *shall assure our hearts before him*” (1Jo 3:18-19). What is the method which God here sets before His children for assuring their hearts before Him? Not in telling them to appropriate one of His promises, but to *walk in the truth* and then their own spirit will bear witness to their divine sonship.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom 8:16). In addition to the testimony of a renewed conscience which is enjoyed by the Christian when he (by grace) is walking in the truth, the Spirit adds His confirmation. How? First, He has laid down clear marks in the Scriptures by which we may settle the question, “For as many as are *led* by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom 8:14)—why tell us this, if “resting on John 5:24” be all that is necessary? Second, by working such graces in the saints as are peculiar to God’s children. In Galatians 5:22, these graces are expressly designated “the fruit of the Spirit.” Third, by His spiritual consolation, “Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit” (Act 9:31 and cf. Rom 15:13). Fourth, by producing in the Christian the affections which dutiful children bear to a wise and loving parent (Rom 8:15).

To sum up, the blessed Spirit witnesses along with our spirit that we are the children of God by enabling us to discern (in the light of Scripture) the *effects* and *fruits* of His supernatural operation within us. The breathings of the renewed heart after holiness, the pantings after a fuller

conformity to the image of Christ, the strivings against sin, are all inspired by Him. Thus, by begetting in us the divine nature, by teaching us to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts,” and to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Ti 2:12), the Spirit conducts us to the sure conclusion that we are the children of God. Thereby He shows us there is a real correspondency between our experience and revealed truth. “Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us *of* his Spirit” (1Jo 4:13).

4. Its Subjects

Under this head we propose to briefly consider the character of those persons to whom the privilege of Christian assurance rightfully belongs. Here again there are two extremes to be guarded against. On the one hand is that class who have been deceived by the slogan, “Believe you are saved and you *are* saved,” which is best met by pointing out that genuine assurance is never any greater than is our *evidence* of the same. On the other hand are those who are fearful that such evidence is unattainable while the body of sin indwells them. To such we would ask, “Is it impossible to ascertain whether or not the health of your body is sound? Are there not certain symptoms and signs which are a clear index?” If I were doubtful and feared that some fatal disease was beginning to grip me, I would seek a physician. Were he to merely look at me and then lightly say, “Your health is good,” I would leave him and seek another more competent. I would request a thorough overhauling, the taking of my blood-pressure, the sounding of my heart, the testing of my other vital organs. So it should be with the soul.

In seeking to determine from God’s Word who are entitled to Christian assurance, let us ask and answer a number of questions. Who are they with whom the great God dwells? With him also that is of [not an haughty and boastful, but] a contrite and humble spirit” (Isa 57:15). “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and *trembleth at my word*” (Isa 66:2)—do you? or do you joke over or argue about its sacred contents? Whom does God really forgive? They who “repent” and are “converted” (Act 3:19), that is, they who turn their backs upon the world and sinful practices and yield to Him, those in whose hearts God puts His “*laws*” and writes them in their minds, in consequence of which they love, meditate upon, and keep His commandments. Note how Hebrews 10:16 precedes 10:17!

Who is the man whom Christ likened unto one who built his house upon the rock? Not merely him who “believes,” but “Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth* them” (Mat 7:24). Who are truly born again? “Everyone that doeth righteousness” (1Jo 2:29). They who “love the brethren” with such a love as is described in 1 John 3:17-18. To whom does God experimentally reveal the eternal purpose of His grace? “The secret of the LORD is with them that *fear him*; and he will show *them* his covenant” (Psa 25:14). “To him that ordereth his conservation aright will I show the salvation of God” (Psa 50:23). What are the identifying marks of a saving faith? One which “purifies the heart” (See Act 15:9), “worketh by love” (Gal 5:6), “overcometh the world” (1Jo 5:4). Only thus may I know that *my* faith is a living and spiritual one.

The birth of the Spirit can only be known from its effects (Joh 3:8). Thus, it is by comparing what God in His Word has promised to do *in* His elect with what His Spirit has, or has not, wrought in my heart, that I can ascertain whether assurance of salvation be my legitimate portion. *This* is “comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1Co 2:13). Wondrous things has God prepared “for them that love him” (1Co 2:9). How important then for me to make sure that I love Him. Many suppose that because they have (or had) a dread of eternal punishment, that therefore they

love God. Not so. True love of God is neither begotten by fears of hell nor hopes of heaven. If I do not love God for what He is in Himself, then I do not love Him at all. And if I love Him, my desire, my purpose, my aim, will be to *please* Him in all things. Much might be added to this section of our subject, but we trust that sufficient has been said to enable exercised and honest souls to learn how to identify those whom Scripture teaches are entitled to the assurance of salvation. (God willing, to be continued.)

CONVICTION OF SIN

Conviction is an embryo of the new creature. If it come to a perfect birth, it brings forth salvation to your souls. If it fails, you are finally lost. It is of infinite moment, therefore, to everyone to be tender of those convictions of conscience. It is true that conviction and conversion are two things. There may be conviction without conversion, though there cannot be conversion without conviction. The blossoms on the trees in the spring of the year cannot properly be called fruit, but are rather the rudiments of fruit or something in order to fruit. If they open kindly and knit or set firmly, proper fruit follows them, but if blight or a frosty morning kill them, no fruit is to be expected. Thus it is here. Great care, therefore, ought to be taken about the preservation and success of convictions, both by the soul itself that is under them and by all others who are concerned about them.

1. What care the soul itself should have on whom convictions are wrought. Beware, friends, how you quench them or hinder their operations, lest you hinder as much as in you lies the formation of Christ in your souls. The life of your souls is bound up in the life of your convictions. I know it is hard for men to dwell with their own convictions—guilt and wrath are sad subjects for men’s thoughts to dwell upon—but it is far better to dwell with the thoughts of sin and wrath here, than to lie under them in hell forever. You may be freed from your convictions and your salvation together. Be not too eager for peace—a good trouble is better than a false peace. And on the other hand, beware that your convictions turn not into discouragements to faith. This will cross the proper intention of them. They are Christ’s knockings for entrance and were never intended to be bars or stumblingblocks, but steps in your way to Christ.

2. Let all that are concerned about convicted souls beware what counsels they give and what rules they prescribe, lest you destroy all in the bud. There are two errors too commonly committed—one is *excess*, persuading souls under trouble of conscience that there is no coming to Christ for them unless they are so and so prepared, humbled just to such a degree. This is dangerous counsel. It overheats the troubled conscience and keeps the soul from its proper present duty and remedy. I am sure Paul and Silas took no such course with the convicted jailer (Act 16:31), nor Peter with the three thousand wounded consciences (Act 2:38). Nor do I find where God has stated the time and degree of spiritual troubles, so that there must be no approaches to Christ in the way of faith, until they have suffered them so long and to such a height. If they have embittered sin to the soul, and made it see the necessity of a Saviour, it cannot move too soon after Christ in the way of faith. Let no man set bounds where God sets none.

There is another error committed in *defect*, when promises and comfort are applied before the nature of faith is known, or one act of reliance put forth towards Christ. These hasty comforts come to nothing. They will not, they cannot, stand. It is a dangerous thing to apply Gospel cordials and pour out the precious ointments of the promises upon those who were never heart-sick for sin—address to such persons upon every slight trouble, which is but as an early dew, the peculiar consolations of penitent and believing souls. How many such empirics [quacks] are there in every place! Such as the prophet Jeremiah complains of, “They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace” (Jer 6:14). Remember that the foundation is now laying for eternity and that this is the time of deep consideration. Men must ponder the terms and count the cost, and deliberately accept and close this with Christ, before the consolations of the promises can properly be administered to them.

What a blessing is a rousing and faithful ministry among a people! By such a ministry, Christ knocks powerfully. This is one of the greatest blessings God can bestow upon a people, when He sends among them powerful and judicious preachers of the Gospel, under whose ministry their conscience cannot sleep quietly. These are the instruments by which Christ knocks at men’s hearts, and as for those who sew pillows for drowsy sinners to sleep quietly upon (Eze 13:18), the Lord owns them not as His, “Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee: and they have not discovered [exposed] thine iniquity” (Lam 2:14). It is true that those ministers that give men no rest and quietness in their sins, must expect but little rest and quietness themselves. What is it for ministers to preach home to the consciences of others, but to pull down the rage of the world upon their own heads? But certainly you will have cause to bless God through eternity for casting your lot under such a ministry, and the Lord accounts such a mercy sufficient to recompense any outward affliction that may lie heavy upon you.

3. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom 1:18). Then let me exhort and persuade you by all the regard and love you have for your souls, by all the fears you have of incensed wrath of the great and terrible God, that you forthwith set your convictions at liberty and loose all the Lord’s prisoners that lie bound within you, “Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke” (Job 36:18). O stifle the voice of conscience no more, slight not the softest whisper or least intimation of conscience. Reverence and obey its voice.

4. Till you set free your convictions, Satan will not let you go. He binds you, while you bind them. Here is the command of God and the command of Satan in competition. “Let My truths go free, which thou holdest in unrighteousness,” says Jehovah. “Bind and suppress them,” says Satan, “or they will deprive thee of the liberty and pleasures of thy life.” While thou slightest the voice of God and conscience, dost thou not avowedly declare thyself the bondsman of Satan? “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom you obey?” (Rom 6:16). “Dare not to take one step further in the way of known sin,” says conscience. “Continue not at thy peril in such a dangerous state, after I have so clearly convinced and warned thee of it.” “Fear not,” says Satan, “if it be ill with thee, it will be with millions.” Now, I say, thy obedience to Satan’s commands declares thee all this while to be a poor enslaved captive to him, acted on and carried according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit now worketh in the children of disobedience.

5. Until you obey your convictions, you are confederates with Satan in a desperate plot against your own souls. You join with Christ’s great and avowed enemy to dishonour Him. Two things make you confederates with Satan against your own souls. First, your *consent* to this project for your damnation, for so your own conscience out of Scripture informs you it is. Consent makes

you a party. Second, your *concealment* of this plot brings you in as a party with him. “Confess thy sin and bewail it,” says conscience. “Not so,” says pride and shame. “How shall I look men in the face if I do so?” Do not you, in all this, believe Satan and make God a liar? Do not you act as men who hate their own souls and love death? “But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death” (Pro 8:36). O it is a dreadful thing for men to be accessory to their own eternal ruin, and that after fair warning and notice given them by their own conscience. Satan, be his power what it will, cannot destroy you without your own consent.

6. While you go on stifling convictions and turning away your ears from calls to righteousness, you cannot be pardoned. You are yet in your sins and the guilt of them lies at your door. You see what the terms of remission are, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa 55:7). And again, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Pro 28:13). You see by these, and many more plain Scripture testimonies, that there can be no hope of remission, while you go on in the path of rebellion, concealing, yea, and persisting in known wickedness. There is a necessary and inseparable connection between repentance and remission, “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Act 5:31); “That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name” (Luk 24:47).

7. You can never have peace of conscience while you keep convictions prisoners. A man’s conscience is his best friend or his worst enemy. Thence are the sweetest comforts and thence are the bitterest sorrows. It is a dreadful thing for a man to lie with a cold sweating horror upon his panting bosom. And this, or which is worse, obduracy and stupidity must be the case of them who hold the truth in unrighteousness. As Israel could have no peace till Achan was destroyed, so thou shalt have no peace while thy sin is covered and hid. Deliver up thyself, if thou lovest peace, into the hand of thy own convictions, and then thou art in the true way to peace.

Do not some of you stand convicted by your own consciences this day, that your hearts and practices are vastly different from those of the true people of God, among whom you live and whose character you read in Scripture? Do not your consciences tell you that you never took the pains for your salvation which you see them take. That there are some in your families, nay, possibly in your bosoms, who are serious and holy, while you are vain and earthly—who are on their knees wrestling with God, while you are about the things of the world? And does not your conscience sometimes whisper thus into thine ear, “Soul, thou art not right, something is wanting, to make thee a Christian.” If it be so, let me advise thee to hearken diligently to that voice of conscience. Do not venture to the judgment seat of God in such a case. Ponder that verse, “For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him” (Mat 21:32). Let the disparity your conscience shows you between your own course and that of others, awaken you to more diligence and seriousness about your own salvation. How canst thou come from thy vain recreations, and find a wife or child in prayer, and thy conscience not smite thee? It may be they have been mourning for thy sins, whilst thou hast been committing them.

Directions. 1. Fail not to put every conviction into speedy execution. Do not delay. It is a critical hour and delays are exceedingly hazardous. Convictions are fixed and secured in men’s souls four ways. First, by deep and serious consideration, “I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies” (Psa 119:59). Second, by earnest prayer. Thus Saul, after his first

convictions, fell on his knees, “Behold, he prayeth” (Act 9:11). The breath of prayer forments and nourishes the sparks of conviction, that they be not extinct. Third, by diligent attendance on the Word. The Word begets conviction and the Word can, through God’s blessing, preserve it. Fourth, by performing, without delay, the duty thou are commanded of, “For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straight-way forgetteth what manner of man he was” (Jam 1:23, 24). Take the sense thus—a man looks into the glass in the morning, and perhaps he sees a spot on his face or a disorder in his hair or clothes, and thinks within himself, I will rectify it. But being gone from the place, one thing or other diverts his mind, he forgets what he saw, and goes all the day with a spot on his face, never thinking of it more. O brethren, delays are dangerous, sin is deceitful (Heb 3:13), Satan is subtle (2Co 11:3), and in this way he gains his point. This motto may be written on the tomb of most that perish, “Herein lies one that was destroyed by delays.”

Your life is uncertain, so are the strivings of the Spirit. Besides, there is a mighty advantage in the first impulse of the soul. When thy heart is once up in warm affections and resolutions, the work may be easily done. See 2 Chronicles 29:36, for what advantage there is in a present warm frame. Besides, the nature of these things is too serious and weighty to be postponed and delayed. You cannot get out of the danger of hell, or into Christ, too soon. Moreover, every repetition of sin after conviction greatly aggravates it. For it is in sinning as in numbering: — the first be one, the second is ten, the third a hundred. You can never have a fitter season than the present.

