

Studies in the Scriptures
February, 1938
Private Prayer—Conclusion

“My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up” (Psa. 5:3). Let this be our resolve, and, so long as we are spared, our practice, throughout the year we have just entered. It is both our wisdom and our duty to thus begin each day with God. “Should not a people seek unto the Lord their God?” Surely the light of nature dictates that we ought to do so, while the light of the Gospel affords us ample instruction and encouragement for the same. When He says to us “Seek ye My face,” should not our hearts answer as to One we love, “Thy face, LORD, will we seek” (Psa. 27:8)? But suppose our hearts have grown cold, and we have wickedly strayed from Him? Well, when He says “Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings,” should we not readily reply, “Behold, we come unto Thee, for Thou art the LORD our God” (Jer. 3:22)?

O my reader, is there not much that we need to say to the Lord our God, the One whom we serve? How many and important are the concerns which lie between us and Him. We are constantly dependent upon Him—all our expectation is from Him. Is not all our happiness for time and eternity bound up in His favour? Have we not need to seek His approbation—to seek Him with all our hearts; to beg as for our very lives that He will lift up the light of His countenance upon us, to plead Christ’s righteousness as that through which alone we can hope to obtain God’s lovingkindness (Psa. 71:16)?! Are we not conscious that we have deeply offended the Lord our God by our numerous and grievous sins, and have contracted defilement thereby? Should we not confess our folly and seek forgiveness and cleansing by the blood of Christ? Have we not received innumerable bounties and blessings from Him—must we not acknowledge the same, and return thanks and praise? Yes, prayer is the very least we can offer unto God.

Let us now make a few suggestions upon how this duty is to be performed. First, *reverently*. In all our approaches to God we should duly consider His exalted majesty and ineffable holiness, and humble ourselves before Him as Abraham did (Gen. 18:27). The word “*direct* my prayer unto Thee” (Psa. 5:3) signifies a fixedness of thought or close application of the mind. We need to set about the discharge of this duty solemnly, as those who have at heart something of great importance which we dare not trifle with. When we come before the Throne of Grace and address the Most High, we must not offer the sacrifice of fools: “be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God” (Eccl. 5:2). He that shoots an arrow at a mark *directs* it with a steady hand and fixed eye—so when engaging the heart to approach unto God, it must be disengaged from everything else. O to be able to say, “My heart is *fixed*, O God” (Psa. 57:7). See to it that the awe of God’s greatness be upon your soul together with a deep sense of your utter unworthiness.

Second, *sincerely*. We cannot be too strongly or too frequently warned against that mere external worship to which we are so constantly prone, and which is the bane of all spiritual good. Of old, Israel was charged with making mention of God’s name, “but *not in truth*” (Isa. 48:1). The desire of our heart must prompt and correspond to the petitions we present. How we need to beg God that this may be wrought into our spirits. How we need to search our hearts and see to it that we mean what we say, for “The LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain” (Exo. 20:7). Form the habit of challeng-

ing yourself by inquiring, Am I consistent with myself when I invoke God, or do I think I can impose upon Him with hypocrisy. "The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him *in truth*" (Psa. 145:18). As an aid to this, ponder the high value of those spiritual things you ask for—your deep need of them—and inquire, Do I really desire the same?

Third, *submissively*—that is, subserviently to God's glory and our own highest good. Our petitions should ever be presented with the provision, "If it be Thy will." We are ever prone to act amiss and often know not "what manner of spirit we are of" (Luke 9:55). The prayer of faith includes submission as truly as it does confidence, for if the latter be without the former, it is presumption—and not faith. To pray in faith is not to ask in the certain belief that God will give us what we ask for, but rather that He will grant us what is wisest and best. If we knew assuredly beforehand that God would certainly give us the very things we ask for, we would have reason to be afraid to pray, for often we desire things which would prove a curse if we got them! Our wisdom as well as our duty is to pray, conditionally and submissively. We must bow before God's sovereignty.

Fourth, *confidently*. There are some men, who because of their high station or known sternness towards all inferiors, we would be afraid to approach. And because we have none to introduce and speak a good word for us, we would therefore abandon the idea of speaking to them. But there is no reason why a believer should be discouraged from speaking to God—nay, He bids us "come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy": (Heb. 4:16). Let not, then, a sense of God's greatness or holiness, nor a realization of your own entire unworthiness, deter you. Such are God's compassions unto humble supplicants that even His terror should not make them afraid. It is directly against His revealed will that His people should frighten themselves thus. He would have them encourage themselves as children: "for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). By that very spirit of adoption we were brought into the nearness, freedom, and liberty of the children of God, and though we are still full of sin, yet, "we have an Advocate with the Father" (1 John 2:1).

Fifth, *fervently*. David said, "I entreated Thy favour with my whole heart" (Psa. 119:58). It is not sufficient that our tongues babble out a mere form—our hearts must be in this work—we are to be more concerned about the exercise of our affections than in the selection of our words. It is to be feared that we pray far more from our memories than our consciences. But let it be pointed out that fervency in prayer is *not* a working up of our animal spirits so that there is shouting and shaking of the body—actors work themselves up into a great heat to move their audience, and lawyers to impress a judge. Fervency is expressed in Scripture as a calling upon the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:13), a stretching out the hands toward Him (Job 11:13), a following hard after Him (Psa. 63:8), a laying hold of Him (Isa. 64:7), a pouring out the heart before Him (Psa. 62:8). It is a striving in prayer (Rom. 15:30). God hates lukewarmness. Note Daniel's intensity: 9:19. David compared his prayers to "incense" (Psa. 141:2), and no incense was offered without *fire*!

Let us now anticipate an objection. I would be often in praying before God, but sin has so much power over me that it severs communion, and utterly quenches the spirit of prayer in my heart—I feel so polluted that it would be a mockery for me to appear before the thrice holy God. Ah, but God's hearing of our prayers does not depend upon our sanc-

tity—but upon Christ’s mediation: “I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for Mine holy name’s sake” (Ezek. 36:22). It is not because of what Christians are in themselves, but because of what they are in Christ, that God responds to their requests: “to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God *by Jesus Christ*” (1 Peter 2:5). When God answers our petitions it is not for our sakes, nor for our prayers’ sake, but for His Son’s sake: see Ephesians 4:32. Seek to remember, my distressed brethren, that you are a member of the mystical body of Christ, and as Luther said, “What man will cut off his nose because there is filth in it?”

The more desperate be our case, the greater is our need to pray: if grace in us be weak, the continued neglect of prayer will make it weaker. If our corruptions be strong, the omission of prayer will make them stronger. Sins which are bewailed never hinder the access and success of our petitions. Jonah was a man full of sinful passions, yet *his* prayers prevailed with God: (2:1, 2, 7, 10). David said, “iniquities prevail against me,” yet he at once added, “as for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away” (Psa. 65:3). On another occasion he said, “The LORD hath heard the *voice* of my weeping” (Psa. 6:8)—his very tears prayed! God hears the sighs and groanings of those who cannot put them into words. Then encourage yourself by the greatness of God’s mercy, His covenant promises, His Fatherhood, and by the answers you have received in the past.—A.W.P.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

122. *Praying for Ministers:* 13:18, 19.

“Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.” As was pointed out in the opening paragraph of last month’s article, this passage is closely connected with verse 17, where believers are commanded to obey their ecclesiastical leaders. Here is mentioned a further obligation of Christians unto those who minister to them in spiritual things, namely, that they should remember them before the Throne of Grace. A true observance of this exhortation would probably do more than anything else to counteract and countervail a widespread evil: those who plead with God for blessings upon the preacher are far less likely to go around criticizing them unto men. A spirit of fault-finding stifles the breath of intercession; contrariwise, a spirit of prayer will curb complaining and gossiping lips.

“Pray for us” (v. 18). The servants of Christ stand in real and urgent need of the prayers of their people. They are but men themselves, ignorant, weak, and erring, and unless they are granted a double portion of the Spirit they are not equipped for their arduous and honourable calling. They are the ones who bear the brunt of the battle, and are the special objects of Satan’s attacks. They are often tempted to compromise, to keep back that which, though unpalatable to them, is most profitable for their hearers. In the face of many disappointments and discouragements, they are apt to grow weary in well-doing. It is, then, both our duty and privilege to supplicate God on their behalf for daily supplies of grace to be granted them from on High—that they may be delivered from temptations, kept faithful, steadfast, and devoted.

It is to be duly noted that this request was made by none other than the writer of this Epistle; if, then, the greatest of the Apostles stood in need of the intercessory support of his brethren, how much more so the rank and file of God’s ministers. How tenderly, how earnestly, and how frequently Paul made this request! Here he adds, “I beseech you”—language used in Romans 15:30, where he besought the saints to strive together with him in their prayers to God. In 2 Corinthians 1:11 he speaks of “helping together by prayer for us.” A beautiful type of the efficacy of the prayers of God’s people to support one of His servants is found in the holding up the hands of Moses (Exo. 17:11), where we are significantly told, “And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel *prevailed*; and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed.”

“Pray for us” (Heb. 13:18). We agree with Owen that though the Apostle here used the plural number (as was his general custom) that it was for himself alone he made this request: as the “I” in verse 19 intimates. It is a pre-eminently Pauline touch, and, as we pointed out in our second article of this series it supplies one of the many details which serve to *identify* the writer of this Epistle. There is no record in the New Testament that any other of the Apostles besought the prayers of the Church. Paul did so in no less than seven of his Epistles: Romans 15:30; Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Philemon 22 and here. “He who laboured more than the other Apostles, and who was endowed with so many gifts, seems to have had the greatest craving for sympathy, for affection, for communion, and the most vivid conception that God only giveth the increase; that it is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord” (A. Saphir).

“Pray for us” (Heb. 13:18): though the immediate reference was to Paul himself, yet obviously the exhortation applies to all the servants of Christ, and is binding upon all to whom they minister. They are the ones, under God, through whom we receive the most good. Oftentimes they are, ministerially, our spiritual fathers (1 Cor. 4:15), our spiritual nurses (1 Thess. 2:7), our guides, counselors, and nourishers. They are to be esteemed very highly for their work’s sake (1 Thess. 5:13), and that esteem is to be evidenced by our constantly bearing them up before God in the arms of faith and love. To earnestly supplicate the Throne of Grace on their behalf is the least return we can make them for their loving labours, sacrificial endeavours, faithful ministrations. There is no doubt that the more diligent the people are in discharging this duty, the more help and blessing are they likely to receive through their labours.

