

Studies in the Scriptures

April, 1937

The Spirit Preserving

There are two eminent benefits or spiritual blessings which comprehend all others, filling up the entire space of the Christian's life, from the moment of his quickening unto his ultimate arrival in Heaven, namely, his regeneration and his preservation. And as the renowned Puritan Thomas Goodwin says, "If a debate were admitted which of them is the greater, it would be found that no jury of mankind could determine on either side, but must leave it to God's free grace itself, which is the author and finisher of our faith, to decide." As the creating of the world at first and the upholding and governing of all things by Divine power and providence are yoked together (Heb. 1:2, 3), so are regeneration and preservation. "Faithful is He that *calleth* you, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24)—i.e. *preserve* (v. 23). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath *begotten* us again unto a lively hope . . . to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled . . . who are *kept by* the power of God through faith" (1 Peter 1:3-5).

The same blessed linking together of these eminent benefits is seen in the Old Testament: "Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not He thy Father that hath bought thee? hath He not *made* thee and *established* thee?" (Deut. 32:6); "And even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have *made*, and I will *bear*" (Isa. 46:4); "Which *holdeth* our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved" (Psa. 66:9)—the verb has a double meaning, as the margin signifies: "putteth" at the first, and "holdeth" or maintaineth afterwards. How wonderful is this in the natural: delivered from countless dangers, preserved from epidemics and diseases which carried off thousands of our fellows, recovered from various illnesses which had otherwise proven fatal. Still more wonderful is the spiritual preservation of the saint: kept from the dominion of sin which still indwells him; kept from being drawn out of the Narrow Way by the enticements of the world; kept from the horrible heresies which ensnare multitudes on every side; kept from being entirely overcome by Satan, who ever seeks his destruction.

What pleasure it now gives the Christian to hear of the varied and wondrous ways in which God *regenerates* His people! What delight will be ours in Heaven when we learn of the loving care, abiding faithfulness, and mighty power of God in the *preservation* of each of His own! What joy will be ours when we learn the details of how He made good His promise "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa. 43:2)—His providence working for us externally, His grace operating internally: preserving amid the tossings and tempests of life, recovering from woeful backslidings, reviving us when almost dead.

The preservation of God's people through all the vicissitudes of their pilgrim journey is accomplished, immediately, by the Holy Spirit. He it is who watches over the believer, delivering him when he knows it not; keeping him from living in the world's sinks of iniquity, lifting up a standard when the Enemy comes like a flood against him (Isa. 59:19). He it is who keeps him from accepting those fatal heresies which deceive and destroy so many empty professors. He it is who prevents his becoming contented with a mere "letter" ministry or satisfied with head-knowledge and notional religion. And *how* does the

Spirit accomplish the Christian's preservation? By sustaining the new nature within him, and calling it forth into exercise and act. By working such graces in him that he becomes "established" (2 Cor. 1:21). By keeping him conscious of his utter ruin and deep need of Christ. By bringing him to a concurrence with His gracious design, moving him to use appropriate means. But let us be more specific.

"Teach me, O LORD, the way of Thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end" (Psa. 119:33). We lost the way of true happiness when we fell in Adam, and ever since men have wandered up and down vainly seeking rest and satisfaction: "They are *all* gone out of the way" (Rom. 3:12). Nor can any man discover the way of holiness and happiness of himself: he must be *taught it* spiritually and supernaturally by God. Such teaching is earnestly desired by the regenerate, for they have been made painfully conscious of their perversity and insufficiency: "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man" (Prov. 30:2) is their confession. It is by Divine and inward teaching that we are stirred into holy activity: "*I will keep it*"—that which is inwrought by the Spirit is outwrought by us. Thereby our final perseverance is accomplished: "I will keep it *to the end*"—because effectually taught of Jehovah.

"When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; *discretion shall preserve thee*, understanding shall keep thee" (Prov. 2:10, 11). For wisdom to enter into our hearts means that the things of God have such an influence upon us as to dominate our affections and move our wills. For knowledge to be pleasant to our souls, signifies that we delight in the Law of God after the inward man (Rom. 7:22), that submission to God's will is not irksome but desirable. Now where such really be the case, the individual possesses a discernment which enables him to penetrate Satan's disguises and perceive the barb beneath the bait, and is endowed with a discretion which makes him prudent and cautious, so that he shuns those places where alluring temptations abound and avoids the company of evil men and women. Thereby is he delivered from danger and secured from making shipwreck of the faith: see also Proverbs 4:6; 6:22-24.

"I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put *My fear* in their hearts, that they shall *not depart* from Me" (Jer. 32:40). This statement casts much light upon the means and method employed by God in the preserving of His people. The indwelling Spirit not only *constrains* the new nature by considerations drawn from the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14), but He also *restrains* the old nature by a sense of God's majesty. He often drops an awe on the believer's heart, which holds him back from running into that excess of riot which his lusts would carry him unto. The Spirit makes the soul to realise that God is not to be trifled with, and delivers from wickedly presuming upon His mercy. He stimulates a spirit of filial reverence in the saint, so that he shuns those things which would dishonour his Father. He causes us to heed such a word as "Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee" (Rom. 11:20, 21). By such means does God fulfill His promise "I will put My Spirit within you, and *cause you to walk in My statutes*" (Ezek. 36:27).

"For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (Gal. 5:5). It is the stirrings of hope, however faint, which keeps the soul alive in seasons of disappointment and despondency. But for the renewings of the gracious Spirit, the believer would relinquish his hope and sink into abject despair. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a

hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert” (Isa. 35:5, 6): it is by fresh supplies of the Spirit (Phil. 1:19) that there comes not only further light, but new strength and comfort. Amid the perturbations caused by indwelling sin and the anguish from our repeated defeats, it is one of the Spirit’s greatest works to sustain the soul by the expectation of things to come.

“Who are kept by the power of God *through faith*” (1 Peter 1:5). Here again we are shown *how* the preservation of the saint is effected: through the influences of an exercised faith—compare 1 John 5:4. Now faith implies not only the knowledge and belief of the Truth, but also those pious affections and dispositions and the performance of those spiritual duties which constitute practical holiness. Without faith no man can attain unto that holiness, and without the power of God none can exercise this faith. Faith is the channel through which the mighty works of God are wrought—as Hebrews 11 so clearly shows—not the least of which is the conducting of His people safely through the Enemy’s land (1 John 5:19).

Perseverance in grace, or continuance in holiness, is not promoted by a blind confidence or carnal security, but by watchfulness, earnest effort and self-denial. So far from teaching that believers shall certainly reach Heaven whether or not they use the means of grace, Scripture affirms “If ye live after the flesh ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:13). God has not promised that, no matter how loosely a saint may live or what vile habits he may persist in, he shall not perish; but rather does He assure us that He will preserve from such looseness and wickedness as would expose him to His wrath. It is by working grace in our hearts, by calling into exercise the faculties of our souls, by exciting fear and hope, hatred and love, sorrow and joy, that the saint is preserved.—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews.

112. *The Heart Established*: 13:8, 9.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (v.8). Sir Robert Anderson and others regarded this as a declaration of the Saviour’s Godhead, arguing that “The Same” is a Divine title taken from Psalm 102:27, etc. But why, it may be asked, should the Apostle break his line of thought and introduce a formal affirmation of Christ’s Deity in the midst of a series of exhortations? Such an interpretation destroys the unity of the passage. Moreover, there was no need for this, for the Redeemer’s Godhead had been clearly and fully established in the opening chapter of the Epistle. Nor was there any special reason for Paul, at this point, to insist upon the essential immutability of Christ, and that the translators of the A.V. did *not* so understand him is evident from their declining to add the *auxiliary* verb: “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, and today,” etc.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” These words, as was intimated in the final paragraph of last month’s article, are not to be taken absolutely, but are to be regarded relatively; that is to say, they are not to be considered by themselves alone, but in connection with the precise place they occupy in the Sacred Canon. Every statement of Scripture is positioned by Divine wisdom, and often we miss an important key to interpretation when ignoring the particular location of a passage. The verse before us illustrates the special theme of the book in which it is found. The subject of the Hebrews’ letter is the immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism, and here is further demonstration of the fact. Under Judaism, Aaron had been followed by Eleazer, and he, by Eli; but our great High Priest abides forever. Israel’s prophets followed each other on the stage of action; but our Prophet had no successor. So too there had been a long line of kings; but Zion’s King is eternal.

“The Apostle speaks not of the person of Christ absolutely, but with respect unto His office and His discharge of it: he declares who and what He is therein. He is ‘the same’ in His Divine person: eternal, immutable, indeficient. Being so in Himself, He is so *in His office* from first to last. Although diverse alterations were made in the institutions of Divine worship, and there were many degrees and parts of Divine revelation (Heb. 1:1), yet in and through them all, Jesus Christ was still the same. In every state of the church, in every condition of believers, He is the same unto them, and will be so unto the consummation of all things; He is, He ever was, all in all unto the Church. He is the Object, the Author and Finisher of faith, the Preserver and Rewarder of all them that believe, and that equally in all generations” (Condensed from J. Owen).

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” How thoughtlessly is this statement received by many! How carelessly is its setting ignored by most sermonizers! Were we to take this declaration absolutely it would involve us in inextricable difficulties. Ponder its terms for a moment. Did our Lord undergo no radical change when He became incarnate? Did He experience no great change at His resurrection? During the days of His flesh, He was “The Man of Sorrows”: is He so now after His ascension?—one has but to ask the question to perceive its absurdity. This statement, then, is to be understood with certain limitations; or rather, it is to be interpreted in the light of its setting, and for that, not a novice, but an experienced expositor is required. Let us consider it, then, in connection with its context.

First, as has already been pointed out, it most blessedly illustrated the special theme of this Epistle, for in contrast from so much that was mutable and transitory in Judaism, the

Author of Christianity abides essentially the same in all generations. Second, verse 8 supplies an additional and most powerful motive to fidelity. Some of their spiritual guides had already passed away, and in those still left, time and change would swiftly work their sure effects; but the great Head of the Church remained, being alive for evermore. Jesus Christ was the One who had supported their deceased leaders, who had passed through their trials victoriously, and if trusted in, He would sustain *them*, for He was the same gracious and powerful Shepherd of the sheep. He is for *you*, as for them, “the same” Object of faith, “the same” all-sufficient Saviour, “the same” effectual Intercessor. He is “the same” in His loving design and covenant faithfulness. Then cleave to Him with unshakable confidence.

Third, the blessed declaration of verse 8 lays a foundation on which to base the exhortation which immediately follows. “The only way by which we can persevere in the right faith is to hold to the foundation, and not in the slightest degree depart from it, for he who holds not to Christ knows nothing but mere vanity, though he may comprehend heaven and earth” (John Calvin). The Lord Jesus is the same, therefore, *be ye not unstable* and fickle. Christ is the same Teacher: His doctrine does not vary, His will does not fluctuate, nor His purpose alter; therefore should we remain steadfast in the Truth, shunning novelties and refusing all innovations. It is only by “holding the Head” (Col. 2:19), submitting to His will, receiving His doctrine, obeying His precepts, that we shall be fortified against false teachers and persevere unto the end.