8. If you would be clear from this great wickedness of holding the truth in unrighteousness, see that you reverence the voice and authority of your conscience and resolve with Job, “My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live” (Job 27:6). There are two considerations fitted to beget reverence to the voice of conscience. (1) Conscience obeyed and kept pure and inviolate is thy best friend on earth. “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience” (2Co 1:12). What comforted Hezekiah on his supposed deathbed, but the testimony his conscience gave of his integrity, “I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done good in thy sight” (2Ki 20:3). Solomon says, “The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself” (Pro 14:14). Mark the opposition. Conscience gives the backslider a heart full of sorrow, while the heart of the upright man is full of peace. He is satisfied from himself, that is, from his own conscience, which though it be not the original spring, yet is the conduct at which he drinks peace, joy, and satisfaction.

(2) Conscience wounded and abused will be our worst enemy, “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit, who can bear?” (Pro 18:14). Could Judas bear it? What is the torment of hell, but the worm that dies not, and what is the worm, but the remorse of conscience, “Where their worm dieth not, and [in addition] the fire is not quenched” (Mar 9:44). The primitive Christians would rather be cast to the lions than into the power of an enraged conscience. O if men did but fear and reverence their own consciences. If they exercised themselves to have always a conscience void of offence, as Paul did, (Act 24:16), then would they be clear of this great sin of holding the truth in unrighteousness.

9. If you would escape the guilt and danger of holding God’s truth in unrighteousness, keep your hearts under the awful sense of the Day of Judgment, when every secret thing will be brought to light and conscience like a register-book will be opened and examined. The due consideration of that Day gives the conscience a sevenfold defense against sin. First, it incites every man to get real, solid grace, and not rest in an empty profession, and this secures us from

formal hypocrisy, that we should not be found foolish virgins (Mat 25:3). Second, it excites us to the diligent improvement of our talents, that we be not found slothful servants, neglecting any duty to which God and conscience calls us (Mat 25:21). Third, it confirms and establishes us in the ways of God, that we wound not conscience by apostasy (1Jo 2:28). Fourth, it is a loud call to every man to repentance and not to lie stupid and senseless under guilt (Act 17:30, 31). Fifth, it is a powerful antidote against formality in religion, the general and dangerous disease of professors (Mat 7:22-23). Sixth, it excites holy fear and watchfulness in the whole course of life (1Pe 1:17). Seventh, it puts us not only on our watch, but on our knees in fervent prayer (1Pe 4:7). (John Flavel, 1689)

WRONGS RIGHTED

How many Christians there are who seldom get any real, definite, and remarkable answers to their prayers! How many, if they were frank, would have to acknowledge, “For some reason or other God does not answer *my* prayers.” This ought to occasion much concern, exercise of conscience, and searching of heart before Him. God is more willing to give, than His people are to receive. He is their Father and delights to make them happy, “Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (Joh 16:24). But God is *holy* and will not compromise with our sins, nor condone that which is evil, and He requires us to be holy too (See 1Pe 1:15-16).

Yes, the sad fact remains that many Christians do not have the ear of God. Where this is the case, something is wrong in their lives, something which has “grieved the Spirit” (Eph 4:30) and *choked* the channel of blessing. To them it has to be said, “Your sins have withholden good things from you” (Jer 5:25). Nor is that word to be restricted to the present. I may be walking in the path of obedience today, and yet there may be something in the past which is hindering my entering into God’s best for me now.

It behooves every Christian who is not regularly receiving striking and blessed answers to his or her prayers, to diligently review their past lives in connection with their conduct both toward God and toward their fellow-men, earnestly begging the Holy Spirit to bring to their remembrance anything which is grievous in His sight. When He does so, *it is not sufficient* to repent and merely confess the sin unto God! But where that sin has been against a fellow-creature, it must be confessed to him or to her (See Mat 5:23-24; Jam 5:16), and everything in my power must be done to right the wrong, and make full restitution (Luk 19:8).

Alas that there is so very little teaching along this line today. Alas that so many of God’s dear children have rather been instructed to puzzle their brains over whether the parable of the ten virgins treats of “Christendom” or the Jews in the “Tribulation period,” or whether the battle of “Armageddon” is to be fought in a valley or on a mountain—occupation with such questions in *these* days makes us think of Nero fiddling while Rome was burning! It is the *practical* side of Christianity, that which pertains to our *present* welfare, both spiritually and temporally which need to be chiefly pondered. But these popular teachers cannot give out what they do not have in their own hearts, and the daily lives of most of them make it only too evident that they are

strangers to an experimental and practical knowledge of God in their souls. Give such men a wide berth, my reader, for neither their lectures nor their writings can do you any real good.

Not long ago the editor was speaking on this subject and the Lord revealed to him that the message was specially designed for one sister who was present about whose life he knew nothing whatever. After the meeting, she requested a private interview and confessed to him a terrible sin (not immorality), which she had committed years ago, known to no human being. To right that wrong meant deep humiliation and self-abasement before cherished friends. She told us she had been praying long and earnestly for the salvation of her husband. We told her that until that sin in her past life was put right, she might as well pray to the stove, as to an holy God. She slept little that night, fighting her battle alone before God. Grace gave her the victory. The next morning, she assured us that she was fully willing to do all in her power to right the wrong, no matter what the cost to her. And now for the sequel.

When the above-mentioned sister arrived home, some days later, God had unmistakably and gloriously saved her husband. She found him on his knees! He now conducts their family worship. It is a new home! Much more might be added by way of amplification, but sufficient has been said for our present purpose. Reader, *what* is hindering *your* getting wondrous answers to prayer? What sin, what wrong is there in your past life, which needs be righted, not only before God but with your fellow-man? O allow the devil no longer to cheat you out of God's best for this life. Prayerfully re-read the above and *act upon it*.



DECEMBER

THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

Our present subject brings before us a very different aspect of the truth from that which engaged our attention in the last article—a greater contrast could scarcely be imagined—Christ the Servant, Christ the Sovereign, subject to the will of another, exercising His own imperial pleasure, and that, at the same season! Verily, “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in flesh” (1Ti 3:16). In passing, let it be pointed out that the seeming conflict between the divine justice and the divine mercy, between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility, between the Christian’s being “under grace” (Rom 6:14) and yet “under law” (1Co 9:21), between salvation itself being both a “gift” (Eph 2:8) and a “reward” (Col 3:24), presents no greater paradox than the above. Our bounden duty is to believe *both* sides of the paradox as they are revealed in the Scriptures, going as far with each as Scripture goes and leaving with God the perfect consistency between them.

The Greek word for “lord” means one having personal right to rule, such as is exercised in the guiding and governing of a family. More properly it signifies a master or governor over servants, who are bound to obey him. Such a Governor and Ruler is Christ, whether we consider His title to this dominion or the exercise of it. He has this title to universal Lordship by creation (Joh 1:3)—having made all things. He has the right to dispose of them, by sustentation (Col 1:16)—as the Preserver, He has the right to rule all things, by divine appointment (Joh 3:35)—all things having been committed unto Him, by personal fitness (Col 1:19).

There is a twofold “Lordship” belonging to Christ. One which is natural, absolute, underived, pertaining to Him as He is simply considered as second person of the Trinity, to whom all the dignities and royalties of the divine nature do belong, equally as to the Father and the Holy Spirit, which Lordship in all Three is founded upon their joint concern in the making of all things and also in the governing of them. But there is also another “Lordship” pertaining to Christ, namely, a derived and dispensatory one, which is established by the counsels of God for the effecting of all His works both for and unto Him, which Lordship is proper and peculiar to Christ considered as God-man Mediator, to whom as such “all power” or “authority” has been *given* unto him “in heaven and in earth” (Mat 28:18), “And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man” (Joh 5:27).

It is this *delegated* or mediatorial Lordship of Christ which we are now to contemplate. It was of this that Peter spoke when he said, “Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath

made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Act 2:36). There is a “made” lordship of Him who yet, by virtue of it, made all things. Paul also referred to this when he said, “whom he hath appointed heir of all things” (Heb 1:2). “Heir” here is equivalent to “Lord” and “appointed” to “made.” Christ’s being “Lord” evidently imports an office and economy committed to Him and undertaken by Him, as “Christ” also doth.

As “Lord,” Christ has been appointed by the Godhead to “*rule over* all things.” He Himself avowed, “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him” (Joh 17:2). Now it is a serious mistake to suppose that our blessed Redeemer only entered upon this office at His ascension, as it is to think that He has ceased to be Servant and no longer obeys in heaven. Luke 2:11 emphatically declares, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ *the Lord*.” True, there was only an initial entering upon that office at His birth, the full assumption and exercise thereof awaiting His exaltation, nevertheless this, as we shall see, was real.

If we go carefully through the four Gospels with this thought before us, we shall catch many glimpses of Christ’s execution of His Lordship even during the days of His flesh. Listen to His words when the poor leper came to Him for healing, “And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, *I will*; be thou clean” (Mat 8:3). See Him cursing the fig tree (Mat 21:19)—none could rightfully do so, save the Maker and Lord of it. Behold Him giving orders for the winds and waves to be still (Mat 8:26). Ponder His repeated, “Verily, verily, *I say* unto you.” None other ever used such language. Observe Him authoritatively bidding disease to flee and the dead to arise. See Him casting out demons and causing them to quake before Him. What demonstrations were these that He, who had taken upon Him the form of a Servant, had *not* relinquished His Lordship. Appropriately was His name called “Wonderful” (Isa 9:6).

Again and again He referred to Himself in this character. To His disciples He said, “Pray ye therefore *the Lord of the harvest*, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Mat 9:38). When bidding them ask for the use of the ass and its colt He said, “Ye shall say, *the Lord* hath need of them” (Mat 21:3). He commended His apostles for owning Him as such: “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am” (Joh 13:13). His commissioning of His servants evidenced the same fact (Matt 10:5-7; 28:19). His implicit demand for obedience from His followers showed the same thing (Joh 14:15). His possession of the keys of death and hell (Rev 1:18) manifest His high dominion. His appointing of officers in the church exhibits His Lordship (Eph 4:11-12). His rule over the churches demonstrates His sovereign dominion (Rev 1-3). His opening and shutting of doors for His servants (Rev 3:7) clearly displays His Lordship. His rewarding of His saints (Rev 22:12) witnesses to this truth. His destroying of His enemies (Mat 22:13) will solemnly attest it.

A word upon the character and scope of His Lordship. He is “Lord *of* all” (Act 10:36), “Lord *over* all” (Rom 10:12), and Lord *by* whom all creatures and things exist and consist, “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (1Co 8:6)—“one God” in three persons, “one Lord” or Mediator. All things are of God originally, by Christ derivatively. This fact will be universally acknowledged at the last day, when “every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is LORD” (Phi 2:10-11). He is not only a universal Lord, but an all-powerful one, for He “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to *subdue all* things unto himself” (Phi 3:21). He is an unrivalled Lord, the “only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1Ti 6:15).

We trust that what has been brought out above will enable the reader to distinguish clearly between the deity and the Lordship of Christ. In His person, He *is* very God of very God. But when He took manhood into union with Himself, as Mediator, the office of universal Lordship was delegated to Him. That office He assumed at His birth, executed throughout His earthly life, continues to discharge in heaven, and will for all eternity. Even on the new earth, the Lamb occupies the throne with God (Rev 22:1). May divine grace move each of us to say from the heart, “My Lord, and my God” (Joh 20:28). What are our responsibilities under such a Lord? First, to serve Him only—not sin and Satan, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Mat 4:10). He is to be served unreservedly, “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord” (Col 3:23). He is to be served diligently, “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord” (Rom 12:11). He is to be served perpetually, “For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s” (Rom 14:8). May divine grace enable us to heed that exhortation, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (Col 2:6).

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

60. The Call of Abraham (11:8)

“The scope of the apostle in this chapter is to prove that the doctrine of faith is an ancient doctrine and that faith hath been always exercised about things not seen, not liable to the judgment of sense and reason. He had proved both points by instances of the fathers before the flood and now he comes to prove them by the examples of those that were eminent for faith after the flood. And in the first place, he pitcheth upon Abraham—a fit instance. He was the father of the faithful and a person of whom the Hebrews boasted. His life was nothing else but a continual practice of faith and therefore he insisteth upon Abraham longer than upon any other of the patriarchs. The first thing for which Abraham is commended in Scripture is his obedience to God, when He called him out of his country. Now the apostle shows this was an effect of faith” (Thomas Manton, 1660).

The second division of Hebrews 11 begins with the verse which is now to be before us. As pointed out in previous articles, Hebrews 11:4-7 present an outline of the life of faith. In verse 4, we are shown where the life of faith *begins*, namely, at that point where the conscience is awakened to our lost condition, where the soul makes a complete surrender to God, and where the heart rests upon the perfect satisfaction made by Christ our Surety. In verse 5, we are shown the *character* of the life of faith—a pleasing of God, a walking with Him, the heart elevated above this world of death. In verses 6-7, we are shown the *end* of the life of faith—a diligent seeking of God, a heart which is moved by His fear to use those means which He appointed and prescribed, issuing in the saving of the soul, and establishing its title to be an heir of the righteousness which

is by faith. Wonderfully comprehensive are the contents of these opening verses and well repaid will be the prayerful student who ponders them again and again.

From Hebrews 11:8 to the end of the chapter, the Holy Spirit gives us fuller details concerning the life of faith, viewing it from different angles, contemplating varied aspects, and exhibiting the different trials to which it is subject, and the blessed triumphs which divine grace enables it to achieve. Fitly does this new section of our chapter open by presenting to us the case of Abraham. In his days, a new and important era of human history commenced. Hitherto God had maintained a general relation to the whole human race, but at the Tower of Babel that relation was broken. It was there that mankind, as a whole, consummated their revolt against their Maker, in consequence of which He abandoned them. To that point is to be traced the origin of “Heathendom.” Romans 1:18-30 should be read in this connection. From this point onwards, God’s dealings with men were virtually confined to Abraham and his posterity.