“Pray for us” (Heb. 13:18). The Apostle was persuaded that all the blessing he needed could be obtained from God, and from Him alone, and that *prayer* was the appointed means of obtaining those blessings. Someone has said, “If the due obedience of the church by all its members, unto the rulers of it, be the best means of its edification and the chief cause of order and peace in the whole body, certainly prayer for its leaders and fellow-members is the appointed channel for obtaining it.” Again, by requesting the prayers of the Hebrew Christians, Paul intimated the regard in which he held them as righteous men, whose prayers would “avail much.” His request also signified his confidence in their love for him: a heart that tenderly and faithfully sought their good, doubted not the warmth of their affection for him. Prayer for each other is one of the principal parts of the communion of saints.

The Apostle supported his plea for the prayers of his readers by a striking and powerful reason—“For we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.” In saying “we trust,” two things were intimated. First, his becoming modesty: there was no boastful, “we know.” Second, his assurance, for such language in Scripture does not express a doubt. Thus, though there was confidence in his heart toward God, yet he expressed himself in humble terms—an example we do well to heed in this boastful and egotistic age. It is a grand thing when a minister of the Gospel can truly, though modestly, appeal to the faithful performance of his labours as a reason why he may claim the *sympathy and support* of his people. It is only when he sincerely aims to do the right thing and maintains a good conscience that the minister can, with propriety, ask for the *prayers* of his people.

Probably the reason why Paul here made particular reference to his earnest endeavour to maintain a good conscience was because he had been so bitterly denounced by his own nation, and no doubt (for Satan was the same then as now) the most unfavourable reports about him had been circulated among the Hebrews. He had been cruelly scourged by his own countrymen, and unjustly imprisoned by the Romans, yet he had the witness within his own bosom that it was his desire and determination to always act with integrity. “Though my name be cast out as evil, and though I be suffering as a wrong-doer, yet I appeal to my faithfulness in the Gospel ministry; I do not walk in craftiness, nor handle the Word of God deceitfully—nor do I make merchandise of the Gospel—I have genuinely sought to act honourably under all circumstances.” Happy the man that can say that!

“For we trust that we have a good conscience.” As we pointed out last month, the *conscience* is that faculty with which the Creator has endowed man, whereby he is capable of judging his state and actions with respect to the judgment of God. Its office is twofold: to

reveal sin to us, to discover our duty, and that according to the light shining into it. There is a twofold light which men have to illumine conscience: natural reason and Scripture revelation, and the Spirit applying the same. If the conscience has only the twilight of nature, as is the case with the heathen, it passes judgment on natural duties and unnatural sins. But if it enjoys the supernatural light of the Word, it judges of those sins and duties which can only be known by Divine revelation. It registers a permanent record in the soul. The more light we have, the greater is our responsibility: Luke 12:48.

Though the heathen possess not the Law delivered by revelation of God to them, yet they have, in their moral sensibilities, the substance of its precepts written in their hearts: Romans 2:15. When Paul said he had “lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Acts 23:1), it was parallel with his “touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless” (Phil. 3:6): there was a conformity of his outward conduct to the light which he had in his conscience. Thus “those that say there is no use of the moral law to the Christian, may as well say there is no more use of the faculty of conscience in the soul of a Christian. Tear that faculty out of a man’s heart, if you will tear out that other, namely, the obliging precepts. Even as if God would annul colours and light, He must also take away and close up the sense of sight” (Thomas Goodwin).

“The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly” (Prov. 20:27). This moral sense has been rightly denominated the Divine spy in man’s soul. Its checks and reproofs are a warning from God: it acts in His name, citing us before His tribunal. It receives its instruction and authority from God, and is accountable to Him and to none other—alas how many are regulated by the customs and fashions of this world, and live upon the opinions and reports of their fellows. Conscience is a part of that light which “lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9). In many passages both the “heart” (1 John 3:20) and the “spirit” (Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 2:11) signify the conscience, while in Psalm 16:7 it is called the “reins.” In yet other passages it is likened unto the physical “eye” (Luke 11:34-36): as the eye is the most sensitive member of the body and its visive faculty, so is the conscience to the soul.

Conscience, then, is God’s witness within man: it is the voice of His Law directing and admonishing the heart, conveying to us a knowledge of right and wrong. Its functions are to give testimony and force a moral verdict. Its business is to pronounce upon each action, whether it be good or evil, with the reward or punishment belonging to it, and then by a reflex act it deposes or witnesses that we have done righteously or unrighteously. Yet while conscience convicts of sin, it in no wise helps us to believe the Gospel: on the contrary, its workings withstand faith. No matter to what extent the natural conscience be enlightened, it conduces nothing to faith, nay, it is the greatest enemy to it that the heart of man has. Faith is the gift of God, a *supernatural* bestowment, something which is the operation of the Holy Spirit, altogether apart from and transcending the greatest height to which the unaided faculties of fallen man can reach unto.

What has just been pointed out above may, at first sight, surprise the reader; yet it ought not. Conscience is fully capable of hearing what the Law says, for it is but the Law written in the heart naturally; but it is quite deaf to what the Gospel says, and understands not a word of it. If you speak to natural conscience about a Saviour and urge it to believe on Him, its answer will be like unto that of the Jews (and it was this principle of conscience which made them so speak), “as for Moses we know that God spake unto him: but as for this fellow (Christ) we know not whence He is” (John 9:29). Talk to a man of

the Law, and conscience responds, for it knows what he *ought* to do; but as for the Gospel, its voice is that of a stranger to him. Conscience is quite incapable of pointing out the way of deliverance from the condemnation and penalty of sin, yea, "Except a man be born again, he *cannot see* the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

It is true that the more conscience be enlightened, the more will it discover to us all manner of sins, and rebuke us for them; yet conscience alone will never discover unbelief to us, and convict us of its heinousness—only the immediate light of the Holy Spirit shining in the heart will do that. There are two great sins which lie outside the jurisdiction of conscience to set them upon the heart, ordinarily. First, the guilt of Adam's original transgression, which has been justly imputed unto all his posterity. An instructed conscience may perceive the depravity and corruption of a nature which has resulted from our fall in Adam, but it will not convict of that fatal condemnation we lie under because of our first father's offense. Second, conscience will not acquaint us with our lack of faith in Christ, and that this is *the* sin of all sins; only the special operation of the Spirit upon the quickened heart can accomplish this. Examine those who are most troubled in conscience, and it will be found that none of them are burdened because of their *unbelief*.

Until conscience be subordinated unto faith, it is the greatest hindrance to believing which the natural man has. What is the chief obstacle which an awakened and convicted soul encounters? Why, the greatness of his sins—his heart telling him that he is beyond the reach of mercy, and it is naught but the accusations of a guilty conscience which produces that sense of hopelessness in the heart. Conscience brings our sins to light, makes them to stare us in the face, and terrifies us with their enormity. Conscience it is which tells a distressed soul that salvation is far off from such an one as I am. Conscience will set us a working and a doing, but only in a legal way: so far from leading us into the path of true peace, it will take us farther away from it. Thus it was with the Jews of old, and thus it is still: "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness" (Rom. 10:3).

In the case of a Christian, conscience and faith supplement each other in their workings. If conscience convicts of sin or rebukes for the omission of duty, faith eyes the mercy of God in Christ, penitently confesses the fault, and seeks cleansing through the precious blood of Christ. "The worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" (Heb. 10:2)—no more apprehensions of them as standing against us. It is the believer's bounden duty to maintain a good conscience: 1 Timothy 1:19; 3:9, but in order to that there must be a continual judging of ourselves and our ways. The revealed will of God is its only rule, for nothing else can lawfully bind it; therefore it is infinitely better to offend the whole world than God and conscience. "All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed and we shall prevail against him," and what was the Prophet's response and recourse? This, "But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous and seest the reins and the heart, let me see Thy vengeance on them: for unto Thee have I opened my cause" (Jer. 20:10, 12).

The sole rule to regulate the conscience of the Christian is God's written Word, for "whatsoever is not of faith (and therefore according to the Word: Rom. 10:17) is sin" (Rom. 14:23); that is, whatsoever is not done from a settled persuasion of judgment and conscience out of the Word, is sin. The *defects* of a good conscience are, first, *ignorance or error*: some children of God are very imperfectly established in the Truth and are much confused as to what is right and wrong in the sight of God, especially in things in-

different, concerning which there is much difference of opinion. They understand not that *liberty* which Christ has purchased for His people, (Gal. 5:1), whereby they are free to make a right and good use of all things indifferent—i.e., things not specifically forbidden by Scripture. “Wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face shine” (Psa. 104:15), which goes beyond bare necessities; to which we may add those innocent recreations which refresh mind and body. How to make a proper use of such things is defined in 1 Timothy 4:4, 5.

Second, and closely connected with the preceding, is what Scripture calls a “*weak conscience*” (1 Cor. 8:12), which is due to lack of light, wrong teaching, of personal prejudice and idiosyncrasies. It is often trying and difficult to know how to act towards those thus afflicted: on the one hand, love desires their good, and must be patient with them and refrain from acting recklessly and needlessly wounding them; but on the other hand, their fads and scruples are not to be so yielded to by us that our own spiritual liberty is annulled—Christ Himself refused to bring His disciples into bondage by yielding to the traditions of men (Mark 7:2), even though He knew they were spying for some fault in Him, and would be offended by His conduct. Third, a *doubting* conscience. Fourth, a *wounded* conscience, whose peace is disturbed by unrepented and unconfessed sins.

The *benefits and blessings* are indeed rich compensation for every effort we make to maintain a good conscience. First, it gives us confidence Godwards. When we have sinned away our peace there is a strangeness and distance between the soul and the Holy One. When our inward monitor convicts and condemns us, the heart grows shy of God, so that we cannot so comfortably look Him in the face. It is only when everything is made right with God, by contrite confession and faith’s appropriation of the cleansing blood of Christ, that we can approach the Throne of Grace with boldness. “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” (Heb. 10:22)—i.e, a conscience which no longer accuses us before God. “If I regard iniquity in my heart (which is inconsistent with a good conscience) the LORD will not hear me” (Psa. 66:18); but on the other hand, “If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God; and whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (1 John 3:21, 22).

Second, a clear conscience affords his chief relief when a believer is falsely accused and aspersed by his enemies. What unspeakable consolation is ours when we can rightfully appropriate that benediction of Christ’s—“Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake” (Matt. 5:11). This was the case with the Apostle Paul: “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world” (2 Cor. 1:12). Third, a clear conscience vindicates its possessor against the accusations of Satan. The great enemy of our souls is constantly seeking to take away our peace and joy, and we are powerless against his onslaughts when a guilty conscience confirms his charges. But when we can appeal to a pure conscience and expose his lies, then his fiery darts are successfully quenched. The Psalmist was very bold when he said—see Psalm 7:3, 4, 5, 8.