Thus, verses 7-9 are intimately related and together form a complete hortatory passage: so far as we have light thereon, we understand them to mean: Hold fast to the testimony of your former leaders, for they proved the sufficiency of the Truth they proclaimed; Christian doctrine does not vary from day to day, for Jesus Christ is ever the same. The designation used of Him at once intimates that He is *not* here contemplated so much as the second Person in the Godhead, as the Mediator and Head of the Church. He is the same in His identity (Rev. 5:6), the same in His offices, the same in His efficacy, the same in His will; therefore must we refuse to be led away by those who teach anything different. The whole passage is a strong dissuasion against vacillation. The Truth is fixed; the Gospel is everlasting, therefore should we be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein” (Heb. 13:9). This is the point to which the Apostle had been leading in the previous verses: trust in Christ, and cleave to Him according to the instruction you have received from your fathers in the Faith, and give not ear unto those who would unsettle and seduce you. “Divers doctrines” are those which differ from pure Christianity; “strange” doctrines are those which are foreign or opposed to the Gospel. To be carried “about” by such is for the mind to be unsettled thereby, producing an unsteadiness of conduct. To be immune from this evil the heart has to be established with grace, which, because of its deep importance, calls for a careful inquiry thereunto. “Not with meats” has reference to the efforts of the Judaisers to graft the ceremonial law on to the Gospel, a thing utterly unprofitable, yea, baneful.

“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.” It is to be duly noted that the noun is in the plural number. This is in marked and designed contrast from the revelation which *God* has given us. Truth is a perfect unit, but error is multiform. There is but “*one*

faith,” as there is but “one Lord” (Eph. 4:3-5), namely, that which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3) in the revelation made of it by Christ and the Apostles (Heb. 2:3, 4). Hence, when the Truth is in view, it is always “doctrine” in the singular number, as “the doctrine” (John 7:17), “the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 1:9) and see Romans 16:17; 1 Tim. 4:16, etc. On the other hand, where error is referred to the plural number is employed, as in “doctrines of men” (Col. 2:22), “doctrines of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1). The Truth of God is one uniform system and chain of doctrine, which begins in God and ends in Him; but error is inconsistent and manifold.

“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.” The very fact that this dehortation was not only given verbally by the Apostles to the Christians of their own day, but is also preserved in the written Word of God, clearly intimates that the people of God will always have to contend against error unto the end of time. Christ Himself declared, “Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many” (Matt. 24:4, 5); and the last of His Apostles wrote “try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). How unfeignedly thankful we should be that God has put into our hands an unfailing plummet by which we may measure every preacher and teacher. The doctrine of Christ changes not, and whatever proceeds not from it and accords not with it, is alien to the faith of the Church and is to be refused and rejected.

“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.” As this dehortation concerned the Hebrew saints the reference was, of course, to the Mosaic institutions, as the remainder of our verse denotes: “for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace: not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.” The Levitical law made distinctions of meats, and things of a like nature, which the false teachers were pressing with much zeal. It is plain from such passages as Romans 14:13-23, 1 Corinthians 8; Galatians 4, etc., that determined efforts were being made by the Enemy to corrupt the Gospel by attaching to it parts of the ceremonialism of Judaism. When Paul says “which have not profited *them* that have been occupied therein” he referred *not* to the Old Testament saints who had obeyed the Mosaic precepts, but to those who heeded the errorists of his day.

The principle expressed in this dissuasion is as applicable to and as much needed by the saints of each succeeding generation as it was by those Hebrews. It is one of the marks of the Fall that man is fonder of that which is *material* in religion, than he is of what is *spiritual*; he is most prone—as history universally and sadly shows—to concentrate on *trivialities* rather than upon *essentials*. He is more concerned about the details of ordinances than he is of getting his heart established with grace. He will lend a readier ear to novel “doctrines” than to a solid exposition of the fundamentals of the Faith. He will contend zealously for things which contribute nothing to his salvation nor conduce an iota unto true holiness. And the only sure way of being delivered from this evil tendency, and of being preserved from false doctrines, is to buy the Truth and sell it not, and to have the heart established with grace.

“For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.” What is denoted by this weighty expression? First, what is it for the heart to be “established” and then how it is so established “with grace”? An established heart is the opposite from one which is “carried about,” which term is used again in “that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men”

(Eph. 4:14). It is a poetic expression in allusion to sailing-ships and the impression of the wind upon them. The figure is apt, and suggestive of the nature of strange doctrines, the way in which they are spread, and their effects on the minds of men. In themselves they are light and vain, “clouds without water” (Jude 12): there is nothing solid and substantial in them for the soul. Those who would impose such doctrines on others, generally do so with much bombast and blustering: unless we believe and practice such things, we are denounced as heretics and unsaved (Acts 15:1). The unlearned and unstable are disturbed by them, carried out of their course, and are in danger of making shipwreck of their faith. Hence, an “established heart” is one which is rooted and grounded in the Truth, securely anchored in Christ, rejoicing in God.

The word “grace” is vastly comprehensive and has various meanings in its Scripture usage. Its grand, original, fundamental signification is to express the free, eternal, and sovereign *favour of God toward His people*, for *that* is the spring and source of all the gifts, benefits and blessings we receive from Him. From this infinite fountain of the uncaused favour and special love of God—which is the “good pleasure of His (immutable) will”—proceed all the *acts* of His grace toward, in, and upon the elect. “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9). From that blessed ocean of grace proceed our personal and unconditional election in Christ, our union unto Him, interest in Him, relation to Him, together with our being blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3-6). We read of “the grace of God and the gift by grace” (Rom. 5:15): the former of which must mean the favour of God in His own heart towards us, in distinction from all the favours He bestows upon us; while the latter signifies the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, as flowing from the original grace in God.

The operations, breathings, and influences of the Holy Spirit in quickening, enlightening, revealing and applying Christ to us, so that we are put into an actual enjoyment of Him and His salvation, are the outworkings of the everlasting Covenant of Grace; therefore it is *all of grace*. The next most common use of the term is inherent or indwelling grace, being used to designate that supernatural work which is wrought in the Christian at his regeneration, whereby he is made alive Godwards and is given a relish for spiritual things: such passages as “He giveth more grace” (James 4:6), and “grow in grace” (2 Peter 3:18) have respect to grace in the heart. Then too the whole system of doctrine comprehended by “the Gospel” is so designated, for when Paul said to the Galatians, “Whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace” (5:4) he meant they had forsaken *the truth of grace*. Among the less frequent uses of the term we may note that its transforming effects are themselves called “grace” (Acts 11:23); gifts for preaching bear the title of “grace” (2 Cor. 6:1), as do those virtues wrought in us by the Spirit (2 Cor. 12:9, 10).

“For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.” By “grace” in this verse we understand, first, *the doctrine of grace*, that is, the truth of God’s free favour without us, in His own heart towards us, which is made known to us in the Gospel (Acts 20:24). Concerning this we read, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11) i.e., it has been revealed in His Gospel. The doctrine of grace is also styled, “wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness” (1 Tim. 6:3). The doctrine of grace includes all

that sacred system of theology, all the fundamentals of the everlasting Gospel of the blessed God, that grand “mystery” of His mind and will which sets forth to us the complete counsel and covenant of the Eternal Three, the record of God concerning His Son, by which He declares that “he that believeth hath everlasting life.”

As the whole of the Gospel, with the great salvation contained in it, and the blessings, consolations, privileges and promises of it, were fully, freely, and impartially preached by the Apostles, so it was attended with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven to the minds and hearts of many who heard it, so that they were brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord, and to a true and actual closure with Him, by means of the Word of Truth. The doctrine of grace as proclaimed by God’s accredited servants, and as clothed with the power of the Spirit, is the Divinely appointed means of turning the elect from darkness unto light, from the power of Satan into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Acts 26:18). Their understandings are illumined to know from the Gospel that it is God’s will to save them through the appointed Redeemer, and they are enabled to personally realise that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Second, it is most important and blessed for the heart to be “*established*” with inherent grace: a fact which every one born of God must more or less know and feel. Where the Holy Spirit of God dwells, there sin is known in its guilt and felt in its power, while the effects of the Fall on all the faculties of the soul are experienced. When the Spirit has revealed the super-excellency of Christ, His all-sufficiency as a Saviour, His suitableness as such, this begets some longings after Him, thirstings for Him, desires to be found in Him, and high prizings of His blood and righteousness. But many there are who, though quickened and called of God, have not yet closed in with Christ, cannot say He died for *them*, know not that *their* sins are pardoned. The Spirit has thus far wrought with them that they feel themselves to be vile sinners, justly deserving of the wrath of God; yet they cannot affirm that their names are written in Heaven.

They are emptied of all creature dependency and self-sufficiency. Their hearts are broken and humbled with a true and thorough sight and sense of sin. They have heard of Christ, and of His infinite tenderness and compassion, love and mercy, to sinners like themselves. The Lord the Spirit has brought them on so far as to listen attentively to the preaching of the Gospel and the searching of the Scriptures. Though they may be as bruised reeds and smoking flax, incapable of expressing their wants to God, or of describing their case to others, yet they find in the preaching of Christ crucified that which suits them. Though they cannot yet confidently say of Him “who loved *me* and gave Himself for me,” nevertheless *they wait on Him* in His ordinances, longing for Him to arise upon them as the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings. And though such may be called “seekers only,” “inquirers after Christ,” yet they are blessed: “*Blessed* are all they that *wait for Him*” (Isa. 30:18); “let the heart of them rejoice that *seek* the LORD” (1 Chron. 16:10).

Upon such persons the Lord, in His good time, causes His light of grace to break forth more clearly, shining within them, causing their spiritual faculties to expand, and be exercised more particularly upon “the mystery of the Gospel” (Eph. 6:19) and the doctrine of grace. Thereby their spiritual “senses” (Heb. 5:14) are brought to taste the sweetness of Divine truth, to have a heart relish of it, to derive nourishment from it, to perceive its spiritual excellency. In receiving and digesting it, they are brought to find the doctrine of God’s free grace to be wholesome and sustaining. By this means they are “nourished up”

(1 Tim. 4:6) unto everlasting life. It is thus the Lord carries on His work in the souls of His people. At regeneration they are filled with joy in Him, and sin is but little felt within. But as the work of grace is deepened, they are made to see and feel their depravity, and their peace is clouded by increasing discoveries of their vileness, which makes way for a growing appreciation of grace.