That a new division of our chapter commences at verse 8 is further evident from the fact that Abraham is designated “the *father* of all them that believe” (Rom 4:11), which means not only that he is (as it were) the earthly head of the whole election of grace, but the one after whose likeness his spiritual children are conformed. There is a family likeness between Abraham and the true Christian, for if we are Christ’s, then we are “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:29), for “they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham” (Gal 3:7), which is evidenced by them doing “the works of Abraham” (Joh 8:39), for these are the marks of identification. In like manner, Christ declared of the Pharisees, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts [desires and behests] of your father ye will [are determined] to do” (Joh 8:44). The wicked bear the family likeness of the wicked one. The “fatherhood of Abraham” is twofold—natural, as the progenitor of a physical seed, spiritual, as the pattern to which his children are morally conformed.

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went (Heb 11:8). In taking up the study of this verse, our first concern should be to ascertain its meaning and message *for us today*. In order to discover this, we must begin by seeking to know what was shadowed forth in the great incident here recorded. A little meditation should make it obvious that the central thing referred to is the divine call of which Abraham was made the recipient. This is confirmed by a reference to Genesis 12:1, where we have the historical account of that to which the Spirit by the apostle here alludes. Further proof is furnished by Acts 7:2-3. This, then, must be our starting point.

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are *the called* according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28) There are two distinct kinds of “calls” from God mentioned in Scripture—a general and a particular, an outward and an inward, an inoperative and an effectual. The general, external, and inefficacious “call” is given to all who hear the Gospel or come under the sound of the Word. *This* call is *refused* by all. It is found in such passages as the following, “Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man” (Pro 8:4); “For many be called, but few chosen” (Mat 20:16); “And sent his servant at suppertime to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse” (Luk 14:17-18); “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;” etc. (Pro 1:24-28).

The special, inward, and efficacious “call” of God comes only to His elect. It is responded to by each favoured one who receives it. It is referred to in such passages as the following, “The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (Joh 5:25); “He calleth

his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice . . . and other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice” (Joh 10:3-4, 16); “Whom he called, them he also justified” (Rom 8:30); “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise” (1Co 1:26-29). This call is illustrated and exemplified in such cases as Matthew (Luk 5:27-28), Zacchaeus (Luk 19:5-6), Saul of Tarsus (Act 9:4-5).

The individual, internal, and invincible call of God is an act of sovereign grace, accompanied by all-mighty power, quickening those who are dead in trespasses and sins, imparting to them spiritual life. This divine call is regeneration, or the new birth, when its favoured recipient is brought “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1Pe 2:9). Now *this* is what is before us in Hebrews 11:8, which gives additional proof that this verse commences a new section of the chapter. The wondrous call which Abraham received from God is necessarily placed at the head of the Spirit’s detailed description of the life of faith. Necessarily, we say, for faith itself is utterly impossible until the soul has been divinely quickened.

Let us first contemplate the state that Abraham was in until and at the time God called him. To view him in his unregenerate condition is a duty which the Holy Spirit pressed upon Israel of old, “Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the *hole of the pit* whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you” (Isa 51:1-2). Help is afforded if we turn to Joshua 24:2, “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor: and they *served other gods*.” Abraham, then, belonged to a heathen family and dwelt in a great city until he was seventy. No doubt he lived his life after the same manner as his fellows—content with the “husks” which the swine feed upon, with little or no serious thoughts of the Hereafter. Thus it is with each of God’s elect till the divine call comes to them and arrests them in their self-will, mad, and destructive course.

“The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran” (Act 7:2). What marvelous grace! The God of glory condescended to draw near and reveal Himself unto one that was sunk in sin, immersed in idolatry, having no concern for the divine honour. There was nothing in Abraham to deserve God’s notice, still less to merit His esteem. But more, not only was the *grace* of God here signally evident, but the *sovereignty* of His grace was displayed in thus singling him out from the midst of all his fellows. As He says in Isaiah 51:2, “I called him *alone*, and blessed him.” “Why God should not call his father and kindred, there can be no answer but this, God hath mercy on whom He will (See Rom 9:18). He calleth Isaac and refuseth Ishmael; loveth Jacob and hateth Esau; taketh Abel and leaveth Cain—even because He will, and for no cause that we know” (William Perkins, 1595).

“The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham” (Act 7:2). All that is included in these words, we know not, as to how God “appeared” unto him, we cannot say. But of two things we may be certain, for the first time in Abraham’s life, God became a *living reality* to him. Further he perceived that He was an all-glorious being. Thus it is, sooner or later, in the personal experience of each of God’s elect. In the midst of their worldliness, self-seeking, and self-pleasing, one day, He of whom they had but the vaguest notions, and whom they sought to dismiss from their thoughts, appears before their hearts—terrifying, awakening, and then attracting. Now it is they can say, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee” (Job 42:5).

O dear reader, our desire here is not simply to write an article, but to be used of God in addressing a definite message from Him straight to your inmost heart. Suffer us then to inquire,

Do you know anything about what has been said in the above paragraph? Has God become a living reality to your soul? Has He really drawn near to you, manifested Himself in His awe-inspiring Majesty, and had direct and personal dealings with your soul? Or do you know no more about Him than what *others* write and say of Him? This is a question of vital moment, for if He does not have personal dealings with you here in a way of grace, He will have personal dealings with you hereafter, in a way of justice and judgment. Then, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near (Isa 55:6).

This, then, is one important aspect of regeneration—God graciously makes a personal revelation of Himself to the soul. The result is that He “who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). The favoured individual in whom this miracle of grace is wrought is now brought out of that dreadful state in which he lay by nature, whereby “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1Co 2:14). So fearful is that state in which all the unregenerate lie, it is described as “having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph 4:18). But at the new birth the soul is delivered from the terrible darkness of sin and depravity into which the Fall of Adam has brought all his descendants and is ushered into the marvelous and glorious light of God.

Let us next consider the accompaniment of *terms* of the call which Abraham now received from God. A record of this is found in Genesis 12:1, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee.” What a testing of faith was this! What a trial to flesh and blood! Abraham was already seventy years of age and long journeys and the break-up of old associations do not commend themselves to elderly people. To leave the land of his birth, to forsake home and estate, to sever family ties and leave loved ones behind, to abandon present certainty for (what seemed to human wisdom) a future uncertainty, and go forth not knowing whither, must have seemed hard and harsh unto natural sentiment. Why, then, should God make such a demand? To prove Abraham, to give the death-blow to his natural corruptions, to demonstrate the might of His grace. Yet we must look for something deeper and that which applies directly to us.

As we have pointed out above, God’s appearing to Abraham and His call of him speaks to us of that miracle of grace which takes place in the soul at regeneration. Now the evidence of regeneration is found in genuine *conversion*. It is that complete break from the old life, both inner and outer, which furnishes proof of the new birth. It is plain to any renewed mind that when a soul has been favoured with a real and personal manifestation of God, that a move or response is called for from him. It is simply impossible that he should continue his old manner of life. A new object is before him, a new relationship has been established, new desires now fill his heart, and new responsibilities claim him. The moment a man truly realizes that he has to do with God, there must be a radical change, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2Co 5:17).

The call which Abraham received from God required a double response from him. He was to leave the land of his birth and forsake his own kindred. What, then, is the *spiritual* significance of these things? Remember that Abraham was a *pattern* case, for he is the “father” of all Christians and the children must be conformed to the family likeness. Abraham is the prototype of those who are “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb 3:1). Now the spiritual

application to us of what was adumbrated by the terms of Abraham's call is twofold—doctrinal and practical, legal and experimental. Let us, briefly, consider them separately.

“Get thee out of thy country” (Gen 12:1) finds its counterpart in the fact that the Christian is one who has, by grace, the redemptive work of Christ, and the miraculous operation of the Spirit, been delivered from his *old position*. By nature, the Christian was a member of “the world,” the whole of which “lieth in wickedness” (1Jo 5:19) and so is headed for destruction. But God's elect have been delivered from this. Christ “gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father” (Gal 1:4). Therefore does He say unto His own, “because ye are *not of* the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (Joh 15:19).

“Get thee out of thy country” finds its fulfillment, first, in the Christian's being delivered from his *old condition*, namely, “in the flesh.” “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom 6:6). He has now been made a member of a new family, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1Jo 3:1). He is now brought into union with a new “kindred,” for all born-again souls are his brethren and sisters in Christ, “They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are *not in* the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you” (Rom 8:8-9). Thus, the call of God is a separating one—from our old standing and state, into a new one.

Now what has just been pointed out above is already, from the divine side, an accomplished fact. Legally, the Christian no longer belongs to “the world,” nor is he “in the flesh.” But this has to be entered into practically from the human side and made good in our actual experience. Because our “citizenship is in heaven” (Phi 3:20), we are to live here as “strangers and pilgrims.” A practical separation from the world is demanded of us, for “the friendship of the world is enmity with God” (Jam 4:4). Therefore does God say, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers . . . come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2Co 6:14, 17). So too the “flesh,” still in us, is to be allowed no rein. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom 12:1); “Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom 13:14); “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth” (Col 3:5).

The claims of Christ upon His people are paramount. He reminds them that, “Ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price” (1Co 6:19-20). Therefore does He say, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luk 14:26). The response is declared in, “They that are Christ's *have* crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24). Thus the terms of the call which Abraham received from God are addressed to *our* hearts. A complete break from the old life is required of us.

Practical *separation from the world* is imperative. This was typed out of old in the history of Abraham's descendants. They had settled down in Egypt—figure of the world—and after they had come under the blood of the Lamb, and before they entered Canaan (type of heaven), they *must* leave the land of Pharaoh. Hence too God says of our Surety “Out of Egypt have I called my Son” (Mat 2:15). The Head must be conformed to the members and the members to their Head. Practical mortification of *the flesh* is equally imperative. “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die [eternally]; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live [eternally]” (Rom 8:13). “But he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal 6:8).

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Heb 11:8). This verse, read in the light of Genesis 12:1, clearly signifies that God demanded the supreme place in Abraham’s affections. His life was no longer to be regulated by self-will, self-love, self-pleasing. Self was to be entirely set aside, “crucified.” Henceforth, the will and Word of God was to govern and direct him in all things. Henceforth he was to be a man without a *home* on earth, but seeking one in heaven and treading that path which alone leads thither.

Now it should be very evident from what has been said above that, regeneration or an effectual call from God is a *miraculous* thing, as far above the reach of nature as the heavens are above the earth. When God makes a personal revelation of Himself to the soul, this is accompanied by the communication of supernatural grace, which produces supernatural fruit. It was contrary to nature for Abraham to leave home and country and go forth “not knowing whither he went” (Heb 11:8). Equally is it contrary to nature for the Christian to separate from the world and crucify the flesh. A miracle of divine grace has to be wrought within him, before any man will really deny self and live in complete subjection to God. And this leads us to say that, genuine cases of regeneration are much rarer than many suppose. The spiritual children of Abraham are very far from being a numerous company, as is abundantly evident from the fact that few indeed bear his likeness. Out of all the thousands of professing Christians around us, how many manifest Abraham’s faith or do Abraham’s works?

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Heb 11:8). This verse, read in the light upon which we would fix our attention, is Abraham’s *obedience*. A saving faith is one which heeds the divine commands, as well as relies upon the divine promises. Make no mistake upon this point, dear reader, Christ is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey* him” (Heb 5:9). Abraham placed himself unreservedly in the hands of God, surrendered to His lordship, and subscribed to His wisdom as best fitted to direct him. And so must we or we shall never be “carried into Abraham’s bosom” (Luk 16:22).

Abraham “obeyed; and he went out” (Heb 11:8). There are two things there—“obeyed,” signifies the consent of his mind, “and went out,” tells of his actual performance. He obeyed not only in word, but in deed. In this, he was in marked contrast from the rebellious one mentioned in Matthew 21:30, “I go, sir, and went not.” “The first act of saving faith consists in a discovery and sight of the infinite greatness, goodness, and other excellencies of the nature of God, so as to judge it our duty upon His call, His command, and promise to deny ourselves, to relinquish all things, and to do so accordingly” (John Owen, 1616-1683). Such ought our obedience to be unto God’s call and to every manifestation of His will. It must be a simple obedience in subjection to His authority, without inquiring after the reason thereof, and without objecting any scruples or difficulties against it.

“Observe that faith, wherever it is, bringeth forth obedience. By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed God. Faith and obedience can never be severed, as the sun and the light, fire and heat. Therefore we read of the ‘obedience of faith’ (Rom 1:5). Obedience is faith’s daughter. Faith hath not only to do with the grace of God, but with the duty of the creature. By apprehending grace, it works upon duty, ‘faith which worketh by love’ (Gal 5:6). It fills the soul with the apprehensions of God’s love and then makes use of the sweetness of love to urge us to more work or obedience. All our obedience to God comes from love to God and our love comes from the persuasion of God’s love to us. The argument and discourse that is in a sanctified soul is set down thus, ‘I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me’ (Gal 2:20). Wilt thou not

do this for God that loved thee? for Jesus Christ, that gave Himself for thee? Faith works towards obedience by commanding the affections” (Thomas Manton, 1680).

“He went forth *not* knowing whither he went” (Heb 11:8). How this demonstrates the reality and power of his faith—to leave a present possession for a future one. Abraham’s obedience is the more conspicuous because at the time God called him, He did not specify which land he was to journey to, nor where it was located. Thus, it was by faith and not by sight, that he moved forward. Implicit confidence in the One who had called him was needed on the part of Abraham. Imagine a total stranger coming and bidding you follow him, without telling you where! To undertake a journey of unknown length, one of difficulty and danger, towards a land of which he knew nothing, called for real faith in the living God. See here the power of faith to triumph over fleshly disinclinations, to surmount obstacles, to perform difficult duties. Reader, is *this* the nature of *your* faith? Is your faith producing works which are not only *above* the power of mere nature to perform, but also directly *contrary* thereto?

Abraham’s faith is hard to find these days. There is much talk and boasting, but most of it is empty words—the *works* of Abraham are conspicuous by their absence, in the vast majority of those who claim to be his children. The Christian is required to set his affections on things above and not on things below (Col 3:1). He is required to walk by faith and not by sight, to tread the path of obedience to God’s commands and not please himself, to go and do whatever the Lord bids him. Even if God’s commands appear severe or unreasonable, we must obey them, “Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise” (1Co 3:18). “And He said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luk 9:23).