Fourth, a pure conscience gives great advantage to its possessor when he is lawfully reproving others. The admonitions of that Christian whose life is inconsistent have no weight, but he who walks closely with God speaks with authority. That man who is up-

right before God and his fellows, wields a moral force which is felt even by the ungodly. Finally, a peaceful conscience affords unspeakable comfort in a dying hour. When one has the inward witness that, despite many failures, he has sincerely endeavoured to do that which was right before God and unto his fellows, he has an easy pillow to rest his head upon. "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight" (Isa. 38:3): that was an appeal to a good conscience by one who was "sick unto death."

Paul's testimony of his having a good conscience consisted in this: "in all things willing to live honestly" (Heb. 13:18). A resolute will and a sincere endeavour to act rightly under all circumstances is the fruit and evidence of a good conscience. Being "willing" signifies a desire and readiness, with an accompanying effort and diligence. "In *all* things" takes in our whole duty to God and man, expresses the strictness and exactness of the Apostle's course to maintain a conscience "void of offense" (Acts 24:16). What a striking commentary upon this declaration of Paul's is furnished in the account of his manner of life at Ephesus: see Acts 20:18-27. How his devotion, fidelity, and constancy puts to shame the flesh-loving indolence of so many preachers today. What strictness God requires from His servants: as the least bit of grit in the eye hinders its usefulness, so any sin trifled with will trouble a tender conscience.

We are commanded to "Provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Rom. 12:17): a good conscience respects the second table of the Law equally with the first, so that we owe no man anything and are not afraid to look anybody in the face. Any faith which does not produce an impartial and universal obedience, is worthless. All the mysteries of our most holy faith are mysteries of *godliness*. But if the Word of God has come to us in word only and not in power, then we are but Christians of the letter and not of the spirit. Alas, how many today are sound in doctrine and have a carnal assurance of eternal life, yet who exercise themselves not to maintain a conscience void of offense! Alas, alas, what a conscienceless age our lot is cast in. How many souls are stumbled by the loose living of the majority of those who now profess to believe the Gospel?

"In all things willing to live honestly" (Heb. 13:18). We are exhorted to have our conversation "honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:12). The Greek word in our text expresses more than is commonly understood by "honestly," being the same as that used in "He hath done all things *well*" (Mark 7:37). Its real force is "excellently" or "honourably." In his "in all things *willing* to live honestly" the Apostle again expresses his humility and truthfulness. A sincere desire and a diligent endeavour so to act is the highest perfection attainable in this life, for we all fail in the carrying out of it. Thus, in all ages the saints have prayed, "O LORD, I beseech Thee, let now Thine ear be attentive to the prayer of Thy servant, and to the prayer of Thy servants, *who desire to fear Thy name*" (Neh. 1:11). It is blessed to be assured by God Himself that, "For if there be first a *willing* mind, it is *accepted* according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2 Cor. 8:12).

"But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner" (Heb. 13:19). In this verse Paul added a further reason why he desired the Hebrew saints to pray for him. Many things are intimated therein—that he had been with them previously, but circumstances over which he had no control now prevented his return—the best of ministers may be kept from their people (1 Kings 22:27; Jer. 38:6); that he greatly

desired to come to them again, which shows that not his *own* comfort (deliverance from prison) but *their good* was uppermost in his mind; that he had strong confidence in the prevalence of prayer and of their affection for him. "When ministers come to a people as a return of prayer, they come with greater satisfaction to themselves and success to the people. We should fetch in all our mercies by prayer" (Matthew Henry).

The language used here by Paul denotes that he believed man's goings are of the Lord, that He disposes the affairs of the Church much according to their prayers—to His glory and their consolation. "That I may be restored to you the sooner" is very striking, showing that Paul was no blind fatalist: if God had decreed the exact hour, how could prayer bring it to pass "the sooner"? Ah, it is utterly vain for us to reason about or philosophise over the consistency between God's eternal decrees and prayer: sufficient for us to be assured from Scripture that prayer is both a bounden duty and blessed privilege. It is God's way to make us feel the need of and then ask for the bestowment of His mercies before He gives them: Ezekiel 36:37. We know not if this prayer was answered, nor is it at all material: "according to our present apprehensions of duty we may lawfully have earnest desires after, and pray for such things, as shall *not* come to pass. The secret purposes of God are not the rule of prayer" (John Owen).—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF DAVID.

74. *His return to Jordan.*

What a bewildering maze does the path of life present to many a soul: its twistings and turnings, its ups and downs, its advances and retreats are often too puzzling for carnal wisdom to solve. True it is that the lives of some are sheltered ones, with little of adventure and still less of mystery in them; yet it is far otherwise for others, with their journeying hither and thither. But in the light of Scripture the latter should not be surprised. One has only to read the biographies of the Patriarchs to discover how often they were called upon to strike their tents, move from place to place, traverse and then re-traverse the same path. The experiences of David, then, were in this respect: far from being exceptional: nor should any child of God deem it passing strange if he, too, finds himself re-tracing his steps and returning to the same place which he left months or years ago.

Amid the strange vicissitudes of life how comforting it is for the saint to be assured that "the steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD" (Psa. 37:23). Ah, it was David himself, who, by the Spirit of inspiration, originally penned those words. He realized that a predestinating God had first decreed and then ordered his entire journey through this world. Happy, thrice happy, the soul who by faith lays hold of this grand truth. To be fully assured that neither fickle fortune nor blind fate, but his all-wise and loving Father has mapped out his course supplies a peace and poise to a believing heart such as nothing else can give. It softens disappointment, affords comfort in sorrow, and quietens the storm within; yet it is only as faith is *in exercise* that those peaceable fruits of righteousness are produced in us. An evil heart of unbelief deprives one of such consolation, placing him on the same level as the poor worldling, who has no light to disperse his gloom.

In previous months we have spent some time in dwelling upon the various sad incidents which marked David's journey from Jerusalem to the Jordan, and from there to Mahanaim—now we are to contemplate the brighter side of things as the king retraced his steps. The contrasts presented are indeed striking, reminding us of the welcome spring and genial summer after a long and dreary winter. The analogies which exist between the seasons of the year and the different stages and experiences of life have often been dwelt upon yet not too often, for there are many salutary lessons to be learned therefrom. Some dyspeptic souls seem more in their element when dwelling upon that which is sad and somber, just as there are those (because they suffer from the heat) who are glad when summer is over. Another class determines to be occupied only with that which is cheerful and gay, refusing (to their own loss) to face that which is serious, sober and solemn—just as some people always grumble when the weather is wet, failing to realize the rain is as needful as the sunshine.

It is much the same with those preachers who attempt to trace out the experiences of a Christian. Some who delineate the inward history of a believer, or what *they* consider it should consist of, disproportionately dwell upon his assurance, peace and joy; while others overemphasize his painful conflicts and defeats, his doubts and fears. The one is as harmful as the other, for in either case only a caricature of the truth is presented. The one would rapidly skim over the distressing incidents which occasioned David's flight from Jerusalem to the Jordan, and those which attended him on the way to Mahanaim; while the other would expatiate fully thereon, but say little upon his happier lot as he returned from his exile to the capital. Let us diligently seek to avoid such lopsidedness, and preserve the balance in all things, so that as we should be equally thankful for each of the

passing seasons of the year, we will endeavour to profit from the ever-varying circumstances of life through which we are called upon to pass.

If David had passed through a season of gloom and tragedy, he was now to encounter some pleasant and gratifying experiences. If he had met with the ingratitude and unjust reproaches from some of his subjects, he was now to be the recipient of a hearty welcome and the appreciative homage of others. How the tide of public opinion ebbs and flows: one moment exclaiming “no doubt this man is a murderer,” and the next one changing their minds and saving “that he was a god” (Acts 28:4-6). How this should warn us against placing any reliance upon the creature! How thankful we should be when God is pleased to incline any to be favourably disposed towards us. On occasions the crowd changes from friendliness to hostility, at other times the converse is the case. So it was at the stage we have now reached in our hero’s history.

“So the king returned and came to Jordan” (2 Sam. 19:15). What a change had been wrought since David had last stood on the banks of this river. Then he was fleeing from Absalom, who had captured the hearts of many in Judah—now the rebel was dead, and God had so reinstated David in the affections of the royal tribe, that all the men of Judah had sent word unto him, “Return thou, and all thy servants” (v. 14). Assured that God was with him, and that he could rely upon the loyalty of his people, David left Mahanaim where his temporary camp had been set up, and betook himself as far as this famous stream. He had been slow in acting, partly because he wished to make sure of his ground, by ascertaining whether or not the people still desired him to reign over them. Not by force of arms, but by the wishes of his subjects was he determined to hold his position.

“And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan,” (v. 15). It will be recalled that David had sent Zadok and Abiathar to inquire into the attitude of the elders of Judah toward him: it seems a pity that there had been no joint conference with the heads of the other tribes. “It would have been better if they had conferred with their brethren, and thus acted in concert, as this would have prevented many bad consequences” (Thomas Scott). Even though it had involved further delay, joint action on the part of Israel would have been far more satisfactory. Nothing is gained by partiality: those slighted nurse their grievance, and sooner or later express their dissatisfaction and cause trouble. Thus it proved with the Nation, for less than a century later ten of its tribes separated, and were never again restored.

“And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan.” The place where the men of Judah now met David was associated with memorable events. It was there that Joshua had, by the command of the Lord, circumcised those of Israel who had been born in the wilderness, so that “the reproach of Egypt” was rolled away from them (Josh. 5:2-9); and it was from that incident it derived its name, for Gilgal means “rolling away.” How appropriate the chosen venue, for the reproach of Judah’s infidelity was rolled away as they now renewed their fealty to David. Again—at a later date we read, “Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and *renew the kingdom there*” (1 Sam. 11:14)—thus was history now virtually repeating itself.

“And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which was of Bahurim, hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David” (2 Sam. 19:16). What pleasant surprises we sometimes have amid life’s disappointments! This is the last man of all who might have been expected to be among those who came to welcome the king, for Shimei was the one who had reviled and cursed him on his outward journey (2 Sam. 16:5, 6). The

commentators attribute Shimei's friendly advances on this occasion to nothing more than carnal prudence or an instinct of self-preservation, but this we think is quite a mistake—he seems to have been in no danger of his life, for the next verse informs us there were a thousand men of Benjamin with him. No, in the light of verse 14 we believe this is another instance of God's making his enemies to be at peace with him when a man's ways please the Lord.

“And there were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over Jordan before the king” (2 Sam. 19:17). Well did Matthew Henry suggest, “Perhaps Jordan was never passed with so much solemnity, nor with so many remarkable occurrences, as it was now, since Israel passed it under Joshua.” It was almost as surprising for the lying Ziba to present his obeisance to the king on this occasion, as it was for Shimei, for if the one had reviled him with a foul tongue, the other, by his wicked imposition (2 Sam. 16:1-4) abused him with a fair one. No doubt he was anxious to establish himself more firmly in the king's favour ere Mephibosheth should undeceive him.