Inherent grace, then, is a new nature or holy principle implanted by the Spirit at the new birth. It consists in spiritual perceptions, inward apprehensions, spiritual affections, in the souls of those who are born of God, whereby they are fitted for Him and Divine things, enabled to take holy delight in God, to have holy breathings after Him, to hunger and thirst after righteousness, to yearn for a consciousness of Christ's presence, to have a spiritual appetite to feed upon Him as the Bread of Life. Thus, it is most profitable for the saint to have his heart established with inherent grace, for he is the personal subject of it, and it is for this reason that God's people *in general are so fond of experimental preaching*—the tracing out of the work of the Spirit in their hearts—thereby enabling them to set to their seal that God is true, that He has thus far wrought in them to the praise and glory of His grace.

Nor is there any legality in this, for the work of the Spirit, in all its parts and phases, flows as freely from the Covenant of grace as does the work of Christ. Yea, we are expressly said to be "*saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*" (Titus 3:5), which is thus expressed to show that salvation depends equally upon the distinct offices which the Eternal Three are engaged in on behalf of the elect. It is helpful to converse at times with such as are experimentally acquainted with God, and His Son Jesus Christ, and who hold communion with Him by the Holy Spirit. Genuine Christian experience consists principally in this: the Spirit is pleased to open the Scriptures unto us, making them the ground of our faith, giving us to feel their power, making the experience described in them our own, revealing Christ as set forth in the Word to us, and filling our hearts with His love agreeably to what is revealed of it in the Gospel.

The people of God need to be taught and brought to an acquaintance with the real work of God *within* them, with His *method* of strengthening and comforting them, that they may learn the grounds of spiritual assurance. There is a need that the heart be established with grace as it respects their ascertaining for themselves that a supernatural work is actually wrought within them, that Christ is in them the hope of glory, that they "know the grace of God *in truth*" (Col. 1:6), and that their works are "wrought in God" (John 3:21) as Christ expressed it. Let us therefore diligently study the work of the Spirit within us, comparing it with the written Word, and carefully distinguishing between natural and spiritual affections, moral refinements and supernatural regeneration. Nor let us forget that the grace of God within us is only discovered to us as the Spirit shines upon His own work in our souls.

It is also good for the heart to be established with grace as it respects *the doctrine* of it: in the belief of the Father's everlasting love, the Son's complete salvation, and the Spirit's testimony thereof, which strengthens the faith and confirms the hope of the Christian. Confidence before God can be maintained on no other foundation than that of His *grace*. There are seasons when the believer's mind is filled with distress, when the guilt of sin presses heavily on his conscience, when Satan is allowed to buffet him; then it is that he is forced to cry "have respect unto the Covenant" (Psa. 74:20). There are seasons when he cannot pray except with groanings that cannot be uttered, being cast down with

soul burdens and conflicts, but they only serve to prove to him the deep need of his heart being established with the truth of grace.

Thus, for the heart to be “established with grace” signifies, first, the doctrine of God’s free grace *without* us, in His own heart toward us; and second, the blessed operations of the Spirit *within* us. When God’s free-grace salvation is brought home to the heart by the Spirit, it produces blessed fruits and consequences in the person to whom it becomes “the power of God” (Rom. 1:16). It is of vast importance to hold forth a clear profession of the doctrine of grace, and it is of incalculable worth to be able to declare a genuine work of grace wrought in the heart by the Spirit agreeably to the truth we profess. The doctrine of grace is the means, in the hands of the Spirit, of begetting faith, promoting its growth, and supporting it. Therefore there is a real need of God’s everlasting love and Christ’s finished redemption being preached, though they be already known, and their power felt in the heart, because our walk with God and our confidence in Him receive all their encouragement therefrom.

While it is certain that the head must be enlightened with the knowledge of Truth before the heart can experience the virtue and efficacy of it, yet our text speaks of “the heart” so as to emphasize the quickening and operative power of Divine truth, when it is embraced and maintained in the soul. It is good for the heart to be established with grace, for it promotes the believer’s spiritual growth, secures his well-being, and greatly contributes to his comfort. It is also a preservative against error, an antidote against unbelief, and a choice cordial to revive the soul in seasons of distress.—A.W.P.

(N.B. For much in the second half of this article we are indebted to a valuable sermon by S.E. Pierce).

THE LIFE OF DAVID

64. *His Ascending Olivet.*

We resume at the point left off in our last. "The king said also unto Zadok the priest, Art not thou a seer? return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz thy son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there come word from you to certify me" (2 Sam. 15:27, 28). Though they could not be permitted to minister unto him in holy things, he does not disdain their services; they could further his interests by returning to their post of duty, and from there acquaint him with developments in Jerusalem. What implicit confidence in them was evidenced by this experienced strategist, in revealing to them his immediate plans—the place where he intended to remain for the time being! O that God's servants today so conducted themselves that those in trouble would not hesitate to confide in them and seek their counsel. "Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem: and they tarried there" (v. 29). Blessed obedience: sinking their own wishes, complying with the will of their master.

"And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot" (v. 30). Let not the reader forget what was said in the opening paragraphs of last month's article, where we pointed out that the real key to the whole of this passage is to be found in the state of David's heart. Throughout he is to be viewed as *the humble penitent*. God's rebuke was heavy upon him, and therefore did he humble himself beneath His mighty hand. Hence it is that we here see him giving outward expression to his self-abasement and grief for his sins, and for the miseries which he had brought upon himself, his family, and his people. Suitable tokens of his godly sorrow were these, for the covering of his head was a symbol of self-condemnation, while his walking barefooted betokened his mourning: cf. Isaiah 20:2, 4; Ezekiel 24:17.

"And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up." How striking is this, coming right after his crossing of the brook Kidron! In last month's article we pointed out five respects in which that foreshadowed our Lord's crossing that same brook on the night of His betrayal. Who can fail to see here another unmistakable analogy? After His crossing of that doleful brook, our Saviour entered Gethsemane, where His soul was "exceeding sorrowful" and where His supplications were accompanied with "strong crying *and tears*" (Heb. 5:7). Yet while observing the comparison, let us not forget the radical contrast: his own sins were the cause of David's grief, but the sins of His people occasioned Christ's tears.

"And all the people that were with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up" (2 Sam. 15:30). It is our duty to weep with those that weep, and those that were with him were deeply affected by their king's grief. Once again our minds revert to our Saviour's passion, and discover another resemblance between it and David's case here, though it has been strangely overlooked by many. The disciples who accompanied Christ into the Garden failed, it is true, to "watch with Him" for one hour, yet it most certainly was not through indifference, nor because they sought fleshly ease in slumber, for as the Holy Spirit expressly informs us, Christ "found them sleeping *for sorrow*" (Luke 22:45). Thus the weeping people who followed David up Olivet found its counterpart in the sorrowing of those disciples who had accompanied the Saviour unto Gethsemane.

“And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom” (2 Sam. 15:31). With the exception of his own son’s insurrection, this was the bitterest ingredient in the cup which David was now having to drink. It was no ordinary blow for him to bear, for Ahithophel was no ordinary man. He was one whom the king had taken into his confidence, numbered among his closest friends, and to whom he had shown much kindness. He not only enjoyed the most intimate relations with David concerning the affairs of state, but had close fellowship with him in spiritual things. This is evident from the Psalmist’s own statement “We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company” (Psa. 55:14). Fickle and treacherous is human nature. Our sharpest trials often come from those in whom we have reposed the most trust and to whom we have shown the greatest kindness; yet, on the other hand, the most unlikely friends are sometimes raised up among those from whom we had the least expectations—as the Gittites attached to David: 2 Samuel 15:21.

“And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.” Troubles rarely come singly: often they crowd one on top of another, as was the case with Job. This sad news was brought to the king just when he was being the most severely tried. Absalom had revolted, and now his “prime minister” turned traitor at the most crucial moment. It was a vile requital for the king’s generosity to him. Here again we may perceive these historical incidents shadowing forth events even more solemn and frightful in connection with our blessed Lord, for Ahithophel is undoubtedly a striking type of Judas, who, after being admitted to the inner circle of Christ’s disciples, basely turned against Him and went over to the side of His enemies. Sufficient, then, for the disciple to be as his Master: if *His* charity was rewarded with cruel treachery, let *us* be prepared for similar treatment.

How keenly David felt the perfidy of Ahithophel is evident from several statements in the Psalms which obviously refer to him. In the 41st he mentions one evil after another which afflicted him, and finishes with “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me” (v. 9)—that was the climax: anything worse could scarcely be imagined, as the opening “Yea,” suggests. Ahithophel had not only forsaken David in his hour of need, but had gone over to the side of his foe. The “lifted up his heel against me” is the figure of a horse which has just been fed by its master, and then lashing out with his feet, viciously kicks him. More plainly still is his anguish evidenced in “For it was not an enemy that reproached me: then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me: then I would have hid myself from him. But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance” (Psa. 55:12, 13).

There is still another reference in the Psalms where David laments, “For my love they are my adversaries; but I give myself unto prayer. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love” (109:4, 5). This sad trial of David’s was illustrative of what is often the most painful experience of the Church, for her troubles usually begin at home: her open enemies can do her little or no harm until her pretended friends have delivered her into their hands. The statement that David “gave himself to prayer” at once links up with our passage, for there we read next, “And David said, O LORD, I *pray* Thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness” (2 Sam. 15:31). It is apparent that David was more afraid of Ahithophel’s wisdom than he was of Absalom’s daring, for he

was a man of experience in statecraft, and was highly respected by the people (2 Sam. 16:23).

“And David said, O Lord, I pray Thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.” Here again the type points forward to the antitype, in fact *that* is the outstanding feature of our passage. David’s crossing of the Kidron (v. 24), his complete surrender of himself to the will of God (v. 26), his tears (v. 30), and now his *praying*, present one of the most remarkable prefigurations of our Lord’s sufferings to be found anywhere in the Old Testament. In asking the Lord to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel, David recognised and acknowledged that all hearts are in His hands, that He can “make the judges fools” (Job 12:17). There was no suitable opportunity for David to engage in a *lengthy* season of prayer, nor was that necessary, for we are not heard for our much speaking. Apparently, a brief ejaculation was all that now issued from his heart; but it was heard on High!

What a blessed and encouraging example David has here left us! Prayer should ever be the believer’s resource, for there is never a time when it is unseasonable. We too may pray for God to bring to naught the crafty counsel of the wicked against His people. We too may come to Him when all appears to be lost, and spread our case before Him. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, for vain is all worldly wisdom and power against it. So it proved here: though David’s petition was a very brief one, yet it met with an unmistakable answer as 2 Samuel 17:14 shows, where we are told, “And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel; for the LORD had commanded *to defeat* the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.” Let us take encouragement from this incident, then, and “*in everything* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6).