But such an obedience as God requires can only proceed from a *supernatural* faith. An unshakable confidence in the living God and unreserved surrender to His holy will, each step of our lives being ordered by His Word (Psa 119:105), can only issue from a miraculous work of grace which He has Himself wrought in the heart. How many there are who profess to be God’s people yet only obey Him so long as they consider that their *own* interests are being served! How many are unwilling to quit trading on the Sabbath because they fear a few dollars will be lost! Now just as a traveler on foot, who takes a long journey through an unknown country, seeks a reliable guide, commits himself to his leading, trusts to his knowledge, and follows him implicitly o’er hill and dale, so God requires us to commit ourselves fully unto Him, trusting His faithfulness, wisdom and power, and yielding to every demand which He makes upon us.

“He went forth not knowing whither he went” (Heb 11:8). Most probably many of his neighbours and acquaintances in Chaldea would inquire why he was leaving them and where he was bound for. Imagine their surprise when Abraham had to say, I know not. Could *they* appreciate the fact that he was walking by faith and not by sight? Would they commend him for following divine orders? Would they not rather deem him crazy? And, dear reader, the godless will no more understand the motives which prompt the real children of God today than could the Chaldeans understand Abraham. The unregenerate professing Christians all around us will no more approve of our strict compliance with God’s commands than did Abraham’s heathen neighbours. The world is governed by the senses, not faith, lives to please self, not God. And if the world does not deem you and me crazy, then there is something radically wrong with our hearts and our lives.

One other point remains to be considered and we must reluctantly conclude this article. The obedience of Abraham’s faith was *unto* “a place which he should after receive for an inheritance” (Heb 11:8). Literally, that “inheritance” was Canaan—spiritually, it foreshadowed heaven. Now

had Abraham refused to make the radical break which he did from his old life, crucify the affections of the flesh, and leave Chaldea, he had never reached the promised land. The Christian's "inheritance" is purely of *grace* for what can any man do in time to earn something which is eternal? Utterly impossible is it for any finite creature to perform anything which deserves an infinite reward. Nevertheless, God has marked out a certain path which conducts to the promised inheritance—the path of obedience, the "narrow way" which "leadeth *unto* life" (Mat 7:14), and only ever reach heaven who tread *that* path to the end.

As the utmost confusion now reigns upon this subject and as many are, through an unwarranted reserve, afraid to speak out plainly thereon, we feel obliged to add a little more. Unqualified obedience is required from us *not* to furnish title to heaven—that is found alone in the merits of Christ, not to fit us for heaven—that is supplied alone by the supernatural work of the Spirit in the heart, but that God may be owned and honoured by us as we journey thither, that we may prove and manifest the sufficiency of His grace, that we may furnish evidence we *are* HIS children, that we may be preserved from those things which would otherwise destroy us—only in the path of obedience can we avoid those foes which are seeking to slay us.

O dear reader, as you value your soul, we entreat you not to spurn this article and particularly its closing paragraphs, because its teaching differs radically from what you are accustomed to hear or read. The path of obedience *must* be trod if ever you are to reach heaven. Many are acquainted with that path or "way," but they walk not therein—see 2 Peter 2:20. Many, like Lot's wife, make a start along it and then turn from it—see Luke 9:62. Many follow it for quite a while, but fail to persevere and like Israel of old, perish in the wilderness. No rebel can enter heaven. One who is wrapt up in self cannot. No disobedient soul will. Only those will partake of the heavenly "inheritance" who are "the children of Abraham," who have his faith, follow his examples, perform his works. May the Lord deign to add His blessings to the above and to Him shall be all the praise.

THE LIFE OF DAVID

12. His Delivering of Keilah

The first section of 1 Samuel 23 (which we are now to look at) presents some striking contrasts. In it are recorded incidents exceedingly blessed, others fearfully sad. David is seen at his best, Saul at his worst. David humbly waits on the Lord, Saul presumes upon and seeks to pervert His providences. Saul is indifferent to the well-being of his own subjects, David delivers them from their enemies. David, at imminent risk, rescues the town of Keilah from the marauding Philistines. Yet so lacking are they in gratitude that they were ready to hand him over unto the man who sought his life. Though the priests of the Lord, with their entire families, had been brutally slain by Saul's orders, yet the awful malice of the king was not thereby appeased. He is

now seen again seeking the life of David and that at the very time when he had so unselfishly wrought good for the nation.

It is instructive and helpful to keep in mind the *order* of what has been before us in previous articles, so that we may perceive one of the important spiritual lessons in what is now to be before us. David had failed, failed sadly. We all do, but David had done what many are painfully slow in doing. He had humbled himself before the Lord, he had repented of and confessed his sins. In our last paper, we saw how that David had been restored, in considerable measure at least, to communion with the Lord. God had spoken to him through His prophet. Light was now granted again on his path. The word was given him to return to the land of Judah (1Sa 22:5). That word he had heeded and now we are to see how the Lord *used* him again. Strikingly does this illustrate 1 Peter 5:6, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”

“Then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshing floors” (1Sa 23:1). Here we may see another reason (more than those suggested at the close of our last article) why God had called David to return to the land of Judah. He had further work for him to do there. Keilah was within the borders of that tribe (Jos 15:21, 44). It was a fortified town (1 Sa 23:7), and the Philistines had laid siege to it. The “threshing floors” (which were usually situated outside the cities, Jdg 6:11; Ru 3:2, 15) were already being pilfered by them. Who it was that acquainted David with these tidings we know not.

“Therefore David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines?” (1Sa 23:2). Very blessed is this and further evidence does it supply of David’s spiritual recovery. Saul was neglecting the public safety, but the one whom he was hounding was concerned for it. Though he had been ill-treated, David was not sulking over his wrongs, but instead was ready to return good for evil, by coming to the assistance of one of the king’s besieged towns. What a noble spirit did he here manifest! Though his hands were full in seeking to hide from Saul and provide for the needs of his six hundred men (no small task!), yet David unselfishly thought of the welfare of others.

“Therefore David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines?” (1Sa 23:2). This is very beautiful. Having been anointed unto the throne, David considered himself the protector of Israel and was ready to employ his men for the public weal. He had an intense love for his country and was desirous of freeing it from its enemies, yet he would not act without first seeking counsel of the Lord. He desired that *God* should appoint his service. The more particularly we seek direction from God in fervent prayer and the more carefully we consult the sacred Scriptures for the knowledge of His will, the more He is honoured, and the more we are benefited.

“And the LORD said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah” (1Sa 23:2). Where God is truly sought—that is, sought sincerely, humbly, trustfully, with the desire to learn, and do that which is pleasing to Him—the soul will not be left in ignorance. God does not mock His needy children. His Word declares, “In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he *shall* direct thy paths” (Pro 3:6). So it was here. The Lord responded to David’s inquiry—possibly through the prophet Gad—and not only revealed His will, but gave promise that he should be successful.

“And David’s men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?” (1Sa 23:3). This presented a real test to David’s confidence in the Lord, for if his men were unwilling to accompany him, how could he expect to relieve the besieged town? His men were obviously “afraid” of being caught between two fires. Were they to advance upon the Philistines and Saul’s army should follow them up in

the rear, then where would they be? Ah, their eyes were not upon the living God, but upon their difficult “circumstances,” and to be occupied with these is always discouraging to the heart. But how often has a man of God, when facing a trying situation, found the unbelief of his professed friends and followers a real hindrance. Yet he should regard this as a test and not as an obstacle. Instead of paralyzing action, it ought to drive him to seek succour from Him who never fails those who truly count upon His aid.

“Then David inquired of the LORD yet again” (1Sa 23:4). This is very precious. David did not allow the unbelieving fears of his men to drive him to despair. He could hardly expect them to walk by *his* faith. But he knew that when God works, He works at both ends of the line. He who had given him orders to go to the relief of Keilah, could easily quieten the hearts of his followers, remove their fears, and make them willing to follow his lead. Yes, with God “all things are possible” (Mat 19:26). But He requires to be “inquired of” (Eze 36:37). He delights to be “proved” (Mal 3:10). Oft He permits just such a trial as now faced David in order to teach us more fully His sufficiency for every emergency.

“Then David inquired of the LORD yet again” (1Sa 23:4). Yes, this is blessed indeed. David did not storm at his men and denounce them as cowards. That had done no good. Nor did he argue and attempt to reason with them. Disdaining his own wisdom, feeling his utter dependency upon God, and more especially for their benefit—to set before them a godly example—he turned once more unto Jehovah. Let us learn from this incident that the most effectual way of answering the unbelieving objections of faint-hearted followers and of securing their co-operation is to refer them unto the promises and precepts of God and set before them an example of complete dependency upon Him and of implicit confidence in Him.

“And the Lord answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand” (1Sa 23:4). How sure is the fulfillment of that promise, “Them that honour me I will honour” (1Sa 2:30)! We always lose by acting independently of God, but we never lose by seeking counsel, guidance, and grace from Him. God did not ignore David’s inquiry. He was not displeased by his asking a second time. How gracious and patient He is! He not only responded to David’s petition, but He gave an answer more explicit than at the first, for He now assured His servant of entire victory. May this encourage many a reader to come unto God with every difficulty, cast every care upon Him, and count upon His succour ever hour.

“So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah” (1Sa 23:5). Animated by a commission and promise from God, David and his men moved forward and attacked the Philistines. Not only did they completely rout the enemy, but they captured their cattle, which supplied food for David’s men, that they were probably in much need of. How this furnishes an illustration of, “Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly *above* all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Eph 3:20)! God not only overthrew the Philistines and delivered Keilah, but as well bountifully provided David’s army with a supply of victuals.

“And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand” (1Sa 23:6) This was a further reward from the Lord unto David for obeying His word. As we shall see later, the presence of the high priest and his ephod with him, stood David in good stead in the future. We may also see here a striking example of the absolute control of God over all His creatures. It was David’s visit to Ahimelech that had resulted in the slaying of all his family. Well then might the only son left feel that the son of Jesse was the last man whose fortunes he desired to share.

“And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars” (1Sa 23:7). Surely David’s signal victory over the common enemy should have reconciled Saul to him. Was it not abundantly clear that God was with him and if *He* were with him, who could be against him? But one who is abandoned by the Lord can neither discern spiritual things nor judge righteously and therefore his conduct will be all wrong too. Accordingly we find that instead of thinking how he might most suitably reward David for his courageous and unselfish generosity, Saul desired only to do him mischief. Well might our patriarch write, “They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul” (Psa 35:12).

“And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars.” (1Sa 23:7). How easy it is for a jaundiced mind to view things in a false light. When the heart is wrong, the providences of God are certain to be misinterpreted. Terrible is it to behold the apostate king here concluding that God Himself had now sold David into his hands. That man has sunk to a fearful depth who blatantly assumes that the Almighty is working to further his wicked plan. While David was at large, hiding in caves and sheltering in the woods, he was hard to find, but here in a walled town, Saul supposed he would be completely trapped when his army surrounded it.

“And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.” (1Sa 23:8). If we omit the last clause and read on through the next verse, it will be seen that the unscrupulous Saul resorted to a dishonest ruse. To make war against the Philistines was the ostensible object which the king set before his men, to capture David was his real design. The last clause of verse 8 states Saul’s secret motive. While pretending to oppose the common enemy, he was intending to destroy his best friend. Verily, the devil was his father and the lusts of his father he would do.

“And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod” (1Sa 23:9). Yes, “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him” (Psa 25:14). Ah, but *only* with them that truly “fear” Him. “If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not” (Joh 11:9). “He that followeth me,” said Christ, “shall not walk in darkness” (Joh 8:12). O what a blessed thing it is, dear reader, to have light upon our path, to *see* the enemy’s snares and pitfalls. But in order to this, there must be a walking with Him who is “the light” (Joh 8:12). If we are out of communion with the Lord, if we have for the moment turned aside from the path of His commandments, then we can no longer perceive the dangers which menace us.

“And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him” (1Sa 23:9). This is very blessed, and recorded for our instruction. We ought not to be ignorant of Satan’s devices (2Co 2:11), nor shall we be if our hearts are right with God. Observe carefully that this 9th verse opens with the word, “And,” which announces the fact that it is connected with and gives the sequel to what has gone before. And what *had* preceded in this case? First, David had sought counsel of the Lord (1Sa 23:2). Second, he had refused to be turned aside from the path of duty by the unbelieving fears of his followers (1Sa 23:3). Third, he had maintained an attitude of complete dependency upon the Lord (1Sa 23:4). Fourth, he had definitely obeyed the Lord (1Sa 23:5). And now God rewarded him by acquainting him with the enemy’s designs upon him. Meet the conditions, my brother or sister, and you too shall know when the devil is about to attack you.

David was not deceived by Saul’s guile. He knew that though he had given out to his men one thing, yet in his heart he purposed quite another. “Then said David, O LORD God of Israel, Thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake”

(1Sa 23:10). This too is very blessed. Once more David turns to the living God and casts all his care upon Him (1Pe 5:7). Observe well his words. He does not say, “Saul purposeth to slay *me*,” but “he seeketh to destroy *the city* for my sake,” on my account. Is it not lovely to see him more solicitous about the welfare of others, than the preserving of his own life!

“Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the LORD said, He will come down” (1Sa 23:11). It is to be noted that the two questions here asked by David were not orderly put, showing the perturbed state of mind he was then in. We should also observe the manner in which David addressed God, as “LORD God of Israel” (so too in 1Sa 23:10), which was His *covenant* title. It is blessed when we are able to realize the covenant-relationship of God to us (Heb 13:20-21), for it is ever an effectual plea to present before the throne of grace. The Lord graciously responded to David’s supplication and granted the desired information, reversing the order of his questions. God’s saying “He [Saul] will come down” (that is, his purpose), here manifested His omniscience, for He knows all contingencies (possibilities and likelihoods), as well as actualities.

“Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?” (1Sa 23:12). Wise David, he had good cause to conclude that after so nobly befriending Keilah and delivering it from the Philistines, that its citizens would now further his interests, and in such case, he and his own men could defend the town against Saul’s attack. But he prudently refrained from placing any confidence in their loyalty. He probably reasoned that the recent cruel massacre of Nob would fill them with dread of Saul, so that he must not count upon their assistance. Thus did he seek counsel from the Lord. And so ought we. We should never confide in help from others, no, not even those we have befriended and from whom we might reasonably expect a return of kindness. No ties of honour, gratitude, or affection, can secure the heart under powerful temptation. Nay, we know not how *we* would act if assailed by the terrors of a cruel death and left without the immediate support of divine grace. We are to depend *only* upon the Lord for guidance and protection.

“And the LORD said, They will deliver thee up” (1Sa 23:12). This must have been very saddening to David’s heart, for base ingratitude wounds deeply. Yet let us not forget that the kindness of other friends, whom the Lord often unexpectedly raises up, counterbalances the ingratitude and fickleness of those we have served. God answered David here according to His knowledge of the human heart. *Had* David remained in Keilah, its inhabitants would have delivered him up upon Saul’s demand. But he remained not and escaped. Be it carefully noted that this incident furnishes a clear illustration of human responsibility and is a strong case in point against bald Fatalism—taking the passive attitude that what is to be, must be.

“Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forbear to go forth. And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand” (1Sa 23:13-14). This too is blessed. David was willing to expose himself and his men to further hardships, rather than endanger the lives of Keilah! Having no particular place in view, they went forth wherever they thought best. The last half of verse 14 shows God’s protecting hand was still upon them, and is Jehovah’s reply to Saul’s vain and presumptuous confidence in 1 Samuel 23:7.

PEACE: TRUE AND FALSE

Inasmuch as salvation is the bringing of a sinful creature into right relations to God, it necessarily follows that that salvation, in all its parts, must ever be viewed from two sides—the divine and the human. God is the Saviour, a human being the one saved. In the work of salvation, God does not deal with fallen men as inanimate and irresponsible entities, but as moral and accountable agents. The power which He puts forth in the realm of grace is quite different from that which He exerts in the sphere of material creation. The one is spiritual, the other is physical. God works in us so that we are moved to will and to do of His good pleasure. Thus, by noting the effects produced through us, we are able to trace the cause wrought in us. The fruit attests the root.

Inasmuch as salvation is the bringing of a sinful creature into right relations with God, it necessarily follows that that salvation, is both an objective and a subjective thing. That is to say, it is both legal and experimental. Or, in simpler language still, it is both something which is done for us and something which is wrought in us. A salvation effected by a vicarious satisfaction rendered to the Law, but which left the sinner unchanged personally, would be a salvation at the expense of holiness. On the other hand, a salvation which effected the requisite change in the sinner, but ignored the demands of the Law, would be a salvation at the expense of justice. Thus, justification and sanctification are inseparable.

Inasmuch as salvation is the bringing of a sinful creature into right relations to God, it necessarily follows that for peace to be adequately established, both the claims of divine justice and of divine holiness must be met and maintained. Now this is only another way of saying that the wrath of God must be appeased and also that the enmity of men must be slain. The curse of the Law must be removed and a love for the Law implanted in the human heart. The sword of divine justice must be sheathed and the sinner must be made to throw down the weapons of his rebellion against the Law-Giver. Nothing short of this could be a satisfactory peace between the Creator and the creature.

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amo 3:3). No indeed. Then what intercourse can there possibly be between a guilty rebel and a righteous but frowning Judge? Sin has severed the friendship which originally existed between the Creator and His creatures. As it is written, “But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them” (Isa 63:10). In consequence of this, “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (Joh 3:36). Note the present tense—the holy indignation of God will not only be upon the wicked in the lake of fire, but it rests upon them now. It cannot be otherwise, for “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against *all* ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom 1:18).

“The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). “Their enmity against God does not lie still, but they are exceedingly active in it. They are engaged in a war against God. Indeed they cannot hurt God, He is so much above them, but they do what they can. They oppose themselves to His honour and glory. They oppose themselves to the interests of His kingdom in this world. They oppose themselves to the will and command of God. They oppose Him in His government. While God is doing one thing, they are

doing the contrary, and as much as in them lies, counter-working. God seeks one thing, they seek directly the contrary. They list under Satan's banner and are his willing soldiers" (Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758).

God has a controversy with the world and bids His sinful and rebellious creatures cease their controversy with Him. Because they will not, He frequently gives signs of His displeasure and portents of the future storm of divine judgment which shall yet burst upon the wicked and wholly engulf them. Every epidemic of disease, every severe storm on land and sea, every pestilence and famine, every earthquake and flood, is a mark of the Creator's anger, and presages the Day of Judgment. They are divine calls for men to cease fighting against God and solemn warnings of His awful and future vengeance if they will not.

But God is not only just and righteous, but gracious and merciful. Accordingly, He has Himself laid a foundation for sinners to be at peace with Him. This is made known in the Gospel, which is designated "the Gospel of peace" (Eph 6:15). In the Gospel, an announcement is made both of what God (in His grace) has done and of what God (in His holiness) requires from sinful rebels. In that Gospel, God has made known the terms upon which amity with Him may be obtained. But sad to say, we are living in times when the Gospel, like everything else, has been grievously perverted. When that aspect of it which is acceptable to the carnal mind has been made prominent, but when that aspect which is repellent to the flesh has been guiltily concealed. The more clearly God enables the writer to discern this, the more impelled is he to declare and expose it.

There are a great many tracts being circulated today the substance of which purports to give a conversation between an evangelist and some earnest soul who has not yet entered into the full assurance of faith. The latter is represented as "seeking to make his peace with God," whereupon the former flippantly replies, "You are two thousand years too late." The evangelist is then pictured as asking the one to whom he is speaking, to open the Bible and read Colossians 1:20—"Having made peace through the blood of His cross." Then the assertion is made, "*All* that is required from you is to believe that statement and rest upon the finished work which Christ did for you." We greatly fear that thousands of precious souls have been fatally deceived by such superficial and faulty dealings with them.

First of all, let it be duly recognised that Colossians 1:20 *was not addressed* to unsaved people, but instead to "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ" (Col 1:2). Any man who makes it his custom to take the "children's bread" and "cast it to the dogs" at once demonstrates that he is totally unqualified to deal with souls about divine and eternal matters. O how many such are now running without being sent of God! How many "novices" (1Ti 3:6) are bringing the holy truth of God into disrepute by a fleshly zeal which is not according to knowledge! Far better for "young converts" to keep their mouths closed altogether, than to open them to the dishonour of God. "Let *every* man be swift to hear, *slow to speak*" (Jam 1:19) is a much disregarded word these days of feverish activity.

In the second place, let the interested and earnest reader (who desires to please the Lord, rather than follow or be admired by men) turn to the book of Acts and see if the apostles ever preached to unsaved people anything resembling Colossians 1:20. If that important book be read through, it will be found that the message which the apostles delivered to promiscuous crowds was radically different from the "evangelistic" preaching of these degenerate days. Even to Cornelius and his household, who had reverently gathered together to hear "all things that were commanded thee of God" (Act 10:33), Peter declared, "Preaching peace by Jesus Christ: He is *Lord* of all" (Act

10:36). Peace comes to the sinner not simply by his believing on Christ as “Saviour,” but first by his bowing to Him as Lord. Compare Colossians 2:6.

In the third place, to dwell exclusively on that aspect of truth, declared in Colossians 1:20, is to ignore what has been pointed out in the opening paragraphs above, especially the second and third. Colossians 1:20, like Romans 5:1 and Ephesians 2:13-16, treats only of the legal and objective side of the subject, telling of what Christ did for those who repent and believe. But is it right, is it honest, is it pleasing to God, is it helpful to perishing souls, to remain silent upon the experimental side of reconciliation and to say nothing of what God requires from rebellious men before any of them can have *applied to them* what Christ did for His people? Such men are either handling the Word of God “deceitfully” (2Co 4:2) or in great ignorance.

In the fourth place, such tracts as we now refer to and the type of teaching which they embody, betray a sad lack of acquaintance with Holy Writ. In Isaiah 27:5, we find Jehovah Himself saying, “Let him take hold of my strength, that he may *make peace with me*; and he shall make peace with me.” Why that repetition, but that God, in His omniscience, foresaw the evangelistic errors of these perilous times! The same teaching is found in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus declared, “What king, going to make war with another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassador, and desireth *conditions of peace*. So LIKEWISE, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luk 14:31-33), which means he cannot be a Christian—see Matthew 28:19, Acts 11:26.

“The way of peace have they not known” (Rom 3:17), not “known” in a practical way—neither approved nor trodden it. The primary reference here is to an experimental ignorance of that way in which men must walk so as to further the good of their neighbors, for “peace” makes for concord and friendship. It is man’s ferocity which has filled the world with animosities, murders, rebellions, and wars. It has been truly said, “The most savage animals do not destroy so many of their own species to appease their hunger, as man destroys his fellows to satiate his ambition, his revenge, or cupidity” (Robert Haldane, 1764-1842).

Yet though the primary reference be unto man’s relations unto his fellows, these words, “the way of peace have they not known” (Rom 3:17), may well be given a higher application. The way *of* peace is the way that leads *to* peace. There are many who have an intellectual acquaintance with the *ground* of peace with God (namely the perfect satisfaction which Christ made unto divine law and justice), but it is greatly to be feared that the vast majority of them are total strangers experimentally to *the way of* peace. How few today even perceive that there *must be* a zealous renunciation of all those things which have furthered estrangement between God and men. How few today recognize the imperative necessity for casting away the weapons of rebellion against God, the bewailing of our high-handed crimes against Him, and the complete surrender of ourselves to His Lordship.

“There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isa 57:21) and there never will be until they *make their peace with* their offended Maker. By “making our peace” with God, we *do not* mean the performing any works of merit or doing something which entitles us to His favour. No indeed. *That* is utterly impossible. Instead, we mean that the sinner must heed the terms of such a verse as, “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; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa 55:7). God certainly will not pardon our sins while we deliberately remain in them.

By “making our peace with God” is meant that the rebel against God’s holy Law *must truly repent* and until this is done all the “believing” in the world is useless and worthless. Genuine repentance is a heart anguish for having despised and flouted the authority of the all-excellent God. It is a ceasing to be at enmity against God and a becoming at enmity against sin. There cannot be peace with God while we are at peace with sin! We must, by divine grace, be resolved to war against the world, the flesh, and the devil, which constitute the trinity of evil—the arch-enemies of the Blessed Trinity. Peace is the unity and concord of men with God and it is a contradiction in terms to speak of being at peace with Him if I am still striving against Him.

But there are some superficial people who (to their great loss, despise the study of “theology”) imagine that what has been said above sullies the glory of Christ and detracts from the efficacy of His “finished work.” As well might they argue that His present intercession on High does so. What do these people suppose Christ came here to effect? To be the Condoner of sin? To render God less holy? To give a reprieve for the lusts of the flesh? To grant an indulgence for carnal walking? Far, far different was the case. He came here to magnify the Law and make it honourable (Isa 42:21), to procure the Holy Spirit to regenerate and sanctify His people (Gal 3:13-14), to leave them an example that they should follow His steps (1Pe 2:21). Christ died not to reconcile God to our sins, but to bring us into the service, love, and enjoyment of God. True, *our* repentance and reformation would have been useless had not Christ lived and died, yet His atoning sacrifice avails no man who does not repent and surrender to His Lordship. Christ is most honoured when His servants teach that He died to save His people *from* their sins and by His Spirit’s work, enable them to live holy lives in this present evil world.

“And you, that *were* [not “are”!] sometime alienated and enemies [to God] in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled” (Col 1:21). How? By His Spirit overcoming their enmity, changing their hearts, turning them unto God. True, our reconciliation to God is no *cause* of God’s reconciliation to us, yet according to the method which He has settled upon as being most agreeable to His glorious being, to His pure holiness, His hatred of sin, the justice of His government, and the truth of His Word, we cannot say He *is* actually reconciled to us, till we are to Him. We must learn to distinguish between reconciliation purposed by the Father, purchased by Christ, applied by the Spirit, and appropriated by us through repentance and faith.

“When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them” (1Th 5:3). Those words have something more than a “dispensational” reference. They have a practical application. There are many ill-informed “evangelists” and “personal workers” who *are saying*, “Peace and safety” to those who give a bare assent to John 3:16, but “sudden destruction” shall yet come both on themselves and on their poor benighted victims. O my reader, as you value your soul, examine well the “peace” which you fancy *you* are enjoying. Has it brought to an end your rebellion against *God’s Law*, your resistance to the motions of His Spirit, your love of the world, your living to please self? If not, it is a *false* peace. Throw down the weapons of your wicked warfare against God. “Make peace” with Him ere His fury cast you into hell.

“Take care, my dear friend, to clear away as far as possible everything that would *hinder* your believing. Now you may depend upon it that going into sin hinders believing. You cannot continue in willful sin and yet become a believer. Sin cherished in the heart is an effectual hindrance. A man cannot be tied to a post and yet run away at the same time. If you bind yourself to your sin, you cannot escape. Withdraw at once from evil company—it is very deadly mischief to young seekers. You hear an impressive sermon, but then you go away talking with idle gossips, and you fall into frivolous chit-chat on the Sabbath afternoon. You cannot expect your soul to grow in the right direction under such influences. Get you to your knees, get you to solitude, get

you to your God, get you to Jesus Christ. This it is that will roll away the stone which blocks the door” (C. H. Spurgeon from sermon on John 6:24, 1834-1892).

ASSURANCE

5. Its Hindrances

“*Question:* Are all true believers at all times assured of their present being in the estate of grace and that they shall be saved? *Answer:* Assurance of grace and salvation not being of the essence of faith (2Pe 1:10), true believers may wait long before they obtain it (1Jo 5:13), and after the enjoyment thereof, may have it weakened and intermitted, through manifold distempers, sins, temptations, and desertions (Psa 77:7-9; 31:22, etc.). Yet are they never left without such a presence and support of the Spirit of God, as keeps them from sinking into utter despair (Psa 73:13-15, 23; 1Jo 3:9; Isa 54:7-11, Westminster Catechism).