“And there went over a ferry boat to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good” (2 Sam. 19:18). “This is the only place in which a *boat* for passing over a river is mentioned. Bridges are not mentioned in Scripture. Rivers were generally *forded* at that time” (Thomas Scott). “And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was come over Jordan” (v. 18). See here a signal demonstration of the power of God: nothing is too hard for Him—He can subdue the most rebellious heart. What wonders are wrought by the Spirit even in the reprobate, for upon them, too, He puts forth both His restraining and constraining operations: were it not so, the elect could not live in this world at all. Yet how feebly is this realized today, even by the saints. How little is the hand of God beheld by them in the subduing of their enemies' hatred and in making others to be friendly and kind toward them. A spirit of atheism, which would exclude God from all human affairs, is more and more infecting this evil generation.

“And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me; neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart. For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king” (2 Sam. 19:19, 20). Let us see in this incident a typical picture of the penitent sinner casting himself upon the mercy of David's greater Son and Lord. This is exactly what takes place at a genuine conversion: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isa. 55:7). This is the course which Shimei now followed: he ceased his defiant conduct, threw down the weapons of his warfare against David, acknowledged his grievous offences, cast himself at the king's feet, thereby avowing his willingness to be subject to his royal sceptre. Saving mercy is not to be obtained any other way. There must be a complete about-face: contrition and confession are as imperative as is faith in Christ.

Have *you*, my reader, really and truly surrendered yourself to the Lordship of Christ? If you have not, no matter what you believe, or how orthodox the profession you make, you are yet in your sins and on your way to eternal perdition. Make no mistake on this point, we beseech you: as you value your soul, examine thoroughly the foundations of any hope of salvation which you may cherish. If you are living a life of *self*-pleasing, and

are not in subjection to the commandments of Christ, then are you in open revolt against Him. There must be a complete break from the old life of worldliness and carnal gratification, and the entering into a new relationship with God in Christ, namely, a submitting to His holy will and the ordering of all your conduct thereby. You are either living for self, or striving to serve and please God; and in your heart you *know* which course you are following. Being religious on the Sabbath and irreligious the other six days will avail you nothing.

“But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord’s anointed?” (2 Sam. 19:21). Abishai was brother to the arrogant Joab and possessed much of his domineering spirit. He was the one who had offered to slay Shimei at the time he had reviled David (2 Sam. 16:9): mercy was foreign to his nature, and even though Shimei now publicly acknowledged his offense and besought the king’s pardon, this son of Zeruiah thirsted for his blood. May we not consider this line in our typical picture as illustrative of the principle (cf. Luke 9:42; 15:2 etc.) that there are some ready to oppose whenever a sinner takes his true place before God? If there are those who complain that the way of salvation is made too easy when the grace of God is emphasized, there are others who argue that salvation by works is being inculcated when the *righteousness* of God and the claims of Christ are duly pressed.

“And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know that I am this day king over Israel? Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king sware unto him” (2 Sam. 19:22, 23). It is indeed blessed to mark how David’s soul loathed the evil suggestion made by Abishai. That son of Zeruiah—whose heart had never been broken before God, and therefore was devoid of His compassions—was far too blind to perceive that this was no time for the enforcing of unmingled justice. But it was far otherwise with David: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7): he had received wondrous mercy from the Lord, and now he exercised mercy unto this wretched Shimei, and in return for this he shall obtain further mercy from God. Let us not ignore that searching word, “If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:14, 15). God communicates grace to His people in order to make them gracious—reflectors of Himself.

Feign would we dwell for a moment longer on the lovely spirit which now actuated our hero. In previous sections of 1 and 2 Samuel we have beheld the grace of God *towards* David—electing, exalting, pardoning and preserving him; so too have we seen the grace of God working *in* him. It was the general rule of his life, giving character to his dealings with others, as it had thus given character to God’s dealings with him. Being called to enter into blessing, he rendered blessing. When he was reviled, he reviled not again (1 Sam. 17:29); when persecuted, he threatened not, but suffered it (1 Sam. 20:1). Never do we read of him seeking his own advancement or honour: when tidings reached him of the death of Saul, he wept instead of rejoicing; in the fall of Abner and Ishbosheth, it is only the sorrow and fasting of David we hear of. So it is, in varying measure, with all Christians: notwithstanding the detestable workings of the flesh, there are also the precious fruits of the Spirit—seen and approved of by God, if not always observable by others or recognizable to ourselves.

This was the man after God's own heart, and in every scene in which he was called to take a part—save when he was, for a while, turned aside by Satan—we behold him seeking not his own aggrandizement or even vindication, but serving in grace and kindness. A most blessed example of this was before us when pondering 2 Samuel 9. He would be an emulator or follower of God (Eph. 5:1), as a dear child. So it was when Abishai was for exacting bare righteousness: but mercy had rejoiced over judgment towards himself in the heart of the Lord, and nothing but the same is now beheld in the heart of David. Divine grace had not only pardoned his grievous sins against Uriah, but had now delivered him from the murderous designs of Absalom; how, then, could he consent to the death of even his worst enemy?! Ah, my reader, Divine grace not only forgives sins, but it also transforms sinners: taming the lion, making gentle the wolf. Thereby the Divine “workmanship” (Eph. 2:10), is made manifest.

But let us look again beyond David to that blessed One of whom he was so eminent a type. In what has just been before us we are presented with a lovely picture of *the Gospel*. The grand truth of the Gospel is that Christ “receiveth sinners.” Yes, He not only spares, but welcomes His worst enemies, and freely pardons them. Nevertheless, they must seek Him, surrender to His Lordship, take their place before Him in the dust as penitents, confessing their sins, and casting themselves on His sovereign mercy. This is what Shimei did. He determined to make his peace with David, came to him, and did obeisance before him; and we read that the king said, “Thou shalt not die.” And this, dear reader, is what the King of kings will say of you, if you throw down the weapons of your warfare against Him and exercise faith in Him. May the Spirit of God graciously cause some unsaved reader to do so. —A.W.P.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS.

6. *The Davidic.*

In last month's article it was pointed out how that the historical account of the Davidic Covenant lacks that fullness of detail which marked the earlier ones: the reason for this being the nearer the approach unto the advent of Christ the more the type merged into the anti-type. It was also shown how that Psalm 89 supplies us with the Divine interpretation of the promises given through the prophet Nathan to the son of Jesse. The superlative importance of this fact cannot be too strongly insisted upon, for it settles the vexed question as to the character and location of Christ's throne and kingdom. It is here that we are furnished with clear and conclusive answers to the questions and disputes which have been raised concerning the terms found in 2 Samuel 7:11-16.

That which we are most anxious to make clear to the reader is this: is the "seed" promised to David in 2 Samuel 7:12 a carnal or a mystical one? Is His "kingdom" (v. 12) an earthly or a heavenly one? Is His "house" and "throne" (v. 13), a material or spiritual one? If one of these questions can be definitely and finally settled, then the others will be, for it is obvious that the passage must be dealt with *consistently* throughout—all is to be understood literally or all mystically, carnally or spiritually. Now all doubt is removed as to the answer to the first question: the "seed" promised to David, like the seed promised to Abraham (Gal. 3:7, 16) is a *mystical* one; that is to say, it finds its accomplishment not in Christ personally, but in Christ mystically, i.e., Christ *together* with the members of His Body—the Church of which He is the Head. The proof of this is found in Psalm 89.

In 2 Samuel 7 God promised David, "I will set up thy Seed after thee . . . I will be His Father, and He shall be My Son. If He commit iniquity, I will chasten Him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men" (vv. 12-14). In Psalm 89 God declared, "I have found David My Servant . . . He shall cry unto Me, Thou art My Father . . . My Covenant shall stand fast with Him . . . If His children forsake My law then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes" (vv. 20, 26, 28, 30, 31). Nothing could be plainer than this: the "if *He* commit iniquity, I will chasten *Him* with the rod" of 2 Samuel 7:14 is here changed to "I will visit *their* transgressions with the rod." Thus the "seed" of David is Christ and His children. Their absolute identification is further emphasized in, "I will visit *their* transgression with the rod, nevertheless My lovingkindness will I not take from Him" (vv. 32, 33). Thus, the Redeemer and the redeemed are inseparably linked, for together they form *one* (mystical) Body.

The grand promise made to David in 2 Samuel 7 was that though his seed should commit iniquity, God's mercy would "not depart away from him," but that his "house" and "kingdom" should be "established forever" (vv. 14-16). It was no fleshly or earthly blessing, but a spiritual and eternal one. Therein it differs radically from what had gone before. Both Adam in Eden and Israel in Canaan had *forfeited* their heritage, but the inheritance Christ secured for His people is an *inalienable* one. This is what is made so prominent in Psalm 89: of Christ God declared, "His seed also will I make to endure *forever*" (v. 29). This is God's covenant-engagement with the Mediator, and no failure or sin on the part of His people shall cause God to cancel it. True, He will severely chastise them for their transgressions—for in God's family the rod is not spared and the children spoiled—but He will *not* cast them off as incorrigible rebels. The atonement of Christ fully met all their liabilities, and as *He* enjoys God's favour forever, so must *those* vitally united to Him.

The same grand feature marks the throne and kingdom of Christ, distinguishing them from all that pertains to the earth: "I will establish the throne, of His kingdom *forever*" (2 Sam. 7:13). That there should be no uncertainty on this point, God repeats: "Thy throne shall be established *forever*" (v. 16). It is no temporal and temporary throne which the true David occupies, enduring only for a thousand years—as the New Testament expressly declares "of His kingdom there shall be *no end*" (Luke 1:33). The same grand truth is emphasized in Psalm 89: "And His throne as the days of heaven," (v. 29)—not "as the days of earth." "His seed shall endure forever, and His throne as the *sun* before Me; it shall be established forever as the *moon*" (vv. 36, 37): the most enduring objects in nature are selected as the figure and proof of the absoluteness of the perpetuity affirmed. That Christ's kingdom is a celestial, and not an earthly one, is seen in "And as a faithful witness in heaven" (v. 37).

Another Psalm which casts its light upon the character and contents of the Davidic Covenant is the 132nd upon which we must offer a few remarks. It has two divisions. In the first (vv. 1-10) there is a pleading with Jehovah to be merciful unto His people "for David's sake" (v. 10). In the second section (vv. 11-18) we have His response, promising "I will make the horn of David to bud, upon himself shall his crown flourish" (vv. 17, 18). In the first, God is reminded of David's deep concern to supply a permanent house for the holy ark; in the second, the Lord declares that He has found a satisfying and eternal resting-place in Zion. In the first, prayer is made that God's priests might be "clothed with righteousness," in the second, God affirms that He will cloth His priests "with salvation." The second half strictly balances the first throughout.