“And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God” (2 Sam. 15:32). This is very blessed and teaches a lovely practical lesson: “weeping must never hinder worshipping” (Matthew Henry). No, why should it; we may worship God in the minor key as truly as in the major. We may adore the Lord as genuinely in the valley of humiliation as from the heights of jubilation. Furthermore, we may worship God as acceptably from the rugged mountain-top as in the most ornate cathedral. This principle was clearly apprehended by the spiritually-minded in Old Testament times, as is evident from our passage: though David was away from the tabernacle, he realised that God was still accessible in spirit. Let us, then, grasp this fact, that nothing should prevent us worshipping the Lord, even though we no longer have access to His *public* ordinances. How thankful we should be for such a merciful provision in a day like ours.

“And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God.” There are some who believe—we consider with good reason—that David sang the 3rd Psalm as a part of his worship on this occasion, for it bears the title “a Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son.” It has been well said that “Among all the Psalms of David there is none which more remarkably evidences the triumph of his faith out of the depths of affliction and chastisement” than this one (B. W. Newton). There was no shutting of his eyes to the gravity of his situation, no ignoring the imminence of his danger, for he said, “LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah” (Psa. 3:1, 2).

David described his foes as being numerous, and as boasting there would be no deliverance for him by the Lord. As we have seen (2 Sam. 15:12), the revolt had assumed considerable dimensions, and the conspirators were assured that David's sins had turned away the aid of Heaven from his cause. "But thou, O LORD, *art* a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head" (Psa. 3:3): this is most blessed—he opposes their malicious utterances and confident hatred by the conviction that amidst real perils Jehovah was still his defence. With bowed and covered head he had fled from Jerusalem but "Thou art the lifter up of mine head" was his confidence. "Though the dangers were still present, yet in faith he speaks of them as past (Hebrew) the deliverance was yet future, yet he speaks of it as already come" (B. W. Newton).

"I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill. Selah" (Psa. 3:4). He was an exile from the tabernacle on Zion, and he had sent back the ark to its rest; but though he had to cry to God from the mountain side, He graciously answers from "His holy hill." "He and his men camped amidst dangers, but an unslumbering Helper mounted guard over the undefended slumberers" (A. Maclaren): "I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me" (Psa. 3:5). Such was the calm confidence of David, even while multiplied perils were still encircling him. Refreshed by the night's repose, heartened by the Divine protection granted while sheltering in caves or sleeping in the open, the Psalmist breaks forth in triumphant exclamation: "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about" (Psa. 3:6).

Betaking himself for renewed energy to the weapon of prayer, even before the battle David sees the victory, but ascribes it solely to his God. "Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for Thou *hast* smitten all mine enemies upon the cheekbone; Thou *hast* broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: Thy blessing is upon Thy people. Selah" (Psa. 3:7, 8). "Nor was his confidence in vain. He was restored and allowed again to see Israel in peace—again to prove that God's blessing is upon His people. How precious is the individual use of such a Psalm as this, to every one who, after having backslidden or trespassed, has only turned again to the mercies and faithfulness of God. Even though the tokens of Divine rebuke and chastisement be present on every side, even though every tongue may say 'there is no help for him in God,' such an one may remember David, and again say, 'Thou, O LORD, art a shield for me: my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.' Thus, even the sins and chastisements of God's servants are made blessings in result to His people" (B. W. Newton).

"Behold Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head" (2 Sam. 15:32). From 1 Chronicles 27:33 we learn that Hushai was another who had taken a prominent part in the affairs of state, for there it is recorded, "Hushai the Archite was the king's companion." That Hushai was regarded as a man of wisdom is also apparent from the fact that, a little later, Absalom applied to him for advice (2 Sam. 17:5). In the light of what immediately follows, it seems to us that the coming to David of Hushai at this time was *a test*, to manifest whether his confidence lay wholly in the Lord, for it is often His way to so regulate our circumstances as to exhibit the secret workings of our hearts—that we may, subsequently, be humbled thereby, and brought to prize more highly that grace which bears so patiently with us.

"Unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me; But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; as

I have been thy father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be thy servant: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. And hast thou not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, that what thing so ever, thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Behold, they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz Zadok's son, and Jonathan Abiathar's son; and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear. So Hushai David's friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem" (2 Sam. 15:33-37).

"As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. 27:19). Alas, cannot both writer and reader see in the above incident a reflection of his own character? Have there not been times when we confidently committed our cause and case unto the Lord, and then we saw an opportunity where, by fleshly scheming, we thought that we could secure the answer to our prayers? It is far easier to commit our way unto the Lord, than it is to "rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him" (Psa. 37:5, 7). It is *there* that the real test of faith often lies: whether we *leave* things entirely in God's hands, or seek to take matters into our own. Learn, then, that the appearing of a willing Hushai at the critical moment is often permitted to put us to the proof—whether or not our heart be still inclined to lean upon an arm of flesh.

Various attempts have been made seeking to vindicate David for sending Hushai to become a spy for him in Absalom's camp. Strategy may be permissible in warfare, but nothing could justify the king in causing Hushai to act and utter a lie. It is true that God overruled, and through Hushai defeated Ahithophel's counsel, but that no more proves He *approved* of this deception, than did the flowing of water from the smitten rock show God's approbation of Moses' anger. The best that can be said is "Alas! where shall we find wisdom and simplicity so united in any mere man that we can perceive nothing which admits of censure and needs forgiveness?" (Thomas Scott). There has only been One on this earth in whom there was *no* spot or blemish.—A.W.P.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS.

5. *The Siniatic.*

In last month's article we sought to show how that the inadequacy and imperfections of the Mosaic economy only served to pave the way for the introduction of Christianity. Such marks of imperfection were stamped on the very nature of the Levitical institutions, for they were, to a large extent, as the Apostle termed them, "weak and beggarly elements" (Gal. 4:9), and this was because it was then the comparative minority of the Church, and the materials of a more spiritual economy did not exist. "The atonement was yet but prospective; the Holy Spirit did not operate as He does under the Gospel; and God's gracious designs as regards the redemption of our race (rather "of the elect") lay embedded and concealed in the obscure intimations that the Seed of the woman should bruise the Serpent's head and in the promises to Abraham. Nor were those defects perfectly remedied throughout the whole course of the dispensation. To the last the Jew walked in comparative darkness" (Litton's "Bampton" Lectures).

In the historical outworking of the economy, not only imperfection, but, as we all know, gross failure, characterised the entire history of Israel as a nation—ominously foreshadowed at the beginning, when Aaron lent himself to the awful idolatry of the golden calf at the very base of Sinai itself. In the vast majority, spirituality was so lacking and love to God beat so feebly in their hearts, that the requirements of the Law were regarded as an oppressive yoke. Only too often, those who ought to have been the most exemplary in performing what was enjoined, and from their position in the commonwealth should have checked the practice of evil in others, were themselves the most forward in promoting it. Consequently, the predominating principle of the Mosaic economy, namely, the inseparable connection between obedience and blessing, transgression and punishment, was obscured, for souls which should have been "cut off" from the congregation as deliberate covenant-breakers were allowed to retain their standing in the community and to enjoy its privileges.

It should be pointed out that this expression "that soul shall be cut off," which occurs so frequently in the Pentateuch, signifies something far more solemn and awful than does being "disfellowshipped from the church" today—such an explanation or definition on the part of not a few learned men is quite unpardonable. "That soul shall he cut off" refers primarily to *God's* act, for it occurs in connections and cases where those in human authority could not interfere, the violations of the Law being *secret* ones: see Leviticus 17:10; 18:29; 22:2—in fact in a number of instances God expressly said "*I will cut off*" (Lev. 20:3, 5), etc. But where the act was open and the guilt known, God's decision was to be carried out by the community, as in Numbers 15:30; Joshua 7:24-26. Yet even when Israel's judges or magistrates failed to enforce this, the guilty *were* cut off in *God's* judgment.

It was very largely through the failure of the responsible heads in Israel to execute the sentence of the Law upon its open violators that the Nation fell into such a low state, bringing down upon itself the providential judgments of Jehovah. Alas that history has repeated itself, for at no one point is the failure of Christendom more apparent than in the almost universal refusal of the so-called "churches" to enforce a Scriptural discipline upon its refractory members—sentiment and the fear of man have ousted a love of holiness and the fear of God. And just as surely, *the consequence has been the same*, though, in keeping with the more spiritual character of this dispensation, the Divine judgments

have assumed another form: error has supplanted Truth, a company of godless worldlings occupy the pulpits, so that those who long for Bread are now being mocked with a stone.

Had Israel been faithful to their covenant engagement at Sinai, had they as a nation striven in earnest, through the grace offered them in the Abrahamic covenant, to produce the fruits of that righteousness required by the Mosaic, then, as another has beautifully expressed it, “delighting in the Law of the Lord and meditating therein day and night, in their condition they should assuredly have been” like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in his season, whose leaf doth not wither and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” Canaan would then, indeed, have verified the description of “a land flowing with milk and honey.” But alas, the Law was despised, discipline was neglected, self-will and self-pleasing were rampant; and consequently, famines, pestilences, and wars, frequently became their portion.

Just in proportion as practical holiness disappeared from Israel’s midst, so was there a withdrawal of God’s blessing. Israel’s history in Canaan never presented anything more than a most faulty display of that righteousness and prosperity which, like twin sisters, should have accompanied them all through their course. Yet again we would point out that Israel’s failure by no means signified that the plan of the Almighty had been overthrown. So far from that, if the reader will turn to and glance at Deuteronomy 28 and 32 he will find that the Lord Himself *predicted* the future backslidings of the people, and from the beginning announced the sore afflictions which should come in consequence upon them. Thus, co-incident with the birth of the Covenant, intimations were given of its imperfect nature and temporal purpose: it was made clear that not through *its* provisions and agencies would come the ultimate good for Israel and mankind.

But it is high time that we now pointed out, second, wherein the *types* under the Mosaic economy prepared the way for the dawn of Christianity. A large field is here before us, but its ground has been covered so thoroughly by others that it is not necessary to do more than now call attention to its outstanding features. Ere doing so, let us again remind the reader that the Old Testament types were Divinely designed to teach by way of *contrast*, as well as by comparison—the recognition of this important principle at once refutes the God-insulting theory that the types were defective and often misleading. The reason for this should be obvious: the Antitype far excelled the types in value—God is ever jealous of the glory of His beloved Son, and to Him was reserved the honour of producing and bringing in that which is perfect.

First, let us notice the special and *peculiar relation which Israel sustained to the Lord*: they were His chosen people, and He was their God in a way that He was the God of no others. It was as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as the children of promise, that God dealt with them from the beginning: see Exodus 2:24, 25 and 6:5. It was in fulfillment of His holy promise to Abraham that “He brought forth His people with joy, His chosen with gladness” (Psa. 105:43) from the cruel bondage of the land of Egypt—this basic fact must be steadily borne in mind when pondering all of God’s subsequent dealings with them. Therein we find a perfect foreshadowment of God’s dealings with His people today: each of them receives mercy on a covenant basis—the Everlasting Covenant made with Christ—and on the ground of it are they delivered from the power of Satan and translated into the kingdom of Christ.