Just as the absence or the loss of bodily health is not always attributable to the same cause or occasion, neither is the absence or diminution of assurance always to be accounted for in the same way. And just as any doctor who used only one medicine for the healing of all diseases would exhibit his crass incompetence, so any “Christian worker” who prescribes the same treatment to all soul-diseases at once declares himself a physician “of no value” (Job 13:4). There are *degrees* of health, both of body and soul, and this is to be ascribed, in the first place, to the high sovereignty of God, who distributes His gifts, both natural and spiritual, as He pleases. Yet, while we cannot impart health to ourselves, we should use legitimate means which, under God’s blessing, are conducive thereto. So too we may, through our sinful folly, undermine and destroy our health. The same holds good in the spiritual realm.

In many cases, lack of Christian assurance, or a very low degree thereof, is due to a *poor state of health*. Bodily infirmities re-act on the mind. Low physical vitality is usually accompanied by lowness of spirits. A sluggish liver produces depression and despondency. Many a person whose soul is now “cast down” would be greatly benefited by more open air exercise, a change of diet, and a few doses of castor oil. Yet we are far from saying that this course would result in the recovery or increase of assurance, for spiritual effects cannot be produced by material agents. Nevertheless, the removal of a physical hindrance is often an aid. Who can read the Word to profit while suffering from a nerve-racking headache! What we wish to make clear is that, in some instances at least, what is regarded as a lack of assurance is nothing more than physical inability to enjoy the things of God. Nor do we mean by this that none are blest with the joy of the Lord while their bodily health is at a low ebb. Not so. There are striking cases which show the contrary. But it still remains that many are missing much spiritual good through their disregarding the elementary laws of physical well-being.

The assurance of some of God’s dear children has been hindered by a *defective ministry*. They have sat under teaching which was too one-sided, failing to preserve a due balance between the

objective and the subjective aspects of the truth. They have been encouraged to be far more occupied with self than with Christ. Knowing that many are deceived, fearful lest they also should be, their main efforts are directed to self-examination. Disgusted too by the loud boastings of empty professors, perceiving the worthlessness of the carnal confidence voiced by the frothy religionists all around them, they hesitate to avow the assurance of salvation lest they be guilty of presumption or be puffed up by the devil. Yea, they have come to regard doubtings, fears, and uncertainty as the best evidence of spiritual humility.

Now while we are by no means prepared to sanction the idea last named, yet we have no hesitation whatever in saying that we much prefer it to the presumptuous claims now being made by so many. Far rather would we cast in our lot with a company of lowly, pensive, self-distrustful people, who exclaim, "'Tis a point I long to know, Oft it causes anxious thought, Do I love the Lord or no, Am I His, or am I not?" than fraternize with those who never have a doubt of their acceptance in Christ, but who are self-complacent and haughty, and whose daily walk compares most unfavorably with the former. Better far to be weighed down by a sense of my vileness and go mourning all my days over lack of conformity to Christ, than remain ignorant of my real state and go about light-hearted and light-headed, wearing a smile all the time.

But surely there is a happy medium between spending most of my days in Doubting Castle and the Slough of Despond so that I am virtually a stranger to "the joy of the Lord," and experiencing a false peace from Satan which is never disturbed by the voice of conscience. Holy assurance and lowly-heartedness are not incompatible. The same apostle who cried, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom 7:24), also declared, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him" (2Ti 1:12). "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2Co 6:10) summed up his dual experiences. We too are "sorrowful" daily if God has opened our eyes to see something of the mass of corruption which still indwells us. "Sorrowful" too when we perceive how far, far short we come of the example which Christ has left us. Yet we also "rejoice" because God has not left us in ignorance of our dreadful state, that He has planted within us deep yearnings after holiness, and because we know these yearnings will be fully realized when we are freed from this body of death.

The assurance of other saints is greatly dampened by *the assaults of Satan*. There are three principal things which our great enemy seeks to accomplish—incite us to sin, hinder the exercise of our graces, and destroy our peace and joy. If he fails largely in the first two, he is often very successful in the third. Posing as an angel of light, he comes to the soul preaching the holiness of God and the exceeding sinfulness of sin, his object being to overwhelm the conscience and drive to despair. He presses upon the Christian the awfulness and prevalence of his unbelief, the coldness of his heart toward God, and the many respects in which his deportment and actions are unchristlike. He reminds him of numerous sins, both of omission and commission, and the more tender be his conscience, the more poignant are Satan's thrusts. He challenges him to compare *his* character with that given of the saints in Scripture and then tells him his profession is worthless, that he is a hypocrite, and that it is mockery to take the holy name of Christ upon his polluted lips.

So many succumb to Satan's efforts to disturb their peace and destroy their assurance through not knowing how to meet his attacks and through forgetting that Scripture is very far from representing the earthly lives of God's children as flawless and perfect. As a general rule, it is the best thing to *acknowledge the truth* of Satan's charges when he declares that I am still a great sinner in myself. When he asks me if such and such a lusting of the flesh be consistent with a heart in which a miracle of divine grace has been wrought? I should answer, Yes, for the "flesh"

in me has neither been eradicated nor refined. When he asks, How can such doubtings consist with a heart to which God has communicated saving faith? remind him how Scripture tells us of one who came to Christ saying, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24).

But the commonest hindrance to assurance is *the indulgence of some known sin*. When a Christian deliberately follows some course which God’s Word forbids, when he lives in some unwarranted practice, and God has often touched him for it, and his conscience has been sorely pricked, and yet he perseveres in the same—then no wonder if he be destitute of assurance and the comfort of the Spirit. The cherishing of sin necessarily obscures *the evidences* of divine sonship, for it so abates the degree of our graces as to make them indiscernible. Allowed sin dims the eye of the soul so that it cannot see its own state and stupefies the heart so that it cannot feel its own condition. But more—it provokes God so that He withdraws from us the benevolent light of His countenance, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa 59:2).

The sad history of David presents a solemn case in point. His fearful fall brought with it painful consequences, “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer” (Psa 32:3-4). But blessed be God, his earthly life did not end while he was in this lamentable state, “I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Psa 32:5). Further light on the deep exercises of soul through which David passed is given us in Psalm 51. There we hear him crying, “Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy Salvation” (Psa 51:9-12). This leads us to consider,

6. Its Maintenance

Here again there are two extremes to be guarded against—the Fatalistic lethargy of I cannot help myself and the Arminian effrontery which affirms that the remedy lies in my own hands. Spiritual assurance is a divine gift, nevertheless, the Christian has a responsibility for preserving the same. It is true that I cannot speak peace to my own conscience or apply the balm of Gilead to my wounded heart, yet I can do many things to grieve and repel the great Physician. We cannot bring ourselves near to God, but we can and do wander from Him. Of ourselves we cannot live to God’s glory, but we can to our own. Of ourselves we cannot walk after the Spirit, but we can after the flesh. We cannot make ourselves fruitful unto every good word and work, but we may by disobedience and self-indulgence bring leanness into our souls and coldness into our affections. We cannot impart health to our bodies, but we can use *means* which, by God’s blessing, further the same.

1. Holy assurance cannot be maintained unless the Christian keeps his heart with “all diligence” (Pro 4:23). “Watch ye and pray, *lest* ye enter into temptation” (Mar 14:38). “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12). There must be, “A watchful fighting and contending against the whole work of sin, in its deceits and power, with all the contribution of advantage and efficacy that it hath from Satan and the world. This the apostle peculiarly applies it unto, in the cautions and exhortations given us, to take heed of it, that we be not hardened by it; seeing its whole design is to impair or

destroy our interest and persistency in Christ, and so to draw us off from the living God” (John Owen).

More especially does the Christian need to pray and strive against *presumptuous* sins. Right hands must be cut off, right eyes plucked out (Mat 5:29), a gangrened member must be amputated, or death will soon ensue. Cry mightily unto God for enabling grace to mortify besetting sins. Remember that a deliberate running into the place of danger, a willful exposing of myself to sin’s attacks, is a tempting of the Lord. “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away” (Pro 4:14-15). O what circumspect walking is called for in a world which abounds with pitfalls on every side!

2. Holy assurance cannot be maintained unless the Christian be diligent in *cherishing his graces*. A Christian is one who has been made a partaker of those spiritual graces which “accompany salvation” (Heb 6:9), and for the establishing of his comfort and joy it is necessary that he *know* himself to be in possession of them. The best evidence that we *are* in a state of grace is to *grow in grace*. For this there needs to be a “daily constant cherishing and labouring to improve and strengthen every grace by which we abide in Christ. Neglected grace will wither and be ready to die (Rev 3:2), yea, as to some degrees of it, and as to its work in evidencing the love of God unto us or our union with Christ, it will utterly decay. Some of the churches in the Revelation had lost their first love, as well as left their first works. Hence is that command that we should grow in grace and we do so when grace grows and thrives in us. And this is done two ways:

“First, when any individual grace is improved. When that faith which was weak, becomes strong and that love which was faint and cold, becomes fervent and is inflamed, which is not to be done but in and by the sedulous exercise of these graces themselves, and a constant application of our souls by them to the Lord Christ. Secondly, by adding one grace unto another, ‘And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; to virtue knowledge,’ etc. (2Pe 1:5). This is the proper work of spiritual diligence. This is the nature of Gospel-graces, because of their concatenation in Christ and as they are wrought in us by one and the self-same Spirit, the exercise of one leads us to the stirring up and bringing in the exercise of another into the soul” (John Owen).

3. By *keeping short accounts with God*. “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22). Note the intimate connection there is between these things. There cannot be a sincere and hearty approach unto God as worshipers while the guilt of sin be resting upon our consciences. Nothing more effectually curtails our freedom in drawing nigh to the thrice Holy One than the painful realization that my conduct has been displeasing to Him. “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God” (1Jo 3:21).

But strive as he may, walk as cautiously and carefully as he will, in “many things” the Christian “offends” (Jam 3:2) daily, both by sins of omission and commission. Yet, blessed be God, provision has been made by our loving Father even for this sad failure of ours. “If we *confess* our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jo 1:9). As soon as we are conscious of having done wrong, we should unbosom ourselves to God, holding nothing back, but freely acknowledge each offence. Nor should we fear to do this frequently, daily, yea constantly. If the Lord bids us to forgive our sinning brethren “until seventy times seven” (Mat 18:22), is He less merciful! “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them [in heart and purpose] shall have mercy” (Pro 28:13).

4. By *cultivating daily communion with God*. “Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full” (1Jo 1:3-4). Observe the connection between these two statements—fullness of joy (which in this epistle largely has reference to walking in the unclouded assurance of our divine sonship) is the fruit of fellowship with the Father and His Son. But what is signified by the term “fellowship”? Many seem to have but vague and visionary ideas of its meaning. Oneness of heart and mind, common interests and delights, unity of will and purpose, reciprocal love, is what is denoted. It is a fellowship “in the light” (1Jo 1:5, 7). This was perfectly realized and exemplified by the Lord Jesus. He walked in uninterrupted communion with the Father, delighting in His will (Psa 40:8), keeping His commandments (Joh 14:31), always doing those things which were pleasing in His sight (Joh 8:29). And this very epistle declares, “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1Jo 2:6). What a standard is here set before us! Yet after it we should prayerfully and constantly strive.

Fellowship is *participation* in the light and love of God. It is a refusing of the things He hates and a choosing of the things in which He delights. It is the losing of my will in His. It is a going out of self and an embracing of God in Christ. It is the acceptance of His estimate of things, thinking His thoughts after Him, viewing the world and all in it, life both present and future, from His viewpoint. It is therefore a being moulded into conformity with His holy nature. It is living to His glory. And thus it is a fellowship of *joy* and “the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10)—strength to overcome temptations, to perform the duties of life, to endure its sorrows and disappointments. The closer we walk with the Lord, the brighter will be the evidences of our divine sonship.

7. Its Fruits.

Holy assurance delivers from those doubts and fears, which rob many a Christian of his legitimate joy in the Lord. This is clear from the contrast presented in Romans 8:15, “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father.” Suspense is bad enough in any of our concerns, but most of all in connection with our eternal interests. But true assurance sets us free from the painful bondage of uncertainty and even robs death of its terrors. It enables the soul to say, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in *my* God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation” (Isa 61:10).

Holy assurance produces patience in tribulation, “And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, *knowing in yourselves* that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance” (Heb 10:34). Where the heart is anchored in God, basking in the sunshine of His countenance, the Christian will not be afraid of evil tidings, remains calm under bereavements, is unmoved by persecutions. “When I live in a settled and steadfast assurance about the state of my soul, methinks that I am as bold as a lion. I can laugh at all tribulation: no afflictions daunt me. But when I am eclipsed in my comfort, I am of so fearful a spirit that I can run into a very mouse-hole” (Ridley, 1551).

Holy assurance results in a joy in God which causes its possessor to despise those evil pleasures after which the worldling so much dotes. “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab 3:17-18). “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure...*for* so an entrance shall be

ministered unto you abundantly [both now and in the future] into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 1:10-11).

SELF-JUDGMENT

“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world”—1 Corinthians 11:31-32.

“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1Co 11:31). Here we perceive a judgment to which the saints, and only the saints, are amenable—a judgment belonging solely to this life, exercised by Christ, who is the Judge. To Him the church is accountable, every believer is responsible to Him for his thoughts, words, and works. Nothing escapes His notice. He walks “in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks” (Rev 1:13), “His eyes are as a flame of fire” (Rev 1:13), “Before Him all things are naked and opened,” (See Heb 4:13) and He can still say to each and all, “I know thy works” (Rev 3:15), *This* tribunal is always set. The books are always open. From it, no believer can altogether escape. Not that the Lord is strict to mark iniquity or righteous to punish, if He were, “O Lord, who shall stand?” (Psa 130:3) The Lord Jesus has no haste to correct His children. He says, He does it not from his heart. And indeed, the words above contain most gracious assurance of deliverance from correction, even though they have offended. They seem to say, indeed, that the Lord is slow to chasten, though His children be so faulty. His love for them is such that not only shall they be delivered from all penal inflictions for sin (for these He has fully borne for them), but He would also show them *how to avoid His corrections*. There is something, therefore, exceedingly gracious in this notice given to the church, “If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1Co 11:31), tending to confirm our confidence in our Lord and in His amazing condescension and tenderness. The believer knows he must trust in Jesus implicitly and confide in Him entirely. When the storm and tempest rage the most furiously, he may run into his hiding-place and find sweet repose from the world, the flesh, and the devil, for “the name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe” (Pro 18:10).