Now that which invests this 132nd Psalm with particular interest for us is what is found therein concerning God's *resting-place* and the relation of this to the Davidic Covenant. It will be remembered that 2 Samuel 7 opens with an account of David's anxiety to provide a suitable residence for the ark, and that it was in response thereto Nathan made such a wondrous and gracious revelation to him. Let it be duly noted that among the covenant promises which God then made to David concerning the blessed One, who, (according to the flesh) should descend from him, was this declaration: "He shall build *a house* for My name," and to Him God says, "Thine *house* and Thy kingdom shall be established forever" (vv. 13, 16). Like the "throne" and "kingdom" mentioned in the same passage, this "house" is not material, earthly, and temporal, but a spiritual, heavenly and eternal one; it is no mere Jewish temple for "the millennium," but a Divine dwelling-place for the ages of the ages.

The tabernacle, as is well known, was the symbol of God's residing among the covenant people and of the Divine fellowship to which He had graciously admitted them. This symbolical significance was transferred to the temple, with the additional idea—suggested by its very structure—of *durability* and permanency. With this place of worship the *throne* of David was indissoluble bound up. The destruction of the temple only became possible as the effect of the confirmed apostasy of the occupants of David's throne, and its restoration was only to be expected as the work of someone of the royal race being brought into renewed fellowship with God—this is verified in the reconstruction of the second temple by Zerubbabel. The symbol, however, was the type of something higher: the true temple of God is the sanctified *hearts* of His saints. It is with His spiritual Church that the throne of David, as occupied by the Redeemer, is permanently and inseparably united.

The kingdom of Christ and the house of God are one and the same, viewed from different angles. It is the redeemed who constitute the true subjects of Christ's kingdom, for they alone own His sceptre: where there are no subjects, there can be no kingdom. And it is the redeemed who provide God with a satisfying resting-place. In the later Prophets it was expressly foretold, "Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the Man whose name is the BRANCH: and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the LORD: even He shall build the temple of the LORD, and He shall bear the glory" (Zech. 6:12, 13). Now the true House in which God dwells is a spiritual one, composed of living stones, converted souls, which is "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:20, 21).

Returning to Psalm 132. "The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David: He will not turn from it, Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep My covenant and My testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne forever more" (vv. 11, 12). These verses make it clear beyond all doubt that our Psalm has to do directly with the Davidic Covenant. In their "letter" significance, they respected David's throne upon earth and the condition which determined its continuance—a condition which was not met by his descendants. In their spiritual purport they concern the antitypical David and His children, His infinite merits assuring that God would grant the needed grace for them to render to Him that obedience which the new covenant required, namely, a real and sincere one, though not flawless and perfect—D.V., this will be carefully considered by us when we take up the new covenant. Such Scriptures as the following are to be pondered for the fulfillment of this promise of Christ's children occupying His throne: Luke 22:29, 30; 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3; 1 Peter 2:9 ("a royal priesthood"), Revelation 3:21.

"For the LORD hath chosen Zion: He hath desired it for His *habitation*" (Psa 132:13). "It was no more than any other Canaanite town till God chose it, David captured it, Solomon built it, and the Lord dwelt in it. So was the Church a mere Jebusite stronghold till grace chose it, conquered it, rebuilt it, and dwelt in it. Jehovah has chosen His people, and hence they are His people—He has chosen the Church, and hence it is what it is. Thus in the covenant David and Zion, Christ and His people, go together. David is for Zion, and Zion for David; the interests of Christ and His people are mutual" (C. H. Spurgeon). In Hebrews 12:22 the kingdom of Christ is expressly denominated "Mount Sion": see our comments thereon in the exposition of that verse in "Studies" of April, 1936.

"This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Psa. 132:14). "Again are we filled with wonder that He who fills all things should dwell in Zion—should dwell in His *Church*. God does not unwillingly visit His chosen; He *desires* to dwell with them; He desires *them*. He is already in Zion, for He says *here*, as one upon the spot. Not only will He occasionally come to His Church, but He will dwell in it, as His fixed abode. He cared not for the magnificence of Solomon's temple, but He determined that at the mercy-seat He would be found by suplicants, and from thence He would shine forth in brightness of grace among the favoured nation. All this, however, was but a type of the spiritual house, of which Jesus is foundation and cornerstone, upon which all the living stones are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. O the sweetness of

the thought that God desires to dwell in His people and rest among them!” (C. H. Spurgeon).

If further proof be required that the Church is the dwelling-place of God, it is forthcoming in “that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). Here, then, is the ultimate accomplishment of those promises God made through Nathan. The antitypical David *has built* the House for God’s name (2 Sam. 7:13 and cf. His use of the word “build” in Matt. 16:18). Unto Him God said, “*Thine* House and Thy kingdom shall be established forever” (2 Sam. 7:16), for the Father and the Son are one. In this House the Lord Jesus presides, for we read, “But Christ as a Son over His own house: whose House are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (Heb. 3:6). When the first Heaven and the first earth are passed away, it shall be said, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev. 21:3). The Lord God will then “rest in His love” (Zeph. 3:17).

Nor was David himself left in ignorance as to the higher and spiritual purport of the covenant promises which the Lord had made to him. This appears first in the expressions of his deep wonderment and overwhelming gratitude at the time they were first made to him (2 Sam. 7:18-29): “Thou hast also spoken of Thy servant’s house for a great while to come” (v. 19), he declared, language which connotes a period of vast extent, far in excess of that covered the lengthiest human dynasties. Then he added, “Is this the manner (“law,” margin) of man, O LORD God!” Christ’s kingdom shall be ordered by a principle securing for it a perpetuity which was wholly inapplicable to any human rule, and therefore all pertaining to His kingdom obviously stands in marked contrast from the established order of things which belongs to all merely human dynasties.

David’s own understanding of the deeper import of the contents of the covenant also appears in those Messianic Psalms of which he was the author. As we have already seen, in the 2nd Psalm, David declares of that One whom God was to establish king in Zion, that He would possess the dominion of the whole earth, kings being commanded to acknowledge Him on pain of incurring His ruinous disfavour—something which plainly denoted that a greater than Solomon was in view. From the many things he predicated in Psalm 89 of his Seed, it is evident David must have known that in no proper sense could they be applied to his immediate successors on the throne. While in the 110th Psalm David himself calls his promised Descendant his *Lord*: “The LORD said unto my Lord, sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool” (v. 1).

Not only does it appear from the Psalms that David’s mind was freely occupied with the covenant promises and that God granted him much light thereon, but we also learn from Scripture that they formed the principal solace and joy in the prospect of his dissolution, for when the world was fast receding from his view, he clung to them as “all his salvation and all his desire.” As he contemplated death, the future of his family seriously engaged his thoughts. Sorely had he suffered from and by his children, and few if any appeared to have the fear of God upon them. He was probably exercised as to whom should succeed him in the kingdom: then it was he exclaimed, “Although my house be not so with God; yet, He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although He make it not to grow” (2 Sam. 23:5).

“Although my house be not so (i.e., as described in vv. 3, 4) with God, *yet* . . . although He make it not to grow,” that is, it declines and diminishes naturally. Absalom was dead, Adonijah, another of his sons, would be slain (1 Kings 2:24, 25), yet God *would* preserve him a seed from which Christ would come. The dying king was convinced that nothing could prevail to prevent the fulfillment of the Divine promises—that full provision was made for every possible contingency.—A.W.P.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

Another article seems to be required for the further elucidation and amplification of what has already been advanced in our exposition of 1 Corinthians 15:22-28, the more so as we have yet said nothing upon the last two verses. We have endeavoured to show that the contents of this passage introduce nothing that is not strictly pertinent to the theme which the Apostle is discussing in this chapter, both before verse 22 and after verse 28—namely, the resurrection of the saints. Instead, as we have seen, it supplies a striking and valuable contribution to that important subject, by furnishing proof that there is no possibility of any enemy of Christ and His people being able to prevent that glorious event. Furthermore, it has been shown that the whole passage is one connected and consistent whole, and not a number of individual statements having little or nothing in common.

In verse 22 the assertion is made that “in Christ shall all be made alive.” This at once intimates that the elect only are in view, for the non-elect never were and never will be in Christ—compare verses 45-47, where further contrasts between the first and last Adam are in view. In verse 23 the statement made in the second half of verse 22 is particularized: “But every man (every one) in his own order.” The Head and His members are not made alive simultaneously. No, in this, as in all things, Christ has the pre-eminence, consequently there is an interval between “Christ the firstfruits”—which not only denotes *precedence*, but *pledge* of the future harvest. “Afterward (Greek, “then”) they which are Christ’s (again showing that only the holy dead are here in view) at His coming.” But will there not be the raising of other believers at a still later period: no, for “*then the end*”—the promise in verse 22 is now completely made good.

Two important questions are naturally raised by the contents of verses 22, 23: how and when shall Christ bring this to pass? Each is answered in what follows. “For He (God) hath put all things under His (Christ’s) feet” (v. 27). This is only another way of saying that God has exalted the crucified but risen Redeemer to the place of supreme authority and power—carefully compare Ephesians 1:19-23 and observe the same words in verse 22. God has not only entrusted unto the Mediator the saving of His own people, but the subduing of all His enemies—note the double claim He makes in John 17:2. This is the answer to His prayer, “Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee” (John 17:1). In the new creation, from beginning to end, “all things” are of the Father, yet “all things” are by Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 8:6).

How glorious is the Christ of God! What dignity, majesty, and might are His! Alas, how vastly different is that wretched caricature presented from the modern pulpit, wherein Christ is referred to as *needing* the help of His puny creatures in order to bring His work to a successful conclusion. How perversely man inverses the Divine order: it is we who are in sore need of *His* help, and not He of *ours*. Christ has received commission from the Father, to “destroy the works of the Devil” (1 John 3:8): not only to bring good out of all the evil which sin has created, but also to bring to an end all the confusion and dishonour to God which Satan has brought into the universe. Therefore, “He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet” (1 Cor. 15:25).

“When He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father”—that is, the kingdom which Satan has usurped, the kingdom of darkness—“when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power”—which explains the previous clause, meaning when He shall have subdued every creature and force which is hostile to God; “the last enemy shall be destroyed—death.” Thus the two “whens” of verse 24 correspond to

the two “thens” of verse 23—we showed last month that the closing clause of verse 24 (in the A.V.) completes verse 23, while the destruction of death answers to, confirms the fact, that “the end” (of the resurrection of the saints) has come. If any shadow of doubt remains upon this point of our interpretation, verse 54 completely removes it: “So *when* this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, *then* shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory,” for “death” is “destroyed.”