Second, what we have just said above supplies the key to our right understanding of the *typical significance* of God’s giving the Decalogue to Israel. The revelation of Law at

Sinai did not come forth in independence of what had preceded, as if it were to lay the foundation of something altogether new. It did not proceed from God considered simply as the Creator, exercising His prerogative to impose commands on the consciences of His creatures, which with no other helps and endowments but those of mere nature, they were required with unfailing rectitude to fulfill. The history of Israel knows nothing of Law in connection with promise and blessing. It was as *the Redeemer* of Israel that God announced the Ten Words, as being in a special sense “the LORD their God” (Exo. 20:2), proclaiming Himself therein to be the God of “*mercy*” as well as holiness (20:5, 6), and recognising their title to the inheritance of Canaan as His own sovereign gift to them (20:12).

The Law, then, was not given to Israel as a deliverer from evil, nor as the bestower of life. Its design was not to rescue from bondage, nor found a title to the favour and blessing of Jehovah, for all that was *already* Israel’s: see Galatians 3:16-22. “So that grace here also took precedence of law, life of righteousness; and the covenant of law, assuming and rooting itself in the prior covenant of grace (the Abrahamic) only came to shut the heirs of promise up to that course of dutiful obedience toward God, and brotherly kindness toward each other, by which alone they could accomplish the higher ends of their calling. In *form* merely (viz., the Law now given as a covenant) was there anything new in this, not in *principle*. For what else was involved in the command given to Abraham . . . ‘I am the almighty God, walk before Me and be thou perfect’ (Gen. 17:1)—a word which was comprehensive of all true service and righteous behaviour.

“But an advance *was* made by the entrance of the Law over such preceding calls and appointments, and it was this: the obligation to rectitude of life resting upon the heirs of promise was now thrown into a categorical and imperative form, embracing the entire round of moral and religious duty; yet, not that they might by the observance of this work themselves into a blissful relation to God, but that, as already standing in such a relation, they might walk worthy of it, and become filled with the fruits of righteousness, which alone could either prove the reality of their interest in God, or fulfill the calling they had received from Him” (P. Fairbairn).

Therein we have a striking exemplification of the relation which the Law sustains to the people of God in all dispensations, most blessedly so in this Christian era. In every dispensation God has first revealed Himself unto His people as the Giver of life and blessing and then as the Requirer of obedience to His commands. Their obedience, so far from entitling them to justification, can never be acceptably rendered until they *are* justified. All the blessings of Israel were purely and solely of grace, received through faith. And what is faith but the acceptance of Heaven’s gifts, or the trusting in the record wherein those gifts are promised? The order of experience in the life of every saint, as it is so clearly set forth in the Epistle to the Romans (summed up in 12:1), is first participation in the Divine mercy, and then, issuing from it, a constraining obligation to run in the way of God’s commandments.

How could it be otherwise? Surely it is not more obvious than that it is impossible for fallen and depraved creatures, already lying under the Divine condemnation and wrath, to *earn* anything at God’s hands, or even to perform good works acceptable in His sight, until they have become partakers of His sovereign *grace*. Can they, *against* the tide of inward corruption, against the power of Satan and the allurements of the world, and against God’s judicial displeasure, recover themselves and set out on a journey Heaven-

wards, only requiring the aid of the Spirit to *perfect* their efforts? To suppose such an absurdity betrays an utter ignorance of God's character in reference to His dealings with the guilty. If He "spared not His own Son" (Rom. 8:32), how shall He refuse to smite thee, O sinner! But, blessed be His name, He can, for His Son's sake, bestow eternal life and everlasting blessing on the most unworthy; but He *cannot* stoop to bargain with criminals about their acquiring a title to it, through their own defective services.

Third, if the circumstances of God's placing Israel under the Law typified the fact that it was *not* given to *un-redeemed* sinners in order for them to procure the Divine favour, on the other hand, it is equally clear that it exemplifies the fact that *the redeemed are placed under the Law*—otherwise, one of the most important of all the Divine transactions of the past (Exo. 19) would have no threat bearing upon us today. The Christian *needs* the Law. First, to subdue the spirit of self-righteousness. Nothing is more calculated to produce humility than a daily measuring of ourselves by the exalted standard of righteousness required by the Law. As we recognise how far short we come of rendering that unremitting love demanded, we shall be constantly driven out of self unto Christ. Second, to restrain the flesh and hold us back from lawlessness. Third, as a rule of life, setting before us continually that holiness of heart and conduct which, through the power of the Spirit, we should be ever striving to attain.

Should it be objected, But the believer has perfect freedom, and must not be entangled again in the yoke of bondage. The answer is, Yes, he is "free to *righteousness*" (Rom. 6:18), he is free to act as a *servant* of Christ, and not as a lord over himself. Believers are not free to introduce what they please into the service of God, for He is a jealous God, and will not suffer His glory to be associated with the vain imaginations of men; they are free to worship Him only in spirit and in truth. "The freedom of the Spirit is a freedom only within the bounds of the Law" (P. Fairbairn). Subjection to the Law is that which alone proves our title to the grace which is in Christ Jesus. None has any legitimate ground to conclude that he has savingly trusted in the Saviour, unless he possesses a sincere desire and determination of heart to serve and glorify God. Faith is not a lawless sentiment, but a holy principle, its sure fruit being obedience. Love to God ever yields itself willingly to His requirements.

But let us now observe a conspicuous *contrast* in the type. At Sinai God said "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed (as enunciated in the Ten Words), and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people . . . Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Exo. 19:5, 6). There was a *contingency*: Israel's entering into those blessings turned upon *their* fulfillment of the condition of obedience. But the terms of the "new covenant," under which Christians live, are quite otherwise. Here there is *no* contingency, but blessed certainty, for the condition of it was *perfectly fulfilled by Christ*. Hence God now says, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that *they shall* not depart from Me" (Jer. 32:40); and, "I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye *shall* keep My judgments and do *them*" (Ezek. 36:27). Therein we may adore God for the antitype excelling the type: the IF concerning Israel being displaced by His SHALL.

Yet in concluding our consideration of this branch of the subject let us say very emphatically, that the only ones who are entitled to draw comfort from those precious "shalls" of God, are they who correspond to the characters described in the immediate

context. Jeremiah depicts them as those in whose hearts God puts His holy “fear”: if, then, the fear of God is not in me, if I do not stand in awe of His majesty and dread a despising of His authority, then I have no reason to conclude that I am numbered amongst those to whom the promises belong. Ezekiel describes those who “shall keep God’s judgments and do them” as they from whom He takes away the stony heart and gives a heart of flesh. If, then, my heart is unresponsive to the Divine voice and impenitent when I have disregarded it, then I am not one of the characters there delineated. Finally, God says of them “I will put My laws into their minds and write them in their hearts” (Heb. 8:10). If, then, I do not “*delight* in the Law of God after the inward man” and “*serve* the Law of God” (Rom. 7:22, 25), then I have no part or lot in the Better Covenant.—A.W.P.

EXPERIMENTAL PREACHING

It was our desire to say more upon this in the Hebrews' article in this issue, but so as not to unduly lengthen it, we decided to write a separate article thereon. The subject is one of great practical importance and value, though sadly neglected by the modern pulpit. By "experimental preaching" we mean preaching that analyses, diagnoses, describes the strange and often bewildering experience of the Christian. As we have pointed out before, there is a real distinction to be drawn between Christian experience and the experience of the Christian. True Christian experience consists of a knowledge of Christ, communion with Him, conformity to Him. But the experience of a Christian grows out of the conflict of the two natures within—natures which are radically different in their character, tendency, and products. In consequence of that conflict there is a ceaseless warfare going on within him, issuing in a series of defeats and victories, victories and defeats. These, in turn, produce joy and sorrow, doubtings and confidence, fears and peace; until often he knows not what to think or how to place himself.

Now it is one important and fundamental part of the office of God's minister to trace out the workings of sin and the actings of grace in the believer's heart; to turn the light of Scripture upon the mysterious anomaly of what is daily taking place in the Christian's soul; to enable him to determine how far he is growing in grace or is backsliding from the Lord. It is his business to take the stumbling stones out of the way of Zion's travelers, to explain to them "*the mystery* of the Gospel," to define the grounds of true assurance, and to undermine a carnal confidence. It is an essential part of his task as preacher to trace out the work of the Spirit in the regenerate, and to show He is a Spirit of "judgment" as well as consolation, a Spirit of "burning" (Isa. 4:4) as well as building, that He wounds as well as heals.

The human soul possesses three principal faculties: the understanding, the affections, and the will; and the Word of God is addressed to each of them. Consequently the preaching of the Word comes under this general threefold classification: doctrinal preaching, experimental, and hortatory. Doctrinal preaching expounds the great truths and facts which constitute the substance of Holy Writ, and has for its prime aim the instruction of the hearer, the enlightening of his mind. Experimental preaching concerns the actual application of salvation to the individual and traces out the operations of the Spirit in the effectuation thereof, having for its main object the stirring of the affections. Hortatory preaching deals with the requirements of God and the obligations of the hearer, takes up the exhortations and warnings of Scripture, calls to the discharge of duty, and is addressed principally to the will. And it is only as these three fundamental offices of the minister are adequately and wisely *combined*, that the pulpit has performed its proper functions.

Doctrinal preaching treats of the character of God, proclaims His attributes, extols His perfections. It deals with the nature of man, his accountability to God, his obligation to serve and glorify Him. It exalts the Law, and presses its requirement that we love the Lord God with all our hearts and our neighbour as ourselves. It is concerned with showing what sin is, its enormity, its workings, its consequences. It delineates God's wondrous salvation, and shows the grace from which it springs, the wisdom which contrived it, the holiness which required it, the love that secured it. It describes what the Church is, both universally and locally. It expounds the ordinances: their significance, their purpose, their value.

Experimental preaching deals with the actual experience of those upon whom and in whom God works. It begins with their natural estate, as those who were shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin. It shows how, as fallen creatures, we are sin's slaves and Satan's serfs. It describes the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart, its pride and self-righteousness. It treats of man's spiritual impotency, and the hypocrisy and uselessness of making this a ground of self-pity, and an excuse for slothfulness. It delineates the workings of the Spirit when He convicts of sin, and the effects this produces in the subject of it. It takes up the heart exercises of an awakened soul, and seeks to counsel, admonish, and comfort.

Hortatory preaching is concerned with the claims of God upon us, and how we should endeavour to meet the same. It bids us remember the Creator in the days of our youth, and affirms that our chief end is to glorify Him. It bids us throw down the weapons of our warfare against Him, and seek reconciliation with Him. It calls upon us to repent of our sins, forsake our wicked ways, and sue for mercy through Christ. It emphasises the various motives unto obedience. It describes the life which the Christian is required to live, and exhorts him to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Christ. In short, it enforces the righteous demands of the Lord, and urges unto a compliance therewith.