Now if ever there was a time when this confidence could be shaken, it would be when the saint had sinned, but even then he may, and must, rest his soul in Jesus. Some of the Lord’s children, when overtaken in a fault, immediately expect correction at His hands and through all of it walk heavily, but the passage also meets their case. It is a law of our great High Priest, and also our Judge, that, “If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1Co 11:31). That is, if we note when we have offended, and go directly to the Judge condemning ourselves and confessing it to Him, He will pardon and pass it by. Wonderful condescension! He will allow the believer to be his own judge. What a proof that the Spirit is within him, yea, Christ Himself, the Hope of Glory! Having judged himself and brought in the verdict of guilty, the believer will feel the paramount necessity of getting the blood sprinkled afresh upon him and of turning out of the wrong path, and he is thus brought to the point, only more readily and speedily, to which

chastening would have brought him. It is, if one might so speak, a nearer and easier way back into the right path, for the Lord only wishes us to walk with him, enjoying His presence and His smiles, and when we turn aside through frailty, the sooner we come back the better. It is not He who would keep us at a distance. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins” (1Jo 1:9).

But alas! many walk so carelessly, “at all adventures with God” (Matthew Henry on Jer 34:8-11, 1662-1714) that they offend and are not aware of it. They are out of the way and know it not. They are plainly, therefore, not in a capacity to judge themselves, and as sin must not be on the believer unknown and unconfessed, the good Lord will go after the careless one and bring him into judgment. He will judge him, since he would not judge himself. But (if such an expression might be used) He would much rather His people should judge themselves. He would have them live so that He might always be present with them and they might have their Lord continually, if, as soon as they sinned, they detected it and acknowledged it, then they would cease to be guilty, and walking thus in the light as He is in the light, the fellowship should not be broken, for the blood should “cleanse from all sin” (1Jo 1:7). The believer, thus cleansed and restored to obedience, *escapes the chastening*, for the end of the chastening is amendment, and if he has arrived at the latter, what need is there for the former? And O how like is this to our Lord! and how kind of Him to make it so plain to us! Should we not at least learn thus much from the words,—if He is so graciously desirous not to chasten, how very careful should be our walk with Him!

Now this was not the case with these Corinthians. They sinned again and again and seemed to take no account of it. They were carnal. There was among them envying and strife and division, still they judged not themselves. The Lord, who is slow to anger, waited long, and they only went further and further astray, till at last, in the abuse of His supper, He was compelled to be the Judge. Perhaps Peter’s was a case like the former. He judged himself. His bitter tears told of his guilt and his sorrow and not a word of upbraiding does he hear. The very angels have a special message for him, “Tell his disciples and Peter, that he is risen” (See Mat 28:7) etc. And our Lord was “seen of Cephas, then of the twelve” (1Co 15:12). “The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon” (Luk 24:34).

Note the words *guilt* and *guilty*, in the above, have nothing whatever to do with the believer’s state before God, for in Christ he is as free from the imputation of sin as the risen Surety. But if the washed one offend in neglecting to wash his feet, he will bring the sense of guilt into his conscience, which may be so strong as to make him forget he has been purged from his old sins. The Lord vouchsafe us tender consciences and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, to which we are elected.

“But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (1Co 11:32). “When we are judged of the Lord we are chastened.” He does not always tell us our fault first. We are so selfish and unwilling to suffer that we are willing then to search ourselves and we see wherefore this evil is upon us. Having sinned and failed to confess, we are laid open to His displeasure, to escape then is hopeless. O the bitterness of provoking Him to punish us, our best Friend. That One who poured out His life’s blood for us, who endured the sharpest inflictions of justice to screen us, Him whose heart is love, and on the sense of whose love all our happiness depends! Yet, we forfeit all and compel Him to restrain His lovely smile, put on instead a frown, take the rod in His hand, and chasten us for our folly. Then we cannot escape. Smite He will. How long and how much, we must leave to Him. We are completely in His hands. His power over us is supreme, entire. Resistance is vain and will certainly increase the

affliction. There is nothing to be done, but humbly to lie down before Him and submit to His will. He may punish severely, often He does. He may punish long and there is no promise that it shall not be so. The suffering child has but one resource, but one door of hope. It is love, the exquisite, surpassing love of Him who is chastening. On that he throws himself, as Francis Quarles (1592-1644) says, “I turn from Lord to Jesus; From Thyself to Thee.”

Yes, there is none other. He who inflicts the pain can withdraw His hand. He who has wounded, can bind up. He who has laid us in the dust by His frown, can raise up by His smile. Yes, He can forgive, He can restore, He can heal. “He will not always chide” (Psa 103:9). He will “turn again,” perhaps meaning He will relent, as the parent when he has punished the child, never is his heart so soft as then. So our Jesus, “Since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD” (Jer 31:20). This, this is a mercy, an infinite mercy, that we are in the hands of One so tender, so loving, who does not like to put us to pain, who does it unwillingly, and longs to restore us to favour. But there is still a greater mercy in the reason assigned for correction. It is “that we should not be condemned with the world” (1Co 11:32). Ah, it is enough to make one tremble to think of the ungodly, who never having been chastened here, will hereafter bear the full punishment of all their offences. But it is not so with us, thanks be to God, we are judged here, not there—in this world, not in the next. And it is because we shall be acquitted hereafter that Christ our Lord must of necessity notice our offences here, “You only have I known” (Amo 3:2), etc. The wicked go free, their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them, for this reason, their reckoning is future, ours is present. Let us bless the Lord for His kind care of us and for not suffering us to take our own way. Let us not rebel against His loving discipline, but thank Him for being so particular with us (2Co 10:18), seeing that His dealing points to our high destiny and issues in our everlasting blessedness, to the praise of the glory of His grace.—A Servant of the Church, 1855.

OUR ANNUAL LETTER

To our dear brethren and sisters in Christ. Greetings in the worthy and blessed name of Him who “hath done all things well” (Mar 7:37). It is of Him we desire to speak, His goodness and mercy we wish to extol. True, He is pleased to use intermediary agents and employ human instruments in the carrying out of His purpose of grace and in the bestowing of His blessings, yet it is *Himself* who is the prime-mover, the fountain-head of every good and perfect gift which we receive. Only as this is kept steadily in view are we preserved from idolizing the creature and being unduly occupied with secondary causes. Only as we look behind and above every human kindness and trace all to Him who moved their hearts to show that kindness unto us, are our hearts engaged with Him who is fairer than the children of men, and are we ready to ascribe unto Him the praise and thanksgiving which are His due.

Once more the time has come for us to record something of the Lord’s tender dealings with us throughout another year and these words, “*He hath done all things well*” (Mar 7:37) seem best

suit to express our present thoughts and feelings. O that it may please our God and Father to ever grant us grace to think and feel this when no matter what form His providential dispensations may take. May His Holy Spirit so subdue the sin, which still indwells us, that we may be preserved from murmuring or calling into question any of His dealings with us. Should His chastening hand fall upon us, that too will be “well,” for it will evidence His love giving needful correction and discipline. Should grievous afflictions become our portion, that too will be “well,” for by such things He teaches His children the sinfulness of sin, the vanity of the world, and the weaning-power of His grace.

Perhaps such things as we have just named above seem out of place in a letter which is about to record the Lord’s abounding gifts and favours. But the Word of truth bids us to “Rejoice with trembling” (Psa 2:11). Each separate state of soul has its own peculiar temptation and danger, as it is but a short step from sorrow to despair, so unless we are much upon our guard, it is easy to turn from rejoicing to self-complacency. O may God in His mercy remove pride far from us and cause us to make our boast in Himself alone. In the midst of blessings which God showers upon us, we may well “tremble,” tremble lest our hearts cherish the spirit of self-righteousness and indulge the awful thought that it is because of our own goodness such bounties are now our portion. Rather may the Lord keep us in such a state of soul that we may ever feelingly say, “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shown unto thy servant” (Gen 32:10).

For another year the editor and his wife have been spared a single day’s sickness. What mercy is this! Though the editor spends at least twelve hours every day in his study, engaged in heavy mental work, yet this close confinement, year after year, has not impaired his health to the slightest degree. Though he has now read through the Bible over fifty times and upwards of one million pages of theological literature, he has no glasses and reads the finest print as comfortably as he did twenty-five years ago. Though the editor’s wife does all her own housework (and we have no electricity), making of bread, and her own clothes, looks after a garden, and has canned and preserved, jellied and pickled between two hundred and fifty and three hundred pints of fruits and vegetables, and though she does all the typing and addressing of envelopes for this magazine, yet in spite of a frail body, God has graciously sustained and granted all needed strength.

For another year we have been spared all anxiety. Notwithstanding the financial straitness of the business world, the Lord has sent in funds just as freely as ever. No appeals have been made, no one has been asked to contribute a cent, yet we close this year with a larger credit-balance than any one of the preceding years—D.V. we hope to give details in the next issue. This is the more striking in view of the fact that our circulation has decreased quite a little. But God is not dependent upon numbers. Quite a number of our old friends have been taken to heaven during the past two years, but God has touched the hearts of others to fill their places. Not only has He enabled us to pay every bill within twenty-four hours of its receipt, but He has graciously ministered freely to our personal needs. During the year, we have received less than 25 dollars (five pounds) for the little oral ministry we have engaged in and have not used for ourselves a single cent which has been sent in for the magazine. Yet our every personal need has been fully met and we have been able to send more money to the Lord’s poor during 1932 than any previous year. Hallelujah!

For another year the Spirit has most graciously and freely supplied “Seed to the sower” (2Co 9:10). The class of readers for whom we write is exceedingly varied and much wisdom and definite guidance is needed to suit the messages unto them. Babes in Christ, capable of taking in only the milk of the Word, young men and fathers better able to digest the strong meat, many

preachers anxious for suggestions for sermons, souls in deep trouble needing comfort. Only He who is acquainted with all the circumstances and details of every life can guide us to give a “word in season” to such varied cases. Much of what we have been led to write this year has been of a solemn and searching character and we would earnestly urge our readers to re-read, particularly the articles on “Saving Faith” and “Assurance.” If we are spared, we hope to continue writing other articles of a similar nature.

For another year God has been pleased to grant many seals to our labours. He has condescended to use this little magazine as a channel of help to not a few of His scattered people. Many are the letters to hand from all parts of the earth, testifying to the blessing received under God from its pages. Hardly a day passes but we receive some word of encouragement. What rejoices us even more is the fact that the Lord is raising up an increasing number of prayer-helpers (2Co 1:11). Only that Day will show how much we owe to the daily supplications of those who have the ear of God. We earnestly covet the continued intercession of fellow-saints, that we may be preserved from all error and guided into the “present truth” (2Pe 1:12), and that God will be pleased to use this paper to a yet greater number of His needy people.

Having owned above the goodness of our God in so faithfully supplying all our need through another year, it is only right and meet that we should heartily thank the many brethren and sisters in Christ who have sent in their gifts and love-offerings. Numbers of these have been very touching. One sister sent a tithe of the first money earned in three years. Several have, out of “their deep poverty” (2Co 8:2), given their mite and with such offerings God is well pleased. Others have, we fear through pride, refrained from sending in a few cents because unable to give more. But a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple is owned by Christ! We also take this opportunity for thanking Mr. Ardill of Australia for his kindly interest and Mr. Winstone of England (who is a busy business man) for all the kind trouble he has gone to on our behalf.

Quite a few names for the magazine have been received during the year. Following our usual custom, those from whom we have heard nothing will be dropped from our list, as also others who seem to feel that they are entitled to receive these “Studies” indefinitely, merely because they are “free.” We dare not use the gifts of those who have *denied themselves* to continue sending this magazine to those who deem it neither a privilege nor a duty to help maintain it. When we know that a reader wishes to, but is unable to send in even a small gift and is being helped by our articles, their name is gladly retained. If *you* do not receive the magazine, next year this paragraph will explain why—unless you have failed to notify us of change of address. Will friends please note that though your Post Office will forward letters to a new address, *they will not magazines*.

The dropping of several hundred names from our list at the end of the year is an unpleasant task, we assure you, yet it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful (1Co 4:2) and we dare not waste copies on uninterested ones or on those who would take an unfair advantage of the generosity of others. The mere fact that this magazine is sent forth without any charge to the recipient, does not mean that anybody and everybody is “free to help themselves.” If a reader has, under God, really been profited spiritually, then we believe that person feels it both a privilege and a responsibility to contribute to the financial support of the magazine and that without being asked to do so. If they do not feel thus, then, most probably, the magazine is wasted on them. True, some may be genuinely unable (at the present time) to send in a gift, but surely they can send a post card to say so and ask us to accept the will for the deed.

The dropping of so many names means that new ones are required to fill their places if we are to have sufficient on our list to justify the continued publication of this monthly messenger. And the right kind are not easy to obtain. By the “right kind” we mean those who are likely to really

read and value these “Studies in the Scriptures”—the vast majority of professing Christians today have far more relish for a religious novel or sensational “signs of the times” and current news items. We wish that many of our friends who are interested, would give us permission to send them a second or third copy of each issue for 1933, for them to pass out to those likely to have an appetite for spiritual food. In this way we might reach a few more of God’s hungry sheep. In any case, please pray daily that God will bring us into touch with more of His own and graciously prepare their hearts for the messages.

We are having a number of sets of the twelve issues for 1932 neatly and strongly bound, for those desiring them for permanent use and reference. These we expect to be able to supply very shortly at (—4/2) post paid—practically at cost price. Our stock of back volumes is getting very low, but we can still supply a few from 1928 and onwards. These contain our verse by verse exposition of Hebrews from the beginning. They will soon be out of print! Friends in Australia and Great Britain, please continue remitting to Mr. Winstone till further notice. If a small gift, send to us in English three half-penny stamps or Australian one or two penny stamps. We can use a few of them. Will new readers kindly pardon the *personal* touches in this letter, but many of the older readers are intimate and personal friends. And now commending you all to God and the Word of His grace, Yours by His abounding mercy, A.W. and V.E. Pink.