What has just been pointed out not only refutes the Pre-millennial interpretation of this particular passage, but it seems to completely overthrow their entire position. Their contention is, first, that Christ does not receive the kingdom until His second advent—arguing that He is now seated on the Father’s throne (Rev. 3:21), and that He will not occupy His own throne (Matt. 25:31) until the beginning of the Millennium. Second, that instead of all God’s enemies being completely and finally subdued at the time of Christ’s coming, this will not occur till after the Millennium is over—appealing to Revelation 20:7-10 to bolster up their theory. Third, most of them insist that the coming of Christ and His raising the Church take place before the “tribulation period,” and that it is not until several years later He makes alive those who were slain by “the antichrist.” A worse turning of things upside down could scarcely be imagined—alas that in the past we ourselves have been guilty of it.

As we have shown, so far from the second advent of Christ being the time when His kingdom is inaugurated and that the putting forth of His mighty power for the subduing of His enemies is commenced, it is then that He delivers up the kingdom to the Father because every foe *has* been reduced to a state of utter impotency—it is quite clear from Luke 19:13 that Christ went to Heaven “to receive for Himself a kingdom and to return,” and *not* to return and then receive a kingdom! Again—so far from Christ’s subjugation of His enemies taking place at a date long after His second coming, our passage places it before, or at least makes it to synchronize with, the destruction of death, the last enemy—note the same order in Matthew 13:1, 41-43. And the emphatic and unequivocal statements at the close of 1 Corinthians 15:24, “then cometh the end” entirely excludes all idea of any saints being raised after Christ’s coming.

Far more serious is the view taken by many of the closing portion of our passage. Those who have regarded the “Then (cometh) the end” as referring to the end of time, the termination of this world, consider verses 27, 28 as illustrative of Christ’s then delivering of the kingdom to the Father, following which the Son is to become in some new way subject to the Father—thus does one error logically involve and lead up to another. Whatever be the meaning of verse 28 we may rest fully assured that there is nothing in it which in anywise clashes with the plain teaching of other Scriptures, and therefore no interpretation of it can be valid which supposes that Christ will yet suffer a second humiliation, or cease to be an Object of worship. Most certainly there is nothing in it which casts the slightest cloud upon the Godhead of the Redeemer, or intimates that the second Person in the Trinity is inferior to the First. Equally certain is it that there can be nothing in the verse which signifies Christ will ever abdicate His mediatorial throne.

Obviously, we must turn to the context for a right understanding of verses 27, 28. Nor does that present the slightest difficulty so far as the ascertaining of its leading thought be concerned: the man Christ Jesus possesses such authority and power that nothing can possibly prevent His raising in Glory the whole of His people: the risen Christ has been

invested with such majesty and might that no hostile power can stand before Him. The dominion of Christ is a supreme, universal, and uncontrollable one, so far as creatures are concerned; yet it is a subordinate one so far as essential Deity is concerned. Now the purpose and purport of verses 27, 28 is to illustrate *the delegated character of* that dominion and authority, in the exercise of which the Son brings back the kingdom to the Father by putting down all opposing rule. This brings before us a subject of no small importance.

The expression “when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father” implies that, in some sense, the kingdom has *departed* from the Father. But there is a real sense in which the kingdom never has departed, and never can depart, from the Father. His *right* to reign and His *power* to assert that right, are indubitable and infinite, immutable and eternal. There is no being, and there is no event, that is or can be beyond His control; ay, there is no being nor event which shall not be made ultimately to subserve the purpose of His wise and righteous government. Yet it is an undeniable fact that a considerable portion of His creatures have renounced their allegiance, and have individually, and collectively, set themselves in opposition to Him, refusing to obey His holy, righteous, and good laws, and to yield their co-operation in working out the wise and benevolent designs of His administration. To this rebel portion of God’s subjects belong the whole of the fallen angels, and the whole too of fallen men, with the exception of those who are reclaimed by the Son.

“An important portion of God’s dominions is in a state of revolt. The standard of rebellion, first erected on the very battlements of Heaven, has since been erected on earth; and for nearly six thousand years its inhabitants almost with one consent, have rallied around it, scornfully rejecting the claims of their Maker, and obstinately refusing to return to their allegiance, and acknowledge Him as their rightful King. Earth and Hell are leagued in one grand conspiracy against the throne of the Most High. Christ is exalted to the throne to put down these enemies and opposing powers, and thus recover the kingdom from the usurpers” (Van Valkenburgh).

Now the way in which this usurped kingdom is restored to the Father is Christ’s putting down of all opposing rule and power. All power, whether diabolical or human, exercised by individuals, or embodied in institutions, or order of things, must be overthrown, so that this kingdom will be brought back to Him whose absolute right it is to reign in and over us. The “rulers of the darkness of this world” (Eph. 6:12) must be dethroned—stripped of their power to deceive and destroy. Everything inimical must be destroyed by the God-man in His administration of that kingdom entrusted to Him by the Father. True, these all “make war with the Lamb,” but “the Lamb shall overcome them, *for* He is Lord of lords and King of kings” (Rev. 17:14). He will “break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel” (Psa. 2:9). Satan with his rebel hosts, and those of our race who clung to his dominion, shall be cast into the Lake of Fire.

The object of verses 27, 28 is to show us that the power Christ wields over His enemies is a *delegated* one. Christ’s authority is not distinct from the Divine: rather is it the exercise of that power which is common to the Father and the Son as Divine Persons; just like, “As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself” (John 5:26). It is as though the Apostle said, in referring to Psalm 110, I stated that Christ must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet (1 Cor. 15:25), yet let me now remind you it is *Jehovah* who secures this, as the first verse of that Psalm affirms. “For He hath put all things under His feet” (v. 27) is a quotation from Psalm 8:6, as a fur-

ther corroboration of the truth that it is *Jehovah* who gave the Mediator dominion over all His creatures.

Let it be remarked that this ancient oracle is again quoted by our Apostle in Hebrews 2. That which fills us with wonderment in Psalm 8 is that it is of *man* this is predicated. That Psalm begins by contemplating the ineffable majesty of Jehovah: "O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! Who hast set Thy glory above the heavens" (v. 1). Next he asks "What is man that THOU art mindful of *him*? . . . for Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels" (vv. 4, 5). Then he exclaims "Thou madest him to have *dominion over* the works of Thy hands; *Thou* hast put all things under his feet" (v. 6). After quoting the whole of this passage, the Apostle says, "But now we see not yet all things put under him: but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, *crowned* with glory and honour" (Heb. 2:8, 9)—thereby proving that the unlimited power Christ is now wielding is the power *of God*.

"But when He saith, All things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him" (1 Cor. 15:27). When in the 8th Psalm it is said that Jehovah subjected all things to man, it is very obvious that He who should subject them to Him—who gave supremacy to Him, sovereignty over them—does not, in so doing, denude Himself of His own power or authority: that power necessarily remains supreme. As the Apostle here declares, "it is manifest that He is excepted." And *how* is it "manifest"? Why, because a *delegated* authority necessarily implies a supremacy in Him who confers it. The Father will be greater than the Mediator: Christ's kingdom, though in reference to creatures, supreme, is, in reference to essential Deity, delegated; and this statement is made that it may be obvious that all things are of God.

"And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shalt the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (v. 28). Yet let it be said very emphatically that this subjection of the Son to the Father *is no new thing* which exclusively characterizes that order of things which shalt obtain upon His restoring of the usurped kingdom. No, no—the Father's word to the Son, "Thy throne O God, is forever and ever" (Heb. 1:8) is not to be rescinded in the eternal state. The subjection of the Son to the Father marks the whole mediatorial economy. "That economy, throughout proceeds on the principle that, while essentially the Son and Spirit are equal with the Father, being one with Him in the economy of grace, They are subordinate to the Father, who sustains the majesty of Divinity. The Father is greater than They. He sends, They come; He appoints, and They execute. All things are *of Him by Them*" (John Brown).

The principal design of verse 28, then, is to teach us that the present subjection of the Mediator unto the Father *will continue* after the consummation of His glorious victory. It in nowise signifies that Christ's Divine Person shall withdraw from His humanity, or that as the God-man He *will* no longer be an Object of worship. On the other hand, the glorified humanity of Christ, notwithstanding all the honour and authority conferred upon it, is but *a creature*, and in the Eternal State this will be made evident. Let it be said emphatically that verse 28 must not be understood to mean that the Second Person in the God-head, as such, will, throughout eternity, be under subjection to the First, for on the new earth there is "the throne of God *and* of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1). Nevertheless, the man Christ Jesus will yet resign unto the Father His government of the wicked. Verse 28 refers to the re-assumption by God Himself of that power and authority delegated to the Mediator in connection with His rule over His enemies.

Before the ascension of Christ, God reigned as God; since that event, He reigns through the Mediator; when Christ has delivered up the usurped kingdom to the Father, then “God”—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—will be all in all. Yet even then Christ will still be the Head of His Church and reign upon His mediatorial throne. At the conclusion of his exposition of 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 the renowned Puritan, John Owen, said, “I declared that all the state of things which we have described shall then cease, and all things issue in the immediate enjoyment of God Himself. I would extend this no further than as unto that which concerneth the exercise of Christ’s mediatory office with respect unto the Church *here below* and the *enemies* of it. But there are some things which belong to the essence of this state which shall continue unto all eternity, as, first, I do believe that the Person of Christ, in and by His human nature, shall be forever the immediate Head of the whole glorified creation. Second, that He shall be the means and way of communication between God and His glorified saints forever. Third, that the Person of Christ, and herein His human nature, shall be the eternal Object of Divine glory, praise and worship.”

As a concluding summary of what has been before us, we cannot do better than quote from John Brown’s “The Resurrection of Life” (through which we have received much help in preparing these two articles) wherein he gives the following analysis of 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. “The passage, thus expounded, teaches us the following principles: first, that the risen Saviour is invested with unlimited power and authority: He ‘reigns’—‘all things are subjected to Him.’ Second, the design of His being thus invested with unlimited power and authority is, that He may ‘restore the kingdom to the Father.’ Third, in restoring the kingdom to the Father, He will ‘put down all opposing rule, and authority, and power.’ Fourth, in the accomplishment of this, the destruction of death as an opposing power is necessarily involved. Fifth, all this is to be accomplished by *Divine* power, administered by the Son, that the whole glory of the bringing back of the kingdom may be seen to belong, and be ascribed, to Him, ‘of whom are all things, and through whom are all things’ and to whom, therefore, it is most meet that all things should be—whose glory ought to be the end, as His will is the cause and the law, of the universe.”— A.W.P.

GOD'S WORD IN OUR HEARTS.