Now it is in *a due combination* of these three distinct lines of preaching that the best results are likely to ensue. Care needs to be exercised that the balance is properly maintained. If there be a disproportionate dwelling on any one of these, souls are likely to be hindered rather than helped. There needs to be *variety* in our mental and spiritual food, as much as there is in our material, and He who has graciously furnished the latter in Nature, has mercifully provided the former in His Word. If a person ate nothing but meat, his system would soon be clogged; if he confined himself to sweets, his stomach would quickly be soured. It is so spiritually. A surfeit of doctrinal preaching produces swelled heads; too much experimental induces morbidity, and nothing but hortatory issues in legality.

Alas, one of the most lamentable features of Christendom is the *lopsidedness* of present-day ministry. Where the Law is faithfully expounded, the Gospel is conspicuous by its absence, and where the Gospel is freely proclaimed, the Law is rigidly excluded. Even when a more or less balanced doctrine is maintained, there is very little experimental preaching, yea, it is generally decried as harmful, as fostering doubts, as getting us occupied with ourselves instead of Christ. In those places where really helpful experimental preaching *is* to be heard, the hortatory note is never raised: promises are freely quoted, but the precepts are shelved, while exhorting the unregenerate to repent and believe in Christ is denounced as inculcating creature ability and as insulting to the Holy Spirit. In other quarters, one might hear little or nothing except our duties—becoming personal workers, giving to missions etc.—which is like whipping a horse that has had no food.

But of the three it is *experimental* preaching which is given least place in our day. So much so is this the case, that many of God's poor people and not a few preachers themselves, have never so much as heard the expression. Yet this is scarcely to be wondered at, for experimental preaching is by far *the most difficult* of the three. A little reading and study is all that is required to equip one naturally (we do not say spiritually) to prepare a doctrinal sermon, while a novice, a "young convert," is deemed capable of standing at a street-corner and urging all and sundry to receive Christ as their personal Saviour. But *a personal experience* of the Truth is indispensable before one can helpfully preach along

experimental lines: such sermons have to be hammered out on the anvil of the preacher's own heart. An unregenerate man may preach most orthodoxly on doctrine, but he cannot describe the operations of the Spirit in the heart to any good purpose.

Though experimental preaching be the hardest task which the preacher has to perform, yet it is needful he attend to it, and when the blessing of God rests thereon, salutary are its effects. It is calculated to expose empty professors—both to themselves and others—more effectually than any other type of sermon, for it shows at length that the saving of a soul is very much more than a sudden “decision” on my part or believing that Christ died in my room and stead; for it is a supernatural work of the Spirit in the heart. Such preaching is most likely to open the eyes of sincere but deceived souls, for as they are shown *what* the work of the Spirit is, and *the effects it produces*, they will discover a miracle of grace has been wrought in them. While nothing is so apt to establish trembling believers, above all, it honours the Spirit Himself.

Let us now point out *along what lines* experimental preaching is to proceed in order to be most helpful to the saints. First and primarily, its business is to show *of what* “Salvation” consists in its actual application to the individual. Doctrinal preaching lays the foundation for this by an exposition of the grand truth of Election (which makes known the blessed fact that God has chosen a people unto salvation: 2 Thess. 2:13), and by opening up the subject of the Atonement, showing how Christ has fully satisfied every requirement of Divine justice upon the elect, thereby purchasing redemption for them. Doctrinal preaching is *the means* which the Spirit uses in the enlightenment, conviction and conversion of the elect, and the practical value of experimental preaching is that it enables concerned and attentive hearers to ascertain *what stage* has been reached in the Spirit's work in them.

In taking up the Spirit's application of that salvation which the Father ordained and the Son secured, the preacher first shows *how* the soul is prepared to receive it. By nature his heart is as hard and unresponsive to the Truth as the “highway” is to the reception of wheat: so there has to be a preliminary plowing and harrowing, a breaking up and turning over of the soil of his soul before the Word will obtain entrance and take root therein. Experimental preaching, then, will show *which* of his hearers is still accurately pictured by the “wayside” around, namely, those whose hearts are thoroughly antagonistic to God's claims upon them, those who are unconcerned about their eternal interests, those who wish to be left alone and undisturbed in their pleasures and worldly interests. The preacher will then press upon them the woeful state they are in, the terribleness of their condition, that they are dead toward God, devoid of any actual interest in spiritual things.

As the preacher develops and follows out the above line of thought, those who have been quickened and awakened by the Spirit of God will be better able to place themselves. As they measure themselves by the message, as they apply to themselves what the minister is saying (which the hearer should ever do if he is to “take heed *how* ye hear”: Luke 8:18), he will perceive that by the sovereign grace of God it is now no longer with him as it once was. He will recall the time when *he too* sat under the preaching of the Word with stoical indifference, when it was a meaningless jumble to him, a weariness to sit through. He will remember he rarely gave more than a passing thought as to where he would spend eternity. But now it is otherwise. He is no longer unconcerned, but is truly anxious to be saved. The preacher will point out that this is a hopeful sign, but must press

the fact that it is *not* one to be rested in, that it is the height of folly and most dangerous to be contented with anything short of the full assurance of faith.

Again; the preacher will show that the great work of the Spirit in preparing the heart for a saving reception of the Gospel, consists in revealing to the individual *his dire need of Christ*, and this is accomplished by His making him to see and feel what a *vile sinner* he is in the sight of God. A life belt receives little notice from those who are safe on dry ground, but let a man be drowning in the water and he will eagerly grasp at and deeply appreciate one. They that are whole need not a physician, but when they are desperately sick he is most welcome. So it is spiritually. Let a man be unconscious of his moral leprosy, unconcerned of how he appears in the eyes of the Holy One, and salvation is little considered by him. But let him be convicted of his lifelong rebellion against God, let him discover that there is “no soundness” in him, let him realise that the wrath of God abideth on him, and he is ready to give the Gospel an earnest hearing.

Now the great *instrument* or means used by the Spirit in bringing the people to see their ruined and lost condition is *the Law*, for “by the Law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). A striking illustration of this is found in Nehemiah 8. There we read of Ezra ministering to those who had returned from the Babylonian captivity: “And Ezra the priest brought the Law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the watergate *from the morning until mid-day*, before the men and the women, and those that could understand, and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the Law” (vv. 2, 3). He, in turn, was assisted by others, who “caused the people to understand the Law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book of the Law of God distinctly, and gave the sense” (vv. 7, 8). And what was the outcome? This, “all the people *wept* when they heard the words of the Law” (v. 9). The Spirit had applied it to their hearts in power; they were convicted of their wicked self-will and self-pleasing, their disobedience and defiance to the Lord, and they repented of the same and mourned before Him.

God wounds before He heals, and abases before He exalts. When the Spirit applies the Law to a sinner’s heart, his self-complacency is shattered and his self-righteousness receives its death-wound. When he is brought to realise the justice of the Law’s requirements, discovers that it demands perfect and perpetual conformity to the revealed will of God in thought and word and deed, then he perceives that “innumerable evils have encompassed him about,” his iniquities “take hold of him” so that he cannot look up, and he recognizes that his sins are “more than the hairs of his head” (Psa. 40:12). Such an experience is beyond misunderstanding: those subject to the same cannot mistake it. Un-speakably painful though it be, it is most necessary if man’s proud heart is to be humbled and made receptive to the Gospel of God’s grace. Such an experience evidences that God has not abandoned him to a heart that is “past feeling” (Eph. 4:19), yet this is not to be rested in as though the goal had been reached.

So far from a state of becoming aroused to see our danger and be concerned about our eternal destiny being, of itself, something to complacently rest in, assured that all will certainly end well, it is one that is full of peril. Satan is never more active than when he discovers souls are being awakened, for he is loathe to lose his captives, and redoubles his efforts to retain them. It is then that he transforms himself as an angel of light, and performs his most subtle and successful work. There are multitudes, my reader, who were

shaken out of their indifference, and became diligent in seeking the way of salvation. But false guides misled them, and they were fatally deceived: as Ezekiel 13:22 expresses it, they “strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life.” The sinner must “*forsake his way*” *before* he can return to the Lord and find pardon (Isa. 55:7).

Not until we actually *comply* with the terms of the Gospel, not until we really *close* with Christ as He is presented therein, is forgiveness obtainable. To stop anywhere short of that, is to gravely endanger the soul’s going to sleep on the Devil’s “enchanted ground”—to borrow a figure from Bunyan. It is therefore the pressing duty of the preacher to sound the alarm here, and warn awakened souls of the danger of taking their ease, assuming that all is well. The foolish virgins “went forth to meet the Bridegroom” but they went to sleep, and when they awoke it was *too late* to procure the requisite oil! It is good that the ground should be plowed, yet that is only the preliminary work—seed must actually be sown and take root therein ere there can be any fruit. The anxious soul, then, must be continually exhorted to make sure that “the root of the matter” (Job 19:28) is in him.

This brings us to the next important stage or branch of experimental preaching: the making clear unto the concerned *how* it may be ascertained whether or no “the root of the matter” *is* in them; in other words, whether a work of grace has actually been started in their souls. This is a point of vast importance, for it concerns the vital difference between the general and special work of the Spirit—on which we wrote at some length when expounding Hebrews 6:4-6. But the determining if a “good work” has been begun in the soul is far too important for us to dismiss with a few sentences. And too, we desire to also take up the later experiences of a Christian. It will therefore be necessary for us to devote another article to the further consideration of this many-sided and momentous subject of experimental preaching.—A.W.P.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

12. *Its Process.*

Notwithstanding the *judicial* death of the Christian's old man and all his sins in the death of Christ (Rom. 6:6; 1 Peter 2:24), and notwithstanding that a real foundation of universal mortification is laid in the believer's first conversion (by conviction of sin, humiliation for it, and the forsaking of it), yet his indwelling corruptions so remain and work in the best of Christians that, the constant mortification of sin is, all their days, incumbent upon them. Mortification, then, is a life-long continuance of our initial repentance, which included hatred of sin, sorrow for sin, confession of sin, and turning away therefrom; and, if these were really sincere, then a *continued opposition* to all the solicitations of the flesh, the Devil and the world, must ensue. "Mortify" means put to death: to slay an enemy is to destroy the principle of all his vigour and power, so that he cannot exert or put forth any actings of his own.

The subjugation of indwelling sin so that it may not have power to bring forth the works of the flesh, is the constant duty of the believer. The health and comfort of his spiritual life depends thereon: he must be daily killing sin, or it will kill him. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13); "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; *lest* that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27). The solemn alternatives presented in these passages are too plain to be misunderstood. Nor is their point to be dulled by pitting against them the truth of the final preservation of the believer. These passages are to be taken at their face value, for there is no conflict between them and any others; believers are preserved in the paths of righteousness, and God has nowhere promised to secure any soul which sports with sin.