APPENDICES

About Studies in the Scriptures

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952) wrote and published his monthly 28 page expository digest, *Studies in the Scriptures*, from 1922 to 1953. He mailed it worldwide by paid subscription to whomever desired the deeper truths of God. Each issue contained continuing serialized articles on six to eight subjects. When one subject was “completed” to the author’s satisfaction, another subject series began in its place in the next issue. In total, the 380 issues comprise a treasure of immense proportions.

By God’s grace, Chapel Library republishes the *Studies* beginning with the year 1934, available for download worldwide, and mailing three issues each quarter by free subscription in North America. We also print many books and booklets gleaned from articles in the *Studies*. These may be ordered in print in North America, or downloaded from our website worldwide without charge:

Studies: www.chapellibrary.org/studies

Other literature: www.chapellibrary.org/literature/title-catalog

Today the various subjects are being gathered together by topic, and republished in paperbacks by several sources. *Chapel Library* offers the following at the time of this printing:

- The Sovereignty of God	176 pages
- Comfort for Christians	79 pages
- Profiting from the Word	96 pages
- Seven Sayings of the Savior	94 pages
- Spiritual Union and Communion	175 pages
- The Attributes of God	105 pages
- The Doctrine of Human Depravity	241 pages
- The Doctrine of Revelation	214 pages
- 1 John – An Exposition, Part 1	190 pages
- 1 John – An Exposition, Part 2	173 pages
- The Holy Spirit	196 pages

Biography of A.W. Pink

by Erroll Hulse

Concerning Calvinism¹ and Arminianism² during the first half of the Twentieth Century, a most interesting case study is the experience of Arthur W. Pink. He was a preacher and writer of outstanding talent who ministered in Britain, America, and Australia. When he died in 1952 in isolation on the Island of Lewis in north eastern Scotland, he was hardly known outside a small list of subscribers to his magazine, *Studies in the Scriptures*. Yet, by the 1970s, his books were in wide demand and his name was widely known among publishers and ministers. In fact, for that period it would be difficult to find a reformed author whose books were more widely read.

The preaching ministry of A. W. Pink had been remarkably blessed in the USA, but it was in Australia that he seemed to reach the apex of his public ministry, and there in particular that his preaching ministry reached great heights. He was then faced with accreditation by the Baptist Union and was rejected on account of his Calvinistic views. He then ministered in a Baptist church of Strict Baptist pedigree. There he came unstuck since they esteemed him an Arminian! A considerable group, however, appreciated Pink, recognised his worth, and seceded from that Strict Baptist Church to form a new church of 27 members. Then suddenly, in 1934, Pink resigned and returned to Britain. It is widely held that one rejection is enough to cripple a minister for life, but two in quick succession can destroy a pastor completely. So it proved for Arthur Pink. He never again found meaningful entrance into the ministry, though he tried his utmost. He sought openings in both the UK and the USA without success. He became increasingly isolated. He ended his days as an evangelical recluse in the Island of Stornoway off the coast of Scotland. It was rumoured that not more than ten souls attended his funeral.

There is much that we can learn from the life of A. W. Pink. Firstly, we will trace out his early life in broad outline. Secondly, we will describe his experience in Australia, and trace out the adverse effects of this on his life. Thirdly, we will the impact of his writing ministry.

1. Early Life

Arthur Pink was born in Nottingham, England, in 1886. His parents were godly. They lived by the Bible and kept the Lord's Day holy. Arthur was the first of three children brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. To the grief of their parents, all three children drifted into lives

¹ **Calvinism** – the doctrinal system developed from the teachings of the French-born Swiss Reformer John Calvin (1509-1664), holding that the Bible teaches the supreme authority of the Scriptures, the sovereignty of God, predestination, and the “doctrines of grace”; these doctrines were the response of the Synod of Dort (1618-19) to the Arminians’ remonstrance (protest) and are commonly known by the acronym TULIP.

² **Arminianism** – (from Jacobus Arminius, 1560-1609, Dutch theologian) the doctrinal system that rejects the Reformers’ understanding of predestination, teaching instead that God’s predestination of individuals was based on His foreknowledge of their accepting or rejecting Christ by their own free will.

of unbelief. Worse was to come: Arthur embraced *Theosophy*, an esoteric cult that claimed powers of the occult! “Lucifer” was the name of the leading theosophy magazine. A natural feature of Arthur’s character was wholeheartedness, and he entered theosophy with zeal. A leadership role was offered him, which meant that he would visit India. At the same time a friend who was an opera singer, noted that Arthur possessed a fine baritone voice; he urged him to study for a career in opera. Then suddenly on a night during 1908, Arthur was converted. His first action was to preach the Gospel to the theosophist group.

Simultaneous with Pink’s conversion was a call to the Christian ministry. But the colleges were in the hands of liberals bent on the destruction of the Scriptures. Arthur, however, heard of the Moody Bible Institute, which had been founded by D. L. Moody³ in 1889. In 1910, aged 24, Pink left for Chicago to begin a two-year course. His time at Moody lasted only six weeks, however. He decided that he was wasting his time, and that he should enter directly into a pastorate—and his professors agreed! He was not disgruntled, but rather frustrated, that the teaching was pitched at such a primary level that it did nothing for him.

During 1910, he began in his first pastorate in Silverton, Colorado, a mining camp in the San Juan Mountains. We possess little detail of this period, but we know that from Silverton, Pink moved to Los Angeles. He was always a hard worker, and this is illustrated by the fact that at one point in Oakland he was engaged in tent evangelism six nights a week for eighteen weeks!

From Los Angeles, he moved to Kentucky. It was here that he met and married Vera E. Russell. There could not have been a better gift from heaven. Vera was entirely committed to the Lord. She was hard working, gifted, intelligent, and persevering. She died just ten years after Arthur’s decease on the island of Stornoway.

The next move was to Spartanburg, South Carolina, from 1917 to 1920. This church building consisted of a small and frail wooden structure, while he and Vera lived in a small wooden house standing on wooden columns. Heating was inadequate, and in the freezing winter it was like an ice box.

It was during this time Pink began writing books. There were two of significance: one with the title *Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, and the second *The Sovereignty of God*, the foreword of which is dated June 1918. It was this book that was later taken up by The Banner of Truth publishers. The first edition, according to I. C. Herendeen, his first publisher at that time, was only 500 copies, and it was a struggle to sell that number. When the book came to Banner, it was edited by Iain Murray and vastly improved. It became one of the most popular of The Banner of Truth paperbacks. By 1980, 92,000 copies had sold.

After about a year at Spartanburg, Pink almost came to grief. He felt a strong conviction to give up the ministry and devote himself to writing only, and at one point was disconsolate. Vera wrote to a friend saying that her husband was even thinking of leaving the ministry and going into business, to make money for the Kingdom as a better way of serving God. In 1920, Arthur resigned the pastorate at Spartanburg. He and Vera moved and settled at Swengel, Pennsylvania, in order to be near the publisher I. C. Herendeen.

In the middle of July, 1920, he left to take a series of meetings in California. Large crowds gathered and numbers were saved. At one point 1,200 gathered to hear the Gospel. Other crusades and conferences followed; it was evident that Pink was eminently suited to this kind of ministry.

³ **D. L. Moody** (1837-1899) – American evangelist and publisher who founded the Moody Church, Northfield School and Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts (now the Northfield Mount Hermon School), the Moody Bible Institute, and Moody Publishers.

Looking back over his life, it is apparent that he experienced more blessing in the itinerant ministry than he did in a total of twelve years in pastoring churches. This had to do with his temperament; he preferred being in his study to visiting.

In 1921, Arthur and Vera were back in Pennsylvania. The monthly digest, the *Studies in the Scriptures*, first appeared in 1922. It ran continuously without interruption for 32 years, until Arthur's death in 1952. Initially, this was a 24 page magazine, with four to six articles as instalments in a series. To write expository material at a high standard at this rate every month is a tremendous testimony to his insight into the Scriptures, and to the Lord's blessing and enabling. All his articles had to be written by hand and finished for the printer at least two months before the date of publication. *Studies in the Scriptures* had about 1,000 circulation at the beginning, but for most of its existence the subscription level hovered at about 500. The financial side was always precarious, with only just enough to cover printing costs from one month to the next. Pink corresponded with some of his subscribers; eventually this formed his pastoral work. Throughout he was assisted by his very hard working wife, who acted as secretary. They never had a family, always lived very humbly, and managed always to make ends meet. This was made possible through a modest inheritance left to him by his parents and through gifts that he received from his readers.

During 1923, Arthur fell into a deep depression, which turned out to be a nervous breakdown. At this juncture a young couple that had been greatly blessed by Pink's ministry came to the rescue, and Arthur was nursed through a period of several months enforced rest, which brought him back to normal health.

In 1924, a major new direction came by way of letters of invitation from a publisher in Sydney, Australia. Before departing for Australia, no less than four months preparation had to be made for the *Studies*. On his way to Australia, Pink engaged in more Bible conference preaching in Colorado, then in Oakland, California, and also San Francisco—from where he and Vera took ship across the Pacific to Sydney.

2. *Pink's Experience in Australia*

The Pinks spent a total of three and half years in Australia. These times were for them the best, but also turned out to be the worst. Upon arrival Arthur had more invitations than he possibly fill. Initially his ministry in Australia was a great success. Crowds gathered; churches were filled; believers were revived; and souls were brought to the Saviour.

Attendance swelled in every place he preached. In the first year in Australia Arthur preached 250 times. He would often work until 2:00 in the morning to keep *Studies in the Scriptures* going. The Pinks truly must have felt that at last they had found the place of permanent fulfilment. There was an evident power in his ministry. One mature believer declared that he drew people "like a magnet," and that he preached the "whole counsel of God's Word," and was capable of preaching a sermon "from every word of the text."

This period proved to be one of great joy. Pink was now 40 years old. He was preaching almost daily for well over an hour. He would get home at 10:00 PM and then work until 2:00 AM. He wrote, "never before during our 16 years in the ministry, have we experienced such blessing and joy in our souls, such liberty of utterance, and such an encouraging response as we have done in this highly favoured portion of Christ's vineyard."⁴

We can be sure that a thrilling and powerful soul-saving ministry will arouse the fury of Satan. And so it proved to be in this case when that old serpent, the devil, mounted a cunning

⁴ *The Life of Arthur W. Pink*, by Iain H. Murray, The Banner of Truth Trust, p 49

counterattack. The Baptist Union leaders were fundamentally opposed to Calvinism. These leaders invited Arthur Pink to read a paper on “Human Responsibility.” Sadly, Pink did not realise that this was a plot to demote him in the eyes of the public—and in his sincere earnestness he fell into the trap. Instead of declining this invitation, he presented the paper and then answered questions for over an hour. The result of this was that the BU of New South Wales published a statement that they agreed unanimously *not* to endorse his ministry. What they really meant (for they did not themselves clarify any doctrine) is that they did not agree with Pink’s Reformed doctrine. They were fundamentally Arminian. The effect of all this was that invitations dried up, and Pink’s wider effective ministry in Australia was drastically reduced.

It was at this juncture that one of three Strict and Particular Baptist Churches invited Pink to become its pastor. This church was known as the Belvoir Street Church. Here Pink was as busy as he had ever been in his life. He had preached 300 times in the year ending 1926. In addition to preaching three times a week at Belvoir Street, he preached in three different places in Sydney each week to an average of 200 at each meeting. He still managed to maintain *Studies in the Scriptures* by burning midnight oil.

Trouble however was in store. The early part of the Twentieth Century was a time of lack of clarity in doctrine. One of the evidences of this was confusion over Calvinism, Arminianism, and hyper-Calvinism.⁵ Many churches polarized. The Baptist Union was Arminian, and the Strict and Particular Baptists tended to be hyper-Calvinist. This proved to be the case at Belvoir Street. Until about May 1927, the Pinks believed that they had found a permanent church home.

3. *Impact of Pink’s Writing Ministry*

If history had progressed normally, Arthur Pink would have been forgotten. There are several leaders in each generation who are well known, but it is unlikely that their names will be remembered for very long. When Arthur Pink died, he was known to a small circle of readers—about 500—who read his monthly periodical *Studies in the Scriptures*, which he had faithfully produced with the help of his wife Vera for 31 years. Yet, after his decease, as his writings were collected and published as books, his name became very well known in the English-speaking evangelical world. During the 1960s and ’70s, there was a dearth of reliable expository writing; Pink’s writings filled an important need. His expositions are God-centred, theologically compelling, and reliable—as well as practical and experimental. That was precisely what was needed during a period of spiritual drought. Publishers discovered the value of his writings. The outcome was dramatic.

For instance, Baker Book House published twenty-two different titles by Pink, with a combined total sales by 1980 of 350,000. By the same date just three books (*Sovereignty of God*, *Life of Elijah*, and *Profiting from the Word*) totaled 211,000. Yet as contemporary reformed authors have multiplied, so the demand for Pink’s books has lessened.

We must remember that with the dawning of the twentieth century, the mainline denominations had already suffered extensive losses to higher criticism and modernism. Such was the advance of modernism in the late nineteenth century and through the first half of the twentieth century, most Bible colleges and seminaries were lost to an agenda of unbelief and anti-Christianity. Instead of producing preacher/pastors for the churches, men were sent out who

⁵ **hyper-Calvinism** – the doctrinal error that holds men need not evangelize, since God will save His elect children with or without the means of preaching the Word. This represents only one side of biblical truth; the other is that God is pleased to use human instruments as means to His work, and the preaching of the Word is uniquely marked out for this purpose (2Ti 4:2; 2Ti 3:16; Mat 28:19).

emptied the churches. The most striking example is Methodism. The aggregate membership in Methodism grew to be the highest of the non-conformist churches. Yet this denomination has been virtually annihilated by modernism.

The writings of Pink provided not only food for the spiritually hungry, but as Iain Murray asserts, “Pink has been immensely important in reviving and stimulating doctrinal reading at the popular level. The same can be said of few other authors of the twentieth century.”⁶

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⁶ *ibid.*

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