Use 1. To persuade you to study the Scripture, that you may get understanding and hide the Word in your hearts for gracious purposes. This is the Book of books: let it not lie idle. The world can as well be without the sun as the Bible—Psalm 19 speaks first of the sun, then of the Law of God, which is to the Christian as the sun is to the outward world. Consider the great use of the Word for informing the understanding and reforming the will. The Word of God is able “to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished” (2 Tim. 3:17). “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word” (Psa. 119:9). A young man that is so heedless and headstrong, and in the very heat of his lusts, yet there is enough in the Word to cleanse, tame, and subdue him to God. Therefore let us get it into our hearts. To this end:

Meditate often on it: “Mary kept all these sayings” (Luke 2:19). How did she keep them? She “pondered them in her heart.” Musing makes the fire to burn, and deep and constant thoughts are operative. The hen which straggles from her nest when she sits a-brooding produces nothing; it is a constant incubation which hatches the young. So when we have only a few straggling thoughts, and do not brood upon the Truth; when we have flashes only, like a little glance of a sunbeam upon a wall, it does nothing; but serious thoughts, through the Lord’s blessing, will do the work. Urge the heart again and again. Ask, is this a Truth?—then what will become of me if I disregard it; is this the Word of God, and does it find no more entertainment in my heart?

Receive it in the love of it. The Apostle makes this to be the ground of apostasy: “because they received not the love of the truth” (2 Thess. 2:10). O let it soak into the affections. If it lie only in the tongue or in the mind, only to make it a matter of talk and speculation, it will be soon gone. The seed which lies upon the surface, the fowls of the air will pick it up. Therefore hide it deeply; let it soak further and further. First men have a naked apprehension of truth, then it gets into the conscience, then it lies in the heart, then it is laid up. When it is dearer than our dearest lust, then it will stick by us. When it breaks in upon the heart with evidence and power, you cannot keep both.

Use 2. To direct you what to do in *reading*. It is a notable preservative against sin, and an antidote against the infection of the world: “The Law of God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide” (Psa. 37:31). As long as truth is kept lively and active, and in view of conscience, we shall not slide, or not so often. We have many temptations to divert us from obedience; but we are in safety when the Law of God is in our heart. See how it was in Joseph’s heart: “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”—against God, that is of such sovereign majesty; of such infinite goodness and mighty power, so able to save and to destroy! Every time you read the Scripture you should lay up something. The best way to destroy ill weeds is by planting the ground with right seed. Then for *promises*: what have you hidden in your heart for comfort against desertions and afflictions? In a time of trial you will find one promise gives more comfort and support than all the arguments that can be produced by reason. “This is my comfort in my affliction: Thy *Word* hath quickened me” (Psa. 119:50). He had a word to support him: therefore let us treasure up the promises. So for *threats*, especially against the sins we are most inclined to: “Who among you will give ear, and hear for the time to come?” (Isa. 42:23). It is well with you for the present, but matters to come are put off, little cared for: Amos 6:3. You should think of and provide against what will come afterward.

So in *hearing*. Do not hear lightly, but hide the Word in your heart, that it be not embezzled by your own negligence, forgetfulness, running into carnal distractions; that it be not purloined by Satan, that he may not snatch away the good Seed out of your soul. When the Word is preached, there is more company present than is visible; there are angels and demons in the assembly. Whenever the sons of God meet together, Satan is there too. The Devil is present to divert the mind by wandering thoughts, by raising prejudices that we may cast out the Word—or by excuses, delays, evasions, putting it off to others when we begin to have some sense of our sin and danger. The Devil is loath to let us go too far, lest Christ get a subject into His kingdom. Therefore let us labour to get something into the heart by every sermon: some fresh consideration is given out to set you a-work in the spiritual life. A conscientious waiting upon God will find something every time. It is sad to consider how many have heard much, and laid up little or nothing at all; it may be they have laid it up in their notebooks, but not laid up the Word in their hearts.

For *meditation*. Meditate upon the Word: do not study it in a cursory manner, or content yourselves with a slight taste, or a little volatile affection; but ponder it seriously, that it may enter into your very heart. Hasty and perfunctory thoughts work nothing. Meat must be well chewed and digested, if you would have it turn into good blood and energy. You must follow the Word closely till it settle into some affection. So much then for David's practice: "Thy Word have I hid in my heart." The second thing is the aim and end of it: "that I might not sin against Thee."

In hiding the Word in our hearts there must be a *right design*: our knowledge of it and delight in it are to be directed to *practice*. First, we must not study the Word merely out of *curiosity*, that we may know what is said there, as men will pry into civil art and secular subjects. So the Athenians flocked about Paul: Acts 17:18-21; so for novelty's sake men may have an affection in the Word—"ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light" (John 5:35). There are certain adulterous affections we have to the Word when it is new and fresh, but when it grows familiar we loathe it. This affection to the Word is soon spent.

Second, we must not hide the Word in our heart that we may be able to *teach others*, that we may make a gainful trade of it. Alas! a man may teach others and be himself a castaway. Look, as in coining of money, an iron stamp may impress the character and print upon a piece of silver or of gold, so God may use the gifts of some men to beget faith in others, and perish themselves. "We have prophesied in Thy name," yet "depart from Me; I know you not" (Matt. 7:22-23).

Third, this must not be our end either: not merely for *delight*. Largeness of knowledge brings a content with it, as it is an addition to our equipment. Truth is the object of our understanding, and may please an unsanctified mind. Not merely out of subserviency to some base and inferior ends, that we get esteem in the world or the reputation of knowing persons, but as it is an elevation of the understanding. Every delight in *Truth* is not a delight in *God*! There is a natural delight we have in the contemplation of any sublime truth: this is merely a delight in the work of our own faculties, when the affections are terminated in bare knowledge—as it is a high and mysterious truth, or as it is a delectation to the understanding.

Fourth, we are not merely to study the Word for the *comfort* of it, and the suitableness to the conscience. As man is a reasonable creature, he will delight in knowledge; and as he has a conscience which presages death and judgment to come, he may delight in the

comfort of it. Many search out promises, but do not love precepts. The stony ground seem to have a joy; they may delight in the comfortable part of religion, but this joy comes to nothing—this gladsome forward spring is no sure prognostication of a plentiful harvest. Then only do we receive the Word aright when we look to the holy part, and *mortify* our natural desires and affections. Many deal with the Word as great men do with fleshly companions—willing to entertain them at their tables—to hear their discourse, because of the pleasantness of their mirth; but to enter into bonds for them, and discharge them from debt, or better their fortunes, that they will not do. So many will give Christ and the Word, especially the comfortable part of it, entertainment; but they are loath to take the duty of the Gospel unto themselves. Therefore it is not enough to study the Word merely that we may cherish our own persons with the comforting part of it, but we must also study the holy part and that which does require our duty. Then let us labour to hide the Word in our hearts as David did: that we may not sin against God. (A sermon by the Puritan Manton, slightly abbreviated).—A.W.P.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

2. *Its Source.*

Accurately speaking, election is a branch of predestination, the latter being a more comprehensive term than the former. Predestination relates to *all* creatures, things, and events; but election is restricted to rational beings—angels and humans. As the word *predestinate* signifies, God from all eternity sovereignly ordained and immutably determined the history and destiny of each and all of His creatures. But in these articles we shall confine ourselves to predestination as it relates to or concerns rational creatures. And here, too, a further distinction must be noticed. There cannot be an election without a rejection, a taking without a passing by, a choice without a refusal. As Psalm 78 expresses it, “He *refused* the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim; but *chose* the tribe of Judah” (vv. 67, 68). Thus predestination includes both reprobation (the passing by of the non-elect, and then the foreordaining of them to condemnation—Jude 4—because of their sins) and election unto eternal life, the former of which we shall *not* now discuss.

The doctrine of election means, then, that God singled out certain ones in His mind both from among angels (1 Tim. 5:21) and from among men, and ordained them unto eternal life and blessedness; that before He created them, He decided their destiny, just as a builder draws his plans and determines every part of the building before any of the materials are assembled for the carrying out of his design. Election may thus be defined: it is that part of the counsel of God whereby He did from all eternity purpose in Himself to display His grace upon certain of His creatures. This was made effectual by a definite decree concerning them. Now in every decree of God three things must be considered: the beginning, the matter or substance, the end or design. Let us offer a few remarks upon each.

The *beginning* of the decree is the *will of God*. It originates solely in His own sovereign determination. While determining the estate of His creatures, God’s own will is the alone and absolute cause thereof. As there is nothing above God to rule Him, so there is nothing outside of Himself which can be in any wise an impulsive cause unto Him—to say otherwise is to make the will of God no will at all. Herein, He is infinitely exalted above us, for not only are we subject to One above us, but *our* wills are being constantly moved and disposed by external causes. The will of God could have no cause outside of itself, or otherwise there would be something prior to itself (for a cause ever precedes the effect) and something more excellent (for the cause is ever superior to the effect), and thus God would not be the independent Being which He is.

The *matter* or substance of a Divine decree is God’s purpose *to manifest* one or more of His attributes or perfections. This is true of all the Divine decrees, but as there is variety in God’s attributes, so there is in the things He decrees to bring into existence. The two principal attributes He exercises upon His rational creatures are His grace and His justice. In the case of the elect, God determined to exemplify the riches of His amazing grace, but in the case of the non-elect He saw fit to demonstrate His justice and severity—withholding His grace from them because it was His good pleasure so to do. Yet it must not be allowed for a moment that this latter was a point of cruelty in God, for His nature is not grace alone, nor justice alone, but both together; and therefore in determining to display *both* of them there could not be a point of injustice.

The *end*, or design of every Divine decree is God’s own *glory*, for nothing less than this could be worthy of Himself. As God swears by Himself because He can swear by

none greater, so because a greater and grander end cannot be proposed than His own glory, God has set up that as the supreme end of all His decrees and works. "The Lord hath made all things *for Himself*" (Prov. 16:4)—for His own glory. As all things are from Him as the first cause, so all things are *to Him* (Rom. 11:36) as the final end. The good of His creatures is but the secondary end; His own glory is the supreme end, and everything else is subordinate thereto. In the case of the elect it is God's amazing grace which will be magnified; in the case of the reprobate His pure justice will be glorified. What follows in this article will largely be an amplification of these three points.

The source of election, then, is *the will of God*. It should be scarcely necessary to point out that by "God" we mean, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Though there are three Persons in the Godhead, there is but one undivided nature common to Them all, and so but one will. They are one, and They agree in one: "He is in *one* mind, and who can turn Him?" (Job 23:13). Let it also be pointed out that the will of God is not a thing apart from God, nor is it to be considered only as a part of God: the will of God is God Himself Willing: it is, if we may so speak, His very nature in activity, for His will is His very essence. Nor is God's will subject to any fluctuation or change: when we affirm that God's will is immutable, we are only saying that God Himself is, "without variableness or shadow of turning" (James 1:17). Therefore the will of God is *eternal*, for since God Himself had no beginning, and since His will is His very nature, then His will must be from everlasting.