This work of mortification is a *very difficult one*, especially considering the prevalence of corruption and the multitude of temptations we are exposed to; the subtlety and watchfulness of Satan, who goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour; the treachery of our own hearts, that are so prone to depart from God, the instability of our resolutions and the fickleness of our affections; the ceaseless efforts made by our corruptions to gain the advantage over us. O the deceitfulness and wickedness of our hearts, to call evil good and good evil, to represent such things as harmless and not displeasing to God, when really they are most injurious to us and offensive to Him. O the blindness of our sin-darkened understandings, to lead us into mistakes both as to the matter of sin and duty, and to persuade us those things will issue well that prove bitterness in the end. O the perversity of our wills, in walking contrary to God.

Now it is *this* which renders it so essential that we make a right use of those methods which God has prescribed for the mortification of sin, the chief of which is the denying of self and the taking up of our cross. And that is to be done *daily*; see Luke 9:23. We would advise those who have access to the complete works of Bunyan to read this piece "Instruction for the Ignorant" and especially the section on "Self-denial." It is in the form of questions and answers. We give a brief excerpt. "Quest., if a man carrieth himself well outwardly, so that he doth not dishonour the Gospel before men, may not this be counted self-denial? Ans., no, If he be not right at heart: 1 Samuel 16:7. He that makes not daily conscience of self-denial is very unlikely to abide a disciple in times of persecution. Quest., who are they that *indulge* their lusts? Ans., they that make provision for them,

either in apparel, diet, or otherwise: Romans 13:12-14, Isaiah 3:6-21, Amos 6:3-6. Quest., who else do? Ans., they that heap to themselves such teachers as favour their lusts.

“Quest., Who else indulge their sins? Ans., They that choose rather to walk by the imperfect lives of professors, rather than by the holy Word of God; or those what make the miscarriages of some good men an encouragement unto themselves to forbear to be exact in self-denial. Self-denial is one of the distinguishing marks by which Christians are manifested from the feigned ones; for those that are feigned flatter God with their mouths, but their hearts seek Him not; but the sincere, for the love that he hath to Christ, forsaketh all that he hath which is opposed to Him: Psalm 78:36, 37; Ezekiel 33:31, 32.” It is because of the extreme difficulty of the work of mortification that Christ bids those contemplating discipleship to “sit down first and count the cost” (Luke 14:28). Nevertheless, we must settle it in our minds that, either we must fight sin, or be eternally lost.

Mortification, then, is not optional, but an imperative necessity. Sin indwells us to the end and it is ever lusting and labouring to bring forth the deeds of the flesh. Therefore no indulgence is to be shown it: the axe must be laid to the root of the tree. Dangerous enemies are to be grappled with promptly and no quarter shown them. One reason why God has given His children a new nature is that they may have within them a principle which is opposed to sin, and *not to employ it* in resisting sin is to neglect that excellent succour which God has granted us against our greatest foe. “Not to be daily mortifying sin, is to sin against the goodness, kindness, wisdom, grace and love of God, who has furnished us with a principle of defying it” (John Owen).

But, alas, we are living in a day when mortification has well nigh disappeared among those who bear the name of Christ. Carnal ease rather than striving against sin, self-gratification instead of self-denial, is the order of our perverse generation. Preachers and professing Christians generally now hold such a perverted concept of God’s grace and mercy, that they are able to digest sin without any bitterness of soul, which shows they are rotten at heart. Rightly has it been said that, “To use the blood of Christ—which is given to cleanse us, the exaltation of Christ—which is to give us repentance (Acts 5:31), the doctrine of grace—which teaches us to deny all ungodliness (Titus 2:11,12), to *countenance sin*, is a rebellion that in the issue will break the bones.”

It is not without good reason that God has expressed this duty of opposing sin and curbing its power by “mortification” or putting to death. There is something peculiar therein beyond any other duty. There is intimated a great contest of sin for the preservation of its life. Every creature will do its utmost to preserve its being, and sin is no exception. Sin cannot be vanquished, my reader, by gentle taps or half-hearted efforts to subdue it. The subjugation of indwelling sin is also likened unto “crucifixion” (Gal. 5:24) and *that* is a most painful process: and note that in Galatians 5:24 the Apostle does not say “they that *believe* Christ was crucified for them, are His,” but only they who experience the efficacy of His sufferings in subduing their evil lusts. This duty is also likened to a cutting off of right hands and plucking out of right eyes. It is the difficulties and severities of mortification which constitute the narrowness of that “way which leadeth unto Life,” for it shuts out the unbridled indulgence of sinful affections.

“If they that be Christ’s have crucified the flesh, then the number of real Christians *is very small*. It is true, if all that *seem* to be meek, humble, and heavenly, might pass for Christians, the number would be great; but if no more must be accounted Christians than those who *crucify the flesh*, with its affections and lusts, O how small is the number! For

O how many there be under the Christian name that pamper and indulge their lusts, that secretly hate all who faithfully reprove them, and really love none but such as feed their lusts by praising and admiring them. How many that make provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts, who cannot endure to have their corruptions crossed. How many are there that seem very meek and humble until an occasion be given them to stir up their passion, and then you shall see in what degree they are mortified: the flint is a cold stone till it be *struck*, and then it is *all fiery*. I know the best of Christians are mortified but in part, and strong corruptions are oftentimes found in the most eminent; but they love them not so well as to defend and countenance them, nor dare they secretly hate such as faithfully reprove them; as many thousands that go under the name of Christians *do*" (John Flavell, 1650).

But difficult as this work may be, and few as there are that set themselves to it, real Christians are not left to themselves therein: "*The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities*" (Rom. 8:26), and therefore do we read, "For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (8:13). How clearly that shows the inseparable connection (of means and end) there is between mortification and life. Let it also be remarked that the term "body" in the second clause corresponds to "the flesh" in the first, and "deeds" here are the same as "works" in Galatians 5:19, some of which are internal others external. But let it be carefully noted that it does not say "If the deeds of the flesh be mortified in you through the Spirit," but "if ye do mortify!"

"We must not dream of a mortification to be wrought in us without our consent or endeavours, as well whilst we are asleep as when we are waking, as if it were wrought in our cradles or whilst we were passing our days in childhood's play and pastime; or shall be done in our ripe age without any careful watch over our works and thoughts; or it may be by a sluggish wish or slothful prayer, as if this would mortify sin. No, all renewed ones must address themselves to the work; the flesh must be mortified, and mortified it must be *by us*, through the Spirit, if we would cherish the hope of life. The Spirit alone giveth victory, but *we* must be *active* in it, for His grace and powerful work do not license us to be idle, but calleth for an assiduous, diligent, and faithful use of means" (Thomas Manton). To the same effect wrote another renowned Puritan, when treating of mortification under the figure of "purging" used by Christ in John 15:2, 3.

"In this work of mortification, considered thus in the progress of it, *we are not mere passives*—as at that final finishing of it and carrying away all sin at death we are, and are at that first beginning of it in the new birth—but therein we are 'workers together with God': we being purged from sin as the body is by physic from poisons; though the physic work, yet *nature joins with the physic*, being quickened and helped by it to cast out the poisons; for give a dead man physic, and it carries not any poisons away. So as those means whereby God purgeth us are not to be imagined to do it as mere physical agents, like as the pruning-hook cuts off branches from a tree, or as when a surgeon cuts out dead flesh: but these means do it by stirring up our graces, and by setting our thoughts, faith, and affections a-work, and so God assisting with the power of Christ's death, He doth purge us daily. It is certain that unless *our thoughts work upon the means*, as well as the means work upon us, and so do mingle themselves with those means, that unless faith and Christ's death be mingled in the heart, it purgeth not. And therefore it is said that we 'purge ourselves': 2 Timothy 2:21; 1 John 3:3" (Thomas Goodwin, vol.3, p. 475).

The influence of the blessed Spirit upon the principle of grace in the believer is absolutely necessary unto the mortification of sin. The flesh needs no external influence to excite it to action: it is at all times capable of exerting itself without assistance from without. But not so with indwelling grace: it is entirely dependent on God to strengthen, and move it: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 3:5). It is the Spirit who maintains in the believer a realisation of the sinfulness of sin, without which we would never be in earnest in opposing it. It is the Spirit who suggests to the mind considerations and motives unto watchfulness against Satan's encroachments, and rouses us to endeavours against our evil lusts. He it is who makes us sensible of temptations, warns us against them, and often grants strength to resist them. He causes us to meditate upon the sufferings of Christ for our sins, and stirs us up to strive against them.

Though the utter destruction of sin in him is to be the believer's aim, so that it shall no more hold any residence in his heart, yet in this life such success is never fully accomplished. It was the Apostle's consuming desire to be "made conformable unto Christ's death, if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. 3:10, 11), that is, so deny the lust of the flesh as to perfectly and wholly walk in newness of life. But he at once added, "*Not* as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," (v. 12) which at once gives the lie to all claiming "sinless perfection" in this life. Nevertheless, he continued "*but I follow after*": he still earnestly pursued his quest, and, as his "if by any means" indicates, exerted all his faculties and followed out all the methods God has appointed for our fighting against sin. This brings us to speak more definitely on the means and methods of mortification.

If indwelling sin is to be subdued by the Christian, if temptations are to be successfully resisted, then he must, first, make a real effort daily to maintain in his mind a constant sense of the heinousness of sin, as being that abominable thing which God hates. The believer will never put forth his utmost endeavours against it while he regards sin lightly. Second, he must strive to keep his conscience under the awe of God, for this is the great preventative against sin, without which all other external rules and helps signify nothing, for "by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil" (Prov. 16:6). Third, there must be a diligent watching against the occasions of sin, against those things which excite our corruptions and tempt us to wrongdoing: let those who are really concerned turn up and ponder the following passages: Job 31:1; Psalm 18:23; Proverbs 4:14; 15 and 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; Jude 23. It is our disobedience to these precepts which accounts for much of our failure.

Fourth, see to it that you do not give sin an advantage by making provision for its lusts. How diligent we are in this respect over the body: if there be any constitutional weakness, how carefully we guard against it—shame on us that we are less diligent about our souls. Fifth, form the habit of nipping sin in the bud, resisting its first risings: that is more than half the battle—to *promptly* heed the convictions from the Spirit. Sixth, train the mind to dwell upon the enormity of sin: the fearfulness of its guilt, the horribleness of its defilement, and think of what it cost Christ to make atonement for it. Seventh, let there be frequent self-examination, as to our motives and ends, and to discover what most absorbs our hearts. Eighth, deep humility for past sins begets hatred of sin and caution against it: see 2 Corinthians 7:11.

Ninth, spare no pains to nourish and develop those graces which are the opposites of your besetting sins: pride is weakened by cultivating humility, uncleanness by purity of mind and conscience, love of the world by heavenly mindedness. Tenth, make yourself willing to be reproved for your faults: Psalm 141:5. Eleventh, meditate often upon the vanity of the creature and the transitoriness of all earthly pleasures: the sweetest enjoyments this world has to offer are but fading flowers and withering grass. Twelfth, cry mightily unto God for restraining grace: Psalm 19:13; appropriate such promises as Micah 7:19 and Romans 6:14; plead the blood of Christ for victory. Thirteenth, seek to get chastisements and afflictions sanctified unto your souls: Isaiah 27:9; Hebrews 12:11. Finally, beg the Spirit to teach you to "Put on the whole armour of God" (Eph. 6:10-18). We have covered much ground in these fourteen points and they need to be carefully pondered if they are to be made real helps in this work.

In bringing this article to a close we offer a few suggestions on *the evidences* of a mortified heart, for that is a matter of deep concern to renewed souls, unto whom it frequently appears that sin completely fills and dominates their hearts, and who feel that if their resistance to indwelling corruption is anything more than a mere pretence, it is certainly unavailing and a total failure. Satan will frequently tell the Christian that he might as well seek to subdue the wind or reverse the action of the tides, as expect to overcome the evil inclinations of the flesh. Satan will taunt him with his defeats, assure him he is waging a losing battle, and bid him give up the hopeless fight. But success is *not* the true criterion; *sincerity*, genuine desires and faithful efforts are the determining factors as to whether or not we are really engaged in this protracted and painful work.

First, genuine tenderness of conscience as to all known sins is a sign that sin does not have dominion in the soul. It is a great mercy to have a heart that smites us for things which others do not regard as sinful, to have a heart that admonishes us for secret faults is proof that sin is loathed by us: "what I hate, that do I" (Rom. 7:15). Second, "The sincere and earnest desires of our souls to God in prayer for heart-purging and sin-mortifying grace, is a good sign our souls have no love for sin. Canst thou say, poor believer, in the truth of thy heart, that if God would give thee thy choice, it would please thee better to have *sin cast out*, than to have the world cast in; that thy heart is not so earnest with God for daily bread, as it is for heart-purging grace?" (J. Flavell).

Third, honest efforts to guard against the occasions of sin and a daily attempt to preserve the heart from Satan's incursions, argue a purpose to mortify sin. Fourth, thankfulness to God when His providences cross our worldly and evil desires, blocks the actual commission of sin, manifests that sin is hated and not loved—such was the case with David: 1 Samuel 25:33. Fifth, bitter grief over failure, mourning when sin has overcome you, is clear evidence of a mortified heart. Sixth, the holding of earthly things lightly and valuing them cheaply, is another mark of a mortified heart. The unregenerate set a high price on worldly possessions and carnal pleasures, for their hearts are completely wedded to material and outward things; but the regenerate set their affections on spiritual and heavenly objects. Seventh, contentment with the position and portion God has allotted in this life, is another fruit of mortification, for such an one can genuinely pray, "Give me neither poverty nor riches" (Prov. 30:8).

That aspect of our subject which we are now dealing with is of great practical importance and value, for the more thorough be the mortification of our lusts, and the clearer the evidence of the same, then the stronger and brighter the assurance of our interest in

and union with Christ: note how the Spirit has joined the two things together in Galatians 5:24! The proof that we are Christ's is that we have crucified the flesh. This does *not* mean that the flesh is now dead, or that it has improved any, but that we are engaged in seeking to put it *to* death. Among further evidences of this process we name the following. The degree of our mortification may be ascertained by the extent of our self-denial. A deeper insight into *spiritual* corruptions, and a striving against them. A *spiritual* appetite for the Word—not an intellectual curiosity. Shame over our previous performances and attainments—i.e., over wasted opportunities and half-hearted efforts.—A.W.P.

PRESERVING GRACE

A few remarks seemed called for upon the article in the preceding issue under this title. The subject of *suicide* is, admittedly, not a pleasant one, and to a few of our readers, probably most painful. We do not expect to return to it again, but ere turning away therefrom desire to throw further light from Scripture thereon, for there are many in this evil day harbouring most God-dishonouring ideas on the matter. Human reasoning in such things is quite worthless; an appeal to carnal sentiment, which is the recourse of the worldling, should not satisfy a child of God: "to the Law and to the Testimony" must ever be the demand of those who desire to see things in the Divine light. The unerring Word of Truth is the final court of appeal to which every problem and question must be submitted. Nor will an appeal thereto be in vain, if we set aside our own preconceptions and prejudices, and approach it in an humble, reverent, and expectant spirit.

Let us put the question in its strongest form: is it possible for a real Christian, under the pressure of sore trial and protracted trouble, for his mind to give way, and in a fit of madness take things into his own hands and make an end of his earthly sufferings? Or, take another case. Insanity sometimes assumes the form of religious melancholia. A person so afflicted often resembles very closely a child of God under deep convictions of sin, which even a minister of Christ may regard as the beginnings of a genuine work of grace in the soul. But the sequel is staggering: instead of that seeming soul-travail being followed by a happy deliverance; tumult and sorrow giving way to peace and joy, the subject of that melancholia lays violent hands upon himself. And then it is that a false charity so often steps in, and with the desire to comfort the bereaved survivors, it is said that such an one *was* a regenerate soul, but his mind becoming unhinged, and he no longer responsible for his actions, ended his life.

How hard the flesh will appeal for a favourable verdict in such a case! How loath and slow the poor relatives are to submit unto the decision of God's infallible Word. The writer has personally met with those concerning whose spirituality he entertained no doubts, for they appeared to have the hall-mark of the new birth plainly stamped upon them. Even so, we cannot read the heart, and none can say what natural effects a religious training will produce. If the eleven apostles were deceived by Judas, need it be cause for surprise if the best taught and most deeply experienced ministers should sometimes err in their estimate of others today? "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. 2:19) implies that often *we do not*. There is only One who is endowed with omniscience, and He is very jealous of His glory, and therefore does He often stain our pride by making us conscious of *our* fallibility.

But though it be human to err, the Holy Scriptures make no mistakes, and it is by them that this issue is to be decided, for the more our minds be regulated by their teaching, the more shall we be found "thinking God's thoughts after Him." When, then, some insist that a real child of God *may* lay suicidal hands upon himself, we ask, *Where is Scripture* in support of such a horrible affirmation? And the answer is, there is none. Surely this is sufficient to settle the matter for all those who be in subjection to the authority of God. As Mr. Hunt so plainly pointed out, Samson certainly was not guilty of this enormous sin; instead, he died as a godly hero for the good of Israel. It is to be carefully noted that the life of Samson ended by his calling upon the Lord! His last act is one of *prayer*, and it was in direct answer thereto that supernatural strength was granted unto him, so that "the

dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life” (Judges 16:28, 30).

There is more than one instance of suicide recorded in the Bible, and most solemn and instructive is their testimony. There are three cases in all, and each of them was that of a professor, who belonged externally to the people of God; but in none of them can it be fairly shown that he was a regenerated soul. The first was Saul, the apostate king. It is true that for a brief season he seemed to run well, but the evil spirit which troubled him, his rank disobedience to the Lord, his murderous designs upon David, and his consulting with the witch of Endor, all clearly marked him out as a son of Beliel, before he took his own life (1 Chron. 10:4). The second was Ahithophel, who basely deserted David and befriended Absalom in his insurrection (2 Sam. 17:23). The third was Judas, the traitorous Apostle, who, though he deceived his fellows, was denominated by Christ as “a devil” (John 6:70). Rightly has it been said “These stand forth as so many monuments of the power of Satan, the strength of despair, and the indignation of the Almighty.”

This, in itself, is quite sufficient in our judgment to settle the matter: the only ones mentioned in Scripture who directly took their own lives, were not believers, but *unbelievers*! Let the reader carefully ponder that fact. But that is negative evidence; the positive, as we shall see, is equally conclusive. But before weighing that, perhaps a word or two should be said upon what the Spirit has chronicled about Jonah, for the nearest approach to a saint actually committing suicide is his, for he distinctly bade the sailors in the ship “take me up and cast me forth into the sea” (Jonah 1:12). But observe, first, that was designed for *their* good: “So shall the sea be calm *unto you!*” Second, Jonah did not himself jump overboard. Third, as in the case of Samson, the providence of God had designed that he should be a remarkable type of Christ. Finally, remember that God *miraculously delivered him*, as though to show us that He will not, under any circumstances, suffer one of His own to destroy himself.

The same feature appears most conspicuously in the case of Job. In addition to what was said thereon by Mr. Hunt, it may be pointed out, first, that the situation of that patriarch was a most desperate one and his sufferings almost unprecedented. Second, he was tempted, yea urged by his wicked wife, to resort unto extreme measures: “curse God, and die” (2:9). Third, poor Job ardently longed for death, as that which would put a happy end to his miseries. This is clear from his own words: “O that I might have my request, and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me; that He would let loose His hand and cut me off” (6:8, 9)—recorded, we need hardly say, for our admonition, and not for our imitation. Fourth, yet though he was peeved at death’s delay, and fretful because life still remained in him, nevertheless the fact remains that *he did not* destroy himself. The Lord’s qualification to Satan—“Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life” (2:6)—makes it clear that while He allows the Devil to sorely buffet a saint, he cannot take his *life*.

“Is suicide *a sin*, or not? Is rebellion a sin, unbelief a sin, despair a sin? then suicide must be a sin of sins; for it is the last fruit, the highest top and summit of those sins. Can a man who commits it be said to die in faith, or hope, or love? Where is receiving the end of faith, the salvation of the soul, (1 Peter 1:9), if a man die in unbelief, as a suicide must do? How can his hope be “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast” (Heb. 6:19) if it break in the storm? And where is love, when he bids defiance to the Almighty by breaking through the bounds of life and death which He has set up? Evidently he dies in sin,

and in a sin for which he can have no repentance, for he cuts himself off from repentance by that same act by which he cuts himself off from life” (J. C. Philpot, *Gospel Standard*, 1861).

How each of us, then, needs to earnestly pray, “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe!” (Psa. 119:117). It is naught but sovereign grace which maketh any of us to differ. Probably there are very few Christians but at one time or other seriously pondered suicide, yet the Lord in His covenant-faithfulness either renewed their graces, changed their intentions, or thwarted their efforts—as He did more than once with the hymn-writer of blessed memory, W. Cowper. And to those Christians who are fearful lest such a terrible ending as suicide should be their lot, we close by reminding them of the sure promises of the preserving hand of the Most High over His saints. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord *delivereth him* out of them *all*” (Psa. 34:19). “Who are *kept* by the power of God through faith unto salvation” (1 Peter 1:5).

“He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that Wicked One toucheth him not” (1 John 5:18). These are strong testimonies to show that Jehovah will not allow Satan to prevail over any of His chosen ones.—A.W.P.