To proceed one step further. The will of God is absolutely *free*, uninfluenced and uncontrolled by anything outside of itself. This appears from the making of the world—as well as of everything in it. The world is not eternal, but was *made* by God, yet whether it should be or should not be created, was determined by Himself alone. The time when it was made—whether sooner or later; the size of it—whether smaller or larger; the duration of it—whether for a season or forever; the condition of it—whether it should remain "very good" or be defiled by sin—was all settled by the sovereign decree of the Most High. Had He so pleased, God could have brought this world into existence millions of ages earlier than He did. Had He so pleased, He could have made it and all things in it in a moment of time, instead of in six days and nights. Had He so pleased, He could have limited the human family to a few thousands or hundreds, or have made it a thousand times larger than it is. No other reason can be assigned why God created it when and as it is than His own imperial will.

God's will was absolutely free in connection with election. In choosing a people unto eternal life and glory, there was nothing outside Himself which moved God to form such a purpose. As He expressly declares, "I *will* have mercy on whom I *will* have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I *will* have compassion" (Rom. 9:15)—language could not state more definitely the absoluteness of Divine sovereignty in this matter. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph. 1:5): here again all is resolved into the mere pleasure of God. He bestows His favours or withholds them as pleases Himself. Nor does He stand in any need of *our* vindicating His procedure. The Almighty is not to be brought down to the bar of human reason: instead of working to *justify* God's high sovereignty, we are only required to *believe it*, on the authority of His own Word. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent,

and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for *so* it seemed good in Thy sight” (Matt. 11:25, 26)—the Lord Jesus was content to rest there, and so must we be.

Some of the ablest expositors of this profound truth have affirmed that the *love* of God is the moving cause of our election, citing “In love having predestinated us” (Eph. 1:5); yet *in so* doing, we think they are chargeable with a slight inaccuracy or departure from the Rule of Faith. While fully agreeing that the last two words of Ephesians 1:4 (as they stand in the A.V.), belong properly to the beginning of verse 5, yet it should be carefully noted that verse 5 is *not* speaking of our original election, but of our being predestinated *unto* the adoption of children: the two things are quite distinct, separate acts on the part of God, the second following upon the first. There is *an order* in the Divine counsels, as there is in God’s works of creation, and it is as important to heed what is said of the former as it is to attend unto the Divine procedure in the six days’ work of Genesis 1.

An object must exist or subsist *before* it can be loved. Election was the first act in the mind of God, whereby He chose the persons of the elect to be holy and without blame (v. 4). Predestination was God’s second act, whereby He ratified by decree the *state* of those to whom His election had given a real subsistence before Him. Having chosen them in His dear Son unto a perfection of holiness and righteousness, God’s love went forth to them, and bestowed upon them the chiefest and highest blessing His love could confer: to make them His children by adoption. God is love, and all His love is exercised upon Christ and those in Him. Having made the elect His own by the sovereign choice of His will, God’s heart was set upon them as His special treasure.

Others have attributed our election to the *grace* of God, quoting “There is a remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom. 11:5). But here again we must distinguish between things that differ, namely, between the *beginning* of a Divine decree and its *matter* or substance. It is true, blessedly true, that the elect are the objects upon which the grace of God is specially exercised, but that is quite another thing from saying that their election *originated* in God’s grace. The order we are here insisting upon is clearly expressed in Ephesians 1. First, “He (God) hath chosen us in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world; that we should be holy and without blame (righteous) before Him” (v. 4): that was the *initial* act in the Divine mind. Second, “in love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself,” and that “according to the good pleasure of His will” (v. 5): that was God *enriching* those upon whom He had set His heart. Third, “to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved” (v. 6): that was both the subject and *design* of God’s decree—the manifestation and magnification of His grace.

“The election of grace” (Rom. 11:5), then, is *not* to be understood as the genitive of *origin*, but of object or character, as in “the Rose *of* Sharon,” “the tree *of* life,” “the children *of* disobedience.” The election of the church, as of all His acts and works, is to be traced right back to the uncontrolled and uncontrollable will of God. Nowhere else in Scripture is the *order* of the Divine counsels so definitely revealed as in Ephesians 1, and nowhere else is the emphasis placed so strongly upon God’s will. He predestinated unto the adoption of children “according to the good pleasure of His *will*” (v. 5). He has made known to us “the mystery of His *will*” (not “grace”) and that “according to His good pleasure which He hath *purposed* in Himself” (v. 9). And then, as though that was not sufficiently explicit, the passage closes with “being predestinated according to the pur-

pose of Him who worketh *all* things after the counsel of His own *will*, that we should be to the praise of His glory” (vv. 11, 12).

Let us dwell for a moment longer upon that remarkable expression “who worketh all things after *the counsel* of His own will” (v. 11). Note well it is not “the counsel of His own *heart*,” nor even “the counsel of His own *mind*,” but WILL: not “the will of His own counsel,” but “the counsel of His own will.” Herein God differs radically from us. Our wills are influenced by the thoughts of our minds and moved by the affections of our hearts; but not so God’s. “He doeth according to His *will* in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth” (Dan. 4:35). God’s will is supreme, determining the exercise of all His perfections. He is infinite in wisdom, yet His will regulates the operations of it. He is full of mercy, but His will determines when and to whom He shows it. He is inflexibly just, yet His will decides whether or not justice shall be put forth: observe carefully, *not*, “Who *can* by no means clear the guilty” (as is so generally misquoted), but “Who *will* by no means clear the guilty” (Exo. 34:7). God first wills or determines that a thing shall be, and then His wisdom contrives the *execution* of it.

Let us now point out what has been *disproved*. From all that has been said above it is clear, first, that our *good works* are *not* the thing which induced God to elect us, for that act passed in the Divine mind in eternity—long before we had any actual existence. See how this very point is set aside in, “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand: not of works, but of Him that calleth” (Rom. 9:11). Again we read, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto* good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Since, then, we were elected prior to our creation, then good works could not be the moving cause of it: no, they are the *fruits and effects* of it.

Second, the *holiness* of men, whether in principle or in practice, or both, is not the moving cause of election, for as Ephesians 1:4 so plainly declares, “He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him”—not because we *were* holy, but so that we *might* be. That we “*should* be holy” was something future, which follows upon it, and is the means to a further end, namely, our salvation, to which men are chosen. “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit” (2 Thess. 2:13). Since, then, the sanctification of God’s people was the design of His election, it could not be the cause of it. “This is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3): not barely the approving will of God, as being agreeable to His nature; nor merely His preceptive will, as required by the Law; but His *decretive* will, His determinate counsel.

Third, nor is *faith* the cause of our election. How could it be? Throughout their unregeneracy all men are in a state of unbelief, living in this world without God and without hope. And when we had faith, it was not of ourselves—either of our goodness, power, or will. No, it was a gift from God (Eph. 2:9), and the operation of the Spirit (Col. 2:12), flowing from His grace. “As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed” (Acts 13:48), and *not* “as many as believed, were ordained to eternal life.” Since, then, faith flows from Divine grace, it cannot be the cause of our election. The reason other men do not believe, is because they are “not of Christ’s sheep” (John 10:26); the reason why any believe is because God gives them faith, and therefore it is called “the faith of God’s elect” (Titus 1:1).

Fourth, it is not God's *foreview* of these things in men which moved Him to choose them. God's foreknowledge of the future is founded upon the determination of His *will* concerning it. The Divine decree, the Divine foreknowledge, and the Divine predestination is the *order* set forth in the Scriptures. First, "Who are the called according to His purpose"; second, "for whom He did foreknow"; third, "He also did predestinate" (Rom. 8:28, 29). The decree of God as *preceding* His foreknowledge is also stated in, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). God foreknows everything that *will* be, because He has ordained everything that *shall* be; then it is to put the cart before the horse when we make foreknowledge the cause of God's election.

In conclusion let it be said that the *end* of God in His decree of election is the manifestation of His own glory, but before entering into detail upon this point we will quote several passages which state the broad fact itself. "But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly *for Himself*" (Psa. 4:3). "Set apart" here signifies chosen or severed from the rest; "Him that is godly" refers to David himself (Psa. 89:19, 20); "for Himself," and not merely for the throne and kingdom of Israel. "For the Lord hath chosen Jacob *unto Himself*, and Israel for His peculiar treasure" (Psa. 135:4). "To give drink to My people, My chosen: this people have I formed *for Myself*; they shall show forth My praise" (Isa. 43:20, 21), which is parallel with Ephesians 1:5, 6. So in the New Testament: when Christ was pleased to give to Ananias an account of the conversion of His beloved Paul, He said "he is a chosen vessel *unto Me*" (Acts 9:15). Again, "I have reserved *to Myself* seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal" (Rom. 11:4), which is explained in the next verse as "a remnant according to the election of grace."—A.W.P.

TRUST IN GOD.

A right judgment of God will help us to employ our faith in any condition. *In wealth* men are apt to trust in their abundance, to stand upon their mountain, and to say, "I shall never be moved." But now in this estate, if a man conceives aright of God—that it is He who gives strength to be rich, and who gives strength to do us good—that He can blast the greatest estate with an imperceptible consumption, and in the midst of a man's sufficiency make him to be in straits, that He can embitter all with His sore displeasure, and not suffer the flour nor the winepress to feed him. In great wisdom and deep counsels, if a man considers that "the counsel of the Lord shall stand," and that He can turn the wisdom of the world into foolishness, and catch the wise in their own craftiness; in great provisions of worldly strength and human combinations, if he consider that God can take off the wheels, dissipate the affections, melt the spirits, and waylay the enterprises of the largest hosts of men; that He can arm flies, and lice, and dust, and winds, and stars, and every small unexpected contingency against the strongest opposition—it must needs make him set his rest and hang his confidence and assurance upon an higher principle.

Again—in *poverty* and the most extreme straits which a man can be in, if he considers that God is a God of the valleys as well as of the hills; that He will be seen in the mount when His people are under the sword; that the Lord knows the days of the upright, and will satisfy them in the time of famine: that when the young lions famish for hunger (they which live not by the fruits on the earth, but by their prey; they which can feed on the dead bodies of those other creatures which a famine has devoured), yet even *then* He can provide abundantly for His own; that when things are marvelous unto us, then they are easy unto Him, that when they are impossible unto us, then they are possible with Him; that He can lead in a wilderness, and feed with all unknown and unsuspected bread; that when the light of the sun and moon shall fail, He can be an everlasting light and glory to His people; that as a Father so He pities, and as an heavenly Father so He knows, and can supply all our need; that when we are without any wisdom to disappoint, or strength to withstand the confederacies of men, when they come with chariots of iron and walls of brass, even then the eyes of the Lord run too and fro to show Himself strong in the behalf of those that walk uprightly; that He can then order some Providence, produce some engine, discover some way to extricate—then will a man learn to be anxious or distracted in nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make his requests known unto Him who is at hand, and who cares for him.—E. Reynolds, 1648.